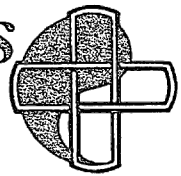


History of Women Religious News and Notes



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HWR Network News

The Call for Papers has been issued for the Eighth Triennial Meeting of the Conference on the History of Women Religious, to convene June 27-30, 2010 at the University of Scranton, Scranton, Pennsylvania. The Conference invites paper and session proposals that relate to the theme, "Confronting Challenges: Women Religious Respond to Change," with particular reference to the ways communities of women religious or their members have defined or redefined their mission in response to regional, national, or international developments. Studies may explore, among other themes and issues, the impact of change on congregational leadership, structures of governance, mission and ministry, membership, intercongregational cooperation, relations with other organizations, and the creation of new modes of affiliation.

Proposals for papers and/or sessions in the form of a title and abstract of no more than 250 words accompanied by a one-page C.V. are requested by July 15, 2009. Incomplete proposals will not be considered. Volunteers to chair and comment on sessions are also invited. Send all proposals to Margaret McGuinness, Dept. of Religion, La Salle University, 1900 W. Olney Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19141. Email mcguinness@lasalle.edu. Note that all conference participants are expected to cover the cost of their travel and accommodations. Proposals for workshops will not be considered.

In other HWR news, an ad hoc committee composed of Kathleen Sprows Cummings, Mary Hayes, and Elizabeth McGahan is reviewing administrative functions associated with the network with a view toward submitting recommendations and suggestions at the 2010 Conference regarding governance and future distribution and electronic archiving of the HWR newsletter. Plans for a Web page are being developed under the direction of Judith Sutera.

Publications

Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Susan Marti, eds., *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*,

trans. Dietlinde Hamburger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), includes essays on a broad range of topics ranging from art to spirituality.

Carmen M. Mangion, *Contested Identities: Catholic Women Religious in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), examines the identity of religious sisters from the perspective of gender, class, and ethnicity, in the context of Victorian culture and society.

Roseanne McDougall, *Cornelia Connelly's Innovations in Female Education, 1846-1864: Revolutionizing the School Curriculum for Girls* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellon Press, 2008), assesses the innovative philosophy of education for girls developed by the Victorian era's most controversial woman religious.

The Westminster Handbook to Women in American Religious History, eds. Susan Hill Lindley and Eleanor J. Stebner (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), includes essays on 24 Roman Catholic women's congregations and 46 women founders as well as coverage of such organizations as the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

Therese Marie Rebstock, SSND, has brought to completion a six-volume history of the School Sisters of Notre Dame's St. Louis Province, *Called and Sent: A Charism of Service* (Privately printed, St. Louis Province, 2008). The product of an extensive collaborative effort among members of the province, publication coincides with the worldwide celebration of the 175th anniversary of the founding of the SSNDs in Bavaria in 1833.

Paschala Noonan, OP, *La Bella Brigata: A Pictorial History of the Kentucky Dominicans* (Privately printed, Brookville Books, 2008), relates the story of her congregation, 1822 to the present, by means of archival photographs. Her work assumes unique value given the total lack of extant writings by the congregation's founders and the recent (2007) amalgamation of the Kentucky Dominicans with six other Dominican communities to form a new congregation.

Ann Miriam Gallagher, RSM, presented a lecture on “The Life and Times of Catherine Josephine Seton (1800-1891): the First New York Sister of Mercy,” at the Bradley Institute for the Study of Christian Culture, Belmont Abbey College, Belmont, North Carolina, September 8, 2008. Catherine Josephine was the daughter of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

Deborah A. Skok, *More than Neighbors: Catholic Settlements and Day Nurseries in Chicago, 1893-1930* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), documents the role of religious sisters in nursery/settlement houses under parish auspices as part of the larger picture of Roman Catholic settlement work in Chicago.

Timothy P. Stein, *Where God Reigns: A History of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, 1911-2007* (Privately printed, Sisters of the Holy Family, 2008), weaves together the history of parishes, priests, and sisters in this rural diocese of central Pennsylvania.

Marie Brinkman, SCL, *Emerging Frontiers: Renewal in the Life of Women Religious, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth 1955-2005* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), illuminates the emergence of new institutional roles and forms of ministry as part of the renewal process engaged in by her congregation, present today in 11 states and in Peru and celebrating the 150th anniversary of its foundation in 1858.

