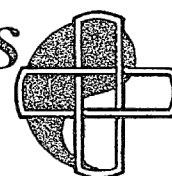


# History of Women Religious

## News and Notes



Volume 19—Number 3

October 2006

### HWR Network News

The next triennial conference sponsored by the History of Women Religious network is scheduled to convene June 24-27, 2007 at the University of Notre Dame, with the theme "Local Cultures/Global Church: Challenge and Mission in the History of Women Religious." Angelyn Dries, OSF, holder of the Danforth Humanities Chair at St. Louis University and author of *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History* (Orbis Books 1998) and other works on the missionary movement will be the keynote speaker. Margaret (Meg) Eletta Guider, OSF, associate professor of missiology at Weston Jesuit School of Theology and author of *The Changing Face of Mission in the United States* (Maryknoll Cross-Cultural Institute 2005) will be the Awards Banquet speaker. The NGOMA Group, a Chicago ensemble of nine musicians, will provide a musical journey through African-American history on Monday evening. The Group's founder, Marcia Ann Berry, is a leader in lay and liturgical ministry in Chicago and nationally.

Details on local arrangements, registration and the program will be available on the website of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at Notre Dame University [www.nd.edu/~cushwa](http://www.nd.edu/~cushwa) after December 1, 2006. For more information at this time contact local arrangements chair, Kathleen Cummings, [kcumming@nd.edu](mailto:kcumming@nd.edu) Phone 574-631-8749.

We encourage you to participate in the nomination process for the awards given at the triennial conference. The Distinguished Book Award is given for outstanding books on any aspect of the history of women religious since the 2004 conference. The Distinguished Historian Award is given to recognize lifetime achievement for research and publication in the field. 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, 7607 Teasdale Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63130. Email [KOLMERE@SLU.EDU](mailto:KOLMERE@SLU.EDU).

### Publications

The latest in the Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages series, *Women in Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. Margaret C. Schaus (New York: Routledge, 2006), includes coverage of women religious particularly in entries on religion and religious figures.

Danielle Culpepper, "'Our particular Cloister': Ursulines and Female Education in Seventeenth-Century Parma and Piacenza," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXXVI (Winter, 2005), 1017-1037, adds a valuable local perspective to the literature on women religion and education.

John Watts, *A Canticle of Love: The Story of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception* (Edinburgh: John Daniel, 2006) traces the congregation from its foundation in Glasgow in 1847 by Franciscan Sisters from northern France, to the present day. The congregation later founded missions in Jamaica (later affiliated with the Alleghany, New York, Franciscans), Nigeria, Kenya, and Pennsylvania. For details and ordering see the publisher's website [www.birlinn.co.uk](http://www.birlinn.co.uk).

Carmen Mangion reports that Manchester University Press has accepted her doctoral thesis ("Contested Identities: Active Women Religious in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales") for publication. Her article, "'Good Teacher' or 'Good Religious'?: The Professional Identity of Catholic Women Religious in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales," appears in *Women's History Review* 14: 2 (2005).

Mary David Fraine, OSC, *'Doing what is ours to do'—History of our 100 years in the Archdiocese of Boston* (Privately printed, Boston: Ink Spot, 2006), relates the story of the Poor Clares century of presence in Boston. For further information on this publication, contact the author, archivist for the Poor Clares in Boston and also for the Holy Name Federation of Poor Clare Nuns, at the Monastery of St. Clare, 920 Centre St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. Those interested in obtaining an earlier publication edited by Fraine, *Clarion Call: Eight Centuries of Franciscan Poor Clare Life* (Privately printed, Boston: Andres T. Johnson

Graphics, 1993; third printing, 2006) may obtain information at the same address as above.

William L. Montgomery, "The Oblate Sisters of Providence: The Origins of Their Mission to Latin America," in *U.S. Catholic Historian* 24:2 (Spring 2006), 41-55, builds on the work of Diane Batts Morrow (*Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time: The Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1828-1860*, University of North Carolina Press, 2002) to elucidate the missionary activity of the first congregation of Catholic women of African descent in the U.S.

Two papers on the work of the recently canonized founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Katharine Drexel, were presented at the annual meeting of the Texas Catholic Historical Society in March, 2006: "St. Katharine Drexel and St. Patrick's Mission to the Comanche People: A Study of Saintly Administration," by Stephanie Morris and Richard Fossey; and "A Catholic Negro Child Living in the Segregated South of the 50s and 60s: A Postmodern Retrospective of Saint Katharine Drexel's Mission in New Orleans, Louisiana," by Collette Bloom.

