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# HISTORY OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS

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Volume 8, Number 2 June 1995

## CONFERENCE '95

The program for the 1995 conference, "Beyond Convent Walls: Women Religious in Historical Context," was sent to all newsletter subscribers in April. Registration information for the meeting, which is due to convene June 18-21 at Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee, is contained in the program booklet.

Sixty-eight papers and several plenary sessions cover a broad scope of interests pertaining to the history of women religious from medieval times to the present. Gerda Lerner will speak at the evening plenary June 18 on the subject, "Feminist Criticism and Religious Revisioning."

The last day's plenary will include a brief business meeting. A proposal submitted by HWR member, Regina Siegfried, ASC, will be considered at that time:

Proposal for Reorganization of HWR. The Ad hoc Conference Committee on the History of Women Religious was organized in 1987, a result of a colloquium held at the Cushwa Center, Notre Dame, October 2, 1987, with 32 invited participants. Since then HWR has hosted two conferences, the first June 25-28, 1989, at The College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minnesota. The second conference met at Marymount College in Tarrytown, New York from June 28-July 1, 1992. The organization has a newsletter, *History of Women Religious News and Notes*, with a circulation of 536, all of whom are considered to be members of the conference.

Now is a good time for HWR to expand and grow; it has proven that it is a viable organization.

## NEWS AND NOTES

I therefore propose that HWR formalize its structures with a president, vice president, executive secretary and treasurer. I recommend that a committee be formed to formulate by-laws, to establish new membership fees, to review the role, frequency of publication and editorial policies for the newsletter and to provide for standing committees:

Anyone having opinions regarding this proposal who cannot be at the Milwaukee conference is encouraged to write or call Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ, newsletter editor, at her Los Angeles address; telephone (310) 471-9500 office; -9506 home.

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

JULIE BILLIART: *Woman of Courage*, by Roseanne Murphy, SNDdeN, is a biography of the foundress (1751-1816) of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Published by Paulist Press, 1995.

Marygrace Peters, OP, "Begaine Women: Medieval Spirituality, Modern Implications," *Review For Religious*, March-April, 1995, 224-236, examines major aspects of Begaine spirituality with an eye to the meaning for today.

Clark Colahan's *THE VISIONS OF SOR MARIA DE AGREDA: WRITING, KNOWLEDGE, AND POWER* (University of Arizona Press, 1994) is an analysis of the writings of this seventeenth century Spanish Carmelite nun and mystic.

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Marianne Kappes' *TRACK OF THE MYSTIC: THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESSICA POWERS* (Sheed and Ward, 1994) focuses on the life and work of a twentieth century American Carmelite mystic and poet.

*THE STORY OF ROSARY SHRINE, 1919-1994: Gleanings From The Chronicles of The Monastery of Our Lady of The Rosary*, by Maria Agnes, OP, is a 57-page booklet describing the origin and growth of a Dominican monastic contemplative community, one among the North American foundations tracing their common roots to thirteenth century France.

*Xavier Review* has two publications of interest: *BLACKROBE'S LOVE LETTERS, 1995*, by Leo Luke Marcello, is a book of poetry based on the correspondence of Blessed Katharine Drexel. *IO, CATHERINE*, which came out in 1986, by Retta M. Taney, is a play based on the life of Catherine of Siena. Both may be ordered from Robert Skinner, Xavier University, New Orleans, LA 70125.

Mary Rhodes Buckler, Mary Ann Cunningham and other members of the Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross, chronicle the experiences of one of the earliest communities of women in the U.S. in *NAMING OUR TRUTH* (Nerinx, KY: Chardon Press, 1944). A compilation of memoirs, poetry, history and story, the emphasis is on the last 70 years of this 183-year-old group.

Kathryn Lawlor, BVM, has edited a compilation of articles on *TERENCE J. DONAGHOE, CO-FOUNDER OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY, B.V.M.* to honor the 200th anniversary of his birth. The book brings better balance to past accounts which developed Mother Mary Clarke's founding role to the exclusion of Donaghoe's. Available from the B.V.M. Center, 1100 Carmel Drive, Dubuque, Iowa 52001.