Charles E. Nolan, *Waters of Transition: The Sisters of Mount Carmel of Louisiana and the Philippines (1983-2008)* (Privately printed, The Congregation of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 2008), recounts the contemporary history of a congregation that came from France to New Orleans in 1833 and celebrates its sesquicentennial having come to new life through many “waters of transition,” most recently, floods caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Teresa A. Flaherty, RSM *Crossings in Mercy: The Story of the Sisters of Mercy of Papua New Guinea 1956-2006* (Privately printed, Sisters of Mercy—Papua New Guinea Region, 2008), documents the response of Australian Mercy Sisters, a group composed of 17 independent congregations in Australia, to the post-War call for missionary service in the Australian-administered Territory of Papua New Guinea.

M. Rosa MacGinley, PBVM, *Presentation Sisters in Papua New Guinea 1966-2006* (Wagga Wagga: Triple D Books, 2008), provides a companion volume to Flaherty’s work by

documenting the response to the same missionary call on the part of the six independent Presentation congregations in Australia and the New Zealand province of the Irish Union.

Research in Progress

Laura Swan, OSB, is working on a manuscript on the Beguines. She is interested in hearing from any religious communities that trace their roots/founding to the beguines or to one of the *begijnhof* (city within a city). Her email address is LauraSwanOSB@gmail.com.

Margaret Nacke, CSJ, and Mary Savoie, CSJ, report that NewGroup Media, South Bend, Indiana, plans to complete production on their documentary, “Interrupted Lives—Catholic Sisters under European Communism,” by April. It is hoped that ABC Affiliates will air the documentary in the Fall; contacts are being explored in Australia and Canada for possible airing on networks in those countries.

Extensive research is well underway in connection with celebration of the 200th anniversary (1809--) of the founding, by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s in Emmitsburg, Maryland. For more information on anniversary events see the following Web pages: www.setonlegacy.org (Emmitsburg); www.setonbicentennial.org (New York-New Jersey area); www.srcharitycinti.org (Cincinnati); and www.sisters-of-charity-federation.org (SC Federation).

The LCWR exhibit, “Women and Spirit,” is in its final research and construction phases. The touring schedule 2009-2012 will begin at the Cincinnati Museum Center in May 2009; the Dillon Ripley Center of the Smithsonian will host the exhibit beginning in November, 2010. Remaining venues for the traveling schedule are in the process of being confirmed. Check the Web page for the latest information, www.womenandspirit.org.

Book Reviews

Beyond the Call: A Legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine of Florida. Sister Thomas Joseph McGoldrick, SSJ (XLibris Corporation, 2008). Pp. 519, hard cover and paper. No price listed.

The opportunity to situate the unique story of her St. Augustine congregation within the broader history of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the U.S. and Europe motivated the author to undertake this research. It was a worthy ambition.

The area of the future dioceses of Florida was rooted in a tradition and faith introduced more than four hundred years previous to the Civil War. During the Reconstruction, efforts to improve conditions for African Americans were not consistent. Bishop Augustin Verot of Savannah, Georgia, and vicar apostolic of Florida, asked the Sisters of St. Joseph of his home city of Le Puy-en-Velay, to come to America for the specific mission of educating liberated slaves. The bishop began his own rebuilding with Sister Marie Sidone Rasclé and seven companions.

The first eight sisters arrived in 1866. Without a working knowledge of the language and without money, they depended on the resources made available by Bishop Verot and the hospitality offered by the Sisters of Mercy. The new Floridians had to contend with a climate and landscape radically different from their homeland as they struggled from a lack of personnel and straitened circumstances. The first overtures to the "colored" women and children near their home were welcome. Though others viewed them with disapproval for working with former slaves, the warmth and genuine goodness of the "French ladies" soon touched hearts and won them support.

McGoldrick uses materials from the Le Puy archives to tell the story of those first mission years. Even in translation, those letters and journal pages convey the flavor of the period. The observations of the sisters provide fresh insight into the American scene. Comments are non-critical, expressing naïve amazement at differences from "things back home." The openness of the sisters is apparent as they reached out to those for whom they had come; equally apparent is the mutual affection established with "their people" as they worked together through language and customs.

