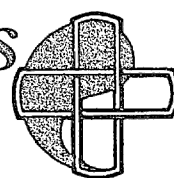


History of Women Religious

News and Notes



Volume 23—Number 2

June 2010

HWR NETWORK NEWS

The Eighth Triennial Conference will convene June 27-30, 2010 at the University of Scranton, Scranton, Pennsylvania. Eighteen concurrent sessions will feature papers relating to the theme of "Confronting Challenges: Women Religious Respond to Change." Presenters from several countries will speak to distinctive responses by women's congregations to the Second Vatican Council and the re-defining of mission subsequent to the Council; to societal change and its impact on teaching sisters and women involved in health care; and to the impact of war on women's congregations. Papers in other sessions relate to the general topic of change and adaptation as affected by such widely divergent factors as technology and canon law. Sections on transnational perspectives explore the impact of change on women religious in parts of Africa, Europe, and Asia.

New Web sites of special relevance for those doing research on women religious are assessed by speakers familiar with their use. Persons responsible for the development of specific historiographic projects comment on project development and outcomes. Films to be viewed and critiqued include "A Question of Habit: The Image of Women Religious in U.S. Popular Culture," produced by Bren Ortega Murphy, Loyola University Chicago; and "Interrupted Lives: Catholic Sisters Under European Communism," for which Sisters Mary Savoie and Margaret Nacke served as principal advisers and researchers. An illustrated session will familiarize participants with the exhibit, "Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America." (See below, Announcements, for the traveling exhibit schedule.)

Recipients of the HWR Distinguished Book Award and Lifetime Achievement Award will be honored at an awards banquet the evening of June 29. Featured speaker, Debra Campbell from Colby College, will engage banqueters in the intriguing topic "Whose Story is *The Nun's Story*." The banquet is preceded by a late afternoon HWR business meeting focused on the less intriguing, but no less important, topics of the financial

health and future plans of the conference. Further program information including a registration form is available on our Web site, www.CHWR.org.

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PUBLICATIONS

Carole Hill, *Women and Religion in Late Medieval Norwich* (Royal Historical Society Studies in History New Series, Boydell Press, September, 2010), draws on an extensive array of fifteenth century literature to identify the religious interests of Norwich women including the well known figures of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe as well as many others. Particularly evident from her study are ways continental European piety enriched female life in the busy international depot of Norwich.

Eileen Flanagan, "Establishment of the Poor Clares in the United States: Ecclesiastical Conflicts—Vocational Changes," *American Catholic Studies* (121:1 Spring 2010), pp. 51-68, traces the heroic efforts of the Poor Clares, led by Mother Maddalena Benvivoglio and her blood sister, Mother Constanza, to preserve a way of life following the Primitive Rule of St. Clare while establishing the congregation in the United States. Rejections by Archbishops John McCloskey, John Baptist Purcell, and James Frederic Wood in New York, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia in the early 1870s finally led to the nuns' acceptance for foundations in New Orleans and Cleveland 1877-78, and in a number of other dioceses from 1888 to 1916. Reasons for early rejections, as perceived by Mother Maddalena and adduced by the author, afford fascinating perspectives into U.S. church and society of the times.

M. Shawn Copeland, ed., *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009) brings together a valuable series of essays probing the meaning of being black and Catholic

in nineteenth and twentieth century U.S. Frequent allusion is made to women's experiences, particularly in Diane Batts Morrow's essay on ways the Oblate Sisters of Providence overcame obstacles as black women desirous of becoming vowed religious, and Diane L. Hayes' essay on ways Christian black women overcame challenges to the integrity of family life, baptism and catechizing of children, and personal faith.

Anne E. Patrick, SNJM, in her 2009 Madeleva Lecture, *Women, Conscience, and the Creative Process* (New York: Paulist Press, forthcoming), describes Mother Alfred Moes, OSF (a key figure in the founding of the Mayo Clinic) and Sister Madeleva Wolff, CSC (innovative educator of women) as instances of "eminent" or culture-changing creativity. Patrick is now completing *Conscience in Context: Vocation, Virtue, and History* for Continuum International. This work will probe the meaning and ethical implications of the symbol of vocation from the vantage of contemporary Catholic women, and discuss some twentieth-century conflicts between sisters and their ecclesiastical employers, the history of the National Assembly of Religious Women (NAWR/NARW), and tensions over women's vocations since the 1980s.

