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# HISTORY OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS

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## NEWS AND NOTES

### CONFERENCE

A flyer with this issue publicizes the Conference on the History of Women Religious now set for June 25 to 28, 1989, at one of the country's distinguished colleges for women, the College of St. Catherine. As noted in the flyer, the timeliness and importance of this gathering for all those interested in discovering and disseminating the story of women religious can scarcely be exaggerated. We invite you to duplicate the flyer and send it to interested friends, and to post it wherever you have access to likely places, such as college or university history departments. Conference notices will be placed in the usual professional journals, but we ask those of you like Mary Denis Maher, CSA, secretary-treasurer of Women Historians of Greater Cleveland, to get a notice into appropriate local publications.

### NEWS

Much interest continues to be expressed in the areas of individual congregational histories and in biographies, both of outstanding leaders and of the ordinary nun-in-the-street. The coming Conference should generate information responsive to recent HWR subscribers' questions concerning histories of individual congregations, bibliographic studies, video productions on women religious, and collections of published histories. Meanwhile, writing to specific congregations is the most satisfactory route to accurate current information and acquisition of published histories.

Dunstan Klewicki, OSF, archivist for the Sylvania, Ohio, Franciscans, is presently completing a history of that congregation whose founding in 1916 typifies the vigorous nineteenth and early twentieth century movement among women religious to minister to immigrant Catholics.

Maureen Fitzgerald is researching a dissertation at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on Catholic women religious' work with poor immigrant women in nineteenth century New York City. Her main emphasis will be on the

work of the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd from 1846-1900.

Janice Farnham, RJM, anticipates a December, 1988, defense of her dissertation at The Catholic University of America, "Alternative Childhood: Girls' Providences in Nineteenth-Century Lyons (1800-1850)." This ground-breaking study raises important questions about the replication of work in the United States which congregations were directing in Europe, in this case, work-schools or convent-factories for girls. Farnham's findings indicate that the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Daughters of Charity were leaders in this type of work in France.

Ephrem Hollerman, OSB, as a doctoral candidate in historical theology at Marquette University, has in process a dissertation entitled "The Reshaping of a Tradition: American Benedictine Women, 1852-1881." Her methodology involves a focus on the forty women who came from Bavaria to the United States in 1852 and formed the first community of Benedictine women in North America between the years 1852 and 1855 in St. Joseph Convent, St. Mary's, Pennsylvania. Her effort to illuminate the process of transplanting Benedictine life through tracing the personal and communal roles of the "invisible" women founders of the United States tradition should yield important new insights into what some have called the Americanization process.

The feminist methodology being used by Hollerman, that of looking beyond the few conspicuous leaders to the lives of ordinary women, is evident in the work of several other HWR subscribers. Mary Lenore Martin, SC, is in the process of researching the backgrounds of the women who were among the early entrants into the congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. Daniel P. O'Neill, on the faculty of St. Mary's College, Winona, Minnesota, is at work on a collective biography of women religious in the archdiocese of St. Paul, 1851-1920. Patricia Wittberg, SC, a sociologist on the Fordham University faculty, is working on some sociological explorations of Karl Mannheim's "The Problem of Generations" as it applies to religious life, particularly with regard to the adherence (or lack of it) to feminist ideas among the various generations of women religious today.

She has an article forthcoming in *Review for Religious*, and another submitted to *Women's Studies International Forum*. Kathleen Cooney, OSU, on the faculty of Ursuline College, Cleveland, did her dissertation at Case Western Reserve, where she completed her doctorate in January, 1988, on "Reasons for Staying in a Religious Congregation," a qualitative study on religious commitment from the viewpoint of women who joined religious congregations between 1945 and 1975.

Women from 32 United States Benedictine priories renewed their ties with their European counterparts by an historic first in the spring months of 1988: they planned and carried out a Pilgrimage Study Tour to 20 European Benedictine monasteries.

Carol Berg, OSB, associate professor of history at St. Benedict's—another of Minnesota's fine colleges for women—is preparing to research Benedictine women at Red Lake Indian reservation 1888-1950, as a companion study to her dissertation on "Benedictines at White Earth, 1878-1945."

Regina Siegfried, ASC, is in the beginning stages of research into that little-studied subject of the development of spirituality among women religious in this country; the particular focus of her study is the Ruma, Illinois province of her congregation, Adorers of the Blood of Christ.

Elizabeth Kolmer, ASC, is currently researching Eldress Anna White of the Shaker Community at Mount Lebanon, New York (died 1910) and projects a book-length biography of White.

#### NOTES ON RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Sisters of Mercy foundress, Catherine McAuley, is the subject of a recently published biography by Isabella Keiss, RSM, and Joanne Regan, RSM: *Tender Courage: A Reflection on the Life and Spirit of Catherine McAuley*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1988.

Mother Austin Carroll, another extraordinary Mercy nun, who founded black schools in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana in the 1870's and financed them by her writings—her 40 published books not only brought in money but were also a power for social reform—, has found a worthy biographer in M. Hermenia Muldrey, RSM, *Abounding in Mercy, Mother Austin Carroll*, Habersham Press, 1988. Prepublication purchase prices of

\$24.50 hardcover, \$9.00 softcover (both prices are inclusive of postage) are available through 1988 from Habersham, Whitney Building 1020, 653 Gravier St., New Orleans, LA 70130, or from the author at P.O. Box 19024, New Orleans, LA 70179.

