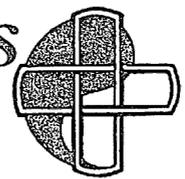

History of Women Religious

News and Notes



Volume 18—Number 3

OCTOBER 2005

HWR Network News

The next Triennial conference will be June 24-27, 2007, at the University of Notre Dame. More information will be given in the February, 2006 issue of the newsletter. Requests for further information at this time may be addressed to Program Chair Prudence Moylan at pmoylan@luc.edu.

News of HWR members resident in areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama affected by Hurricane Katrina was still reaching us as this issue went to press. Damage to motherhouse properties, retirement facilities and other convents is extensive. Sisters were safely evacuated so far is known (three Sisters of the Holy Family remained unaccounted for as we went to press). Hermenia Muldrey, RSM, sustained a minor heart attack at the beginning of the crisis and was held for a time at the temporary triage center at the New Orleans airport but was later safely relocated.

Records housed in the historic Ursuline Convent survived undamaged despite structural damage to the building. The hospital that housed Sisters of Mercy archives up until the move of that depository to St. Louis a few years ago was flooded. Personal papers accumulated by hospital resident. Hermenia Muldrey, in the course of her years of research had been donated to the HWR Archive housed at Avila University, Kansas City, Missouri. As Dolores Liptak, RSM, observed when relaying this information, "therein lies a cautionary tale!"

Publications

Patricia Cox Miller, ed., *Women in Early Christianity: Translations from Greek Texts* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), brings together translations of a variety of Christian texts that illuminate perceptions and portrayals of women in Greek literature written from the second to sixth centuries.

Julian M. Luxford, *The Art and Architecture of English Benedictine Monasteries, 1300-1540: A Patronage History* (London: Routledge, 2005), analyzes records of artistic

patronage by houses of Benedictine monks and nuns in southwest England to produce an intriguing account of the ambitions, beliefs and allegiances characteristic of monastic culture of the period.

Valerie G. Spear, *Leadership in Medieval English Nunneries* (London: Routledge, 2005), uses a wide range of sources relating to sixteen female houses in the period from 1280 to 1540 to examine the role of the convent superior during this period and the effects of the dissolution of religious houses by Henry VIII on morale and behavior.

Elizabeth Teresa Howe, *The Visionary Life of Madre Ana de San Agustín* (Colección Tamesis, Series B: Textos, 46; Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), offers a critical edition and Introduction for two long-neglected autobiographical narratives by Madre Ana (1555-1624), situating the works in the tradition of Christian visionary literature.

Rosemary Raughter, editor and contributor, *Religious Women and Their History: Breaking the Silence* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005), presents a collection of essays on the part religion played in the lives of women of various Christian denominations from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. A Foreword by Margaret MacCurtain provides a helpful conceptual framework for a collection that includes several essays focused on Roman Catholic women religious: Phil Kilroy, on Madeleine Sophie Barat; Suellen Hoy, on Irish nuns in the U.S.; and Maria Luddy, on convent archives as sources for Irish history.

Mary Ellen Doyle, SCN, is pleased to report that her recently completed biography of Mother Catherine Spalding (see *HWR News and Notes* June 2005) is being published by the University Press of Kentucky under the (tentative) title of *Pioneer Spirit: Catherine Spalding, Sister of Charity of Nazareth*.

The account of the worldwide foundations of Sisters of St. Joseph by Australian Mary Cresp, RSJ (*In the Spirit of St. Joseph*, see *HWR News and Notes* June 2005), is now

available for purchase from a U.S. distributor, St. Joseph's Press, LaGrange, Illinois. To purchase contact the press manager, Flo Christiano, at FChristiano@csjlagrange.org.

Sally Witt, CSJ, *Sisters of the North Country: The History of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, Watertown, New York* (Privately printed, New York: Sisters of St. Joseph, 2005), traces the history of this community from its foundation in Watertown in 1880 to 1981 with an epilogue extending to 2002. To purchase contact Sisters of St. Joseph Administration at 1425 Washington St., Watertown, NY 13601.