More sisters arrived from France and, within a relatively short time, young women joined with them to staff the fledgling school system for both "blacks and whites." The reality of their immersion was seen in the heroic efforts at the mission in Mandarin during the yellow fever epidemic of 1877. The tireless efforts cost them dearly: two of the sisters died within six hours of each other, victims with the people they had come to serve.

Twenty years later (1899) a crisis from an unexpected source shook the little foundation. The superior of the sisters was excommunicated for—in the bishop's terms—insubordination (316). He placed another sister in charge of the missions. Succeeding actions brought about a separation from the sisters in Le Puy. Caught between what the heart

desired and obedience to episcopal authority, the sisters suffered as they strove to continue their ministry. Some sisters chose to return to France or begin anew in Fall River, Massachusetts. Some of the French Sisters chose to remain and, with the American and Irish Sisters, were able to maintain the missions established since 1866, and to continue to expand.

A formal meeting between the Florida branch and the French foundation was initiated early in the 1970s. An official reunification took place in March 1977, when the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine hosted the gathering of representatives from each congregation of St. Joseph in the United States and Canada. The superior general from Le Puy was an honored guest for this occasion. Though the process and final determinations may be clear to those involved, the when and how of the relationship of the Sisters of St. Augustine with other congregations of St. Joseph within the United States and with Le Puy, tantalize this reader. There is a desire to know more about the final decision with this affiliation.

Chapters 9, 10, and 11, show the growth and renewal of the congregation. Events and statistics are organized chronologically within term(s) of each elected leader. The implementation of renewal following Vatican Council II takes up the final three chapters. It is a foregone conclusion that this congregation—317 Sisters in 1965—was caught up in meetings and discussion that were a part of religious life at that time. The listings of ministries indicate the variety of adjustment within the congregation, another commonality among religious groups. It would be of interest to know how this group met the demands of alternate apostolic work: how diocesan considerations were made a part of the deliberation; who were included; what was entailed.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine have much to contribute to the study of religious history, and McGoldrick's work opens the door. It tells of a group that is localized and contained, yet struggling with contemporary problems common to national and international congregations. Another dimension is present, that of the unique clergy involvement that dates to their early founding in Florida. This challenges readers to further research on how a diocesan congregation defines that aspect of government structure.

In his foreword, Bishop Victor Galeone calls the sisters the backbone of the diocese. His assertion that they faced religious life with dignity, resolve, renewal, and rebirth is

affirmed by the progression of events recorded in *Beyond the Call*.

Therese Marie Rebstock, SSND
St. Louis, Missouri

Sister Rosalie Rendu: A Daughter of Charity on Fire with Love for the Poor. Louise Sullivan, DC (Vincentian Studies Institute, Chicago, 2006). Pp. i-viii+456. \$40.

Sr. Rosalie Rendu (1786-1856) was a Daughter of Charity who lived through three revolutions in France. She climbed the barricades to rescue the wounded of both sides. Her convent in the poor Mouffetard district of Paris became a nonpartisan sanctuary for fugitives. University students, intellectuals, government officials and wealthy nobles, sought her out, along with the poor, the sick, and the abandoned. She was equally comfortable talking with the Archbishop and the corner newspaper vendor. She introduced Frédéric Ozanam and his companions, earnest but inexperienced university students, to the real world of the poor, and taught them to build their Society of St. Vincent de Paul on a foundation of respect toward those they sought to serve. She received the Cross of the Legion of Honor for her 50 years of public, devoted service to the poor. In mid-19th century, anticlerical Paris, 50,000 people crowded the streets for her funeral, and the government suspended its prohibition against displaying religious symbols for the day.

Rosalie Rendu was known as a saint in her own lifetime. Why, then, did it take almost a century for her cause to be promoted? Who is the woman behind the works?

Sr. Louise Sullivan, Professor Emerita of French at Niagara University, author and translator of numerous studies on Vincentian history and values, including *Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac*, applies her formidable skills to these questions. The result is a definitive biography of Sister Rosalie Rendu that is scholarly yet readable.

The first two chapters treat Rendu's childhood in the shadow of the French Revolution, when her mother harbored clergy fleeing persecution. Chs. III & IV describe the newly reestablished Company of the Daughters of Charity that Rendu entered in 1802, with about half of the members and houses it had when it was suppressed in 1793.

