

New Women New Church

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A Voice for Women in the Catholic Church

Differences Among Us

By Victoria Rue

Theology and liturgy are intertwined sisters. One affects the other. At the same time, we must see that there are different approaches to coming to the table. I am hopeful that in the coming months, WOC can serve as a fulcrum for different points of view regarding theology and liturgy and a renewing priestly ministry. I offer below a small example to begin the conversation.

Since being ordained a woman priest in July 2005 as part of the group Roman Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP), I have had the privilege of presiding not only within the Sophia small faith community of Santa Cruz, but within various communities throughout the U.S.A.

Recently I was invited to preside at Eucharist at a rather large gathering in a U.S. metropolis. It would be the first time that a woman priest had been asked to preside for this organization. And the first time, as well, to have a woman priest who was also an "out" lesbian. In weekly phone conversations that spanned months of preparation for the Mass, I worked with a male priest to design a feminist Mass based on several liturgies that I had already created for previous celebrations. As I laughingly told Jim, "you know you can't just add women and stir." Meaning, you can't just invite a woman priest to preside at a Eucharist and not expect that the liturgy itself will be affected, such as the use of inclusive language. Jim was eager to work with me and just as eager to use my presence as the presider to introduce new ideas into the group's weekly liturgy.

For some time I have been using an embodied prayer to the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Mass. Jim was eager to have everyone participate in it. We took



Victoria Rue presides at a recent Eucharist.

out the Creed, both agreeing that we did not need a "loyalty oath" in the middle of our liturgy. I wrote a new Eucharistic Prayer that I hoped could be shared by many voices in addition to my own, but Jim suggested that it be said by me because it would be meaningful to people to see and hear a woman pray it since this might be the first time that many people would be witnessing a woman priest. I understood and agreed. We added the entire congregation saying the words of institution. He asked that I invite the congregation to join in saying the words together. He was particularly excited to add this with the hope that it could be replicated each Sunday thereafter. Following the words of institution, we also added a moment when each person would turn to her/his right and left, take the hands of that person and look them in the eyes saying "this is my body, this is my blood." I have added this piece to every Eucharist at which I preside. I find that people are often in tears following this moment because, as I am commonly told, "I understood the Eucharist in a whole new way today."

continued on page 10

Celebrate the 15th Annual
**World Day of Prayer for
Women's Ordination**

March 25, 2008

**"Imagining and Creating
an Inclusive Church"**

Every year, WOC members and friends host events across the country on March 25, the feast of the Annunciation, to advocate women's ordination into a renewing priestly ministry.

Host an event in your community!

**Free Toolkit, including prayer service,
will be available online in December at
www.womensordination.org**

For more information, contact
Nidza Vázquez at 703-352-1006 or
nvazquez@womensordination.org

See page 11 to be included in this year's
inclusive prayer service

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Dear WOC Members,



As Mother Nature brings us longer nights once again, I hope you enjoy the following articles that encompass many different facets of the women's ordination movement.

First, Victoria Rue publicly opens the conversation about some of the differences that are emerging among women priests, especially as they relate to liturgical celebrations and other traditions. As expected with the wave of women's ordinations since 2001, differences of style, theology, and church have been surfacing among these new priests. Victoria articulates her position clearly, so read the article and join the dialogue.

Next, Anne Eggebroten gives us some history about Women-Church and describes the essence of their recent conference in Chicago.

On page 6, the presentation given by Dr. Marie-Thérèse Van Lunen Chenu at the Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW)

Steering Committee meeting in Paris provides us with a view into the French perspective on feminism, the French organization that works for women's ordination, and Dr. Chenu's suggestions for moving the issue forward.

In our efforts to continue ecumenical dialogue, the Rev. Lyn Brakeman regales us with her difficult but persistent ordeal in becoming an ordained Episcopal priest. Her advice to Catholic women comes from many years of experience and a rich prayer life.

Speaking of ordained women, the Rev. Jessica Rowley, who was recently featured in a *Newsweek* web exclusive, offers the story of her journey to ordination in the Ecumenical Catholic Communion on page 12.

There are plenty of other interesting items in this issue. Don't miss the call for submissions for the World Day of Prayer for Women's Ordination prayer service on page 11. Read about the recent Young Feminist Network retreat on page 13 and meet WOC's new Board members on page 14. Then, nominate your favorite women's ordination activist for WOC's Board of Directors — perhaps it is you! Our last page lists WOC's merchandise, so go wild with Christmas shopping that is sweatshop-free and supports one of your favorite causes.

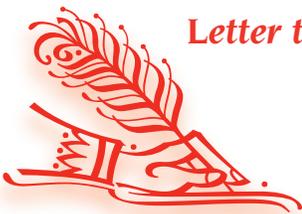
With the waning days of Ordinary Time, I pray you find rest, refreshment, and peace in the spirit of Jesus and Mary.

Blessings of the Season,
Aisha S. Taylor

"Clearly, if one wants to know what is going on among Catholics, listening to the Vatican and national episcopacies is a small part of the story. One needs to look at the grass roots."

