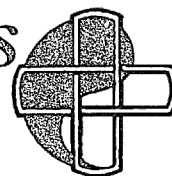


History of Women Religious News and Notes



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February 2006

HWR Network News

The Network invites paper and session proposals for the Seventh Triennial Conference on the History of Women Religious, to be convened at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, June 24-27, 2007, with the theme "Local Cultures/Global Church: Challenge and Mission in the History of Women Religious." Proposals that explore how communities of women religious or their individual members have answered the challenges of interacting with peoples from different cultures and backgrounds are welcome. Studies may focus on challenges within communities as well as on encounters with people of different cultures in life and work. Papers on women religious from all faith traditions are invited; disciplinary approaches may include but are not limited to history, sociology, literature, anthropology, theology, and communication.

Proposals for papers or sessions in the form of a one-page abstract accompanied by a one-page C.V. are requested (letter, email, fax) by **July 15, 2006**. Send all proposals to Prudence Moylan, HWR Program Chair, c/o Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism, University of Notre Dame, 1135 Flanner Hall, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556. Email cushwa.1@nd.edu Fax 574-631-8471.

For more information on the program contact Prudence Moylan pmoylan@luc.edu, Tel. 773-508-3082.

For information on local arrangements contact Kathleen Sprows Cummings, Local Arrangements Chair, kcumming@nd.edu Tel. 574-631-8749.

Publications

Michel Paret has successfully defended his doctoral thesis, *Reuilly Deaconesses from medical and social action to religious communal life: French Protestant sisters and their institutions then and now (1841-2003)* (original in French) at the Sorbonne, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. He is presently preparing this extensive work for publication.

Grace Donovan, SUSC, *Italy Women on Holy Ground*

(simultaneous publication in English, French and Spanish editions, 2005), recounts the history of the Holy Union Sisters 1823-1907. For further information contact Sancta Unione dei Suori Cuori, Casa Generalizia, Viale Aurelia Saffi 28, 00152 Rome, Italy.

Mary Lyons, RSM, *Governance Structures of the Congregation of Mercy: Becoming One* (Wales, UK: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), traces the process that culminated in the unification of a worldwide religious institute, the Sisters of Mercy. Based on extensive archival research and of particular interest to those interested in the contemporary evolution of religious life, the work originated as a Canon Law doctoral dissertation at the Université Saint-Paul, Canada.

Rosa Bruno-Jofré, *The Missionary Oblate Sisters Vision and Mission* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2006), draws from extensive archival research to demonstrate the major role Oblate Sisters played in building a French Canadian identity in Manitoba and Quebec.

Bernadette McCauley, *Who Shall Take Care of Our Sick? Roman Catholic Sisters and the Development of Catholic Hospitals in New York City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), delineates the significant role of Sisters in elaborating an extensive medical network over an 80-year period beginning with establishment of St. Vincent's Hospital in 1849.

Barbara Mann Wall, *Unlikely Entrepreneurs: Catholic Sisters and the Hospital Marketplace, 1865-1925* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2005), employs the angle of adaptation to a market economy in her account of the work of immigrant nuns to expand the health care system in the U.S.

JoAnn Raverty Schwartz, *A History of St. Walburg Monastery, Covington, Kentucky: Origins and Beginnings 1859-1899* (privately printed, Sisters of St. Benedict, Covington), contributes the first section of this monastery's history. Additional sections are planned for completion at the time of the order's sesquicentennial (2009).

For more information contact Teresa Wolking, OSB, twolking@yahoo.com .

Two recent articles expand the literature on Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Judith Metz, SC, "Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Extending the Role of Caregiver Beyond the Family Circle," *American Catholic Studies*, 116:2 (Summer 2005), 19-38; and Joan Elizabeth Cook, SC, "Elizabeth Seton: Woman Steeped in Scripture," *Vincentian Heritage* 23-5:1 (2005), 103-21.

Mary S. Donovan's essay, "Creating a Neighborhood: The Social Service Networks of Mary Kingsbury Simkovich," appears in *Deeper Joy: Lay Women and Vocation in the Twentieth-Century Episcopal Church*, ed. by Frederica Harris Thompset and Sheryl Krijawa-Holbrook (New York: Church Publishing Co., 2005).

Suellen Hoy's *Good Hearts: Catholic Sisters in Chicago's Past* is due off the press in March or April from the University of Illinois Press.

A collective work by a number of Sisters of Providence *Love, Mercy and Justice: A Book of Practices of the Sisters of Providence* (privately published by the Providence congregation in Terre Haute, Indiana, 2006), offers reflective essays on practices such as prayer, hospitality, feasting and fasting, home making and community shaping that evolved over time among women whose immigrant origins trace to 1840. Though the practices described pertain directly to the SPs, they were common to many religious communities as well as to Christians in general.

