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# History Of Women Religious

## News and Notes

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### CONFERENCE '98

Florence Deacon, OSF, program chair for the next HWR Conference scheduled for Loyola University Chicago, June 21-24, reminds us that it's time to finalize panels for the Conference. While complete interdisciplinary panels are encouraged, individual papers will also be considered. Remember that history is an essential perspective with which to view our past—to date, proposals from social sciences other than history have dominated. The Conference theme, "Through Multiple Lenses: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the History of Women Religious," invites papers dealing with the same topic from different disciplines or perspectives, or papers incorporating the theories or methods of more than one discipline.

Please submit five copies of your proposal (including paper or panel title, one-page abstract of each paper, and a one-page vita for each participant including current address, e-mail, and phone number; and a stamped self addressed postcard which will be returned to you on receipt of your packet) by **November 15, 1997** to Florence Deacon, OSF, Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, WI 53217.

Program and registration information may be obtained from Ann M. Harrington, BVM at Loyola University Chicago, Gannon Center for Women and Leadership, 6525 N. Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60626 (phone 773-508-8430).

Conference business will be highlighted in the next issue of *News and Notes*, including changes in Conference structure being recommended by the committee which met between conferences to review this matter. Selection of an archival depository for HWR records and documents will also be on the

agenda. Criteria for archive selection are an existing collection strong in related fields, accessibility, physical capacity to house the HWR collection, and standard policies governing access. Formal expressions of interest in housing the HWR archives may be sent to *News and Notes* editor, Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ, at the newsletter address. To date, interest has been expressed by the Marquette University archives and by the Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, Center for Women and Leadership Archives at Loyola Chicago.

### PUBLICATIONS, TALKS

Paschala Noonan, OP, *Signadou: A History of the Kentucky Dominican Sisters* (Charles Roth Publishers, 1997), traces the history of the oldest foundation of Dominican sisters in the U.S. (1822—), pioneers on a frontier with its western edge in Kentucky. To order contact Eleanor Tierney, OP, 1900 Bashford Manor Ln., A-17, Louisville, KY 40218.

An earlier dissertation by Mary Patricia Green, OP, *Third Order Dominican Sisters - Kentucky* (1978) has been reprinted by Charles Roth Publishers (1997). It focuses on the life and constitutions of the Kentucky Dominicans. To order contact Judy Morris, OP, 2645 Bardstown Rd, St. Catharine, KY 4006. Telephone or FAX inquiries regarding this and the Noonan publication may be directed to Morris at (606) 336-9303, and FAX (606) 336-9306.

Jeryldene M. Wood, *Women, Art, and Spirituality: The Poor Clares of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, 1996), uses perspectives drawn from sociology and the history of spirituality to critique the art and architecture found in early Italian Clarissan convents.

Patricia Ranft, Women and the Religious Life in Premodern Europe (St. Martin's Press, 1996), offers a brief survey, intentionally analogous to that provided a century past by Lina Eckenstein (Women Under Monasticism, 500-1500, Cambridge University Press, 1896). The volume extends the survey to 1700, but falls very much short of the Eckenstein volume in substance. For a helpful review see Jo Ann Kay McNamara, The Catholic Historical Review (April, 1997), pp.298f.

Natalie Zemon Davis, Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives (Harvard University Press, 1995), has as a pervasive motif the powerlessness of females in a male-dominated Europe, a thesis that must be questioned in the case of the French Ursuline nun, Marie de l'Incarnation, whose power as head of a religious community dealing with colonial officials was remarkable in its day. This flaw does not detract, however, from Davis' brilliance in developing a triadic history (the other women studied are biologist Marie Sibyll Merian and Jewish Germanic mother and dealer in precious stones, Glikl Bas Judah Leib) that offers unusual insights into gendered acculturation in early modern Europe.

Joanna Chan, MM, has had an English version of her 1985 drama, Before the Dawn-Wind Rises, included in An Oxford Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Drama (Oxford Press, Hong Kong, 1997).

A Call to Care, a 57-minute companion video documentary to the publication with the same title (see News and Notes February, 1997) focuses on a selected number of the over 150 sisters featured in the print version, using historical photos, diaries, letters, and eye witness accounts of the women's activities in developing the Catholic healthcare system in the U.S.

JoAnn Kay McNamara participated in a symposium at Duke University on Mainstreaming Catholic History. Her interventions emphasized the importance of mainstreaming nuns (and women in general) into Catholic history.



## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Kathleen M. Joyce, Professor, Department of Religion, Duke University, is working on a social history of Catholic hospitals in the U.S. Collections containing administrative and financial documents, as well as information on the medical staffing of Catholic hospitals between 1840 and 1940 are of particular interest. Joyce can be contacted at Duke, Box 90964, Durham, NC 27708; or by phone (919) 660-3513, or e-mail kmjoyce@aopub.dul6.edu.

