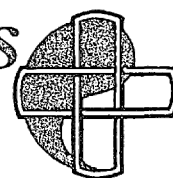


History of Women Religious News and Notes



Volume 18—Number 2

JUNE 2005

HWR Network News

New HWR subscribers/members since last June come from Australia, Canada, England, Hungary, and Italy (9 new members); and from all regions of the United States: California, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania (20 new members). The triennial conferences and word-of-mouth are the chief sources for new members.

The next triennial conference will be June 24-27, 2007, at the University of Notre Dame. Program Chair Prudence Moylan is working with a committee composed of past conference chairs Carol Coburn and Elizabeth McGahan; Mary Anne Foley; Suellen Hoy; Ann Harrington; Barbara Hughes and Kay Cummings. Moylan may be contacted at pmoylan@luc.edu for advance information. Nominations for awards given at the conference are welcome at any time and may be sent to awards committee chair Elizabeth Kolmer at kolmere@SLU.EDU. The Distinguished Book Award is given for outstanding books pertaining to the history of women religious published since the last conference (summer 2004); the Distinguished Historian Award is given to honor lifetime achievement.

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News of research in progress or recent publications may be forwarded using the subscription form or sent to the editor at KKennelly33@hotmail.com. Books for review may also be sent to the editor.

Publications

Constance Berman is editor and contributor for *Medieval Religion: New Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2005), an anthology of 15 articles by different medievalists on such topics as women, the Crusades,

and Christian attitudes toward Jews and Islam. Two articles are of considerable interest for Franciscan women. We missed noting a prior publication for which Berman was editor and translator, *Women and Monasticism in Medieval Europe: Sisters and Patrons of the Cistercian Order* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002), a collection of translated documents about medieval Cistercian nuns with extensive commentary.

Elizabeth Makowski, *'A Pernicious Sort of Woman': Quasi-Religious Women and Canon Lawyers in the Later Middle Ages* (Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Canon Law Series, vol. 6, The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), examines the ambivalent legal status of women such as secular canonesses or beguines, tertiaries or Sisters of the Common Life who, because they lacked one or more of the canonical earmarks of religious women strictly defined, had to justify and defend their unauthorized way of life.

Barbara Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), focuses on the efforts of Parisian *dévot*es or wealthy, pious women of the French capital to effect the religious regeneration of seventeenth-century France through their work with various women's religious congregations.

Kathleen Ann Myers, *Neither Saints nor Sinners: Writing the Lives of Women in Spanish America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), analyzes the life writings of six seventeenth century women, including Rose of Lima, Catarina de San Juan, the Augustinian Recollect nun, María de San José, and Sor Juana de la Cruz, with a focus on tracing the way the relationship between writings by and about these women illustrate the interplay between Counter-Reformation codes of orthodox sanctity and the uniqueness of each woman.

K. J. P. Lowe, *Nuns' Chronicles and Convent Culture in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy* (New

York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), examines three convent chronicles from Venice, Florence, and Rome, as a means of illuminating convent life in the early modern period, the women's perspective on the past and their contemporary role in society, and regional differences.

Derek Beales, *Prosperity and Plunder: European Catholic Monasteries in the Age of Revolution, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), substantiates the significant impact of male and female monasteries in post-Reformation Europe—an era during which historians have generally regarded monasteries as largely irrelevant.

Jane E. Schultz, *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), moves effortlessly through a myriad of details to establish a social history of the war years (Part I) and a cultural history of the same period (Part II), reminding readers of the tremendous variety of work performed by women who “were as diverse as the population of the United States in 1860: they were adolescent slaves, Catholic sisters, elite slaveholders, free African Americans, abandoned wives, and farm women” (p. 12).

Mary Cresp, RSJ, *In the Spirit of St. Joseph* (Privately printed, Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, 2005), achieves a remarkable *tour de force* by tracing multiple communities of Sisters of St. Joseph from beginnings in seventeenth-century France on through to contemporary times in North and South America, Africa, Asia and Australia. For more information or to order, contact Cresp at P.O. Box 1508, North Sydney NSW, 2059, Australia, or by email Mary.Cresp@sosj.org.au.