Leslie O'Brien, *MARY MacKILLOP UNVEILED* (Harper-Collins, 1994) is a biography occasioned by the beatification of this pioneer Australian educator. See *HWR News and Notes* June, 1994, on Gardiner's biography.

The Ursulines of Brown County, St. Martin, Ohio, are

reprinting their foundation story, *THE CROSS IN THE WILDERNESS*, by Monica Maginnis, OSU. Originally published in 1930, it will have as a companion volume a biography of Monica Maginnis soon to be published by Joan Brosnan, OSU. See *HWR News and Notes* June, 1993. Both books will be available from Ursuline Publications, c/o Raphael Grueter, OSU, 20860 Rte 261 North, St. Martin, OH 45118.

Christopher Kauffman's *MINISTRY AND MEANING: A Religious History of Catholic Health Care in the United States* (Crossroad, 1995), is the first comprehensive history of the subject. Three main sections, augmented by a prologue reflecting on European background, provide an analysis of what Kauffman aptly characterizes as the formative period for Catholic health care from 1800-1890; the era of modernization and the persistence of tradition, 1890-1950; and the contemporary period of social and religious change, 1950 to 1985. Women religious dominate the action in each era.

Charles W. Sanford, *A HISTORY OF HEALING, A FUTURE OF CARE. Saint Mary of Nazareth Hospital Center: Celebrating a Century of Catholic Hospitality* (Flagstaff, AZ: Heritage Press, 1994), assesses the work on one community, the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, who provided care for Polish Catholics in Chicago in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Margaret M. Press, *SUNRISE TO SUNRISE: THE HISTORY OF ST. MARGARET'S HOSPITAL DARLINGHURST 1894-1994* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1994), takes us into the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph in South Australia.

Other recent Australian publications are: Margaret Zucker, *FROM PATRONS TO PARTNERS: A HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE KIMBERLEY 1884-1994* (Freemantle: University of Notre Dame Australia Press, 1994); and M. Hutchinson, E. Champion, eds., *LONG PATIENT STRUGGLE: STUDIES IN THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIANITY* (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994). The ten essays

comprising the latter volume were initially presented as papers at a national conference, "Studying Australian Christianity," at Robert Menzies College, Macquarie University, July, 1993.

Henriette Peters, *MARY WARD: A WORLD IN CONTEMPLATION*, (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1994) is a scholarly biography of the foundress of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto Sisters), translated from the original German by Helen Butterworth. Regina Cameron, IBVM, is working on a masters thesis in theology, at the Sydney College of Divinity, tentatively entitled "An analysis of Mary Ward (1585-1645) as a woman of the Reformation Period."

On a lighter tone, Gerelyn Hollingsworth writes that her *MURDER AT ST. ADELAIDE'S*, a Frances Finn mystery involving a convent and its history, is just off the press, St. Martin's Press, 1995. Readers may want to sample the mystery series authored by Carol Ann O'Marie, CSJ, whose plots, settings, and characters, including Sister Mary Helen, come straight out of her religious congregation. Doubleday-Dell publishes the paperback version of her books including *NOVENA FOR MURDER*, *ADVENT OF DYING*, *MISSING MADONNA*, *MURDER IN ORDINARY TIME*, and *MURDER MAKES A PILGRIM*. Her latest, *DEATH GOES ON RETREAT*, is due in June.

### WORK IN PROGRESS

Several congregations have persons researching and writing biographical essays on deceased members, typically nuns whose roles were not high enough profile (e.g., foundresses) to have attracted a biographer in past years. Examples which have been forwarded recently to *News and Notes* are: Ann Thomasine Sampson, CSJ, who has finished nine essays on pioneer Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Paul province, and is working on seven more. Margery Frisbee, an alumna of Mundelein College, contributed a two-part article on Mary Justicia Coffey, "The nun who stopped traffic . . . and built a skyscraper college," to Chicago's Catholic newspaper, *The New World*, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Mary Olga McKenna, SC, is working on the contemporary history of her congregation. Her work, "Women Witnessing to Love: Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax, 1950-1980," will be an update of Sr. Maura Power's history, published by Ryerson Press, Toronto, in 1956. McKenna's paper, "Paradigm Shifts in a Women's Religious Institute: the Sisters of Charity, Halifax, 1950-1979," delivered at the annual conference of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Calgary, Alberta, June 1994, is to be published in the CCHA's 1994-1995 issue of *Historical Studies*.