~ Rosemary Radford Ruether in *National Catholic Reporter*, September 7, 2007

Letter to the Editor



Dear Editor,

I finished reading the summer issue of *NewWomen, NewChurch*, and wanted to comment on the discussion about the Ministry of Irritation. I love the name "Irritation," and I think it should stay as is. I have become even more convinced of that after reading the letters

people wrote with their suggestions. Like them, I was trying to think of other words that would work, however, I cannot think of another word that packs as much punch as this one does. The word "irritation" is so self explanatory and accessible; it hardly needs elaboration, unlike some other terms that I thought of or were suggested. It says exactly what we are doing, and there is great integrity as well as marketability to that. I wanted to express my support for it, as I imagine you don't always get responses from people who like it, even if they are thinking it! I have loved the term since the very first time I heard it from Gerry Rauch after the Board of Directors created the Three Ministries focus.

Lauren Ivory
Chicago, Ill.

NewWomen, NewChurch is published quarterly by the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC). WOC works for the ordination of women as deacons, priests and bishops into a renewing priestly ministry in the Roman Catholic Church.

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In principle and practice WOC values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability.

A subscription to *NewWomen, NewChurch* is included in the WOC membership fee of \$45. WOC is incorporated under 501(c)(3) as a nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax deductible accordingly.

WOC archives, including microfilms of *NewWomen, NewChurch*, are held at Marquette University. For more information, contact Philip Runkel at the Department of Special Collections & University Archives, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI 53201-3141, 414.288.5903, or phil.runkel@marquette.edu.

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WOC Sends Blessings to the Newly Ordained

Roman Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP) ordinations in Quebec, Canada May 19

Jean Beauchemin, deacon
Johane Filiatraut, deacon

RCWP ordinations in Toronto, Canada May 27

Jim Lauder, deacon
Monica Kilburn-Smith, deacon
Mary Bouclin, priest
Cheryl Bristol, priest
Mary Ellen Robertson, priest

RCWP ordinations in New York, N.Y. July 14

Gabriella Velardi-Ward, deacon
Gloria Carpeneto, deacon
Andrea Johnson, priest
Eleonora Marinaro, priest

RCWP ordinations in Santa Barbara, Calif. July 22

Norma Jean Coon, deacon
Juanita Cordero, priest

RCWP ordinations in Portland, Ore. July 28

Ruth Ellen Broeski, deacon
Suzanne Avison Thiel, deacon
Toni Jean Tortorilla, priest

RCWP ordinations in Minneapolis, Minn. August 12

Kathy Redig, deacon
Ree Hudson, deacon
Elsie McGrath, deacon
Alice Iaquina, priest
Judith McKloskey, priest

Ecumenical Catholic Communion ordination in St. Louis, Mo. September 7

Jessica Rowley, priest

Pope to Speak at U.N. in Spring 2008

The Associated Press
September 20, 2007

VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI plans to travel to the United States in the spring to address the United Nations, but other possible U.S. stops haven't yet been confirmed, the Vatican said Wednesday. Benedict accepted an invitation from the U.N. secretary-general.

Lay Ecclesial Ministry

By John L. Allen Jr – National Catholic Reporter
August 17, 2007

According to the National Pastoral Life Center, there are 31,000 lay ecclesial ministers working in Catholic parishes in the United States today, surpassing the 29,000 diocesan priests in the country.... There are currently 18,000 people preparing to become lay ecclesial ministers, roughly six times the number of seminarians preparing to become priests.... As of 2005, roughly 80 percent of lay ecclesial ministers in the United States were women.

Lay Ministry Traditional and Radically New

America Magazine
September 10, 2007

One of the "top three or four most important ministerial shifts" in the last 2,000 years has been the "emergence of lay ecclesial ministry over the past 40 years," said Edward P. Hahnenberg, assistant professor of theology at Jesuit-run Xavier University in Cincinnati. He said it was on a "historical par with — and in fact may even eclipse — the changes to the church brought about by the rise of communal forms of monasticism in the fifth century, the birth of mendicant orders in the 13th century, or the explosion of women's religious communities in the 19th century." Hahnenberg, who is also a theological adviser to the bishops, put the development of lay ecclesial ministry within a broad historical context as being both "traditional and radically new."

Consider writing a letter to the editor or an Op-ed responding to news you see that relates to women's ordination and church reform. For samples and tips, visit:

www.womensordination.org
under Action Alerts

“Quotable Quotes”

"Nobody is waiting for great advances in the church while Benedict XVI is pope. 'The problem is that the hierarchy is extremely conservative. They are not ready for the transformation, but the faithful — they are ready,' stated Aisha Taylor, director of Women's Ordination Conference."

~ "Abuse Feeds Movements for Change" in *Mundo*, a Brazilian newspaper, on July 17, 2007, translated by Dr. Maria Elvira Callapez



"Recent events have not shaken Catholics' views of the faith very much, but they have shaken Catholics confidence in the Church. Laypeople continue to identify with the faith and remain committed to the Church, but they have differences with the hierarchy when it comes to specific teachings and policies (p. 14)... As far as most Catholics are concerned, helping the poor, belief in Jesus' resurrection from the dead, the sacraments, and devotion to Mary as the Mother of God form the unchangeable core of the faith; other things ... such as having a celibate male clergy ... are less important and open to change." (p. 143)

~ From *American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church* by William D'Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge, and Mary L. Gautier, 2007

"The Christian faithful are obliged to express their opinions about the good of the church to their bishops and fellow church members. Not only is it your right, but it is your obligation. Right there in canon law, this is the authentic teaching of the Roman Catholic Church."