Mary E. Sullivan, *The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley, 1818-1841* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), renders accessible a large corpus of correspondence by, to, or about the woman who founded the Sisters of Mercy in Dublin in 1831 and launched the congregation on a remarkable period of worldwide growth. A fully documented edition, drawn from archives in many parts of the world, this volume will be invaluable for those seeking to know better the woman, her personal contribution to the development of the church in Ireland and England, and the spirit she imparted to the Sisters of Mercy.

Mary Ryan, *For Whom We Go Forward or Stay Back: A History of the Sisters of Mercy, Wilcannia-Forbes Congregation 1884-1959* (Privately printed by the Sisters of Mercy Wilcannia-Forbes, 2004), provides an valuable glimpse into the history of the Australian outback and a unique Mercy congregation that grew with the people and the land in the vast sparsely settled area of western New South Wales. The author, a member of the Bathurst Mercy congregation, bases her account on extensive archival research and interviews that lend her narrative the quality of a case study.

Co-editors Regina Bechtle, SC and Judith Metz, SC, announce the impending publication of the last volume of the two-part series, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings* (New City Press), covering Seton's correspondence and journals, 1793-1820. The book should be off the press in fall, 2005. Additional Seton materials, *Spiritual Writings, Notebooks, and Other Documents*, will be available in two volumes from Vincentian Studies Institute. VSI is also the distributor for the *Collected Writings*. For more information or to place orders contact www.depaul.edu/~vstudies (click on “Bookstore”) or phone 773-325-4943.

Vincent A. Lapomarda, *The Catholic Church in the Land of the Holy Cross: A History of the Diocese of Portland, Maine* (Strasbourg: Editions du Signe, 2003), maintains a central focus on Portland's series of bishops and parish priests as he develops a history that began four hundred years ago with the establishment of the first Catholic community in the present-day state of Maine. The role of the laity and women religious is thoughtfully examined within that framework, and is lent further recognition by inclusion of appendices on Catholic schools as well as on parishes and historic sites.

Margaret Brennan, SSJ, makes a singular contribution to mission history and biography with her two recently published works, *The Good Rain: Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester in Brazil, 1964-2004*; and *Persistence of Vision: A Portrait of Mother Stanislaus Leary*. Brennan rescues Mother Stanislaus from being a “shadowy figure” in the community's collective memory who was known to have gone on to found other congregations in the Midwest after being replaced by the bishop of Rochester under harsh circumstances. Both books are privately printed by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester and can be ordered from Cornerstone Crafts at 150 French Road, Rochester, NY 14618. More information is

also available from the SSJ Archivist, Kathleen Urbanic, at kurbanic@ssjrochester.org.

Camilla Mullay's manuscript, *A Place of Springs: Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs 1830-1970*, near completion at the time of her death in July, 2003, has been edited and prepared for publication by another member of the congregation, Ruth Casper, OP (Privately printed by the Columbus, Ohio Dominicans, 2005). For more information on the book, due off the press on the occasion of the congregation's 175th anniversary celebration this July, contact Casper at RCaspar@columbusdominicans.org.

A series of four articles on Margaret Anna Cusack in the Summer 2004 issue of *U.S. Catholic Historian* highlight the historical importance of the founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace in the religious and social contexts of Ireland and the United States: Janet Davis Richardson, CSJP, "Margaret Anna Cusack, The Nun of Kenmare: A Voice for Justice in Ireland," pp. 97-112; Rosalie McQuaide, CSJP, "An Irish Voice for Justice: The Nun of Kenmare in America," pp. 113-138; Thomas L. Schubeck, S.J., "Prophet of the Immigrant Church: Later Essays of Margaret Anna Cusack," pp. 139-150; and Mildred Gorman, CSJPA with Richardson, "M. F. Cusack in *Our Day*," pp. 151-163.

Sarah Borden, *Edith Stein* (Outstanding Christian Thinkers series. New York: Continuum, 2003), provides a scholarly yet readable introduction to the life, spirituality, and philosophical thought of Edith Stein (Sr. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross).

Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1794-1840* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002) invites consideration of the influential role of religion in the struggle for women's rights in nineteenth-century United States, supporting her thesis by analysis of extant records for seventy groups and over 1000 women leaders in New York City and Boston. Elizabeth Bayley Seton is one of the portraits of organizers featured in a narrative that notes the charitable works of nuns and credits them with the exercise of public roles off limits to Protestant women of the day.