Regina Siegfried, ASC, *Missionaries More and More: The History of the China Mission of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, 1933-1945*, notes that book is now available from <AuthorHouse.com> for \$16 plus postage.

Research in Progress

Sarah A. Curtis, whose article, "Emilie de Vialar and the Religious Reconquest of Algeria," will appear in *French Historical Studies* 29:2 (Spring 2006), notes that the article is part of a larger book-length project she has undertaken on three early Nineteenth-century French women missionaries: Philippine Duchesne, Emilie de Vialar, and Anne-Marie Javouhey.

Ann Miriam Gallagher, RSM, recently retired Professor of Church History at Mount Saint Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland, is engaged in research on the biography of Catherine Josephine Seton (1800-1891),

daughter of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and the first New York Sister of Mercy.

Mary Lyons, RSM (see Publications) is currently researching the subjects of lay sisters in religious congregations and varied expressions of charism among congregations. Persons with an interest in her research topics may contact her in Dublin at lyonsmc@eircom.net .

The fourth annual Conference on Consecrated Women, held at Cambridge University's Margaret Beaufort Institute last September, reflected extensive research in progress. The 65 scholars and archivists from Ghana, Australia, North America and Europe as well as from Britain and Ireland attending the conference heard keynote addresses by Barbara Mann Wall of Purdue University on the uses of textual analysis and by Ann Matthews of the National Library of Ireland, Maynooth, on the work of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart with unwed mothers and their babies. Papers spanned a wide range of eras and disciplines covering the period of the Middle Ages through to the twentieth century and treating women religious of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Church of Scotland traditions through historical, literary, or sociological frameworks. The next conference will be held at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth in Dublin, Ireland September 15-16, 2006 (excerpted from the conference report by Moira Egan, City University of New York, m.egan@erols.com). For more information on conferences sponsored by the Historians of Women Religious of Britain and Ireland, contact Carmen Mangion at carmenmangion@freeuk.com .

Book Reviews

The Way We Were: A Story of Conversion and Renewal, by Joan Chittister, OSB (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. 2005). Pp. 253. Cloth. \$20.

Outstanding communicator that she is, Joan Chittister spells out in her introduction exactly what she intends to do in this excellent review of one community's experience of what is now generally known as the period of renewal in religious life. What she doesn't tell is how enjoyable the sharing is.

"This book," she states, "deals with questions of how change comes about and how leadership affects the process and progress of it (9)." It also looks at "what happens to the people caught in the abyss of it and what those experiences have to say to the rest of us (9)." The story is told through the experiences and eyes of Benedictine Sis-

ters of Erie, Pennsylvania and focuses on the period from 1965 to 1990.

In this story of conversion and renewal, elegantly written in first-person narrative, Chittister reminds us that changes in religious life did not occur in a vacuum. Throughout the larger society there were major changes, precipitated by World War II and its effects, in all aspects of society but particularly the economy, education, and the role of women. In developing her story, Chittister identifies three stages of conversion: deconstruction, development and revitalization and uses the administrations (including her own) of the three prioresses who headed the Erie Benedictines during that time to frame each phase.

During the deconstruction stage, the very structures that defined religious life shifted, dismantling the ways of looking at life, community, ministry, even self. At the same time, the theology, which had supported those structures, was also changing. "When both ideas and structure are in flux, error and confusion are the order of the day (69)." So it was with Chittister's community and many others. Just to live through this major paradigm shift required faith and courage of all members, and vision on the part of leadership to make the decisions for the future for which their past had not prepared them.

While all Catholics were impacted by the decrees of the Vatican II, women religious were most profoundly affected by the Decree on Renewal of Religious Life which directed religious communities to review "the charism of the order, the needs of the members, and the signs of the times" (see 72, 103) to determine what about their personal and congregational lives was authentic and essential and what should/ought to be changed.

In preparing for renewal chapters, many communities found that the zeal and creativity of their foundation years had largely disappeared. Routine had replaced vision, and a customs book supplanted charism. Reading about Chittister's community undoubtedly will take some readers a while as they pause to reflect how they and their communities struggled over such issues as habit, open placement, and living arrangements. In the end, the Benedictines voted to accept all the proposed changes as "experimental" knowing that no one had to abide by them but that most would (155). They had come to understand that community was about consensus and care rather than uniformity and geography.

Issues the community dealt with during the development phase were more personal than theological. While the

framework for change was in place, learning what it involved and how it felt on an individual level to women who had never written a résumé, shopped for personal clothing, furnished an apartment, welcomed "regular people" to the Sisters' personal living space—were on-going, sometimes painful processes. Inevitably there were tensions among those whose core beliefs about what religious life meant differed. Even though required life-style adjustments were made, their significance took much longer to internalize.

