
History of Women Religious

News and Notes

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February 2001

HWR Network News

The fifth triennial conference will convene June 17-20, 2001, at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The keynote speaker will be Mary Ewens, OP, noted authority on the history of religious life and author of the groundbreaking work, *The Nun in the Nineteenth Century*. Researchers from North America, Western Europe, and Australia will be presenting work on a range of topics including missionary sisters; Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Buddhist nuns and sisters; as well as on sisters' lives and work in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. A program and registration form will be mailed to each *News and Notes* subscriber later this spring.

Publications

With Hearts Expanded (North Star Press, St. Cloud, MN, 2000), a collaborative history of the Sisters of the Order of St. Benedict in St. Joseph Priory from 1957 to the present, is a sequel to Grace McDonald's *With Lamps Burning*. Lead author, Evin Rademacher, OSB, worked with three others to produce this scholarly account of a monastic community's efforts to express an authentic Benedictine spirit in the fast-changing context of the last half of the twentieth century.

Eyes Open on a World: the Challenges of Change (privately printed, 2001), a collaborative work that charts the last half-century of life in the community of the Sisters of St. Joseph (see *News and Notes* October, 2000), is now available. A cover endorsement by Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, of Fordham University, notes that the book is "written with critical intelligence and a loving heart. Momentous decisions ... stand at the center of the story. [The] changes are creatively set against the background of key events in the wider church and society." Copies available for \$19.95 plus \$4 shipping and handling (checks payable to Srs. of St. Joseph) from Mary E. Kraft, CSJ, 1884

Randolph Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105. Tel. 651-690-7001.

Mother Mary Gerald Barry, OP, Ecclesial Woman of Vision and Daring, ed. by Nadine Foley, OP (privately printed, 2000), is a pictorial biography of the woman whose 28-year term as prioress general of the Adrian Dominican Sisters was remarkable for its extraordinary achievements as well as for its longevity. Copies available for \$22 from the History Dept. of Adrian Dominicans, 1257 East Siena Heights Drive, Adrian, MI 49221. Email <ADHistory@admcp.org>

Letter from Another Time: A Portrait of Mother M. Teresa Moran (privately printed, 2000), by Rosalie McQuaide, CSJP, is a short biography of the pioneer founder of the northwestern province and third mother general of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace with copious quotations from Teresa's 16 extant letters. Copies available from the author at PeaceWorks, Box 642, Hunt Valley, MD 21030.

A Common Heart: The Dubuque Franciscans' Faith Journey 1975-2000, by Jordan Dahm (privately printed, 2000), probes ways this congregation's members continued to name and live their identity as a group, their call to community and ministry, their spirituality, and shared responsibility for governance. Copies available from Mount St. Francis, 3390 Windsor Ave., Dubuque, IA 52001.

Pioneer Mentoring in Teacher Preparation: From the Voices of Women Religious (North Star Press, 2001), by Kevina Keating, CCVI and Mary Peter Traviss, OP, is a rare study, told through the voices of 60 sisters, that describes an organized mentoring system inherited from the age of apprenticeships. Copies available at pre-publication rate of \$24, check payable to CCVI, from Sondra Gaubatz, Box 230969, Houston, TX 77223.

Barbara Estelle Beaumont, OP, successfully defended her doctoral thesis, *The Restoration of Dominican Monasteries in France in the 19th Century* (University of Fribourg, 2000). It is scheduled for publication in 2001 in the collection *Mémoire Dominicaine*.

An exhibition of religious habits in the Museo Nazionale di Castel Sant'Angelo last spring prompted the publication, *La Sostanza dell'Effimero. Gli abiti delle Ordini religiosi in Occidente*, ed. Giancarlo Rossi (Edizioni Paoline, 2000). Various categorizations of dress ranging from the simple to the luxuriant, worn during the late medieval, renaissance and early modern European era, afford unexpected glimpses into social history.

Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Reuther are co-editors of *In Our Own Voices: Four Centuries of American Women's Religious Writing* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), a collection of primary source material relating to 125 women who made major contributions to the history of religion in America.

James Kelly and Dáire Keogh, eds., *History of the Catholic Diocese of Dublin* (Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2000), includes a chapter by Séamus Enright that is of particular interest to readers of this newsletter. Entitled "Women and Catholic Life in Dublin, 1766-1852" (pp.268-293), the account is inclusive of lay and religious women.