Angela Bonavoglia, *Good Catholic Girls: How Women are Leading the Fight to Change the Church* (Harper Collins: Regan Books, 2005), creates a compelling argument for viewing women—from Mary Magdalene

to Joan Chittister and from Catherine of Siena to Elisabeth Johnson—as the driving force toward an inclusive church. Interviews with contemporary women form the basis for the author's narrative.

Rebecca Sullivan, *Visual Habits: Nuns, Feminism and American Postwar Popular Culture* (University of Toronto Press, 2005), offers the first analysis of the revolutionary experiences of American women religious in the post-World War II era from the perspective of the media and popular culture. Currently specializing in feminist film, media and cultural studies on the University of Calgary faculty, the author traces her interest in media portrayals of nuns to the cache of records by people like Sister Janet Mead and the Medical Mission Sisters given to her by a professor during her struggling PhD student days. The professor pointed to the unlikely-looking collection of faded and musty covers and warped albums (found at a church bazaar) with the fateful comment, "there's your research topic!" Look for a review in the next issue of *HWR News*.

The *National Catholic Reporter* issue of February 25, 2005 Religious Life Supplement includes articles and book reviews of interest to HWR subscribers, including "From the 4th to the 21st Century," by Benedictine Antonia Ryan. The article is basically the author's reflections on papers presented at the HWR Sixth Biennial Conference, Atchison, 2004.

Research in Progress

Constance Berman is continuing research for a forthcoming book, *The White Nuns*, a study of Cistercian women in the Middle Ages.

Research underway on numerous expressions of religious life for women in the Middle Ages is reflected in papers presented at the 40th International Congress on Medieval Studies held in May, 2005, at the Medieval Institute, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan. The extraordinary research accomplishments of Jo Ann McNamara, HWR member and recipient of its Distinguished Historian Award (1998), were honored in a series of three panels entitled "In Honor of Jo Ann McNamara I: McNamara and the Saints; II: Nuns' and Women's Spirituality; and III: Thinking About Gender."

Angelyn Dries, OSF, holder of the Danforth Chair at St. Louis University and author of the groundbreak-

ing volume, *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History* (Orbis Books, 1998) continues her research efforts toward putting American Catholic missionary history into an international or comparative framework, most recently through course development and work with St. Louis area archivists (organized into SLARA, St. Louis Area Religious Archivists) to compile a comprehensive list of relevant archival holdings. St. Louis is a particularly rich archival resource on this subject given the numerous central and provincial motherhouses based there.

Mary Ellen Doyle, SCN, has brought her biography of Catherine Spalding, co-founder of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (Kentucky), to the stage of publication. She reports that the book is presently being considered by the University Press of Kentucky.

Film producer Jayasri Hart is in the process of completing the final cut for the PBS documentary film, *Sisters of Selma: Bearing Witness for Change*. Her hope is to have the film out in the fall, followed by the DVD version and an interactive website to come online by spring, 2006. The DVD will contain the video and more footage plus primary documents from the Selma 1965 event. The website will also feature primary documents, biographies of the sisters and information about their communities, and "QuickTime" clips with brief interviews with some of the sisters. Once the website is functioning there will also be "forums" for interactive and live discussion with sisters and scholars about the event. (Note: we are indebted to Carol Coburn, Avila University, for this update on the film production.)

Book Review

Wisdom Raises Her Voice: An Oral History Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto Celebrate 150 Years, ed. by Elizabeth M. Smyth and Linda F. Wicks (Privately printed: Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, 2001). Pp. 248.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto have served in many parts of the world in a variety of ways connected to education, health care, and social services since arriving in Toronto from France and Carondelet, Missouri in 1851. This oral history, conceived by their archivist Linda Wicks, beautifully conveys their dynamism and commitment. The volume is a fitting way to celebrate the congregation's 150 years of ministry in Toronto. Wicks was joined by the well-known and respected historian of women religious, Elizabeth

Smyth, in editing this comprehensive history. They were both aided significantly by Grace Sauvé, CSJ, the community representative for the project.