The section on revitalization covers 1978-1990, the years of Chittister's term as prioress. She admits she cannot know the mind of her community during those years from the other side of the desk. But she knows without doubt what she was thinking and why she made the choices she did. Her analysis of the state of religious life and its future is one of the strongest sections of the book. Finally, her thoughts on leadership found in the epilogue should be required reading for leaders of religious communities and those considering that call.

Who else should read this book? Those who lived through this era will find it a fascinating journey to a place they have been but perhaps did not understand at the time. Anyone interested in the history of women in the United States and role women religious played in it will find it useful. What is abundantly clear is that when on the brink of paradigm change, which some think is where we are today in religious life, it is critically important to elect to leadership women of vision. But how to recognize them? That is the rub. Perhaps this book will help.

Mary E. Seematter

Loretto Community and Washington University, St. Louis

The Maryknoll Sisters in Hong Kong, 1921-1969. In Love with the Chinese, Cindy Yik-Ye Chu (New York, NY: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2004). Pp. 214. \$59.95, cloth.

Using substantial archival research at the Maryknoll Sisters Archives near Ossining, New York, as well as Catholic and Public Records offices and libraries in Hong Kong, Cindy Yik-Ye Chu unfolds the life and mission of the Missionary Sisters of St. Dominic, known popularly as the Maryknoll Sisters. The author is Assistant Professor of History at Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong. We do not know from her introduction whether the author was once a student in a Maryknoll school in Hong Kong, but her perception that Maryknoll Sisters are "independent, outgoing, optimistic, and socially conscious," (ix) led her to examine the Sisters' history.

Chu views the mission of the Maryknoll women over

forty-eight of their eighty plus years in Hong Kong as intersecting with four areas: diplomatic history, cross-cultural relations and the evolution of mission work, the history of China, and the history of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong. Several wonderful photographs portray the Sisters working with inhabitants of the island in various phases of the mission. Fourteen tables indicate enrollment figures for schools, statistics for the resettlement communities, and types of mission work in various periods, along with an appendix naming the 209 Sisters who served and the annual number of Sisters who worked in Hong Kong between 1921 and 2004. A map of the area described would have been helpful, when particular missions were discussed.

Maryknoll's original purpose when the first six Sisters arrived in Hong Kong in 1921 was to have the area be a port of entry for their future missions on mainland China. In Hong Kong, the women would prepare for mission and learn Chinese. However, almost immediately, the Sisters saw the need to remain in Hong Kong and to serve on the mainland. By 1929, a long-term plan was in place for the island. The Maryknoll Convent School and Holy Spirit School were the Sisters' first long-term commitments. Collectively over the years, the Sisters built schools, were interned during the Japanese occupation, developed catechetical centers and training programs, evangelized, engaged in resettlement work among the refugee communities after 1950, and developed a variety of social and medical services for the people. While Chu's study of the Hong Kong missions goes to 1969, she relates the significant changes for the Sisters subsequent to that date by noting the evolution of the Sisters' constitutions and statements from Maryknoll's General Chapters.

Chu concludes that the Maryknoll Sisters were an institutional presence in Hong Kong, acting as a "third force" negotiating the colonial government and the Chinese people to help with resolution of conflict (158). She sums up the cross-cultural exchanges between the Maryknoll Sisters and the Chinese people by indicating that each group did some things the way the other group did after their association over time (160-162). I found the interpretation rather thin, especially because there were several "cultures" which were intersecting: the colonials, various European ethnic groups in the schools, and the Chinese. While Chu doesn't make this point, it can be observed that there is a value in a congregation with international members, so that if one country is out of favor at a given time, Sisters from other nationalities can respond to emergencies. Such was the case with the Canadian Maryknollers

who were able to work in the British colonial hospital in 1961, while the Americans could not.

Another conclusion Chu draws is the "liberation of the Maryknoll women." While she does not specifically define what she means by this, some of this seems to be tied to the Sisters' practical response to problems, as well as a resilient response when new needs arose. For example, after a fire swept through the wooden structures of the refugee communities, the Sisters came up with a plan for stone houses to replace them, a project which was constructed on government land and with the assistance of a Maryknoll Brother. She also suggests that the Sisters acquired a higher status than "commonly ascribed" to women, but she does not elaborate on what this means in the Chinese context. The book is unabashedly laudatory of the Sisters' mission, something one picks up immediately from the title. Through instruction of catechumens and home visits, sisters came to know the people and their family problems and one gets a sense of the closeness between the Sisters and the people.