Elizabeth Smyth is contributing to a section of a forthcoming book on Canadian women as historian scholars and hopes to include several members of religious orders.

Seamus Enright, CSsR, affiliated with St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, is working on a doctoral dissertation, "The theological and spiritual ethos of Irish women's religious communities, 1771-1900." He is also contributing a chapter to a new history of the Archdiocese of Dublin, on women religious in nineteenth-century Dublin.

Sally Witt, CSJ, and Chris Magoc of the Alleghany Kislei Valley Historical Society have planned an oral history project to research the religious, ethnic and industrial history of Tarentun, Pennsylvania, a town on the Alleghany River near Pittsburgh. Titled "Voices of Faith, Years of Change," the project is co-sponsored by the historical society and a local parish.

### BOOK REVIEW

*PRICELESS SPIRIT: A History of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, 1841-1893*, by Sister M. Georgia Costin, CSC (University of Notre Dame Press, South Bend, Indiana: 1994), 268 pp.

In *Priceless Spirit*, Sister M. Georgia Costin chronicles the nineteenth-century history of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, with a special focus on the complex evolution of the Congregation from its founding in 1841 and arrival in Indiana in 1843, to its formal separation from the mother house in France in 1969.

Basil Anthony Moreau founded the community in Le Mans, France as the Marianite Sisters of the Holy Cross and united it with the Congregation of priests and brothers which he had already established.

This unique structure of priests, brothers, and sisters, separate branches, yet governed by a common founder with shared heritage and shared financial resources, would last until 1857 when the priests and brothers received papal approval as a congregation separate from the women. Although this approval excluded the women's section of the Congregation, at the same time Rome organized the Sisters of the Holy Cross as an autonomous Congregation with the motherhouse continuing at Le Mans.

Costin's narrative traces these structural shifts, and in so doing contrasts the differences between the Indiana mission and its growing American identity with the missions in Canada and Louisiana which continued to feel a strong pull towards France. But the dominant emphasis in Costin's history is her exploration of the relationship between Edward Sorin, CSC and the Sisters, and the impact of this connection on the organization of the Congregation. Provincial of the Holy Cross mission in Indiana and President of the newly founded college at Notre Dame du Lac until the mid-1860's, Sorin also served as Superior of the Indiana missions of the sisters; in 1869 he was appointed ecclesiastical superior of the community, a position he held until his death in 1893.

Although Priceless Spirit describes the ministry of the sisters in the early foundations at Notre Dame, in Bertrand, Michigan, in Pokagon, Michigan, and the founding of St. Mary's in 1855, it does so by stressing Sorin's role as spiritual leader of the community, and in effect presents a revisionist history of the first twenty-five years of the Congregation. This reconstruction portrays Sorin as a priest of deep faith who cared deeply for the welfare of the sisters; it contrasts sharply with earlier twentieth-century accounts that present him as authoritarian, secular and in some cases guilty of insubordination to Father Moreau. Through careful detective work, utilizing documents not previously consulted, Costin contests this view and presents a portrait of a man not without his faults, but one whose authority and leadership the early sisters accepted.

Issues of authority complicated the community's relationship with Sorin, Sorin's with Moreau, and the French speaking houses with the English-speaking mid-western ones. One of the strengths of Costin's work is her careful, detailed analysis of the growing cultural disparity between the Le Mans motherhouse and Indiana, and, closer to home, between Louisiana and Indiana. Although issues arising from distance contributed to the tension, increasingly different understandings of the Congregation's direction exacerbated the stress between the French and English speaking provinces. In 1869, this alienation led to Indiana's separation from the motherhouse and recognition of the Sisters of the Holy Cross as a distinct order with its motherhouse established at St. Mary's, Notre Dame.