The Mercy congregations are producing some fine history these days. Another recent volume which has come to our attention is Kathleen O'Brien, RSM, *Journeys: A Pre-Amalgamation History of the Sisters of Mercy, Omaha Province*, procurable for \$10.00 from Deb Newcomer, Sisters of Mercy Provincialate, 1801 S. 72nd, Omaha, NE 68124.

A biography published a few years back, Mary Tonra, MSBT, *Led by the Spirit* (Gardner Press, New York, 1984) is mentioned here because of the uniqueness of its subject: Mother Mary Boniface Keasey, co-foundress along with Father Thomas A. Judge, CM, of the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity. This congregation and the men's congregation, Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity, are the first in the twentieth century to have a Common Rule of Life, the development of which is described in the Tonra biography of Keasey.

Other recently published biographies affording glimpses into the unique spirituality of the women religious of the United States are Camilla Kennedy, MM, *To the Uttermost Parts of the Earth: the Spirit and Charism of Mary Joseph Rogers*, Maryknoll, 1987; and Caritas McCarthy, SHCJ, *The Spirituality of Cornelia Connelly: In God, For God, With God*, Edwin Mellen Press, 1986.

Mary Urban Archer, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Stella Niagara, New York, has completed a history of the Holy Name Province of that congregation, *From the Kreppel to the Banks of the Niagara—Once a Small Franciscan Seed Planted in the Netherlands*.

Barbara Misner, SCSC, now has her dissertation in print: *Highly Respectable Ladies: Catholic Women Religious in America, 1790-1850*, Garland Publishing, 1988, includes detailed accounts of the first eight permanent communities of women religious within the original boundaries of the United States.

John Shideler and Hal K. Rothman have completed *Pioneering Spirit*, the story of the Sisters of Providence in Alaska. It is available through Providence Hospital, 3200 Providence Drive, P.O. Box 6614, Anchorage, AK 99502-0604.

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## ARCHIVES, ORAL HISTORY

Constance Fitzgerald, OCD, reports that the Carmelite monastery of Baltimore, home of the first women's congregation founded in the original United States, is the recipient of an NHPRC grant of \$37,000 "to preserve the Order's permanently valuable records dating from 1642." Constance, as Project director, will be assisted by Dolores Liptak as director of archives for the year of the grant. A committee has been established to begin research on the history of Carmel in the United States; preparations are in progress for a Symposium on Carmelite history and spirituality, to be held August 12-18, 1990, marking the bicentennial of Carmel, and of women religious, in the United States.

Ann Thomasine Sampson, CSJ, is following up her institutional history, *Care with Prayer: A History of St. Mary's Hospital and Rehabilitation Center*, 1987 (available from the author, 1880 Randolph Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105), with an archival organization project at the hospital. She reports a dearth of institutional histories in this field, a sad fact which indicates a corresponding lack of archival organization.

M. Lucy McDonald, RSM, archives consultant for the Mercy Province of Detroit, is seeking information three women: Mary Carmelita Manning, RSM, active in Iowa, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, and elsewhere (nuns really got around in those early immigrant days!); M.M. Alphonsus Thilemann, active in Brooklyn, New York, Worcester, Massachusetts, and Big Rapids, Michigan; and on M. Thecla O'Brien, also of Big Rapids. Send any information to her at 29000 Eleven Mile, Farmington Hills, Michigan, 48018.

Speaking of getting around, the travels and activities of one of our subscribers, Virginia Therese Johnson, MM, is as clear an argument as I have seen for getting oral history projects organized and for chronicling the stories of United States women religious. Possessed of a baccalaureate in American History, a masters in Hawaiian History, and a doctorate in Asian History, Johnson's experience includes teaching at all levels from elementary through graduate (18 years at that level) for a total of 46 years in New York City, Hawaii, Hong Kong, and Nicaragua. She was Dean of the Asian Center at St. John's University, New York, when she ended her teaching career, and now resides at Maryknoll. Her interest in history continues unabated!

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## CURRICULUM, RESEARCH

Marjorie Bingham, one of the new subscribers to HWR News, writes from her experience with curriculum development that "so little of the history of women religious has hit the textbooks and the schools; there is an important task to be done." Bingham is co-author with Susan Hill Gross of some excellent curricular materials on Women in World Area Studies, including *Women in Latin America: From Pre-Columbian Times to the 20th Century*, and *WLA: The 20th Century*, Glenhurst Publications, 1985. These volumes and others in the series are meant to enhance regular social studies units and are valuable resources for college as well as secondary school teachers. Information available from Bingham at Central Community Center, 6300 Walker St., St. Louis Park, MN 55416.

Kitty Sklar will be co-directing an 8-week NEH-funded seminar next summer on the teaching of women's history. The seminar is intended for college faculty who teach women's history regularly rather than for research university faculty. For further information contact Sklar at SUNY Binghamton where she is now located.

The Cushwa Center, University of Notre Dame, is inaugurating a research fellowship program designed to provide a collegial environment for individuals engaged in research in the area of American religion, especially as it relates to the study of American Catholicism. The deadline for applications for the 1989-90 academic year is January, 1989. For further information contact Jay Dolan, 614 Hesburgh Library, University of ND, Notre Dame, IN 46556.

## CONFERENCES

Jeffrey M. Burns, Chancery Archives of the archdiocese of San Francisco, notes that the archives hosts a local history conference each spring that usually included one or more papers on Women Religious. Persons doing research in the San Francisco Bay area who would like to present a paper

## NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Please have copy for the February issue to the editor by January 1.

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