Jeff Burns, Joe White, and Ellen Skerret, eds., *Keeping Faith: European and Asian Catholic Immigrants* (Orbis Books, 2000) is part of a nine volume collection of primary sources pertaining to the social history of Catholicism in the U.S. and the role of women religious in that history. Additional volumes just off the press are *"!Presente!" Latino Catholics*, ed. by Timothy Matovina and Gerald E. Poyo; and *Prayer and Practice*, ed. by Joseph P. Chinnici, OFM and Angelyn Dries, OSF. Expected Spring 2001 is *Gender Identities* ed. by Paula Kane, James Kenneally, and Karen Kennelly.

Mary Seematter's article, "Overcoming Obstacles: Serving Black Catholics in St. Louis, 1873-1993," appears in the Spring 2000 of *Gateway Heritage*,

the quarterly magazine of the Missouri Historical Society. The article deals with the work of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, and the Society of Helpers in St. Louis.

Mary Anne Foley, CND, has an article, "Another Window on the Crisis in Women's Communities," in *Review for Religious*, July 2000, pp. 342-57. In this connection, readers may wish to peruse the Irish periodical, *Religious Life Review*, Jan.-Febr. 2000, and other issues, for an illuminating series of articles on contemporary religious life including exchanges by Doris Gottemoeller, RSM, and Ann Carey; and Margaret MacCurtain, OP, "Catholic Sisterhoods in Twentieth Century Ireland."

Leslie L. Leidel's "Indomitable Nuns and an Unruly Bishop: Property Rights and the Grey Nuns' Defense Against the Arbitrary Use of Diocesan Power in Nineteenth-Century Cleveland," in *The Catholic Historical Review*, July, 2000, pp. 459-79, draws on research for an earlier doctoral thesis and sheds light on an important facet of community history,

Debra Campbell's essay, "Be-ing Is Be/Leaving," in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Daly*, eds. Sarah Lucia Hoegland and Marilyn Frye (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), examines the importance of "departures" in the life and spirituality of feminist philosopher-theologian Mary Daly.

Book Reviews

Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context, by Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM. Vol. I of *Religious Life in a New Millennium* (Paulist Press, 2000). Pp. xvii+450.

Despite the subtitle, Sandra Schneiders serves as far more than a cartographer in this first of two volumes on contemporary religious life. Not only does she "locate" that life as experienced by North American women, but she opens a veritable treasure chest of insights about it. Those accustomed to the precision and clarity of her writing may be disconcerted by the profusion of ideas, presented in such a way that the connec-

tions between them are not always clear. But some lack of clarity is inevitable when treating religious life as: a universal phenomenon, present in all religious traditions (ch. 1); a certain way of living Christianity which can be distinguished ecclesiastically and theologically from other ways (chs. 2, 4, 7, 9); and a lifeform marked by its location in both a post-Vatican II church and a world which is becoming postmodern (chs. 3, 5, 6, 8, 10).

The nature of her project requires careful attention to terminology. Some of her choices, such as retaining and capitalizing the word "Religious" when referring to this way of life or to individuals who adopt it, may be unfortunate. But alternatives are not easy to find, and those who try must take into consideration the issues raised here.

Schneiders begins by describing "Religious Life" for women as "a project of life integration around the God-quest," a project that embodies that single-heartedness which anthropologists call the "monk" archetype. At the same time, it provides an environment which supports those in whom one of the "virgin" archetypes of Jungian psychology predominates, and it seeks to foster religious virtuosity. Schneiders accepts the latter sociological category but distinguishes between growth in holiness as the aim of the group and the assertion that group members are "religious virtuosi."

Within the Christian tradition, this project necessarily "involves a particular relationship with Jesus Christ expressed in lifelong consecrated celibacy." In addition, throughout the history of Christianity, it has been characterized as well by Catholic Christian faith, community, and mission/ministry, though the latter two elements have taken a wide variety of forms. Eliminating any of these four "coordinates" would constitute mutation of this lifeform, rather than further evolution. Moreover, members of religious communities are "Religious," specializing in the "religious quest," rather than secular; lay, rather than ordained. Their celibacy and their pooling of economic resources results in a certain "marginalization in relation to the world." However, they are also outside the hierarchical church order; unlike clerics, members of religious communities as such are not agents of the institution.

