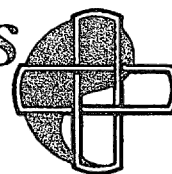


# History of Women Religious

## News and Notes



Volume 24—Number 1

February 2011

### HWR NETWORK NEWS

Several changes are soon to be adopted as the Conference on the History of Women Religious continues its primary function of facilitating networking among persons interested in promoting research and publication on the topic of women religious. Following the June 2011 issue *HWR News and Notes* will appear as a separate space in each issue of the *American Catholic Studies Newsletter* published biannually by the Cushwa Center for the Study of Catholicism, University of Notre Dame. Inclusion in the ACSN will automatically expand our networking contacts while preserving our distinct service to historians. More information on our membership profile and past activities may be obtained from the Conference web site [www.CHWR.org](http://www.CHWR.org).

Because the Cushwa newsletter will be going on-line in fall 2011 it will be essential to have email addresses for all of our subscribers by this summer, as well as regular mail addresses for those lacking email access. Please help us ensure a smooth transition to the Cushwa on-line format by using the enclosed subscription renewal form both to keep your subscription current (see address label due date by month/day/year) and to ensure our having your email address. Watch for information in the next issue of HWR about a special email address which will be used to accurately capture your email address for future communications.

### PUBLICATIONS

Dominican scholar Suzanne Noffke has brought to completion a collaborative effort spanning 30 years of research with publication of the fourth and last volume of *The Letters of Catherine of Siena* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Arizona State University, 2008). An extraordinarily challenging task, the multi-volume work not only renders the complete corpus of St. Catherine of Siena's letters available to the English-speaking world but also establishes a convincing chronology for the letters, less than ten per cent of which are identified by date, and proposes a convincing methodology

for reconstructing Catherine's life by means of the letters.

Laurence Lux-Skerritt and Carmen M. Mangion, eds., bring together in *Gender, Catholicism and Spirituality: Women and the Roman Catholic Church in Britain and Europe, 1200-1900* (London: Palgrave, 2010) a timely collection of essays exploring how ideas of the sacred influenced female relationships with piety and religious vocations over time. Essays include "Gender, Catholicism, Women's Spirituality over the Longue Durée" by the editors; A. Welch, "Marguerite Porete and the Predicament of Preaching in Fourteenth Century France"; R. Lahav, "The Impact of Renaissance Gender-Related Notions on the Female Experience of the Sacred: The Case of Angela Merici's Ursulines"; Q. Mazzonis, "Teresa de Jesus's *Book* and the Reform of the Religious Man in Sixteenth Century Spain"; E. Rhodes, "Mary Ward's English Institute and Prescribed Female Roles in the Early Modern Church"; L. Lux-Skerritt, "An English Nun's Authority: Early Modern Spiritual Controversy and the Manuscripts of Barbara Constable"; and several others.

Another of Mangion's studies, "Religious Ministry and Feminist Practice, 1830-1930," appears in *Women, gender and religious cultures in Britain, 1800-1940*, eds. Sue Morgan and Jacqueline deVries (London: Routledge, 2010). Her essay charts the emergence of sisterhoods and deaconess movement, their changing roles and relationships within institutional structures, and the relationship of both deaconesses and sisterhoods to an emerging feminist consciousness.

Annabel Loyola's award-winning feature film, *La Folle Entreprise (A Mad Venture)*, *In the Footsteps of Jeanne Mance*, is an intimate portrait of the co-founder of the city of Montreal and founder of Hotel-Dieu, the city's first hospital. A contemporary of Marie de l'Incarnation and Marguerite Bourgeoys and like them a strong and influential woman in the seventeenth century French colony of Quebec, Mance never became a nun but led a very religious life. For more information visit the film website at [www.jeannemancefilm.com](http://www.jeannemancefilm.com). Excerpts with English

subtitles may be viewed on <http://jeannemancefilm.wordpress.com/fiche-technique/extraitsphotos/>.

Recent studies relating to the Sisters of Charity in the U.S. are Betty A. McNeill, "Memoirs of Sister Cecilia O'Conway: Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's," *Vincen-tian Heritage Journal* (29:2, 2009), 20-49; and Ann M. O'Neill, "Elizabeth Bayley Seton, Teacher: A Legacy of Charity Education," *ibid.*, 7-19.

Marie Therese Hanna, OP, *Drawn by Love: A History of Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena* (Sor Juana Press, 2010), recounts the history of the Dominican community begun in Mosul, Iraq in 1877. Edited by Elise D. Garcia, OP, the 280-page volume also appears in Arabic, trans. Anne Miriam Mansoor, OP and Joanne Screes, OP. It may be ordered online through [www.sisterform.org/sor-juana-press.html](http://www.sisterform.org/sor-juana-press.html), or through Weber Shop tel. 517-266-4035.