Cindy Yik-yi Chu, *The Maryknoll Sisters in Hong Kong, 1921-1969* (Palgrave, 2004), describes the ministry of Maryknoll sisters as teachers, social workers, and medical care givers in the first U.S.-originated Catholic female overseas mission in Hong Kong.

Regina Siegfried, ASC, reports that her recently completed account of her congregation's China mission will be published in the near future under the title *Missionaries More and More: The History of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, 1933-1945*, probably by late September. To purchase contact the publisher Web site at AuthorHouse.com.

Michel Keenan, IHM, *The Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, Pennsylvania: 1919-1974* (Pittsburgh: Rosedogbooks, a subsidiary of Dorance Publishers, 2005), continues the account of this IHM congregation begun by Immaculata Gillespie, IHM (*The Sisters of the IHM*, 1920). To purchase contact www.rosedogbookstore.com or call 1-800-834-1803 (Megan Tarbett).

Recent journal articles of note: Ulrike Strasser, "Early Modern Nuns and the Feminist Politics of Religion," *Journal of Religion*, 84 (Oct., 2004), 529-554; and Margaret Chowning, "Convent Reform, Catholic Reform, and Bourbon Reform in Eighteenth-Century New Spain: The View from the Nunnery," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 85 (Feb., 2005), 1-37.

Correction The publication data for the Elizabeth Bayley Seton series given in *HWR News and Notes* June 2005 should have indicated that the last (third) volume is a double volume, IIIa. and IIIb. All volumes are available for purchase from the Vincentian Studies Institute at www.depaul.edu/~vstudies. Click on "Bookstore."

Research in Progress

Margaret Preston has received a Hibernian Research

Award to pursue her study of the Irish Presentation sisters and the educational and medical institutions they established in North and South Dakota.

Angelyn Dries, OSF, reports that she and a number of other scholars involved in the history of missions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are preparing articles for inclusion in a forthcoming issue of *U.S. Catholic Historian* (editor, Christopher Kauffman) to be devoted to that topic. Archivists from the greater St. Louis area have begun responding to Dries' request for data about their members going overseas as missionaries. The large number of religious congregations with "headquarters" in the area suggests the likely importance of the collected data in terms of missionary patterns.

Elizabeth McGahan continues her research on religion and the city of Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada, specifically on changes in various parishes and denominations in the city. Readers may be familiar with her prior work on the Sisters of Charity of Halifax.

Angelita Myerscough, ASC, is currently nearing completion of a new annotated English translation from the original Italian of the more than 1400 extant letters of St. Maria De Mattias (1805-1866), foundress of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ. More than 500 of the letters are written to sisters, about the same number to bishops and priests, and over two hundred to her spiritual director with the remainder being to civil officials, family, and other lay persons. The letters afford numerous insights into the life and holiness of the writer and into ways life in the Italian peninsula was affected by mid-nineteenth century political changes.

Claude Auger successfully defended his doctoral thesis in December, 2004, at Saint Paul University, Ottawa. Entitled "Spiritualité sacerdotale et communautés de religieuses québécoises au service du clergé" (Sacerdotal Spirituality in Quebec Communities Serving the Clergy), the thesis demonstrates how the Trent definition of the priesthood, combined with the teachings of the French School of Spirituality, provided a background for the sisters' spiritual life. Through "sacerdotal devotions" (to Jesus, Priest and Victim; or to Mary, Queen of the Clergy), role models such as members of the Holy Family and St. Martha, and the influence of Victimal spirituality, the sisters prayed for the priests and their ministry as they were cleaning, cooking and sewing for them. Ten congregations of women religious founded to provide domestic services to priests and religious formed the basis for a study that makes extensive

use of archival and published material pertaining to each community (constitutions, prayer manuals, founders' writings). A Canadian publisher is considering the thesis for publication.