~ Sr. Kate Kuentler, a canon lawyer, in the article "The rights and duties of the laity" by Dennis Coday in the August 31, 2007 issue of *National Catholic Reporter*

Celebrating 25 Years of Catholic Feminist Ministries

By Anne Eggebroten

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, waltzing with a Women-Church activist from Germany to the swinging sound of the Chicago Outskirts, a 17-piece all-women band, on Saturday night. Victoria Rue twirling a partner, later taking the hands of Donna Herp, who left behind her walker to join the dancing. Spontaneity and joy marked the gathering of Women-Church in Chicago, August 17-19, to celebrate 25 years of women creating their own liturgies.

The joyful spirit was reminiscent of the 1993 Women-Church conference in Albuquerque, where more than 2,000 people gathered with the theme “Women-Church: Weavers of Change / Mujer Iglesia: Tejedoras de Cambio.” A variety of cultural elements were woven into the liturgies and dance. As with most meaningful events, it was not without its difficult moments. Mary Hunt described this moment in her entry on Women-Church in the *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion*, edited by Rosemary Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller, “[At the] third such gathering in 1993 in Albuquerque, NM...the multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural reality of common life in the United States made for difficult dynamics in this mostly white, Anglo, middle-class Christian movement. However the conflicts helped to force a more conscious self-awareness and opened the way for women-church to be more diverse.”

The two hundred fifty people at this year’s gathering sat together around tables of eight to share liturgies and listen to speakers with the theme “Celebrating Catholic Feminist Ministries.” They had traveled from as far away as Japan and Germany, as well as many parts of the U.S. and Canada to share their visions for the *ekklesia* of wo/men and the discipleship of equals.

Keynote speakers included womanist theologian Diana Hayes, who teaches systematic theology at Georgetown University; Mari Castellanos, an ordained United Church of Christ minister who works in legislative advocacy, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, New Testament professor at the Harvard Divinity School, and Mary Hunt, cofounder of WATER.

WOC, as one of the 45 groups that form the Women-Church Convergence (W-CC), was a supportive presence and played a major role in planning the event. Joy Barnes, former executive director of WOC,



Soona Samsami and her colleague enthralled the participants of the Women-Church conference in Chicago with the stories of their imprisonment in Iran for refusing to don the headscarf when fundamentalist Islam took over the government.

served on the planning committee. Aisha Taylor, WOC’s current executive director, co-convoked the opening session on Friday evening and co-facilitated a working group on anti-racism. Nidza Vázquez, WOC’s program director, was the chair of the outreach committee and a “weaver,” pulling together the insights and suggestions of the Gender and Racial Justice working group on Saturday afternoon.

A founding member of the convergence, “WOC holds the tension between the two ends of the spectrum — those working for ordination into the current system and those leading their own liturgies without ordination, and everyone in between” as Taylor explains it. While WOC has paid staff to carry on its work, W-CC exists as a loose, grassroots coalition depending on the volunteer efforts of its member groups.

Over a third of the W-CC member organizations are local groups who meet regularly to share liturgies designed and led by women, naming the divine with words such as *Sophia* and *Divine Wisdom*.

Women-Church was founded in Chicago in 1983 at the third national WOC conference, and held a major international gathering in 1987 in Cincinnati. In 1985, Rosemary Radford Ruether described the movement in her book *Women-Church: Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities*. She and Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, among others, have continued to call for the formation of feminist communities, the *ekklesia* of wo/men, which they view as a way to transform the Roman Catholic Church into a discipleship of equals.

In the September 7, 2007 issue of *National Catholic Reporter*, Ruether states, “Women-Church Convergence is an outgrowth of the Women’s Ordination Conference.... This movement called for women and men to gather in communities for liturgy, study, reflection and social justice work in which all members participate as equals, with no separation of an ordained leader from the other members.”

Many of those gathered in Chicago remain active in their parishes and/or committed to their canonical religious communities despite significant theological differences with the institutional church. Groups like the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Loretto Women’s Network live out their feminist commitments through Women-Church. These women are modeling Miriam Therese Winter’s concept of “defecting in place.”

Participants also spanned the ecumenical rainbow: there were Protestants, Catholic women who have been ordained in other churches, and Catholics at all levels of commitment to the church. Veronica Dunne of the University of Alberta in Edmonton said it in this way: “We transgress denominational boundaries. We refuse to accept any kyriarchical definition of what constitutes a faith community.”

Catholic women priests were another lively presence, including Bishop Patricia Fresen, coordinator of the International Program of Preparation for Roman Catholic Womenpriests. At a caucus of 10-15 women priests, women deacons and others, the energy was electric. “That room was filled, and so many were working with those on the margins of society,” reports Janet Morrissey from California. “It really made me think of what the beginning of the church was like.” Fresen, Rue, Sheila Dierks, Joan Hammond, and Bridget Mary Meehan were among the ordained women whose combined presence made real the vision of a changed church.