Sarah A. Curtis, *Civilizing Habits: Women Missionaries and the French Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), explores the life stories of three French women missionaries: Religious of the Sacred Heart, Philippine Duchesne; Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, Emilie de Vialar; and Sister of St. Joseph of Cluny, Anne-Marie Javouhey. Pioneers of a new missionary era in post-Revolutionary France, these intrepid women crossed boundaries of gender and religion by bringing an evangelizing presence to Missouri, part of the once French Louisiana Territory; and to the recently acquired French colonies of Algeria and French Guiana.

Margaret M. McKenna, RSJ, *With Grateful Hearts! Mary MacKillop and the Sisters of St. Joseph in Queensland, 1870-1970* (Privately printed, North Sydney, NSW, Australia: Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, 2010), recounts the history of the congregation jointly founded in 1866 by Julian Tenison Woods and Mary MacKillop. The author's biographical treatment offers a useful corrective to some of the details of MacKillop's life publicized by the popular media on the occasion of her recent canonization while establishing a well authenticated record of the congregation that was to become the second most numerous and widespread in Australia after the Sisters of Mercy.

Mary Ann Kuttner, SSND, has completed the fifteenth and last volume of the translated and edited *Letters of Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, Foundress of the School*

*Sisters of Notre Dame* (Privately printed, Elm Grove, Wisconsin: School Sisters of Notre Dame Printing Department, 2008-2010). Letters written from 1822 to 1879 referring to the origin and development of the congregation in Bavaria are contained in the first six volumes; remaining volumes contain letters written from 1847 to 1879 pertaining to SSND missions in North America, Prussia, Austria, Hungary, England, and Baden. For more information contact the editor at [makuttner@ssndmankato.org](mailto:makuttner@ssndmankato.org).

Lou Baldwin, "Katharine Drexel: The Formation of a Saint," appears as the cover article in *American Catholic Studies* (121:3, Fall 2010), 115-121+. Baldwin, former staff writer for Philadelphia's *The Catholic Standard* and author of two biographies of Drexel, brings to the subject the experience of having been a resident at the former St. Francis Industrial School in Eddington, Pennsylvania, founded by the three Drexel sisters as a memorial to their father. He may be contacted at [lbscoop@aol.com](mailto:lbscoop@aol.com).

Kathryn Lawlor, BVM, *From There to Here: The Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary from 1942-1972* (Privately printed, Dubuque, Iowa: Mount Carmel Press, 2010), explores the changes that occurred in the BVM congregation in the years immediately preceding and following the Second Vatican Council, documenting the changes through analysis of the leadership styles of the women whose service as Mother General or President spanned the years 1942-1972.

Patricia Wittberg's essay "New Religious Communities in the United States," in *Nuove forme di vita consacrata*, eds. Roberto Fusco and Giancarlo Rocca (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 2010), 141-162, analyses from a sociological perspective the U.S. experience of new religious communities, characteristics of these communities, and the dynamic of community growth and decline. This and remaining essays in this volume, in Italian and French, originated in a 2007 gathering in Rome on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Franciscan Fraternity of Bethany. A second volume, *Primo censimento delle nuove comunità*, ed. by Giancarlo Rocca (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 2010), includes a general bibliography, an alphabetical community list, and membership census for new communities identified at the time of the meeting.

Timothy Matovina, "Remapping American Catholicism," *U.S. Catholic Historian* (28:4, Fall 2010), 31-72, argues for a reinterpretation of U.S. Catholic history, including

that of religious congregations, based on a clearer understanding of the role Latinos and multiple other peoples have played in a Church that today constitutes "the most ethnically and racially diverse national ecclesial body in the world." (70)

## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Mary Fishman, independent film producer/director, is targeting the end of 2011 for release of *Band of Sisters*, a documentary film about Catholic sisters in the U.S. who responded to the call of the Second Vatican Council to work for justice for the world's poor. Now 85 per cent filmed and nearing completion, the film is intended for national broadcast on PBS and will also be screened at national and international film festivals, Catholic universities, motherhouses, community centers and other venues. A brief description of film contents has been posted to our web site [www.CHWR.org](http://www.CHWR.org). For more information consult the producer's site [www.bandofsistersmovie.com](http://www.bandofsistersmovie.com) or contact her at [maryfishman@bandofsistersmovie.com](mailto:maryfishman@bandofsistersmovie.com).

## BOOK REVIEWS

Martha M. Libster and Betty Ann McNeil, DC, *Enlightened Charity, the Holistic Nursing Care, Education, and "Advices Concerning the Sick" of Sister Matilda Coskery, 1799-1870*. Golden Apple Publications, 2009. Pp. 504.