Carmen Mangion successfully defended her doctoral thesis in July, 2005, at the University of London, Birkbeck College. Entitled "Contested Identities: Active Women Religious in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales," the thesis makes a substantial contribution toward better understanding of the role of Roman Catholic sisters in Victorian Britain. Her work, as well as that of her examiners, Drs. Maria Luddy and Anna Davin, reflects growing scholarly interest in the subject. Luddy integrates women religious into her extensive studies of Irish women, most recently by editing the diaries of sisters from Ireland who went to the Crimea, while Davin's work on nineteenth-century British women and children helped pave the way for Mangion. See also Barbara Walsh's path-breaking thesis published as *Roman Catholic Nuns in England and Wales 1800-1937: A Social History* (Irish Academic Press, 2002).

Maureen Abbott, SP, is conducting research preparatory to writing the fourth volume of the History of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute, Indiana. Presently assistant Director of Ministry Formation for the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, Abbott walks in the footsteps of a distinguished series of Sister of Providence historians including HWR member and author Mary Roger Madden, SP.

Sarah Summers, MMS, is working on her community's history from the time of the Medical Mission Sisters' renewal chapter in 1967 through 1991, having coordinated research on the previous volume covering the years immediately prior to the community's beginnings in 1925 to 1967. Archives in England as well as in the U.S. have rich documentation on a congregation whose work in hospitals throughout the world during the pre-Vatican II era has since evolved into a more complex range of ministries. Summers may be contacted at ses1@mindspring.com.

Marie Brinkman, SCL, has completed research on her congregation's (Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth) renewal period 1955-2005. The manuscript is currently being submitted to publishers for consideration.

Alexis Navarro, a founding member of the Immaculate Heart Community, is in the exploratory stage of a research project designed to explore various facets of this ecumenical group, now celebrating its 35th anniversary.

She has a particular interest in the effect of membership on those who joined the community as married persons, sometimes, but not always, having been a vowed member of the IHM-Los Angeles congregation. About 10 per cent of the current 165-member community fall into this category. Persons are welcome to contact Navarro at alexismc@earthlink.net with their observations, questions, and suggestions for possible sources of funding for such research.

Book Reviews

Creating Community. Mary Frances Clarke and Her Companions, by Ann M. Harrington, BVM (Dubuque: Mount Carmel Press, 2004). Pp. 155 plus appendices.

The story is a familiar one. A small group of dedicated women, with a charismatic woman to inspire them, comes together to fulfill their own spiritual goals and to address societal needs. Living on limited means, struggling at times with Church authorities, finding a few supportive churchmen to help them in their endeavors and finally seeking approbation as a religious order of women are some of the events that have been common experiences for many foundations of sisters in the nineteenth century. It is also the story of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, chronicled here by Ann M. Harrington, BVM.

Harrington tells the story of the origin of this religious order from the small beginnings of five dedicated women in Ireland to their flourishing in the United States and beyond to attain a membership of over a thousand. Led by Frances Clarke, they came from Dublin, Ireland, to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and in 1843 settled in Dubuque, Iowa, where they established their central house to serve the growing congregation. From there they spread their educational mission to places in the state of Iowa encompassed by the diocese of Dubuque. When the call came to serve in schools outside the diocese, initially Chicago, they met with opposition from the Bishop, another familiar story in the history of women religious orders. Their move beyond the diocese was a wise one. Their work spread, as did their reputation for being excellent educators. With that growth came numbers of women who asked to join them and their work.

Harrington focuses on the first five members; each in turn gets attention as an individual in establishing this congregation, but Mary Frances Clarke receives the emphasis she deserves as leader of the band. Highly respected by all who knew her, sisters, clergy and lay people alike, she ultimately became, with the approval of the sisters, the gen-

eral superior for life. Harrington presents her as a most interesting woman, unassuming, modest, and of quiet demeanor. Clarke did not put herself forward and yet had the strength and courage that was called for as she faced the problems of a fast-growing and more complex organization. Even as she received help from several male clergy (e.g. Terence Donaghue) who really helped to further her cause, she retained her own mind about what direction the order should take. Interestingly, as the order grew and adopted a habit, Clarke herself never wore it in her lifetime. She continued to wear the simple dress and cap that she had adopted in their earlier days. Her reasons for doing so remain unknown. This lack of explanation is true of much of the early history of the order. Private person that she was, Clarke committed little regarding herself to paper or if she did, it is no longer extant. It is likewise true of the other members. They left little of their personal thoughts or comments on their experiences in founding schools and convents.