Issues of diversity and inclusion came to the fore at a few different points during the weekend. It was generally noted that participants did not represent all women in the inclusive term “Women-Church,” given that most were older, European-American women. However, it was also made clear that many member organizations are actively working to become more diverse and inclusive.

On Saturday morning during a panel discussion with the four keynote speakers,



Left to right: Joy Barnes, Mary Hunt, Theresa Yugar, Victoria Rue, Diann Neu, Aisha Taylor and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza dance the night away to the *Chicago Outskirts*, a 17-piece all-woman band.

Hayes answered a question about the use of the term *womanist* by stating that the word *feminist* "is not applicable to my situation" and is seen as a negative term by most African-American Christian women. Hayes mentioned the book *Deeper Shades of Purple*, which explores the achievements of the *womanist* movement over the past two decades and evaluates some of the leading voices and different perspectives in it. Hayes said she uses *womanist* because of its depth and breadth; it can't be simply translated as "black feminist."

"I don't care about the name," Castellanos responded. "Those who do the work of justice with me, march in an immigration march with me, I know who you are—that's what matters."

Working groups at the conference formed the core of the weekend. An intentional effort was made to model partnership in ministry, with two women leading every working group: community building with Fresen and Theresa Kane, peace work with Kathleen Desautels and Katy Zatsick (a former WOC Board member), immigration ministry with Giselle Stern Hernández and Mary Peter Bruce, feminist theologies with Ruether and Theresa Yugar, feminist liturgies with Dierks and Meehan, justice in reproductive health and HIV/AIDS with Marissa Valeri and Betty Holcomb, among many others.

As always, the liturgies included innovative feminist rituals: blessings from a bowl of water at each table with rose petals and lavender, anointing with oil to strengthen us in our ministries, lighting candles, blessing of breads and beverages representing all continents of the earth, laying on of hands, and sending forth in the power of Divine Wisdom. Accompanying music ranged from "Dancing Sophia's Circle" by Colleen Fulmer to "Blessing Song" by Marsie

Silvestro and African-American spirituals with words adapted to the occasion, for example, "Sing Io! Sing, O Sophia" instead of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot."

There were two highlights to the weekend: Giselle Stern Hernández's solo performance on Friday evening and the testimonies of two Muslim women in the closing session. Stern Hernández vividly described her journey of growing up without church ties on Long Island as the child of a culturally Jewish father and Mexican mother, to marrying a Mexican man who was deported in 2001 and settling in rural Mexico with her in-laws. She found herself immersed in a conservative Catholic environment where the priest prevented her mother-in-law from taking Communion because she was "harboring sinners"—a son and daughter-in-law who had been married in a civil ceremony, not



in the church. "Until the day when she, my mother-in-law, feels invested in this movement, we are not doing our job," Hernández stated. "When I see her here, then we're doing our job."

Just when the conference was coming to a close, two Muslim women delayed in traffic by pouring rain arrived at the microphone and enthralled listeners with their stories. Soona Samsami described her imprisonment at age 17 in Iran for refusing to don the headscarf in 1979 when

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fundamentalist Islam took over the government. Samsami's colleague reported on her four years in Evin Prison in Tehran on the same charge, where she witnessed the atrocities of torture and rape and her friends were hanged in front of her. She said, "I refused to cover myself. I wanted to be a free woman. There are now 610 people in prison waiting to be hanged in public, and eight women waiting to be stoned." Both women called on the assembled Christian women to work for the release of their Muslim sisters facing such severe oppression. For more information or to contact Samsami, director of the Women's Freedom Forum, visit www.womenfreedomforum.org.

The event came at a critical time. Catholic women are living out their calls to spiritual leadership in many ways. The participants explored these different feminist ministries and shared the common vision of bringing about women's recognition and empowerment in church and society. Each person brought a piece of the collective wisdom to imagine and create the future of Women-Church. Participants celebrated the progress Women-Church has made in the last twenty-five years and envisioned the actions that will take Women-Church into the future. It was crystal clear that it will not be another fifteen years until the next gathering.

Anne Eggebrotten has participated in a Women-Church liturgy group in Southern California for twenty years and is also active in the Evangelical & Ecumenical Women's Caucus, www.eewc.com.

“Quotable Quotes”

"Although the news from the Vatican appears to be endlessly backward looking, from continual warnings against 'relativism' to the reinstatement of the Tridentine Mass, there is astonishing creativity at the grass roots. Indeed the more the hierarchy of the Catholic church appears in stasis or backward retreat, the more freewheeling the creative initiatives that pop up on the ground. One forum for these alternative ministries is the Women-Church Convergence."

~ Rosemary Radford Ruether in her article "Creativity at the grass roots: Women-Church Convergence models religious community" in the September 7 issue of National Catholic Reporter

French Catholic Feminists Committed to Partnership and Connection of Church and Society

By Dr. Marie-Thérèse Van Lunen Chenu

Translated by Marie Bouclin

The following presentation was given to the Steering Committee of the Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW) meeting in Paris, on March 4, 2007.

France's Somewhat Ambiguous Position on Feminism and Gender Studies

In France, feminism is the result of an evolution rather than a revolution. The word *feminism* itself is not popular. People still say, "I'm not feminist, but..." A number of factors contribute to this mindset.