Coauthored by Martha Libster, a psychiatric nurse, and Betty Ann McNeil, DC, a professional social worker, this study focuses on the nursing history of the American Daughters of Charity in the nineteenth century and the community's care of the insane. It relies on two principal primary documents written by Sister Matilda Coskery (1799-1870): *Mount Hope Retreat* and *Advices Concerning the Sick*. The content analysis of *Advices* documents the pre-1873 evolution of the nursing profession in America through the collective efforts of the Daughters and other congregations. This study challenges an assumption still held that nursing as a profession commenced with the adoption of the Nightingale model at Bellevue Hospital in 1873. *Advices* contains a plethora of details prescribed by Sr. Coskery regarding wounds, diet, sickroom cleanliness and the importance of kindness when caring for the mentally ill.

Considerable attention is given to the seventeenth century Vincentian spiritual antecedents of the nineteenth century American foundation. Readers are reminded that the

Daughters of Charity were Sisters first and nurses second, receiving their on-the-job training in hospital or infirmary settings after they were formed by the community's Mistress of Novices.

Anastasia Coskery entered the community in 1829.. A year later, as Sr. Matilda Coskery, she was on the infirmary staff at St Joseph's in Emmitsburg, Maryland. In 1833 Sr. Coskery accompanied her sisters when the Daughters were asked to staff the Maryland Hospital for the Insane in Baltimore. Within seven years, the Daughters left the Hospital in a dispute over management issues regarding the care of the insane and the limits of the Sisters' discretion in providing care.(83) They opened their own institution eventually known as Mount Hope Retreat. Sr. Matilda Coskery became the first Sister Servant (superior) of this institution where a consultant physician was retained and moral treatment promoted for the insane. The authors note, "The ideal of moral therapy was that the patients create new lives within the asylum that they could then translate to life outside the asylum."(191)

The focus of the Daughters' care was always to elevate their patients' self-esteem. *Advices* also reveals that the Daughters were involved with the care of alcoholics. Coskery's use of language reveals her sensitivity towards those suffering from this condition, "an old, worn-out drinker will not be able to digest his fill of water."(220) In dealing with the mentally ill or the inebriate, the Daughters often had disputes with physicians over diets for patients. Reportedly one doctor observed, "The only objection that can be made against [the Sisters] is the fear so often realized, that their mode of organization disposes them rather to follow their own plans and desires, than those of the physician."(217) The authors, perhaps betraying their bias, write that Sr. Coskery knew through experience that there was a limit to obedience to physicians when it came to patient care, noting that there were times when Coskery would decline to administer an opiate and instead give a cup of "hop tea."(218)

The professional lives of the Daughters unfolded against the nineteenth century milieu of ubiquitous anti-Catholicism voiced even by Dorothea Dix, the prominent advocate of reform for the care of the mentally ill. As well, similar to any formal organization, the Daughters contended with the internal politics of their religious community. About Coskery a contemporary wrote, "Everyone reverences [her] yet hearts do not cluster around Sister Matilda. [Her] virtue . . . excites more respect than

love.”(284) In the election for Mother General in 1845 Coskery lost by 20 votes. The post election fallout saw Emmitsburg separate from New York, and the Emmitsburg Sisters seeking affiliation with the Daughters in Paris. By 1850 the American Daughters, headquartered in Maryland, had relinquished the Seton garb and adopted the habit of the French sisters, including the large white cornette.

Throughout the book the authors refer to the continuing expansion of the “secularization” of nursing – essentially the profession’s movement away from its religious roots and ties, especially after the Civil War. Even with the “secularization” of nursing, however, for much of the twentieth century a nurse’s uniform included a reminder of the profession’s origins – the nursing cap, which many may recognize as a modified nun’s coif.

*Enlightened Charity* succeeds in capturing the nursing world from the 1830s to the late 1890s through the Daughters’ role in the profession’s development. Libster and McNeil praise Coskery’s knowledge, particularly in the care of the insane, as exemplary. No doubt some modern practitioners, schooled in pharmacological and integrative care and the impact of their voice on patients, might resonate to the sentiment in Coskery’s observation expressed over a century ago, “Your mild tone of voice, is like a ray of light, or taking the hand of a blind man, saying: this way, my friend. Thus you loan them your reason, till their’s [sic] returns.”(233)

Elizabeth W. McGahan  
University of New Brunswick-  
Saint John Campus

*Response to the Word: The Memoirs and Writings of Sister Annamarie Cook Foundress of the Sisters of the Living Word 1914-2005*, compiled by Sisters of the Living Word. Privately printed, Sisters of the Living Word, Arlington Heights, Illinois, 2010. Pp. 180+xxviii.