Harrington shows her ability as an historian in her skillful use of the sources available to her. Because archival sources are not as accessible in this case as one would hope, the oral tradition becomes an important source to supplement the archival documentation. Harrington uses these sources, archival, oral tradition and early historical accounts, to weave together an interesting and informative narrative of the order's early days. She is always careful, however, to use them only within their own capacity to contribute to the story, noting to the reader that the information has not come directly from the subjects themselves. While this book presents brief biographies of the early sisters, its emphasis is on creating community, as the title states. How they came together, the spirit that sustained the group, and their mission of education enter into this creation. Chapters on finances, on their early spirituality, and on the kind of leadership Clarke gave to the early group provide some insight into the workings of this community. Harrington devotes the remainder of the book to the BVM companions of Clarke who came after her. A quick overview of the order's years after Clarke's death in December of 1887 looks at the development of the order up to the Vatican II era and beyond.

The book provides a brief yet well done record of the founding sisters and the development of the BVM community, one that will be of special interest to its members, alumnae and friends. It also adds to the collection of works on women's religious orders that have been published in recent decades. In particular, it is a fine addition to the work already done by the BVMs in recent years.

Notable among these are published selections from their annals (1912;1943), and Jane Coogan's two-volume history, *The Price of Our Heritage* (1975). Also of importance in this collection of BVM works is Kathryn Lawlor's work *Terence J. Donaghue: Co-founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary* [1995]. Jane McDonnell in *Counterpoint Melodies* rounds out that study of the early sister-founders with her work on the two superior generals who follow Clarke, namely Mary Gertrude Regan and Cecelia Dougherty. *Creating Community* contributes very well to this collection of BVM congregational history.

Elizabeth Kolmer, ASC
Professor Emerita, St. Louis University

Like a Tree by Running Water: The Story of Mary Baptist Russell, California's First Sister of Mercy, by Mary Katherine Doyle, RSM (Nevada City, CA: Blue Dolphin Publishing, Inc., 2004). Pp. viii, 399.

Mary Katherine Doyle's biography of Mary Baptist Russell joins a welcome and rapidly growing body of scholarship on the founding generations of American Sisters. Born in Ireland in 1829, Katherine Russell entered the young Mercy community in Kinsale at the age of nineteen and, just six years later, was appointed superior of the first mission band of Mercys to travel from Ireland to the West Coast of the United States. The group of eight reached San Francisco in November 1854; within a month they opened a school and, by the following year, their nursing ministry also was underway. By the time of Russell's death in 1898, her Sisters had established themselves throughout Northern California, and Mother Mary Baptist herself was acknowledged as perhaps "the best known charitable worker on the West Coast (frontispiece)." Moreover, as Doyle aptly notes, "In an age of specialization, it is difficult to comprehend the scope of Mary Baptist's expertise (p. 169)."

This biography is informed by careful scholarship, as well as the author's clear (but rarely obtrusive) love and admiration for her subject. Russell's life is placed neatly within the context of contemporary events in both Ireland and the United States—including cholera epidemics in both settings, the nativism that tarnished antebellum American history, and the gendered assumptions and expectations that shaped both Catholic and secular expectations about women's roles in the nineteenth century. Along the way, readers learn about Russell's early companions in both Ireland and the U.S. For, despite an unquestioned focus upon Russell as the narrative's protago-

nist, Doyle is as aware as Mary Baptist was that religious life is fundamentally a communal and not an individual enterprise, and that the achievements she recounts could never have been accomplished without the sisterhood of dozens of selfless, dedicated companions.