The strongest depiction of any one Maryknoller is that of Mary Paul McKenna, superior at the critical time of twenty-eight Maryknoll Sisters' internment in Stanley Camp during the Japanese occupation from 1941-1945. During that time, the Sisters continued some of the forms and practices of religious life, including having a chapel. Mary Paul retained a schedule in the camp, which probably had the effect of some "normalcy" in a stressful situation. Her "authoritarian" style, which enabled her to deal with Japanese authorities, seems a contrast to the "liberation," which Chu values in the present day Sisters. This leads us to inquire: how did things change?

We get a hint about their "worldview" in Chu's reference to the *Veritas* Clubs, starting in 1954 at the Maryknoll Convent School. The Sisters saw this as a type of missionary work wherein groups of their graduates and young working women met regularly to "encourage their intellectual curiosity" (105) by discussing social and community issues, so the women's careers could have an impact on society. Who were some of the women who took part in these discussions and what did they end up doing in Hong Kong? Where did the Maryknollers obtain these ideas?

The book has a strong narrative, with an emphasis upon the important work the Sisters did and the relationships they established with the Chinese. But more analysis and critique would make the book stronger. There is no doubt the Sisters are valued in the Hong Kong community, nor

is there a question about the impact of the Chinese upon the Maryknollers. However, I hoped to obtain more of a Chinese "insider's view" of the story, the perception the Chinese had of Catholic life and teaching, or their reception of the catechetical approaches the Sisters used, such as that of Francis X. Ford's "Direct Apostolate."

In terms of diplomatic history and its relationship to churches, the author occasionally mentions the work of the National Catholic Welfare Council in distributing relief supplies after World War II. Actually, the many questions which arose from the returned missionaries, confiscated property, distribution of supplies and related issues in China, led to the formation of the Mission Secretariat (the forerunner of today's United States Catholic Mission Association) in 1950. Frederick McQuire, C.M., a former China missionary and Executive Secretary of the Catholic Welfare Committee of China directed the program. We thus see a structural change in the U.S. Catholic Church as a result of mission activity. This point might have strengthened Chu's desire to note the related impact between Hong Kong's church, diplomatic relationships and the Catholic Church in the United States.

There are some areas to which Chu's work could con-

tribute. The book has an underlying but undeveloped theme of economics: the need for the Sisters to support themselves while working among the poor. In what way did this make the Sisters similar to or different from the Chinese women with whom they worked? More study needs to explore the internationalization of devotional or action-oriented groups the Maryknoll Sisters used, such as Catholic Action, the Sodality, and Young Catholic Workers, for example. Is there a difference between women and men's transfer of ideas from country to country? Many American congregations of women and men religious sent members to China between 1920 and 1950, often the communities first endeavor for missions overseas. We do not have a sense of the composite history of that experience, either for American or Chinese communities. In addition to particular histories, such as Ann Colette Wolf's, *Against all Odds: Sisters of Providence Mission to the Chinese*, Mary Carita Pendergast's, *Havoc in Hunan*, and Regina Siegfried's "Missionaries More and More," Cindy Yik-Yi Chu's book would be useful for comparative purposes on that point.

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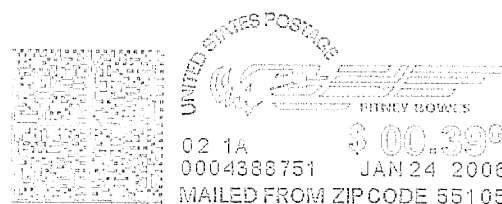
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Announcements

The Sisters of Mercy, Regional Community of Chicago, are seeking a scholar to research and write the history of their congregation from its arrival in Chicago (1846) to the present. For more information contact Joy Clough, RSM, 10024 S. Central Park Ave., Chicago, IL 60655, or email rsm@mercychicago.com with the subject line RSM HISTORY.

The Fifth Triennial Conference of the Archivists for Congregations of Women Religious, with the theme "Religious Archivists: Our Quest for the Best," will convene Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 2006, at the Drawbridge Inn, Fort Mitchell, Kentucky (near Cincinnati, Ohio). The Conference is open to any interested archivists and will cover a wide variety of archive-related topics in plenary and breakout sessions. Further information is available from the ACWR national office, Trinity University, 125 Michigan Ave., NE, Washington, D.C. 20017 or acwr@juno.com.

The 87th annual meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association will convene Jan. 4-7, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia. Proposals for topics and speakers were due January 18, 2006. Further information is available from Professor James M. Powell at 5100 Highbridge Street, Apt. 18D, Fayetteville, NY 13066; tel. 315-637-7793; fax 315-443-5876; email mpowell@dreamscape.com.

The 38th annual conference of the Western Association of Women Historians will meet at the Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove, CA, May 5-7, 2006. For program and registration information visit www.wawh.org. Advance notice of future conferences: May 4-5, 2007, University of San Diego, San Diego, CA; May 16-17, 2008, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

Newsletter Deadline

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