The momentum begun by the Sister Formation Conference and the Second Vatican Council caused sometimes necessary fractures within religious communities. Provinces, intra- and inter-, struggled with members whose ability to embrace the call to transformation and re-formation occurred at different paces. Some communities moved swiftly, and possibly too swiftly, for members to integrate and embrace change; some moved too slowly, fearing change. I believe it is still too soon to make critical

and effective judgments on this. I suspect that in another fifty years or so scholars will seriously explore what happened, with the necessary and healthy distance needed to make meaningful judgment possible.

As with many communities, Annamarie Cook and companions did not set out to break away from the Sisters of Christian Charity. Rather, it was a judicious and measured response to the desire to serve the gospel as adult women. I sensed another desire: to invest energies in ministry rather than dealing with an internal community life that was essentially about controlling its members. And yet that is exactly what I was missing. Response to the Word tells us of all the meetings and correspondence meticulously required to separate and form a new community. While Annamarie Cook was undoubtedly loved and admired for her guidance through troubling and troubled times, I still felt like this was an ode to a process and not to the spirituality that obviously motivated these Sisters to disrupt their lives for a greater cause.

I was mindful while reading this of an earlier history, *Peacemaking-Our Journey: A History of the Franciscan Sisters of Peace* by Constance Gaynor, FSP, which, while providing some narrative of the process of separation and establishment of their new community, left me with a greater sense of heart and spirit. This may be the result of one author versus a team of compilers and writers.

*Response to the Word* will be valued by future historians for the founder’s memoirs, the raw data, the interview with S. Annamaria Cook in 1994, the history of the process and reasons (as much as one can understand why we do something in the given moment) for creating a new community, and records of some of the foundation correspondence. Along with other recent histories of new communities, *Response to the Word* will give future historians good data with which to work as they attempt to understand the momentous season of the Second Vatican Council for women’s communities. After all, was there any other section of the Catholic Church that took the Council as seriously as American sisters?

Laura Swan, OSB  
St. Placid Priory  
Lacey, Washington

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The History of Women Religious Conference extends

its sympathy to the Sisters of Mercy over the death of Mary Hermenia Muldrey, RSM on October 11, 2010, at the age of 90. Author of *Abounding in Mercy*, a biography of Mother Austin Carroll, as well as of numerous other historical studies, Sister Hermenia was an enthusiastic member of the HWR Conference since its inception. She endured evacuation from her beloved New Orleans in the wake of hurricane Katrina, residing during her last years at Catherine Residence in St. Louis.

The American Catholic Historical Association recently bestowed its "Service to Catholic Studies" award on the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in recognition of LCWR sponsorship of the traveling exhibit, "Women and Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America." The citation notes that the exhibit "reflects the best of the abundant research and scholarship that has been done on women religious in the past generation," and particularly commends the manner with which the exhibit challenges its viewers "to look again at the role and place" of religious communities, at their "pivotal role in shaping the Catholic church in the U.S. [and] their importance for shaping the

nation's history." The exhibit is scheduled to remain at the Statue of Liberty National Monument/Ellis Island Immigration Museum, Liberty Island, New York to January 22, 2011, following which it will travel to the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, Dubuque, Iowa, February 28 to May 22, 2011; the José Drudis Biada Gallery at Mount St. Mary's College, Los Angeles, California, June 17 to August 14, 2011; the Center for History in association with the University of Notre Dame and St. Mary's College in South Bend, Indiana, September 2 to December 31; and finally to The California Museum of History, Women, and the Arts, Sacramento, California, January 24 to June 3, 2012.

Archive news: writings by and about Margaret Anna Cusack have been donated by Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace Janet Davis Richardson and Rosalie McQuaide to St. Leo University in Florida where they will be housed in the archives of the Daniel A. Cannon Memorial Library according to the report of archivist M. Dorothy Neuhofer, OSB.

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

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Karen M. Kennelly, Editor  
HWR News and Notes  
1880 Randolph Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55105

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

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St. Paul, MN 55105

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The spring 2011 issue of the *American Catholic Studies Newsletter* will be the last printed issue. Subsequently, the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism will publish the newsletter in pdf format each semester, available at no cost to subscribers, on the Cushwa Center's web site [www.nd.edu/~cushwa](http://www.nd.edu/~cushwa). If you are currently a subscriber and wish to receive biannual email notification when the Center posts a new issue, please send an email to [Cushwa.1@nd.edu](mailto:Cushwa.1@nd.edu) with your current email address.

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**Newsletter Deadline**

Please have copy for the **June 2011 issue** to the Editor by **May 1, 2011**. [KKennelly33@hotmail.com](mailto:KKennelly33@hotmail.com).

**The HWR Newsletter**

Published by the  
Conference on History of Women Religious  
1880 Randolph Avenue St. Paul, MN 55105  
ISSN: 1054-545X

Subscription: \$10.00/1 year  
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