Preparatory work continues for a nine-volume documentary series on U.S. Catholic history under the general editorship of Christopher Kauffman. Publication dates with Orbis Press are paced out over the coming three years. If your research has uncovered primary documents—e.g. diaries, letters, memoirs—by women religious resident in the U.S. from colonial times to the present, please forward information on such documentation to Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ, at the newsletter address, or contact her at (310) 954-4011; or e-mail kkennelly.msmc.la.edu.

Gloria Ricci Lothrop, holder of the W. P. Whitset Chair of California History at California State University, Northridge, is preparing a directory to archival collections pertaining to notable Southern California women. Discussion is underway with the Society of California Archivists and Mellen Publications, an international publisher of library reference materials, regarding publication. The purpose of the guide is to lead researchers to the archives of women whose achievements have been notable but whose contributions have often been unrepresented. The personal papers of religious such as Magdalen Coughlin, CSJ (1930-1994) will be referenced in the guide.

## ELECTRONIC NEWS

Benedictine Distance Learning initiatives begun in 1994 is offering two new courses, on the Rule of St. Benedict, and on Art and Monasticism; other courses include Early Monastic Sources; American Benedictine History; and History of American Benedictine Women. For information, suggestions, registrations, write Hugh Feiss, OSB, Registrar,

their  
Benedictine Consortium for Distance Education, Ascension Priory, 540 East-100 South, Jerome, IN 83338. Many monastic communities are making use of the Internet; the primary clearinghouse for Benedictines is the homepage administered by Brother Richard Oliver, OSB, of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN 56321. One of the outcomes of a recent gathering of abbots and prioresses at St. Meinrad's in Indiana on the subject of "Monasticism in an Age of Technology: The Challenge to Shape or Be Shaped" was a philosophy statement and proposal on the order's future use of technology. HWR member, Judith Sutura, OSB, is another source of further information on this subject. She can be reached at 801 S. 8<sup>th</sup> St., Atchison, KS 66002 (we regret we don't have a current e-mail address!)

You can now email the Baltimore Carmelite monastery at [carmelit@erols.com](mailto:carmelit@erols.com)—and while you're online, you may want to check out the Carmelite web page currently being developed at <http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/1561>.

The National Women's History Project has established a listserv for persons planning programs around the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organized women's rights movement begun by a small group of women in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. To subscribe to the listserv: send an e-mail message to [listserv@sonoma.edu](mailto:listserv@sonoma.edu); leave the subject line blank; the message should read: subscribe legacy98 firstname lastname (substituting your own first and last names). To send a message to everyone using the listserv, the address is: [legacy98@sonoma.edu](mailto:legacy98@sonoma.edu).

The Schlesinger Library on the History of Women Religious places on the Radcliffe web site information on collections, services, events, grants, and programs. To tap into this source, use: <http://www.radcliffe.edu/schles>.

Flo Deacon, OSF and Regina Siegfried, ASC have begun Sistory, an e-mail listed devoted to scholarly discussion about religious women. Sistory is a fully moderated e-mail list dedicated to scholarly discussion on the topic of religious life as lived in community by vowed Catholic women. Sistory seeks to create a community of scholars who will help to integrate the story of women religious into the mainstream of academic history--hence the name "Sistory" for the list.

If you're a member of HWR, you'd probably find this list to your liking. It's relatively unbusy, so you won't be inundated with a flood of messages, but the messages you would receive are substantive and to the topic.

Regina is doing most of the moderating at this point, so if you want to add your name to the list, e-mail her, and she'll add your name to the list and forward the welcoming message to you. Her address is: [ReginaSiegfried@Juno.com](mailto:ReginaSiegfried@Juno.com). If you have any questions before joining, she'll be happy to answer them.

## NOTICES

Radcliffe College announces programs of honorary visiting appointments, research support grants, and dissertation grants at its Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. These programs are intended for visiting faculty from other colleges and universities, independent scholars, and graduate students writing Ph.D. dissertations, who are actively conducting research that requires or will benefit from access to the holdings of the Library. Dissertation grants can only be awarded to U.S. citizens. For complete information, write Grants Administrator, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, 10 Garden St., Cambridge, MA 02138.

The Organization of American Historians announces the Lerner-Scott Prize for the best doctoral dissertations in U.S. women's history. The dissertation must be completed during the period July 1, 1996 through June 30, 1997 to be eligible for the 1998 Lerner-Scott Prize. One copy of each entry (letter of support from a faculty member at the degree-granting university, along with an abstract, table of contents, and sample chapter from the dissertation) must be **received** by each member of the prize committee by **November 1, 1997**. Committee members are: Prof. Lois W. Banner (Committee Chair), Dept. of History, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089; Prof. Joan E. Cashin, Dept. of History, Dulles Hall, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210; and Prof. Glenna Matthews, 2112 C McKinley Ave., Berkeley, CA 94703. All entries must be mailed directly to each committee member, clearly labeled "1998 Lerner-Scott Prize Entry."