In light of these distinctions, Schneiders argues against current proposals to admit associates as full members of congregations, as well as against the "purely theoretical" possibility that members of women's communities be ordained. She can, however, conceive of a number of solutions to the question of canonical status, given the ambiguity of the relationship between "Religious Life" and the institutional church. Throughout this discussion she attempts to avoid the elitism which has characterized many attempts to distinguish members of religious communities from other committed Christians, insisting that both "Religious" and secular stances can lead to holiness and to the transformation of the world, and that both are necessary to the church.

Theologically speaking, this lifeform is charismatic. Schneiders brings a welcome order into the often muddy discussions of charism by suggesting that it functions on multiple levels. In addition to charism as a gift to individuals, as noted in the New Testament, it can be said that "Religious Life" is itself a charism, as are the contemplative or mobile ministerial forms it takes. All religious communities of women participate in these charisms, and that commonality is more significant than differences in their specific "charisms."

The charism of all religious life, especially in its "mobile ministerial" form, is prophecy to the world and especially to the Church. Its "prophetic character is rooted in and derives from the celibate solitude that unites contemplative immediacy to God and solidarity with the marginalized in society..." (126). Schneiders believes that women in religious communities are and ought to be exercising a "prophetic presence" in the dialogue among world religions, in the dialectic between religion and spirituality, and by bringing a feminist perspective to church issues.

Her primary hermeneutical tool in interpreting the contemporary situation of religious life is the process of spiritual transformation described by John of the Cross. The renewal which many communities undertook in response to the Second Vatican Council may be seen as an active dark night of the senses, characterized by joy and optimism. This gave way to a deeper diminish-

ment which was not chosen, as many in the church, including members of the communities themselves, questioned the place and importance of this way of life. The resulting vulnerability has been exacerbated by the surrounding culture's experience of the loss of meaning, as it moves out of the modern and into a postmodern world. This has led many who have given their lives to the God-quest to feel the absence of God, a state John of the Cross calls the passive dark night of the soul.

The fruit of this analysis for Schneiders is a word of hope to those undergoing this purifying experience. Addressing those tempted by the severity of this "night" to abandon the spiritual project altogether, John advises seeking signs that God is working in the midst of the experience of absence, and Schneiders hints that just such signs are present in the current experience of women in religious communities: a continued yearning for God, on-going fidelity, and energy for mission.

Finding the Treasure is addressed primarily to practitioners of this way of life, and its historical evolution is treated quite briefly. It is therefore important for historians of this phenomenon, as well as other theologians, to test Schneiders' presuppositions and analysis by posing several questions. Were the virgins and widows of the early church, for example, or those who lived in feudal monasteries, or nineteenth-century school- or hospital-builders really marginal to church and society? Does being marginal make one prophetic? Is religious life utterly antithetical to priesthood? Have the last 40 years indeed been a time of progressively deeper purification?

Schneiders does not pretend to have the last word on any of these questions, but by daring to raise them and to reveal their complexity and connections, she has performed an invaluable service for anyone seeking to understand and live religious life now and in the future.

Mary Anne Foley, CND
University of Scranton

Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian, by Grace Jantzen (Paulist Press, 2000; first published in Great Britain, 1987). Pp. 230.

As Grace Jantzen herself states, it is unusual for a philosopher of religion to write a book on theology and spirituality. She writes the book for two reasons. First, it is important for her to learn to receive the love of God, to pray, and to love God and neighbor. Furthermore, she desires to make Julian's writings better known. Jantzen brings to her reading of Julian an interest in a spirituality and scholarship, believing that the two are to be colleagues and not competitors. Second, Jantzen maintains that if one is to be a philosopher of religion one ought to know something about religion, about prayer and giving and receiving the love of God, and about loving one's neighbor.

Jantzen's book begins by placing Julian in her context of fourteenth-century England. She goes on to discuss her beliefs about Julian's education and the time of her entrance into the anchorhold. Questions regarding Julian's education, when she entered the anchorhold, as well as what she did before becoming an anchoress emerge in most scholarly writing about Julian. Having considered these elements in Julian's life, Jantzen sees her as a woman of keen intellect with an aptitude for literary skill, in spite of Julian's attestation that she saw herself as a "simple, unlettered creature." As to when Julian entered the anchorhold and what she did prior to her entrance, Jantzen takes the position that we cannot know the answer to either question with any certitude.

