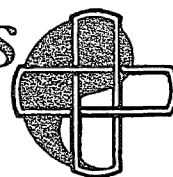


History of Women Religious News and Notes



Volume 20—Number 3

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HWR Network News

The Seventh Triennial Conference of the History of Women Religious network drew over 200 to the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana June 24-27. The growing number of younger scholars and lay persons presenting papers promised well for the future of the network, as did also the scholarly quality of papers in the various sessions. Those who attended will recall the colorful hand-painted silk wall hanging, "We will go, Send us," created for the conference by Thoma Swanson, OP. Anyone wishing to borrow the hanging is asked to contact Kathleen Sprow Cummings at the Cushwa Center at kcumming@nd.edu.

Awards conferred at the conference were the Distinguished Book Award, to Elizabeth Makowski, for *"A Pernicious Sort of Woman": Quasi Religious Women and Canon Lawyers in the Later Middle Ages*; the Distinguished Historian Award, to Elizabeth Kolmer, ASC; and the Lifetime Achievement Award, to two recipients, Suellen Hoy, and Irene Mahoney, OSU.

A particularly lively business meeting provided for an exchange of views on the future of the network which is currently marking its 20th year. The Coordinating Committee (see editorial box for members) will meet in September 2008 for future planning. Subscribers' views are welcome and may be sent to the editor.

Publications

Amy Leonard, *Nails in the Wall: Catholic Nuns in Reformation Germany* (The University of Chicago Press, 2005), casts fresh light on the implications of the Reformation for religious life by examining the post-Reformation history of three Strasbourg Dominican convents of women. Based on her doctoral dissertation at Georgetown, the study underlines the need for local monographs that can nuance general understandings of the subject.

Patricia Byrne has secured a publisher for her translation of *Des "régulières" dans le siècle: Les soeurs de Saint-Joseph du Père Médaille aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, by Marguerite Vacher. Published in 1991, it is a valuable contribution toward understanding the social, political and economic context out of which a number of active congregations of women religious, including the Daughters of Charity and the Visitation nuns as well as the Sisters of St. Joseph emerged. Publication is expected next year from the University Press of America.

Susan E. Dinan, *Women and Poor Relief in Seventeenth-Century France: The Early History of the Daughters of Charity* (Ashgate Publishing Co., 2006), brings to light much new information regarding one of the most influential of the women's religious congregations to emerge during the Catholic Reformation era.

Catherine M. Mooney's biography, *Philippine Duchesne: A Woman with the Poor* (Paulist Press, 1990), is back in print (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007). A pioneer figure, Duchesne came to North America in 1818 as the first Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and was canonized in 1988.

Catherine Kovesi, *Pitch your Tents on Distant Shores: A History of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand and Tahiti* (Playwright Publishing, Caringbah NSW, 2006), traces the origins and development of a congregation that began its work with marginalized women and girls in Australia in the nineteenth century.

M. R. MacGinley, *A Lamp is Lit—History of the Poor Clares Waverley, Australia, 1883-2004* (St. Paul, Sydney, 2005), recounts the history of a contemplative order called to adapt to the demands involved in the educational mission of the Church in Australia.

Marie Brinkman, SCL, *Emerging Frontiers* (Paulist

Press, forthcoming, 2008), describes the experience of renewal in the lives of women religious and their religious congregations as exemplified by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth from 1955 through 2005.

Kay Lewis, OP, *Women Called to be Witness: The Story of the Tacoma Dominicans 1966-2005* (Privately Printed, Sisters of St. Dominic of Tacoma, 2007) brings up to date an earlier history of her congregation, Rita Flanigan's *Sisters of St. Dominic of the Congregation of St. Thomas Aquinas in the Diocese of Seattle 1888-1951* (unpublished Masters' thesis) in her account of the Tacoma Dominican Community from the time of renewal in the 1960s through the first years of the current century. Appendices include a complete list of professed members as well as a listing of schools staffed by the congregation.

Amy L. Koehlinger, *The New Nuns: Racial Justice and Religious Reform in the 1960s* (Harvard University Press, 2007), analyzes with scholarly insight and skill the ways in which Catholic women religious responded to the changing context of race relations in the U.S. in the post-Vatican II era, and the ways their response affected them, their congregations, the civil rights movement and attitudes toward sisters in U.S. society.

Catherine A. Brekus, editor, *The Religious History of American Women: Reimagining the Past* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), includes three essays of significance for the history of women religious: Emily Clark, "Hail Mary Down by the Riverside: Black and White Catholic Women in Early America"; Kathleen Sprows Cummings, "The 'New Woman' at the 'University': Gender and American Catholic Identity in the Progressive Era"; and Amy Koehlinger, "Are You the White Sisters or the Black Sisters?' Women Confounding Categories of Race and Gender."

Research in Progress

Elizabeth Ursic, professor of religious studies at Mesa Community College, is researching the Daughters of Wisdom and their current understanding and expression of Sophia-Wisdom in the broader context of American Catholic nuns. Anyone with information about other congregations or members within congregations who engage Sophia-Wisdom in their

prayer life and/or ministry is invited to contact her at eursic@mail.mc.maricopa.edu or (480) 461-7470.