Patricia Jean Manion, SL, *Venture into the Unknown: Loretto in China 1923-1998* (Privately printed, Independent Publishing Co., Manchester, Missouri) traces the experiences of six Sisters of Loretto and those who followed them to Wuhan and Shanghai. Expelled in 1951-52, Isobel Huang, SL, alone remained until 1998. Based on letters and memoirs of Loretto Sisters and the Irish St. Columban priests, the book takes the reader through floods, famine, invasions and war, and finally to the takeover by Mao Zedong in 1949. A \$20 donation made out to the Sisters of Loretto will cover postage if mailed to Manion, P.O. Box 190491, St. Louis, MO 63119-6491 (be sure to use full 9-digit zip code).

Maris Stella McKeown, OP, *Cabra Dominicans and All That Jazz: A Story of Dominican Sisters in Louisiana*, recounts the experiences of Irish Dominican Sisters who responded to an appeal in 1968 to teach in New Orleans. For more information consult the publisher website, [www.dominicanpublications.com](http://www.dominicanpublications.com).

Kenneth Briggs, *Double Crossed: Uncovering the Catholic Church's Betrayal of American Nuns* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), religion editor of the New York Times in the 1970s and 80s, attributes the precipitous decline in the number of nuns to the Second Vatican Council's call for a process of renewal followed by the opposition of

some members of the U.S. hierarchy to this process. In the words of one well-informed reviewer (Anita Caspary, IHM), Briggs "fails to include a more nuanced and researched analysis of the period to supplement his account of renewal," yet the interest aroused by his readable style and central thesis should contribute to a sorely needed further discussion of this crucial period.

Film producer Jayasri (Joyce) Hart reports that *Sisters of Selma* is set for completion as of this November. The 55-minute program, early cuts from which were screened at the last HWR Triennial conference (Atchison, 2004), will be offered to Public Broadcasting System stations in 2007. The University of Dayton (Ohio) will be screening the completed video November 15 as part of an event that will bring together several of the Sisters involved in the Selma March. A number of other universities, religious congregations, and the Catholic and African American communities in Selma who hosted the production in 2003-2004 have expressed interest in hosting a screening. Newsletter readers are encouraged to contact Hart if they know of festivals (other than the Kansas City Film Festival which will have a screening) or individuals who could help *Sisters of Selma* reach its PBS audience. Hart may be reached at [sistersofselma@earthlink.net](mailto:sistersofselma@earthlink.net).

Rosalie McQuaide, CSJP, and Janet D. Richardson, SCJP, eds, report that Vol. II of *Studies on the Life/Work of Margaret Anna Cusack, Founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace*, is now on the web: [www.csjp.org/women](http://www.csjp.org/women) at the table

### Correction

Connie Gaynor's email address was incorrectly listed in the June 2006 issue. Her correct address is [connieg720@optonline.net](mailto:connieg720@optonline.net).

### Research in Progress

Patricia Wittberg, SC, is working with the Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate (CARA) to develop a directory of emerging religious communities.

Connie Devilbiss, recipient of a Fellow-in-Residence award at The School of Theology, Sewanee, Tennessee, for spring term, 2006-2007, is looking forward to this opportunity to pursue some of the suggestions for further study that she identified in her recently completed research of Episcopal women's religious communities.

Two researchers in Australia will make good use of the

recent gift to the Golding Centre for Women's History, Theology and Spirituality at Australian Catholic University-National. The gift by Dr. Ann Prendergast of her Pacific Mission library focusing on Papua New Guinea is very timely for doctoral student, Tess Flaherty, RSM, who is researching the history of the Sisters of Mercy in PNG; and for Dr. Rosa MacGinley, PBVM (Golding Centre, Brisbane) who is working on the history of the Presentation Sisters in PNG.

Regina Siegfried, ASC, and Judy Eby, RSM, are writing the history of the Religious Formation Conference, picking up where Marjorie Notermann Bean's *From Framework to Freedom* concluded. Their work continues the history of the Conference from 1971 when the Sisters Formation Conference became a separate national conference. The title change to RFC in 1976 reflected inclusion of male religious, contemplatives, members of secular institutes and persons from non-canonical religious groups. The authors anticipate completion of the project in late 2008. Siegfried will be presenting a related paper at the 2007 HWR Conference.