Rendu's formative years and early mission experience coincided with post-Revolutionary upheaval and even schism in the community. Superiors resigned, elections were contest-

ed, and turmoil ensued from 1802 to 1814. Sullivan fairly presents the facts of this painful period in her community's history. During these far-from-placid formative years, Sullivan conjectures, Rendu learned how to keep focused on her mission of service, to use her own judgment and resources, and to avoid judging those in authority -- lessons that would serve her well during her 54 years as a Daughter of Charity.

In 1815 Rendu was named Superior of the community house in the Mouffetard district, one of Paris' poorest. She never left that mission until her death 41 years later. During her lifetime, the population of Paris grew from a half million to 2 million. Revolutions and epidemics ravaged her people, already suffering under terrible working conditions, poor housing, and the high cost of food.

Rendu's apostolic energy seems incredible, even by today's standards. She began (and raised funds for) a school, a day-care center, a nursery school, an orphanage, a home for the aged, a center for distributing food and clothing, and a pharmacy.

Sullivan forthrightly tackles the tenuous relationship between Rendu and her religious superiors who often viewed her with ambivalence, consternation and outright criticism. In an age when model religious were anything but "singular," her high-profile activities on behalf of the poor and her familiarity with the rich and famous aroused much misunderstanding and resentment, as did her behind-the-scenes interventions with the Archbishop of Paris to prevent public scandal to her brother Vincentians.

Tempting as it might be, Sullivan refuses to cast her subject as a renegade, an early anti-establishment crusader, or a champion of personal initiative vs. superiors' obstinacy. Rather, describing Rendu as "not reckless but fearless," she lets Rendu's accomplishments speak for themselves (Chs. V, VI, VIII, and IX), bolstered by her own correspondence and by the testimonies of those who knew her.

On the eve of her beatification in 2003, the French Minister of Transportation singled out Rendu's nonpartisan ability to work with civic agencies to provide services for the needy. He also recognized her unique gift of creating "an irreplaceable network of personal presence." In Chs. X, XI and XII, Sullivan documents the far-reaching "networks of charity" that Rendu forged, including her pivotal role with Frédéric Ozanam in the founding of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Sullivan especially wants to capture "the woman behind the works," since, during her lifetime and after it, Rendu was accused of activism. To counter this charge, Sullivan devotes Ch. VII to the deep spirituality that grounded Rendu's remarkable works of charity. This theme continues in Ch. XIII, which sensitively explores how the aging Rendu dealt with blindness and other limits on her apostolic activity.

With meticulous scholarship, this book, amply illustrated and well-indexed, tells a compelling tale. For the non-specialist there is plenty of background material, including a valuable chronology by Francine Brown, DC, that situates Rendu's life in the context of church, world, and community events.

During her lifetime and for the ensuing century, community superiors regarded Rendu as an anomaly, if not an embarrassment. To their credit, in the 1950s they began to promote her cause, anticipating Vatican II's call to return to the spirit of the founders. That spirits of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, who taught the Daughters of Charity to serve the poor with great care, comes alive con-

vincingly in Sullivan's rich biography of this simple yet savvy servant of the poor of Paris.

Regina Bechtle, SC
Charism Resource Director
Sisters of Charity of New York

Announcements

The Conference is saddened to report the death November 16, 2008 of historian and long-time HWR member Grace McDonald, FSPA. Her successor as congregational historian, Celesta Day, FSPA, is assisting with publication of the manuscript on the community's recent history Grace had brought to near completion prior to her death.

The Historians of Women Religious of Britain and Ireland has issued a Call for Papers for its annual conference, scheduled to convene September 18-19, 2009 at The Bar Convent, York, England. Both individual and panel proposals are invited relating to the conference theme of "Crossing Boundaries." The deadline for proposals, to consist of abstracts of 300 words or less, is 28 February

Subscription Information

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2009. Please send proposals to Dr. Caroline Bowden at c.bowden@qm.ac.uk or Dr. Carmen M. Mangion at c.mangion@history.bbk.ac.uk.

The National Women's Studies Association has issued a Call for Papers for its annual conference being held November 12-15, 2009, in Atlanta, Georgia. The deadline for proposals relating to the conference theme of "Difficult Dialogues" is February 15, 2009. For more information on the theme and the proposal submission process see the NWSA Web page www.nwsaconference.org.

Newsletter Deadline

Please have copy for the **June 2009 issue** to the Editor by **May 1, 2009**. KKennelly33@hotmail.com

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