This book could serve as a model for how to write the oral history of a congregation. Approximately 150 Sisters, ranging in age from 40 to 90, volunteered to participate in the project. According to the editors, "Each Sister who volunteered participated in an individual audio-taped interview. In a session of 30 to 120 minutes duration, the Sister described her family background, her education, her call to religious life, her time in formation, the missions in which she served and the changes she had observed over time. The interview concluded with the Sister's commentary on the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph and a reflection on the nature of religious life" (p. 2). After transcription and editing, selected material from the interviews was arranged into nine chapters based on the interview questions. The result is a transparent and earnest account that combines a variety of individual histories into a textured history of the congregation.

The accessibility of this oral history and the dynamism of this congregation are especially striking. Although the editors obviously used scholarly theory on life history and feminist biography and discuss this methodology in the introduction, individual chapters include only a short introduction by the editors. I would estimate that about 95 percent of the book is in the words of the Sisters, something very enjoyable to read. The editors wisely chose not to add their own conclusions to each chapter or at the end of the book. The Sisters speak for themselves, and the reader is meant to ponder his/her own conclusions.

Running through the Sisters' narratives is their strong connection to their spiritual father and founder, Jean Pierre Médaille. The Sisters regularly refer to specific "Maxims," which were written by Médaille, and often refer to Médaille himself. For example, Sister Jane MacDonald wrote, "One of our Maxims is never to think of the future except in connection with the present. . . . I cannot get upset about the lack of the vocations. . . . We were needed . . . in those times, in those areas. I think we are needed now, too, but in little incidental, quiet ways that nobody sees. I think that Father Médaille would be very happy" (p. 239). One of Sister Marie-Zélie Gignac's entries illustrates the dynamism of individual members and the community as a whole: "[W]hen I saw the Sisters up in the infirmary,

how they needed help, I thought I would take the Nursing Assistant course. Well, the nurses just shook their heads and said, 'What's wrong with you? You don't start to be a nurse when you are sixty-three years of age. . . . It's much too hard at your age.' The instructor could not understand why I would want to be a nurse after teaching school for forty years" (pp. 167-68).

This oral history will be of particular interest to historians of women religious or oral history, but also to a more general audience. It is a must-read for anyone pondering writing an oral history of a congregation.

Heidi MacDonald
University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Announcements

We are saddened to learn of the death of Halifax Sister of Charity, Geraldine Anthony, on April 9, 2005. A

woman of broad interests with her doctoral degree in English from St. John's University, New York, and her Certificate in English from Oxford University, she had a distinguished career as a teacher of literature and a writer on Canadian drama. Her work as historian and biographer for her Congregation after retirement led her to attend HWR Triennial Conferences in 1992, 1995, and 1998. She will be greatly missed.

The eighty-sixth annual meeting of the American Historical Association will convene January 5-8, 2006, in Philadelphia. The call for papers for the ACHA is regularly set in mid-January (this year, January 17, 2005, for the 2006 meeting). Presenters must be members of the Association. Now is the time to consider attending the 2006 meeting, and to consider submitting a proposal for a paper (panel proposals preferred) to be presented at the 2007 meeting.

The Western Association of Women Historians an-

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Karen M. Kennelly, Editor
HWR News and Notes
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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

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St. Louis, MO 63131

nounces its next conference, May 5-7, 2006, at the beautiful Pacific Ocean site of Asilomar, California. Proposals for this conference are due November 1, 2005. The call for papers is posted at <http://www.wahr.org>. All topics are welcome, as are proposals for either individual papers or panels. Conference presenters must be current WAHR members and register for the conference. Membership information is available from Amy Essington at aessington@verizon.net.

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious celebrates its 50th jubilee in 2006. As part of its celebration, a History Committee composed of Barbara Cervenka, OP; Mary Charlotte Chandler, RSCJ; Helen Garvey, BVM (chair); Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ; and Constance Phelps, SCL, is developing an exhibit commemorating the leadership of women religious in the fields of education, healthcare, and social service in U.S. society as well as their embrace of the mission of justice through the years, renewed in the post-Vatican II era. Negotiations are underway with the Smithsonian to mount the exhibit.

Newsletter Deadline

Please have copy for October 2005, issue to the editor by September 1, 2005.
<KKennelly33@hotmail.com>

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