French society is essentially a mixed one where sexism is still prevalent, but not of the variety that has been characterized by ostracism and a clear separation of sexes as experienced elsewhere. In many rural communities, for instance, traditionally Catholic couples engage in a sharing of responsibilities that often evolves into real partnerships between men and women.

A tradition of gallantry, frivolousness and off-color remarks make for a gentler everyday sexism and active misogyny that does not prevent men from respecting and even being fascinated by women. Over the course of history, in politics, arts and literature, the influence of women has often been considerable.

The issue of equality of the sexes has been a subject of debate since the Middle Ages and it has involved men (e.g., Benoîte Groult, *Le féminisme au masculin*, Denoël/Gonthier, 1977). Sometimes men were ahead of women on this issue.

Finally, we are unfortunately chauvinistic. We French did not immediately realize the international scope or the universal importance of the United Nations Decade for Women. Many chose to poke fun at what they perceived as the radical feminism imported from the United States.

And, of course, we have trouble translating the word "gender" because in French *genre* has several meanings: type, appearance, genre (as in literary), as well as gender and genus. An important document has recently been published by the French Conference of Catholic Bishops on the issue of gender. Without actually naming the Queer Movement, this document lumps several issues together, casting suspicion on gender theory, gender studies, and gender approach, among others.

Therefore, I think we would be lacking in objectivity if we limit ourselves by rejecting words like *féminisme* and *genre*. Some excellent journals exist, such as *Les Cahiers du genre*, as well as books written by both male and female scholars who identify as feminist. There is also a marked interest among social scientists, both men and women, who study the sociology of religion.

Femmes et Hommes en Église (Women and Men are Church)

I would like to give you a brief outline of the history of Femmes et Hommes en Église (FHE) because over these 37 years, from 1970-2007, we have dedicated much time and energy to the issue of women's ordination and we wish to reflect with you and try to develop strategies for action.

FHE has evolved out of the following historical movements: *within society*: decline of patriarchy, confrontation of feminism, evolving parity between sexes based on values and the norms of law; *within Christianity*: a renewed understanding of witnessing to the gospel and community life; some Christian denominations expressing their rejection of sexist exceptions and opening ministries to women; *within the Roman Catholic Church*: renewal following the Second Vatican Council and its teachings — the hopes of communities and also their disappointments; *discrimination on the basis of sex*.

In defining our objectives and activities, we started from a structural analysis that we have continuously tried to pursue and perfect: *What Church do we want?* We have always refused to separate *the cause of women from that of men and the need for community renewal*. To that degree, we have also been critical of clericalism, sexism, and dogmatism.

From the beginning we were committed to the interface between *society and the Church, refusing to separate them*. As Catholics our *reference points are Christianity and ecumenism*. We have found strength and support in the contributions and the influence of the reform churches and have been active participants in the work of the World Council of Churches.



FHE, one of the rare feminist movements that is composed of women and men and has been committed to partnership between the sexes since 1970, has focused these last few years on the progress and demands of parity, value reference and the norm of universal law as the essential basis for partnership, whether in the Church or in society.

Our association has never had a large membership but it has collaborated with various associations and movements to organize some fifteen international symposia. Though French, we have strong international connections. We work within several social and church networks, most notably in France with the *Fédération des Réseaux du Parvois* made up of some fifty movements or groups of reformist Christians. In Europe we're part of the *Réseau Européen des Églises de liberté* — with which we are preparing a conference for the European Council in October 2007 on the impact and role of religions in Europe. And of course, we are affiliated with Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW).

From 1971 to 1997, our newsletter *Femmes et Hommes en Église* published information and studies found nowhere else, notably from outside our borders and from ecumenical sources. Even now we strive to expose, through the *Parvois* newsletter, different ways of working for change, trying to reach our objectives through education in the form of testimonies, theoretical studies, book reviews and creative works.

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The access of women to ordained ministries in other denominations or through new Catholic initiatives has forced us to clearly state our position on the ordination of women. We wish to show our solidarity, transmit information, and present it for what it really is — both a condition and an opportunity for a deeper faith and renewal. In this area we also prefer the structural analysis approach. We know that the possibility of women participating in all forms of ministry calls into focus other issues: the meaning of Tradition, the authority of the Magisterium, the responsibility of the laity, community practice, challenging clericalism, the sacralization of the priesthood and the sacraments, and so on. We have dealt with these different topics through our international conferences.

Finally, in 2006 we created a research and information project called **Genre en Christianisme (Gender in Christianity)**. In presenting it, we affirmed an interest in the epistemological concept of gender. We believe it is important for Christians to publicly recognize that “in Christianity *also*, the relationship between the sexes is a social construct.” Our database of more than 1,500 publications is located in the library of the Dominicans, Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, and these publications are catalogued with the CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research). We have received requests for information from several students and professors who are conducting research for doctoral studies in literature, sociology, linguistics, and other types of research.

Considerations and Suggestions for the Current Context

Women have not been consulted regarding issues that concern us and our partnership with men, nor in what Rome imagines and decides for the life of the Church. Consequently, we should shift the parameters in discussing the issue by refusing to accept the “woman-as-object” paradigm and choose instead to discuss the overall issue of *Church* and its message today. I believe we should shift the debate away from *femaleness-as-object* and dispute *maleness-as-subject* that is operative in the Roman institution today.