The Association for the Sociology of Religion announces the Joseph H. Fichter Research Award of \$5,000 for promising research on women and religion. The Award is not normally given for dissertation research; persons must be members of the ASR at the time of application. For more information, contact Paula D. Nesbitt, Iliff School of Theology, 2201 So. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80210; phone (304) 744-1287, x252; e-mail pnesbitt@de.edu.

The American Catholic Historical Association has issued a call for papers for its spring meeting, March 27-28, 1998, in Indianapolis, IN. Proposals, **due by October 1, 1997**, may take the form of brief summaries indicating the nature and depth of the research on which they rest. All materials and inquiries should be sent to Prof. James J. Divita, Dept. of History, Marian College, 3200 Cold Spring Rd., Indianapolis, IN 46222. Office phone is (317) 955-6228; FAX (317) 955-6448.

The Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association has issued a call for papers for its annual meeting, August 6-9, 1998, in San Diego, California. Full-panel proposals are especially encouraged, on all aspects of history and historical writing; proposals by individual presenters are also welcome. Four copies of each proposal consisting of a one-page synopsis of prospective papers, a short vitae on each presenter, and a list of all panelist names, addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses should be sent **by October 31, 1997** to program committee chair Prof. Leonard Dinnerstein, Judaic Studies, Franklin Bldg, Rm 308, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721. FAX (520) 621-7841, or email judaicst@arizona.edu.

## BOOK REVIEW

*A Dynamic of Hope: Institutes of Women Religious in Australia* by Mary Rosa MacGinley (Sydney: Crossing Press, 1996), 440 pp.

The author presents this first attempt at a comprehensive history of women's religious congregations in Australia as "merely an introduction" to a subject spanning over 150 years; a continent rivaling the U.S. in size and demographic complexity; an ecclesi-

astical structure involving 25 dioceses and mission vicariates as of 1940; and 42 congregations, many with multiple off-shoots, as of the same period. Hers was a research task undertaken with few guideposts in the form of scholarly monographs or reliable congregational histories, but one for which her own prior studies prepared the way, specifically, masters and doctoral theses at the University of Queensland, "A Study of Irish Migration to, and Settlement in, Queensland, 1885-1912" (1972); and "Catholicism in Queensland, 1910-1935: A Social History" (1982); a history of her own congregation, *A Place of Springs: Queensland Presentation Sisters 1900-1960* (Brisbane, 1977); a history of Presentation sisters, *Roads to Zion: Presentation Sisters in Australia 1866-1980* (Brisbane, 1983); and most recently, with T. Kelly, *The Church's Mission in Australia* (Melbourne, 1988).

As indicated by these titles, MacGinley's strengths lie in being able to situate often obscure elements of individual community stories within the context of Australian social and ecclesiastical developments. She demonstrates throughout a firm grasp of secondary literature, substantial archival work, and a mastery of relevant socio-economic data. Tables listing Catholic Women's Institutes in Australia, 1838-1944; Communities and Personnel in Religious Institutes, 1940; New Women's Institutes in Australia Since 1940; and Australian Catholic Dioceses and Vicariates and Principal Women's Communities, 1940 (listing and accompanying map), enhance the book's value for general reader and scholar alike, as do also the note on Monetary Values, and the complete scholarly apparatus.

While the scope of the volume is construed as encompassing the history of women's religious institutes from the early centuries of the church through the early modern and contemporary periods, two-thirds of the text is devoted to Australian sisterhoods from their beginnings in Australia in 1838 to 1940. Several brief, but valuable chapters recount the evolution of religious rules up to and following the Council of Trent with special attention to the roots of Australian congregations, while an excellent concluding chapter assesses developments since 1940.

The dynamic tensions created by Tridentine reform directives with their assertion of central authority, yet the delegation of primary responsibility to bishops for carrying out the reform of religious communities—making them in essence “guardians of the cloister” for women’s groups—; and the invitation to engage in the counter-Reformation apostolate, are sharply delineated by MacGinley in themes she carries forward into the Australian experience of religious communities.

Ireland, where so many Australian congregations originated, is shown to have had a unique experience of European religious, political and socio-economic movements with significant consequences for governance structures adopted by communities, their approach to ministry, and their relationships with bishops and clergy once settled in Australia. Analogies with the United States experience of communities in the nineteenth and early twentieth century are numerous, from the canonical ambiguities affecting many communities, to the authoritarian behavior of more than a few bishops vis a vis women’s congregations, and the determination of many to maintain diocesan control over groups aspiring to centralized government.