Ellen Whalan, OSF, is aiming for a 2007 publication date for her sequel to *The Sisters' Story: Saint Marys Hospital-Mayo Clinic 1889 to 1939*. The sequel covers a forty-year period, 1940—1980.

## Book Reviews

*"Missionaries More and More": The History of the China Mission of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, 1933-1945*, by Regina Siegfried, ASC (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse), 2005). Pp. 431. \$15 paperback.

The stories of American Catholic women in the Asian mission field are few, especially when compared to the study of Protestant women missionaries. Regina Siegfried's study of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ in China adds welcome pages to mission history. She holds the reader's attention with her clear, concise narrative, and her generosity in letting the sisters tell their own story through their letters and diaries. She divides the work into six chapters, with a section of photographs, followed by extensive and helpful appendices and bibliographies.

Siegfried begins her story with a discussion of *Rerum Ecclesiae*, the 1926 encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Catholic missions. With this background she traces the decision of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ to launch a China mission at the invitation of the provincial superior

of the Chicago—Saint Louis Sacred Heart province of the Order of Friars Minor beginning in 1931. From among volunteers, congregation leaders chose six sisters for the mission. The reader gains insight into the complexities of such a venture, especially the confusion over finances. The confusion continues well into the sisters' arrival in China in 1933, and after their return to the United States.

The years 1933 to 1936 see the sisters attempting to learn the Chinese language, adjust to Chinese customs and community life in a totally new culture, and seek out what work might be best suited to their talents. Siegfried shares the successes as well as the difficulties the sisters experienced. The political situation in China, with the Long March of the Communists and the increasing presence of the Japanese, becomes more precarious almost daily. At the same time, two new sisters arrive in China, and Chinese women show interest in joining the sisters. The superior of the mission, Sophie Gartner, ASC, begins to plan the future of the Chinese women who seek entrance into the community.

All-out war between China and Japan erupts in 1937, yet the sisters hold firm and complain more about the Communists than the Japanese. They begin a period of time when they must ever be ready to pick up and leave their area, yet they continue to insist that they do not want to leave China, that "God will take care of us." By this time, the sisters have three houses in China, two sisters return to the states to raise funds and return to China, and new sisters arrive to help the expanding mission. The sisters also develop a clear mission policy.

The years between 1942 and 1945 were difficult ones as the sisters spent that time in concentration camps. While life was certainly confined and full of hardship, one does get the sense the sisters were not in fear for their lives. In one appendix, Siegfried includes verbatim the letters and diaries the sisters and priests wrote during their internment; these reflections give great insight into life during their internment

The last two chapters detail the return of the sisters to the United States, the warm welcome they received from their sisters, and the immediate attention to planning for a return to their beloved China and the Christians they had left behind. At this point, Siegfried discusses the results of the work the sisters did in China and places the missionary enterprise in its 1940s setting. But as important, she highlights the beginnings of a change in mission theory. She shows how the sisters' life in China, far

from the immediate arm of authority, helped create new attitudes concerning authority and obedience in religious life. She draws attention to the collaboration with other religious orders of women, a most timely issue today. And finally, she discusses how the congregation began an extended discussion on how one should go about accepting women from other cultures into the congregation.

Not only is mission history richer for this account, but so also is Chinese and Japanese history. To read first hand accounts of sisters who were on the periphery of the war, but nonetheless in contact with Chinese Christians and non-Christians, Japanese military, and members of the burgeoning Communist Party in China sheds new light on those difficult years. Siegfried's study engaged this reader from the first page to the end. It tells a story of the courage, faith, and the willing spirit of a group of women who risked all to work in the mission fields of China.

Ann M. Harrington, BVM  
Loyola University Chicago

*Habits of Compassion: Irish Catholic Nuns and the Origins of New York's Welfare System, 1830-1920*, by Maureen Fitzgerald (Women in American History series. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006). Pp. 298. \$50.00 hardcover, \$25.00 paperback.

Against the accepted interpretation that welfare changed in the antebellum period when native, white, middle-class Protestant ladies claimed that motherhood endowed them with unique insights, the first chapter of *Habits of Compassion* argues that the real change occurred during the famine, when immigrant Irish working-class Catholic women sacrificed themselves for their people.

Maureen Fitzgerald develops her argument in stages. Chapter two describes how single women immigrants worked arduous hours as domestic servants for people who denigrated them. These women denied themselves to send funds home; some evaded Archbishop John Hughes's focus on parochial schools to join religious orders that staffed institutions caring for the poor. Chapter three explains why these institutions were at the forefront of Irish cultural conservation. The cutting edge of antebellum welfare reform was represented by the Children's Aid Society, which argued that placing urban waifs in rural foster homes would lead children to assimilate to a Protestant culture and thus break the cycle of poverty. Irish Catholics denied that culture caused poverty, but there was no denying that Irish Catholics

were poor and unable to be at home tending children. They worked to support them.