A survey in the January 2007 issue of *Le Monde des Religions* found that 79 percent of French Catholics say they are *in favor of the admission of women to the priesthood*. Such an endorsement in principle is quite new, so women are still looked at askance or accusingly if they *transgress*, mention or support *transgression* of Canon Law. Clergy

and laity alike tend to contrast women who do transgress with other women whose spirituality and abilities are increasingly given the benefit of official “recognition” — those with a mission, “happy” in their work and with their place in the Church, those who do not seek the “power” of ordination. We should applaud the positive side of this development. However, the numbers of the latter are growing, as are their responsibilities, while remaining limited. And the hierarchy puts them forward as the only valid female role model.

We must uncompromisingly reject and oppose the way in which this sets women against each other. This does not happen when men assert their different vocations and gifts in the service of the Gospel. For the survival of the Church, women must also lay claim to all the responsibilities conferred upon us by baptism and to all the gifts bestowed upon us by grace (Romans 12: 4-8).

Clearly, Rome is now attempting a different sort of justification for refusing to ordain women. The theological and ecclesiological arguments put forward since 1976 have failed to convince Catholics, so now Rome would rather brandish the fear of confusion between the sexes, surfing a wave of long-standing prejudices that still have plenty of life in them. The argument then invoked is that of symbolism and appropriateness.

We need, ever more bluntly, to ask the fundamental questions, exposing the real reasons that are still insufficiently explored because they are concealed beneath a line of argument based on principle and tradition. It is less a matter of femaleness than of a model of patriarchal maleness still operative in the Church. Why exactly is this male institution incapable of sharing with women the mission of fulfilling its essential responsibilities for the life of the Church? What really makes men so uncomfortable with sharing those responsibilities? Would they feel deprived? What are they afraid of?

We need to be more explicit in our criticism. Even if men are not aware of it, the mere fact that women are excluded implies male privilege, however generous a personal vocation may be. Even if it were “service-determined” power, the fact that one group has an exclusive right to it means that the others are excluded. Why? Because they are capable of giving birth? Because they are holier? It directly affects, perhaps even undermines, the nature of priesthood, the witness of priests, the Gospel message’s power to convince and the credibility of the Church. What witness can an institution bear when it has shown itself incapable of

living out Gospel communion with its women members within the Church?

Women and men together must reclaim the language of our baptismal responsibilities. We must shift it from the *woman-as-object* which has saturated our religious language and the *man-as-subject* which needs to be re-assessed (an indispensable step in the process towards parity), for the sake of ecclesial communion and the greater good of the entire human community.

Dr. Marie-Thérèse Van Lunen Chenu has doctorates in Law and Theology, and is one of the founders of Femmes et Hommes en Église. Marie Bouclin is a long-time women’s ordination activist who lives in Ontario, Canada. She is the author of the 2006 book Seeking Wholeness, Women Dealing with Abuse of Power in the Catholic Church.

How Can I Support WOC’s Ministries?

RENEW Your Membership Today

Three easy ways:

- Online, visit www.womensordination.org under Membership (You can also join WOC this way!)
- Respond to the membership renewal letter you received
- Call the WOC office today, 703 352-2006

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Send monthly checks: We can provide twelve envelopes for you to mail your monthly check.

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We have recently received donations through **America’s Charities**, the **United Way**, and **employer matching grants**. WOC may not be listed in the campaign brochures, but you can make arrangements to donate through such organizations. If you would like to do this, contact the office for our tax identification number.

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WOC can also accept donations of stock or mutual funds, which may give you a tax advantage. Your attorney can include a donation to WOC among the bequests in your estate.

Priesthood in Whose Image?

By The Rev. Lyn G. Brakeman

Women's ordination presents a paradox: the more you are ordained by Godde (the Christian feminist spelling for the divine) through the Spirit, the more the Church of Godde finds you unfit for ordination. But hey, Karen Armstrong says that where there is paradox there is always the Holy.

You might expect that the divine formation process — Godde being part transcendent and all — would be rigorous, stressful, elusive, maybe even impossible for all but the most stalwart or insane. Instead, it is the human institution of the Church of Jesus Christ that is all of the above and more.

The church ordination process, which will be set up for you (Roman Catholic women) after you get "legal" (and you will), will be an obstacle course requiring such stamina that the ordained vocation itself can be endangered, becoming an idol to the compulsively determined, a disdain to the dropouts, Goliath to the timid, and an everlastingly painful memory for the rejected. Think of all the apostles who weren't chosen for the record!

You will need the impatience of Job's wife, the grief of Bathsheba, the heart of Mary Magdalene, the love and chutzpah of the Syrophenician woman, the loving heart of Mother Mary, the wisdom of Wisdom Herself, the satyagraha (Indian word for centered in soul power) of Susanna, the politics of Esther, the obsessive-compulsive tenacity of Paul, the wiles of Judith and the trust-beyond-trust prayer life of Jesus. Chosen or not, persistent or not, the grace of Godde, who knows you through and through and loves you through and through no matter what, remains open for cooperative business.

If you're still reading this essay you have what it takes. Continue on!