Bren Ortega Murphy, Director of Women's Studies at Loyola University Chicago, is producing a documentary film on women religious in the United States. The working title of the feature-length film, "The Real Nuns' Story: Pop Culture vs. Real Women," is indicative of the focus on addressing misperceptions of sisters in order to tell their "real story." Those present at the Notre Dame conference in June had an opportunity to discuss the project with the producer who did some filming of individuals and conference sessions. For more information, contact bmurphy@luc.edu.

Judith Best, SSND, writes that she is "still savoring the wonderful experience of the University of Notre Dame and the fine conference" as she resumes her personal research and encouragement of two doctoral candidates who hope to focus their respective dissertations on her congregation, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. The women are German-born Martina Cuchiarra whose interest is in the role of women religious in rebuilding the educational system in post-war Germany, and Kyoto resident, Midori Teranishi, whom many have met at prior HWR conferences. Midori's doctoral work is at Nanzan University and focuses on the impact of U.S. women's congregations on the education of women in post-war Japan. Judith may be reached at judithb@yhti.net.

Book Reviews

Made Holy: Irish Women Religious at Home and Abroad, by Yvonne McKenna (Dublin/ Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2006). Pp. xii, 268. \$30 paper.

Irish, Catholic, religious, woman: these are the four defining words around which Yvonne McKenna has researched and written her study of some twentieth-century migrants and missionaries. McKenna provides the reader with background information on Irish history, the recent near inseparability of Ireland and Catholicism, religious life before and after Vatican II, as well as discussion on gender matters. She does this skilfully through drawing upon her knowledge of history and sociology combined with quotes

and information from interviewees of different ages and backgrounds.

McKenna offers cultural-historical reasons for the relatively large number of women entering religious life and working abroad during the last century. Later in the narrative she asks her interviewees about religious life today as they experience it at home and abroad, and how these and other factors such as relationships with natal family and attitudes towards religious have influenced their decisions to return, visit, or limit their contact with their homeland and families. In relating their various experiences some interviewees are more able than others to communicate their feelings and understandings about their identities and experiences.

This book will be of interest to women because of its coverage of feminine identity and gender subjectivity questions that the author has interwoven with the overall theme of women religious abroad. McKenna disputes the idea that pre-Vatican II religious life prevented women from acknowledging their womanhood. She says that they were to become, and they accepted that they would be in those years, "a particular kind of woman" (p.80) whereby they would be denied expressions of femininity. Now that religious women feel more free to adopt "feminist and sexual identities" (p.227) they would be experiencing a challenge to their new sense of identity by those who have a different sense of the meaning of religious life.

The appeal of this book is not limited to women, however. As well as being of interest to Irish, Catholic, and religious, the book contributes to the history of migrant and/or missionary peoples. McKenna tells her story so that the meanings shared by the participants on Irishness, Catholicism, religious life and womanhood, at home and abroad, add value to our understanding of a particular niche in society as it has lived and proclaimed its values in the very recent past.

I have one hesitation in my otherwise favourable recommendation. There are incongruities such as p.18 where the eldest interviewee is said to be the only sister to remember independence ('granting of independence' perhaps). Another discrepancy occurs on p.141 on the topic of wearing the habit where sisters who are said not to want to distinguish themselves from those who did not have a vocation, did (in the next sentence)

want difference to remain the very essence of religious life. Also, there are lengthy sentences that lose their sense. For these reasons I would suggest an editorial review before the next publication of this otherwise excellent narrative.

Lita van Bunnik, Ph.D Candidate
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

The Missionary Oblate Sisters, Vision and Mission. Rosa Bruno-Jofré (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005). Pp.158. \$29.95 paper.

This study, *The Missionary Oblate Sisters, Vision and Mission*, opens with a foreword from Sister Dora Tétreault, archivist/historian for the congregation, outlining her experiences and those of the community in learning what a historian does in coming to terms with some of a historian's interpretations. In her introduction Rosa Bruno-Jofré describes Sister Tétreault as a "courageous religious" who was supportive of the study and worked collaboratively with the author to its completion.

Bruno-Jofré sketches the socio-political background leading to the congregation's foundation in 1902 by Bishop Adélard Langevin who believed that Manitoba's French Canadians were under cultural assault following the end of government funding for all denominational schools. Since Catholic schools could not exist without government money Langevin invited religious communities from France, Montreal, Quebec and Minnesota to set up parochial schools in Manitoba; he also secured positions for Sisters in the public schools. The Bishop was determined to counteract Anglicization, then underway due to intense Protestant migration to the West, with the presence of a community of teaching Sisters founded within his diocese. And so the congregation of the Missionary Oblate Sisters, whose primary apostolate would be the education of French Canadian children, was established as a means of helping to sustain a French Catholic presence within Canada outside of Quebec.