M. Christine Morkovsky, CDP, *Living in God's Providence, a History of the Sisters of Divine Providence of San Antonio, Texas, 1943-2000* (privately printed, ordering through www.XLibris.com, 2010), uses oral interviews of 288 sisters as well as archival sources to describe her congregation and its works as well as the reactions of its members to change during the crucial last decades of the twentieth century.

Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ, "Women and Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America," *American Catholic Studies* (cover article, forthcoming issue, 121:2 Fall 2010), provides a succinct overview of the exhibit by the same title, highlighting the historical significance of the lives and work of women religious in the U.S. 1727 to the present as exemplified through artifacts, accompanying narrative, and film included in the exhibit. For other articles, see Carole Shinnick, SSND, "Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America," *St. Anthony Messenger* (August 2009), pp. 18-22; and Suzy Ferren, "Traveling Exhibit Showcases Catholic Sisters Meeting Needs," *Health Progress* (September-October 2009), pp. 57-60.

BOOK REVIEWS

Maire Kealy, OP, *Dominican Education in Ireland*

1820-1930. Dublin, IE: Irish Academic Press, 2007. Pp. xix, 236.

Dominican Education in Ireland 1820-1930 is a fine analysis of how Dominican women religious shaped the development of Irish primary, secondary and post secondary education. The author draws on primary sources housed in the state archives of Ireland and England, university archives (Cambridge University, University College Dublin, Mary Immaculate College), diocesan archives, and the private archives of Dominican and other religious communities (Loreto, Vincentian, Sisters of Mercy), as well as on oral histories from former teachers and past pupils to construct a finely grained picture of the women and their schools.

The book's six chapters present a thoroughly-researched and analyzed study of the development of the Dominican community's educational efforts. It begins with an exceptional historiographical chapter that situates the study within current scholarship on Irish studies, women's studies, the history of education and the history of religious education. The author then traces the involvement of the Cabra community in primary, secondary and tertiary educational sectors, relaying their struggles with the state and ecclesiastical authorities and the ever-present challenges of providing adequate education for those community members charged with teaching and program development. The author details how in the course of the twentieth century, issues of class, ethnicity and gender led to the closure of schools and, in the case of the School for the Deaf, the fossilization of instruction. Further, the author explores how teacher education became a key contribution of the community and charts how the competing objectives for women's higher education led to collaboration across those religious divides that often characterize Irish history. Finally, the roles the Dominicans and their alumnae played in key political and social organizations are explored, especially the leadership the Dominican women gave to the Conference of Convent Secondary Schools and the leadership that their alumnae gave to the Irish state.

Dominican Education is a thoughtful study and a good read. It led me to reflect on the need for international comparative analysis: how does the experience of Irish Dominicans compare with those of Dominicans in other countries? with teachers in other religious orders? with teachers in single sex secular schools? I do hope that Kealy's admirable book will inspire histori-

ans to take up these challenges.

Elizabeth Smyth
University of Toronto

Kathleen Sprows Cummings, *New Women of the Old Faith: Gender and American Catholicism in the Progressive Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. Pp. xi, 278.

Kathleen Sprows Cummings, in *New Women of the Old Faith: Gender and American Catholicism in the Progressive Era*, examines the construction of Catholic womanhood at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the context of the emerging New Woman. The author, by considering the centrality of religion in the shaping of identity, refocuses attention upon a much-overlooked population in this period of women's history, namely Catholic women.