I am an Episcopal priest ordained in Connecticut in 1988. I started *the* process in 1977, just after our church voted women legal. But we started illegally, as you have. The traditionally snail-like pace of ecclesiastical change had been hurried by the 1974 ordination of the "Philadelphia Eleven" and the 1975 ordination of the "Washington Four," fifteen women ordained by heroic retired bishops before the General Convention voted to ordain women with a simple pronoun change — imagine! — in the constitutions and canons.

I was as innocent as a dove and forgot to be wily as a serpent. Political justice is one thing, but out-of-Egypt requires more than manna.

I went to my first interview with Committee One (of many) that grants postulancy. One interviewer said that my four children were "2.24 too many." Another said *she* didn't believe in the ordination of women but it wouldn't bias her judgment. Another worried whether my six-year-old son could reach the refrigerator if I weren't home. And so it went until I was rejected by the bishop who said the committee thought it would be a "dual vocation." Men could be priests and biological fathers but women could not be priests and mothers. There is still prejudice against mothers in the church and in the marketplace of the world (and it is tough balancing it all). That was my first rejection. It hurt like hell. My second rejection came four years later when I was in my second year of seminary. Then it was because of a sad but right divorce.

Here are a few things I learned along the torturous journey.

- Develop an enormous emotional and political support system inside and outside the church. Some of you will be chosen, others not; try not to abandon the sisterhood you formed in the fight for justice. Your many strong emotions, whatever the outcome, will cause you to feel too vulnerable even to be loved, but if you are isolated, the loneliness will be more devastating than the closed door of patriarchy. One of the institution's favorite games is "divide and conquer." Feelings will threaten to overwhelm, but they will pass.
- Get some men on your team. They're not the enemy. Make friends with women in other faith traditions. Their experience will assist you.
- You will be judged in every step of your journey, but in biblical parlance judgment can mean enlightenment not condemnation. Whatever the outcome, you will grow in grace while you suffer in hope.
- Don't forget the difference between Godde and the Church, also between your father and Father God and your mother and Mother Church. And please don't let them call you "Mother" after you're ordained a



The Rev. Lyn Brakeman presides at Mass.

priest. Dependency reigns and needs to be dethroned.

- The stained glass ceiling of ordination will reassert itself as it did for us. Discern wisely the shape of your priestly ministry. For many women, parish ministry is a petri dish for burnout. The traditional model is formed *by men for men* — it is lonely and stressful. My skin wasn't thick enough.
- Get creative. I am a worker priest. I serve on Sundays as a non-stipendiary in a parish because I am called simply to a ministry of Word and Sacrament. My day-job "ministry" is in my office as a pastoral counselor and spiritual director. I pursued this avenue while I waited for official ordination. It paid off.
- Know and be realistic about your expectations. Read Barbara Brown Taylor's, *Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith* (HarperSan Francisco, 2006).
- Grieve well. After two rejections and a Niagara of tears, I altered my course slightly and waited for the bishops to change. A new bishop was hesitant because of my "history" as an ordination reject. We met on many occasions. I had to articulate my vocational call clearly, deliberately, and repeatedly. Have that one memorized. It's your stump speech. He was about to turn me down again; I was about to turn tail and slouch out when I had a power surge (not menopausal) and rose to give my closing arguments. I was brilliant — well, it was Sophia-in-me.
- Pray without ceasing — not for discernment, you already did that, but for letting go into letting go. My

continued on page 9

Celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe the Latin American Way

By Nidza Vázquez

In the spirit of reflecting the fullness and diversity of the Catholic community, WOC invites you to organize an event in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who appeared in what is now Mexico in 1531. Our Lady is, of course, one of the apparitions of Mary accepted by the Vatican. Mary was called by God to bring Christ to the world, and her heartfelt “yes” made her an active partner in God’s work. She knew the fullest meaning of “this is my body, this is my blood.”

In the eyes of many Latin Americans, the miraculous apparitions of Mary in our homeland have made her the female image of God. Anne Clifford, in *Introducing Feminist Theology*, states, “Mary presents the maternal face of God, a face that balances the symbolism of the all-powerful God of the Spanish conquistadors. Our Lady is the compassionate Mother of the people.” (p. 198)

Pray a novena in honor of Our Lady of the Americas

While she has been declared Patroness of the Americas, many in the U.S.A. and Canada are not aware of this. Our Lady of Guadalupe is frequently acknowledged as the Mother of Latin America. She appeared



as a pregnant, young mestiza woman and spoke in the native Aztec language. She is clearly Latina.

It is customary in Latin America for family and friends to gather to pray the Rosary for various purposes. For example, for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, I have prayed the Rosary as part of a novena, where my family and neighbors gathered at a different household for nine consecutive nights. A statue of Our Lady was carried

from one home to the next in a procession. After praying the Rosary each night, we shared light refreshments and good conversation. I can see how this would be a great time to talk about women’s ordination!

This December, WOC offers you an opportunity to advocate women’s ordination in the name of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Invite friends and family to pray a novena, culminating on Our Lady’s feast day, December 12. Feel free to honor Mother Mary by adapting these traditions in your own way. Use the opportunity also to invite loved ones to become members of WOC. A prayer service and other resources for celebrating this feast will be available at www.womensordination.org or you can contact Nidza Vázquez at WOC.