Doyle is an accomplished writer, and her story is well-written and absorbing. But the tale she tells comprises only about half of this volume; the rest (nearly 180 pages) consists of letters and other writings by Mary Baptist Russell, as well as remembrances and tributes by her contemporaries. These primary sources prove invaluable, not just as accompaniments to this biography, but also to others interested in pursuing research on Catholicism generally and religious life in particular during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The result is a book that is accessible to general readers, as well as useful to scholars.

Good as this work is, it might have been even better had the author placed Russell's life more explicitly in the context of the broad body of scholarship that now exists about both nineteenth-century sisters and women generally dur-

ing this period. As it stands, it is difficult to assess with any clarity the extent to which Mary Baptist Russell was representative of the women religious of her era or extraordinary. Additionally, Doyle clearly knows a great deal about sisters in both Ireland and the United States, and some direct analysis of the similarities and differences in religious life between the two contexts would have been useful.

Nevertheless, these are relatively minor criticisms. Mary Katherine Doyle has written a fine account of an important figure and her work is recommended to all those interested in learning more about nineteenth-century women's religious life.

Margaret Susan Thompson
Syracuse University

Announcements

The Archivists for Congregations of Women Religious (ACWR) is holding its next Conference Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 2006, at Fort Mitchell, Kentucky (near Cincinnati, Ohio)

Subscription Information

HWR News and Notes is published three times a year, **February, June and October.**

To subscribe or renew (note expiration date on your mailing label), complete form below and enclose a check for \$10/1 year, \$18/2-year, or \$24/3-year payable to *History of Women Religious* to:

Karen M. Kennelly, Editor
HWR News and Notes
2311 So. Lindbergh Blvd
St. Louis, MO 63131

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

New Subscription Renewal Amt. Enclosed _____

Affiliation _____

News item for *HWR News and Notes*, Recent Publication, Research, Interests, etc.

2401 Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ, Editor
KKennelly33@hotmail.com

History of Women Religious *News and Notes*

2311 So. Lindbergh Blvd
St. Louis, MO 63131

with the theme of "Religious Archivists: Our Quest for the Best." For more information contact ACWR National Office, Trinity University, 125 Michigan Ave, NE Washington, DC 20017.

The Asociación de Escritoras de España y las Américas (AEEA) invites abstracts for its next Conference, to be held in conjunction with the Association for Hispanic Theater in Washington, DC, Sept. 21-23, 2006. The focus for papers will be on women's cultural production in colonial Latin America and medieval and early modern Spain. Brief abstracts and requests for further information may be sent to aeeamail@yahoo.com.

The Spring Meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association will convene Apr. 7-8, 2006, at the Collège of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts. Individuals who wish to organize sessions as well as individual submissions are welcome to send a one-page abstract with brief CV by December 1, 2005, to Virginia C. Raguin, Visual Arts, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA 01610. She may also be reached at vraguin@holycross.edu.

The *Journal of Women's History* is soliciting submissions. Guidelines for submissions may be found at their Web site press.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_womens_history/guidelines.html.

The Center for the Study of Religious Life, located at the

Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, maintains the Religious Life Collection, a repository for documents and studies on Roman Catholic religious institutes of men and women in the U.S. Researchers interested in using the collection are directed to the Web page www.religious-life.org for further information.

Correction: The correct Web site for the Western Association of Women Historians is www.wawh.org.

Newsletter Deadline

Please have copy for the February, 2006 issue to the editor by January 1, 2006. KKennelly33@hotmail.com.

The HWR Newsletter

Published by the
Conference on History of Women Religious
2311 So. Lindbergh Blvd
St. Louis, MO 63131

ISSN: 1054-545X

Subscription: \$10.00/1 year

Coordinating Committee
COORDINATOR/EDITOR: Karen M. Kennelly
BOOK REVIEW EDITOR: Regina Siegfried
AWARDS COMMITTEE CHAIR: Elizabeth Kolmer
PROGRAM CHAIR 2001: Elizabeth McGahan
PROGRAM CHAIR 2004: Carol Coburn
AT LARGE MEMBERS: Mary Hayes; JoAnn