Added to these ever-present sources of tension the colorful personalities drawn to the mission fields of Australia from among predominantly Irish clerical and religious groups, and we have the ingredients for the fascinating amalgam constituting Australian ecclesiastical history from the date of the arrival of its first women’s community, the Irish Sisters of Charity, in 1838, through to the episcopacy of Patrick Moran, archbishop of Sydney 1885-1910. Moran’s tenure was a time of “regularization and consolidation” for women’s congregations in the country, during which he brought resolution to a thorny situation involving the Sisters of St. Joseph and that community’s saintly founder, Mary McKillop; and accommodated the church to the evolving centralization of communities and an ever-intensified commitment on their part to educational ministries, trends which continued throughout the inter-war period.

Intriguing parallels with developments elsewhere are brought out, including the slow pace with which the lay-choir sister distinction was phased out (wearing of an apron as an outward sign of lay-sister status

was not eliminated in most communities until the 1920s; the distinct status for lay and choir was retained until the 1950s, and then dropped only at Rome’s insistence); the formation of unions bringing into formal relationship autonomous units of congregations following the same rule, e.g. Ursulines, Mercies, Presentations (carried out in a manner very like that in the U.S.); and the formation of national conferences of men and women religious, a movement that diverged from that in the U.S. when the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes was formed to encompass both men and women.

Response to the Vatican II call for renewal appears, on the whole, to have taken place “with little overt polarization,” although the very minimal reaction of Australian communities to Pope Pius XII’s advisories in the 1940s and 50s regarding greater flexibility in the daily timetable for prayer, meals, and recreation; elimination of outmoded ascetical practices; better provision for sisters’ professional training; and modification of religious dress, had not augured well for a smooth acceptance of change. MacGinley offers some interesting speculation on the reasons behind the contrasting reaction of Australian communities to renewal imperatives before and after the Council, as well as for the declining membership trends apparent among communities in Europe by the 1950s and in Australia and the U.S. following Vatican II.

Her narrative is enriched throughout by vignettes of the women—leaders and followers—who composed the congregations that implanted religious life in the country: Josephites, Sisters of Charity, Good Samaritan Sisters, Mercies, Presentations, Brigandines, Mary Ward’s Institute (Sisters of Loreto), Dominicans, Poor Clares, Ursulines, Benedictines, Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, Sisters of the Good Shepherd, the Society of the Sacred Heart, Faithful Companions of Jesus, and the Little Sisters of the Poor—to name those present by Moran’s time. New arrivals during his tenure included the Carmelites, Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the Little Community of Mary, The Poor Sisters of Nazareth, Sisters of St. John of God, Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, The Company of St. Teresa, and the Marist Sisters.

The missionary outreach of these and later communities brought religious life into many Pacific-rim countries, particularly in the wake of the collapse of the colonial system following World War II.

In sum, MacGinley has given us a sound synthesis from which to build research on specific facets of this vast subject. Credit is due to the Institute of Religious Studies at Strathfield, New South Wales, and its sponsoring congregations which supported many phases of the author's research. We look to more publications of this caliber in the future.

Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ  
Mount St. Mary's College  
Los Angeles

### BRIEF NOTICE

A Vision of Service: Celebrating the Sisters of Charity  
by Geraldine Antony, SC (Sheed and Ward, 1997), 304 pp.

Undertaken to mark the celebration of the fiftieth jubilee (1947-1997) of the Federation of North American Sisters and Daughters of Charity, A Vision of Service describes the contemporary women who express the vision and spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, in the thirteen congregations composing the Federation.

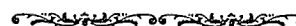
The women's diverse stories exemplify empowerment of ministry within the Roman Catholic Church today in the United States and Canada. Among the 7,000 current members of the various congregations are to be found lawyers, doctors, theologians, educators and health care professionals in a wide array of settings; chief executive officers for large hospitals and social work centers such as Covenant House (NY); activists for peace and social justice; scientists and ecologists; members of labor relations boards, marriage tribunals, and ecumenical and interfaith relations boards. They work to alleviate the sufferings of AIDS victims, battered wives, and abused and handicapped children, to name but a sampling of ministries carried out by today's Sisters and Daughters of Charity.

The persons and ministries of those who have earned distinction—a founder of a school of nuclear medicine, a coordinator of global institutes for Lutheran college

faculties, a medical doctor-university director of bioethics education and research, and an ecologist-founder of the Genesis Farm and Ecological Learning Center—receive somewhat more extended attention in a volume that focuses on both the group and the individual.

The author, a Sister of Charity of Halifax, brings the special talents of an English professor and dramatist as well as hands-on experience of ministry in many capacities to this biographical-historical task. A founder of Sisters Concerned for Senior Citizens, she was awarded in 1992 the Commemorative Medal of Canada for community service and leadership.

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### NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Please have copy for the **February 1998** issue to the editor by **January 1, 1998**.

#### THE HWR NEWSLETTER

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