While this book features specific examples of Catholic women relating and reacting to the expansion of women's roles in the emerging modern America, Cummings' larger point is to illustrate how faith, specifically Catholicism, provided the support and rationale for Catholic laywomen and religious to engage in this new world while maintaining their "old Faith." The author does this by featuring the lives of Margaret Buchanan Sullivan, a Chicago-based writer, Sister Julia (Susan) McGroarty, SND, the American provincial superior of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and founder of Trinity College, Sister Assisium (Catherine) McEvoy, SSJ, Philadelphia educator, and Katherine Eleanor Conway, a Boston journalist. Cummings does not argue that they represented all Catholic women in the United States, but that their lives illustrate how Catholic women often identified themselves as Catholics first and made space within the Church as women. On the surface, these women appeared to possess the characteristics and qualities of the New Woman, but their Irish heritage and their Catholic faith (often intertwined), defended traditional gender roles in the face of American Protestantism. Cummings adeptly shows that Catholic women like those of her study were aware of the ideology of the New Woman; they, however, chose an alternative identity. Women like Katherine Conway and Margaret Sullivan appear to embrace elements of New Woman, but they turned to heroic Catholic women of the past to justify and model their lives in the present.

Cummings divides her study into four sections or chapters. The first chapter, "Chiefly among Women:

The Old Faith, the New Woman, and the Creation of a Usable Past," examines the manner in which Catholic thinkers, both female and male, merged traditional Roman Catholicism (the Old Faith) with the emerging modern American society. Cummings explores this process through the life and work of Margaret Buchanan Sullivan, who carved out a place in the American Catholic Church by advocating a true womanhood based in the Catholic faith set in opposition to the abhorred New Woman. Sullivan and others like her offered alternatives to the Protestant heroines from Catholic history, such as Elizabeth Seton. In doing so, they claimed equal (if not superior) space in American history. This chapter sets the background for the subsequent ones. Chapter Two, "Enlarging Our Lives: Higher Education, Americanism, and Trinity College for Catholic Women," examines the founding of Trinity College in Washington, DC at a time when women's higher education was equated with the New Woman. Through the efforts of Sister Julia McGroarty, Trinity College was established, not as a sister-school to its near neighbor, Catholic University, but an independent institution. Sister Julia and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur established the college amidst the Americanist crisis and fears over the secularizing consequences of higher education upon Catholic women. Despite these concerns, Sister Julia and Trinity College persevered.

Cummings continues the theme of the importance of Catholic education and the significant role of women in Chapter Three, "The Wageless Work of Paradise: Catholic Sisters, Professionalization, and the School Question." In this chapter, the author examines the crucial role women religious played in providing basic education of Catholic children within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for little to no remuneration. These "wageless" sisters, like Sister Assisium McEvoy in Philadelphia, enabled the Church to expand its educational system. The central Catholic school system in Philadelphia expanded at the same time as Progressive trends pushed for professionalism and standardization in education. Sisters Assisium played a crucial, if unsung, role in that process. (Cummings points out that there are no schools named Sister Assisium High School, nor any others named for women religious.) McEvoy and other women religious like her created a Catholic educational foundation for generations of children into the mid-twentieth century, but accepted their silent status in the process based upon their faith.

Cummings concludes her study by returning to the is-

sue of the New Woman and Catholic womanhood, but this time in the context of the woman suffrage movement and the emerging feminism. In Chapter Four, "The Morbid Consciousness of Womanhood: Catholicism, Antisuffrage, and the Limits of Sisterhood," the author examines the U.S. Catholic hostility and condemnation of the New Woman and the suffrage movement by focusing on the life and work Katherine Conway. Cummings brings new attention to the antisuffrage movement and asks why women's historians have overlooked the significance of Catholic women's participation in it. Traditionally historians have characterized the antisuffrage movement as a cause for and directed by elite women intent on holding onto status and power. Furthermore, women's historians have painted Catholic women's position as one directed solely by their priests. By examining Conway's views against suffrage, Cummings shows that laywomen viewed this issue in terms of a defense of the Catholic faith, rather than an issue of feminism. Irishness and the persistence of Irish views of gender roles colored the rejection of the New Woman and the emerging feminist movement, even when women like Conway felt the full brunt of sexism in their professional lives.