Chapter four describes the Gilded Age as a golden age in which sisters helped influence politicians to allocate funds to Catholic institutions that preserved parental control by taking in and releasing children at the parents' request. However, Catholic laymen moving up the socioeconomic ladder adopted the dominant culture's conflicting standards: children should be kept at home rather than in institutions, and no aid should be given to parents so they could afford to keep their children at home. Chapter five resolves the conflict partway: a 1909 White House conference advocated aiding home relief for single mothers and providing homelike settings for institutionalized children. New York's 1915 widows' pension legislation began to divert tax dollars from institutions, and a 1916 investigation of childcare institutions saddled Catholic orphanages with an unsavory reputation. Chapter six also links this story to contemporary debates about the care of the poor.

The narrative leaves some logical gaps. The sisters are described as influential, but it is also emphasized they did not follow the usual paths of influence, so, in what sense were they influential? Similarly, citations of critics of Catholic institutions abound, but the narrative lacks room for the thick descriptions of the sisters' work that would give the reader confidence that the criticisms were unfounded.

Fitzgerald has gathered evidence from many sources, including the archives of the Sisters of Charity of New York, Sisters of Divine Compassion, Sisters of the Good Shepherd, the Sisters of Mercy. Perhaps she can return to delve more deeply into the sisters' world, so that her narrative moves from provocative revisionism to accepted interpretation.

Mary Elizabeth Brown  
Marymount Manhattan College

## Announcements

We are saddened to share news of the death of Mary Luke Tobin, SL, August 24, 2006, at the Loretto Motherhouse in Nerinx, Kentucky. Mary Luke was 98 years old. She served as president of her congregation from 1958 to 1970, and was the oldest living president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (formerly the Conference of Major Superiors of Women). She served in that role in 1964 and, in that capacity, attended the Second Vatican Council as an official auditor, one of

only fifteen women to do so. Advocate for ecumenism, peace, and renewal of religious life, inspiring leader and a delightful person, she will be sorely missed by all who knew her but especially by her Loretto community.

Congratulations to HWR member Anne Butler who recently received an award from the Catholic Press Association for her article, "There are Exceptions to Every Role: Adjusting the Boundaries—Catholic Sisters and the American West." Participants in the Awards banquet at the HWR 2004 Triennial Conference were entertained by her presentation on the topic of the article which appeared in *American Catholic Studies*, Fall, 2005.

Congratulations also to Janet Welsh, OP, recently named Interim Director for the McGreal Center for Dominican Historical Studies by the Dominican Leadership Conference and Dominican University (River Forest, Illinois). The center will become the new home of Project OPUS through which major research and publication regarding the history of the Order of Preachers in the U.S. is conducted.

The Western Association of Women Historians welcomes proposals for panels or single papers on any historical subject, time period, or region although this year's program, to convene May 4-6, 2007 at the University of San Diego, San Diego, California, seeks to emphasize comparisons across national borders and geographic regions with a resulting special interest in thematic papers that focus on non-U.S. locales. Current WAWH membership as well as registration are required of all program participants. For more information on proposals (due by November 1, 2006) consult [www.wawh.org](http://www.wawh.org).

The exhibit, "Pioneers, Poets & Prophets: Catholic Sisters in America," celebrating the lives and influence of the over 220,000 women whose presence in the U.S. began in New Orleans in 1727, entered a new stage in August-September when the committee of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious responsible for planning the exhibit initiated an artifact identification process among the over 400 congregational archivists involved. For further information on exhibit progress to date consult the web site [www.lcwr.org](http://www.lcwr.org)

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### Subscription Information

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On a smaller scale, plans for an exhibit featuring sixteen congregations engaged in health care in Northeastern Pennsylvania have been progressing under the able guidance of John Bavaro, professor at Slippery Rock University (Pennsylvania). Those who tap into the recently created basic web site for this project will be impressed by project conceptualization and development. See [www.srshistoryproject.org](http://www.srshistoryproject.org)

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**Newsletter Deadline**

Please have copy for the February, 2007 issue to the editor by January 1, 2007. [KKennelly33@hotmail.com](mailto:KKennelly33@hotmail.com).

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