Jantzen uses the nature of Julian's prayer and her visions as entry points into her spirituality. In what I consider some of Jantzen's most acute sensibilities, she writes that if we are to understand Julian, we cannot remain uninvolved. Rather, we must be willing to reflect on our own experience, with its moments of depth and of shallowness. Here Jantzen is reiterating the thought of Julian herself who emphasizes the infinite value of our own lived experience as the place of encounter with the Holy. For Julian as well as for other mystics such as Teresa of Avila, knowledge of God is impossible without self-knowledge.

Jantzen considers Julian's methodology in which she constantly refers back to what has gone before; in so doing, her theology is always in the process of expanding. After careful study of

Julian, Jantzen sees her as an integrated theologian who brings together daily life, religious experience and religious reflection. For Julian, these three elements form a unified whole.

Having helped the reader understand Julian's theological methodology, Jantzen goes on to consider theological themes such as the Trinity, creation, human nature, sin and suffering in Julian's writings, weaving in understandings of contemporary theology and psychology in such a way that the contemporary reader will feel a familiarity with Julian's teaching. This is most obvious in Jantzen's last chapter which treats of the relationship of spiritual growth and healing.

In this last chapter, Jantzen, like Julian, enriches our understanding of God's infinite love for humankind and for the individual woman and man. Here, Jantzen demonstrates her capacity for making Julian's texts a resource for anyone who is interested in the process of spiritual growth. She does this by using connecting experiences which today may be considered as negative and shows how they have the potential for being revelatory of a God who loves humankind endlessly and delights in its very existence.

In this work, Jantzen contributes not only to Julian scholarship, but also to the field of spirituality by making Julian more readable to anyone interested in spiritual growth and spiritual direction. Julian emerges as a source for contemporary spirituality, and for contemporary Christian feminists who share the same basic methodology and can derive helpful insights from Julian's insights into the feminine dimension of God, seen most clearly in the motherhood of Christ.

Jantzen achieves her two aims. Her book is a venue of introduction to the texts of Julian and makes her known. Writing as a philosopher of religion, Jantzen demonstrates the richness of disciplines being in conversation with one another. Such a merging of disciplines is mutually beneficial, even imperative as we find ourselves coming to understand the interconnectedness of all of reality.

Elaine M. Biollo, SC, STL, ThD
Toronto, Canada

Research In Progress

Carmen M. Mangion recently began work, at the University of London, Birkbeck College, on the subject of women's religious congregations and orders in Victorian Britain. She may be contacted by email at <manwag@freeuk.com>

Rosemary Halter, a graduate student at the University of Dayton, is researching and writing about Mother Theodore Guerin, pioneer leader of the Sisters of Providence at St. Mary-of-the-Woods in Terre Haute, Indiana. She may be contacted at <rosmarinus@urcengineering.com>

Jeanne Beck, author of *To Do and To Endure: The Life of Catherine Donnelly, Sister of Service* (Dundurn Press, Toronto, 1997), is now writing the history of the Canadian province of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She may be contacted at <Jeannerobin.beck@sympatico.ca>

Katherine Dawson is writing a dissertation on the coal mining community in Gallup, New Mexico, 1900-1950. She is aware of the work of the Sisters of St. Francis in Gallup, and is interested in further information on literature and primary sources relating to that community and any others known to have been active in the area. Contact at P.O. Box 194, Guilford, NY 13798.

Mary Helen Beirne, SSJ, began work this fall as general editor for a history of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia with a focus on the years 1944 to 1999. She may be contacted at <mbeirne@archbalt.org>

Mary Margaret Kealy, OP, whose masters thesis, "The Dominican Nuns of Channel Row 1717-1820" (University of Lancaster, 1998) treated the beginnings of Cabra Dominicans in Ireland, is now engaged in research for a doctoral thesis that extends the story of this congregation's involvement in education in Ireland from 1819 into the early decades of the twentieth century. Contact at 461 Griffith Ave., Glasnevin, Dublin 9, Ireland.