In his Preface to the Rule of 1872, Father Sorin reminded the Sisters of their "priceless spirit of faith." In spite of the confusion sometimes occasioned by the authority questions of the early years, their "priceless spirit" energized the Sisters and enabled them to create their own future.

Mary Hayes, SND  
Trinity College  
Washington, D.C.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Saint Xavier University and the Sisters of Mercy have issued a call for papers and artistic presentations in connection with a conference, "Exploring the Vistas and Vision of Catherine McAuley," to be held at Saint Xavier University in Chicago November 10-11, 1995. The deadline for papers or presentations is July 15, 1995. For more information, call Dr. Avis Clendenen at (312) 298-3441; FAX (312) 779-9061; or write her at the University, 3700 West 103rd St., Chicago, IL 60655.

A conference on "The French School of Spirituality," the first of its kind to be held in the U.S., will convene August 18-24, at the Simpsonwood Conference and Retreat Center in Norcross, Georgia. At least forty congregations in this country claim some ties to the French school. For more information, call Agnes

Community's

Cunningham, SSCM, telephone, (708) 879-1296; or write to her at 717 No. Batavia Avenue, Batavia, IL 60510. Cunningham's translation of Raymond Deville's book on the FRENCH SCHOOL OF SPIRITUALITY was published recently by Duquesne University Press.

"Bridging Centuries, Bridging Cultures," a conference sponsored by the Elizabeth Seton Federation, will convene at four sites in 1996-1997. Scheduled places and dates are: Convent Station, New Jersey, October 11-14, 1996; Nazareth, Kentucky, November 7-10, 1996; Albuquerque, New Mexico, April 10-13, 1997; and Halifax, Nova Scotia, August 1-4, 1997. For more information, call Regina Bechtle, SC, (718) 549-9200; FAX (718) 884-3013; or write her at 6301 Riverdale Avenue, Bronx, New York 10471.

*Vox Benedictina*, a journal of feminine and monastic spirituality, is concluding ten years of publication with a 600-page compilation of many of its finest articles. Entitled ON PILGRIMAGE, it is available for \$31.00 (\$25 plus shipping, U.S. dollars) from Peregrina Publications. Judith Sutera, OSB, and Dr. Deborah Vess, who collaborated with Dr. Margot King in the *Vox Benedictina* work, will be editors of a new publication, *Magistra*, intended to carry articles primarily on feminine spirituality in history, with an emphasis on the Christian and monastic. Subscriptions to VB will carry over to the new journal; first-time subscriptions, or manuscripts being submitted for publication, should be sent to Dr. Vess at DeKalb College, 2101 Womack Road, Dunwoody, Georgia, 30338. The VB anthology may be ordered from Peregrina Publishing Co., 17 Woodside Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6P 1L6.

The Gannon Center for Women and Leadership, named for Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, president of Mundelein College 1957-1975, has received a Kemper grant for \$125,000 for technology in its archives.

### PERSONALS

HWR member Martha Mary McGaw, CSJ, died of cancer on May 3, 1995, in St. Louis. Members who attended the first conference in 1989 may recall the eager curiosity and intelligence she brought the subject of the

history of women religious. Her account of that conference, published in the Oklahoma Sooner where she served as a reporter for some years, is a valuable part of HWR archives. Our sympathies go to her family and religious congregation, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Louis province.

A \$100,000 fund is being created to honor the memory of renowned church historian, Monsignor John Tracy Ellis, who died in 1992. He touched the lives of numerous religious and offered guidance to many whose dissertations at The Catholic University of America related to the history of women religious. Income from the fund will constitute the John Tracy Ellis Memorial Award and will be administered by the American Catholic Historical Association. It is intended to assist the research of a graduate student working on some aspect of Catholic history. Persons interested in contributing to the Fund may send checks to: John Tracy Ellis Memorial Fund, ACHA, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. 20064.

### NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Please have copy for the October issue to the editor by September 1, 1995.

### THE HWR NEWSLETTER

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