For scholars and students of Catholic and women's history, this volume is an essential read. Furthermore, Cummings' history would make an excellent addition to any course, not only on American women's and religious history, and would find a home in Progressive Era surveys. Cummings has provided a roadmap for future study of American Catholic women by effectively uniting the often-divided disciplines of women and religious history.

Mary Beth Fraser Connolly
Purdue University North Central

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Mary Cresp, RSJ, reports from Australia that two congregations based there have asked her to write their histories. Both are diocesan Josephite congregations now in the process of amalgamation: one based in the Western Australian Province and the other devoted to Josephite Aboriginal ministries. Her congregation is anticipating the canonization of its founder, Mary MacKillop, in Rome this Fall, an event that has also occasioned significant research by Cresp.

Elizabeth Makowski, recently named the Ingram Professor of History at Texas State University-San Marcos for 2010-2013, will be working during her three-year tenure in that position on a book to be titled *Justice by Proxy: English Cloistered Nuns and the Lawyers, 1293-1540*. The work concerns the efforts of English nuns to protect their rights and property through litigation at the dawn of the medieval legal profession. Makowski was the recipient of the HWR 2007 Distinguished Book Award for her "*A Pernicious Sort of Woman*": *Quasi Religious Women and Canon Lawyers in the Later Middle Ages*.

Sister Mary Helen Beirne, SSJ Ed.D., is working on the final drafts of the new history of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Philadelphia. Using analysis threaded with anecdote, it concentrates on the years 1944 through 1999 revealing the scope and depth of the Congregation's reshaping in spirituality, ministry, and government. It begins with a synopsis from the founding years in France in the 1650s through the WWI era in Philadelphia PA. The emphasis is not on the Congregation as an institution but on the sisters as individuals and as a community grappling in faith with enormous change. By the new millennium (January 2000) they had reclaimed their unique identity as Sisters of Saint Joseph: apostolic women religious embracing their mission of unity and reconciliation in a global society.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mary Daniel Turner, SNDdeN, died January 27, 2010. We extend our deepest sympathy to members of her congregation, family, and friends as they mourn her death. A distinguished leader of women religious in the United States and former superior general of the international Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Turner co-authored *The Transformation of American Catholic Sisters* and was an influential force for justice and church renewal before and after Vatican II.

If you are interested in editing a small-scale digital edition of a single document or a collection of documents, *Documentary Editing*, The Journal of the Association for Documentary Editing, wants to hear from you. The premier journal in the field of documentary and textual editing since its 1979 inception, *Documentary Editing* will move online with the 2011 issue and become an open-access digital publication. While retaining the familiar content of the print

journal, including peer-reviewed essays about editorial theory and practice, the 2011 change will make it the first academic journal to publish peer-reviewed editions. More information is available from the journal's Web site www.documentaryediting.org.

The new American Catholic Historical Association Web site came online in February, www.achahistory.org. Members are invited to visit the site to renew membership, handle other member-related functions, and to learn what is new in the world of Catholic studies.

Current and immediately forthcoming venues for the traveling exhibit, *Women & Spirit: Catholic Women in America*, are the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage in Cleveland, Ohio May 9-August 28, 2010; the Statue of Liberty National Monument/Ellis Island Immigration Museum, Liberty Island, New York, September 24-January 22, 2011; and the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium (co-hosted by Clarke College) in Dubuque, Iowa February 28-May

22, 2011. For remaining venues during the exhibit's touring life through 2012 consult its Web site www.womenandspirit.org.

Subscription Information

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

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Karen M. Kennelly, Editor
HWR News and Notes
1880 Randolph Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105

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

2401 Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ, Editor
KKennelly33@hotmail.com

History of Women Religious
News and Notes

1880 Randolph Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105

Newsletter Deadline

Please have copy for the **October 2010 issue** to the Editor by **September 1, 2010**. KKennelly33@hotmail.com.

The HWR Newsletter

Published by the
Conference on History of Women Religious
1880 Randolph Avenue St. Paul, MN 55105

ISSN: 1054-545X

Subscription: \$10.00/1 year

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