Margaret A. Hogan, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is doing research on "Controlling the Convent: Authority

and Decision-making among Catholic Women Religious in Kentucky, 1812-1860." She is focusing on three congregations of women religious, and on the influence diocesan authorities and the *Propaganda Fide* had on the women's exercise of authority.

Barbara E. Mattick, a graduate student at Florida State University, will be doing her doctoral dissertation on the Sisters of St. Joseph in St. Augustine, focusing in large part on their work with African Americans ca. 1866-1920. Contact at 6605 Man O'War Trail, Tallahassee, FL 32308.

Ann Kessler, OSB, has just completed research for a chapter entitled "Elena Carnaro Piscopia," the first woman graduate of a university (Padua, where she was awarded the Ph.D. in Philosophy in 1678), for a history of Benedictine Oblates being edited by Linda Kulzer, OSB, and Roberta Bondi.

Shelley Amiste Wolbrink invites scholars with research interests in Germany, especially women's monasticism, to send their name and other pertinent information to <swolbrin@drury.edu>. Her hope is to promote a more public presence at conferences, to foster communication, and to explore possibilities of an edited collection of articles on the history of women's monasticism in Germany.

The Glenmary Research Center is making accessible to scholars the materials collected for a social history of the first Black Catholic parish in Mississippi. The collection, called The Natchez Project, contains taped interviews and transcriptions of 40 attendees of the parish school in the 1950s and 60s, and of 28 children in the school in 1994; a map of the Mississippi counties as of 1890 when the parish was founded; and other documentation. Contact Dr. Kenneth Sanchagrin at <ksanchagrin@glenmary.org>

The Project for Research in Women's History, Theology and Spirituality has been established at the Australian Catholic University as a first step toward a Centre for Women's History. HWR member, Rosa MacGinley, PBVM, did much of the seminal work for this recent development

through her work on women religious in Australia (published 1996 as *A Dynamic of Hope: Institutes of Women Religious in Australia*). Those wishing to subscribe to a biannual newsletter (\$10; checks payable to WHTS Research Project Trust) are asked to contact Dr. Sophie McGrath, RSM, Australian Catholic University, Mount St. Mary's Campus; 179 Albert Road, Strathfield NSW 2135, Australia.

Correction: Patricia Byrne, CSJ, and Veronica O'Reilly, CSJ, are not working on a translation of the Vacher work as reported in the October issue. The project has been referred to the Sisters of St. Joseph Federation for further consideration.

Announcements

Abigail Quigley McCarthy, author, political activist, and wife of former U.S. Sen. Eugene McCarthy, died February 1, 2001, in her Washington, D.C. home. A graduate of The College of St. Catherine where she later endowed the Abigail Quigley McCarthy Center for Women, Abigail coined the phrase "a luminous minority" to describe the women religious she came to know as teachers, colleagues and friends. Her autobiography, *Private Faces, Public Places*, and the many columns she wrote for *Commonweal*, contain frequent reflections on the importance and influence of women religious as she knew and observed them.

The 12th Berkshire Conference of Women's History will convene June 6 - 9, 2002, in Storrs, Connecticut. For further information, contact their website, <www.berksconference.org>

The 82nd annual meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association will convene in San Francisco on January 4 - 6, 2002. For further information, contact Prof. Patrick Carey at Marquette University, <careyp@vms.mu.edu>

The spring, 2002 meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association will be held at the University of Portland, Portland, Oregon, March 15 - 16. Those wishing to present papers should send a proposal and a brief CV to Rev. James Connelly, CSC, Dept. of History and Political

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Science, Univ. of Portland, 5000 N. Willamette Blvd, Portland, OR 97203; email to <connelly@up.edu> or fax (503)943-7803. Deadline for submission is October 1, 2001.

A joint meeting of the ACHA and the Canadian Catholic Historical Association will convene April 6 - 7, 2001, at the University of Toronto. Eight of the program's 17 sessions feature topics relating to the history of women religious, and/or chairpersons and presenters from the History of Women Religious network. Pertinent topics include those on social justice; aspects of North American Catholicism; current scholarship in the historiography of women religious; popular Catholicism in the U.S. and Canada; and the church in Quebec after World War II. Full information is available on the CCHA website: <www.umanitoba.ca/colleges/st_pauls/ccha>

Newsletter Deadline

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