Langevin chose as the first superior, Sister Ida Lafricain (Sister St. Viateur) originally from Montreal – a choice that would linger as controversial for decades as some of the Sisters from Manitoba believed that a Franco-Manitoban would have understood better the

needs of the West. The congregation also attracted a few members from the United States, American-born daughters of the Quebec diaspora. Most significant among these was Sister Albina Laberge (Sister Louis de France) who encouraged other Sisters to upgrade their teaching credentials and whose own words reveal an enlightened pedagogical approach, "I was teaching pupils not subjects."

The author devotes considerable discussion to the delineation of the congregation's foundation myths and analyzes the Sisters' reactions to the uncovering of several dimensions of their history. Among these is the spiritual relationship and personal affection between Sister Ida Lafricain and a friend who subsequently founded another community, the rewriting of the community's constitutions in the 1930s that effectively restated the primary purpose of the congregation from education to the support of the Church and the priests, and the apparent minimal agency of the Sisters in undertaking the staffing of, and negotiating the working conditions within, the residential schools — a painful episode in Canadian history, still awaiting satisfactory resolution. Bruno-Jofré suggests that the Oblate Sisters, operating in association with the Oblate Fathers, may well have internalized some of the negative views held by the Fathers towards the Native people.

Throughout the study short vignettes offer glimpses both of the Sisters' lives and the broader world in which they worked. Surfacing in 1917 is the cultural and linguistic duality of Canadian Catholicism, expressed by a novice who is praying for peace and for France, "*la mère patrie*." Notions on gender emerge in Bishop Langevin's observation that the Sisters' schools should not make "...our girls into a kind of boys in skirts" and again in the 1920s, a priest's remark on the purpose of the Sisters' education of young women as preparing "...excellent citizens, faithful wives, mothers...who would be for families a sweet consolation and a beautiful ornament."

Drawing upon a wide range of congregational documents, the author describes with sensitivity the differing responses between the Sisters and the leadership as this historical discovery process gradually unfolded. Bruno-Jofré identifies parallel voices speaking for the Sisters: the official history and the unofficial memo-

ries, noting that the tension between the two is an important part of the historical process. Also, she acknowledges, as do some in the congregation, that a particular tension lingers surrounding the community's participation in the residential schools. The author comments that the congregation "constructed its official memories as a means of building cohesion, group identity and solidarity." She concludes, perceptively, that contradictions in the congregation's historical narrative may concern "scholars like me" but they are of little relevance to many of the Sisters.

Elizabeth W. McGahan

University of New Brunswick – Saint John Campus

Correction

The review of Suellen Hoy's *Good Hearts* in the June 2007 issue contained a number of errors: the preferred usage is the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM) rather than the shortened version used in the review; "Katharine" Drexler is the correct spelling; and "Jane Hull" refers to Jane Addams, founder of Hull House.

Announcements

The Spring Conference of the American Catholic Historical Association will be hosted by Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, April 3-5, 2008. Proposals for panel/session papers are favored over individual paper proposals and are due February 1, 2008. Questions and/or proposals may be sent to Cyriac K. Pullapilly, Professor of History at Saint Mary's, by email pullapil@saintmarys.edu or to the History Department assistant at cbaumgar@saintmarys.edu.

The Catholic Library Association successfully completed its first Introductory Archives Workshop for Religious Communities at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, IL in July. A second workshop is planned for October 7-12, 2007 at Malvern, PA and is already oversubscribed. Workshop directors, Malachy R. McCarthy, province archivist of the Claretian Missionary Archives in Chicago and Ellen Pierce, Director of Maryknoll Mission Archives in New York, report that the workshops will be held on an annual basis beginning in summer, 2009, returning to Belleville and then in California (2010) in order to meet an evident need.

For more information check the CLA website www.cathla.org.

Carol Coburn, co-author of *Spirited Lives: How Nuns Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836-1920*, is editor of a new initiative to broaden the coverage of the website/database/journal, Women and Social Movements in the United States (<http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com>). The website currently offers a variety of projects concerning Protestant women, Native American women, African-American women, and most recently Catholic women and Second Wave Feminism. To expand this important topic, Carol encourages proposals on Catholic laywomen or women religious from any time period in American history. To discuss proposals, contact her at Carol.Coburn@avila.edu.

The Dominican history research program, Project OPUS, has relocated to the following address: The McGreal Center/Project OPUS, Dominican Uni-

versity, 7900 Division St., River Forest, IL 60305. Telephone contact may be made at (708) 524-6564 or 524-6832; or by email to Judy Miller, OP, at projopus1@juno.com.

The Leadership Conference for Women Religious in the United States is mounting a national traveling exhibit, *Pioneers, Poets & Prophets: Catholic Sisters in America*, to tell the largely untold story of the Catholic Sisters' contributions to the U.S. The purpose of the exhibit, which is now in the design stage with a completion date of 2009, is to demonstrate how Catholic Sisters helped shape the nation and how the nation shaped them. A feasibility survey conducted in August indicated firm interest on the part of national museums such as the Smithsonian and Ellis Island as well as on the part of a number of regional museums. Fund raising has surpassed \$2M toward a \$3.2M goal. Several HWR members are on the planning and advisory committees for the project.

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