Nidza Vázquez is WOC’s program director, and she was born and raised in Puerto Rico. For information about how to pray the rosary visit: www.rosary-center.org/howto.htm For more information on Our Lady, read Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment Among Mexican-American Women by Jeanette Rodríguez.

WOMEN PRIESTS? ARCHAEOLOGY SAYS YES!

2008 CALENDAR by archaeologist and theologian Dr. Dorothy Irvin features six photos of ancient archaeological evidence that women served as priests, bishops, and deacons in the early Church. \$10 each

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Priesthood in Whose Image? ...continued from page 8

prayer was sometimes desperate, sometimes raging, rarely serene, always honest. I kept a journal of letters to Godde daily asking Godde to soften the bishop’s heart toward me.

- Get political. After my power surge, the bishop agreed in my favor but I was wary and contacted a woman priest I knew on the Commission on Ministry asking her to make sure he brought my case before the Commission. She did and he did.
- The church doesn’t clean out its linen closets. I had to go through Committee One again. Many of the same people were still on it!
- Cultivate waiting with grace. It took me eleven years to get ordained.

- Remember your forerunners. For me it was the Rt. Rev. Barbara Harris, now retired, the first woman consecrated bishop (1989) in the Episcopal Church. She received hate mail for years. Barbara was the acolyte at the “illegal” ordination of the Philadelphia Eleven (1974). She was a hero-saint who walked before me.
- Notice what’s happening now that smacks of miracle. Two women hold the highest offices in the Episcopal Church today: the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, a former Roman Catholic, pilot and oceanographer, ordained a priest in 1994, and Bonnie Anderson, lay leader, is President of our House of Deputies.

Godde’s reform takes ages, but Godde’s timing is perfect. I was strengthened to the core and grew to love Godde and myself more than ever.

The Rev. Lyn G. Brakeman is a long-time supporter of WOC, Associate of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, and the author of two books, Spiritual Lemons: Biblical Women, Irreverent Laughter and Righteous Rage and The God Between Us: A Spirituality of Relationships, both available from Augsburg Fortress Press. She has written a not-yet-published memoir about her ordination to priesthood.

Differences Among Us ...continued from page 1

The day of the liturgy arrived. It was indeed a celebration. And it was achingly clear that we were all celebrating at an inclusive altar, where the priest was simply one of the leaders in a circle of people. All were truly welcome, and in this case there were many lesbian/gay/bisexual and transgendered people joyfully present.

And then something worth noting occurred when the "Lamb of God" was sung.

Following the singing, there is a gestural moment called the fractioning or breaking of the bread. Traditionally, the priest holds up the host and breaks it in half. It is meant to enact the sacrifice of Jesus, the breaking of his body. Instead, I use the moment to simply divide the bread into smaller pieces for communion because I believe the whole community is enacting and becoming the body of Christ. After we had concluded singing the "Lamb of God," one of the eucharistic ministers approached me and whispered: "break the bread, break the bread." As usual, I picked up the scored bread, feeling a bit pressured by him, and began breaking it into pieces. But this was not what he wanted me to do. And so, with a frustrated sigh, he took the second loaf of bread and held it up above our heads, broke the bread in half and then almost flung the two sections into the basket, as if to say: there! I did it for you! The moment went by quickly, but it was a deep shock to me. Later, I learned that this particular eucharistic minister was a male priest. This was obviously an important part of the Mass for him. I wasn't doing it his way, and so he decided to step in and do it for me. It was also clear to me that if I

had been a male priest, he would never have done this.

If this story offers an example of the differences among some male and female priests, there are still other examples that show differences among us women priests.

A year ago, near Pittsburgh, at a retreat of women priests and those soon to be ordained, I co-presided at Mass with two other women priests. In the liturgy, we decided to use the "this is my body, this is blood" described earlier. Later, one of the leaders of our group took me aside and, among other things, said how personally violated she felt by the enactment of that moment. She had not liked having to look directly at someone and at the same time hold their hands. Over lunch with her and several others who were about to be ordained, three women said that they appreciated that same moment but they would never use it in a public celebration — "it was just too different," they said. Two other women offered that they liked it and would use it. As women priests, we are already on the margin of our church, yet we live in the tension and pressure of creating liturgies that are both traditional and imaginatively creating something new (or at least I hope so).

Last March, I was asked to both officiate and preside at a wedding of two lesbians. They wanted a Nuptial Mass, they said. I thought, why not, since the state and the traditional church would not recognize such a ceremony! The two women arrived at our first meeting, each with silver rings in their ears, nose, lips, and tongues. Good, I thought, it's going to be a counter-cultural event. I soon learned, however, that they

not only wanted a Nuptial Mass, but they wanted it to be traditional in every way, from exclusive language to wafers — not even a loaf of home baked bread. My dilemma was, do I preside at something I don't believe in, or preside at the Mass because I am here to serve the people of God. I could not in good conscience do it. I called another woman priest, someone who I knew might not find it offensive. I explained my dilemma and the woman priest said she would be happy to preside and meet with the couple.

These stories are an opportunity for good questions. Can you simply add women to the traditional priesthood, and stir? Should all women priests enact liturgy the same way, whether feminist or not? Should feminism be a core value in all of our liturgies? If so, how? Do different theological approaches call for different enactments of the liturgy?

Still deeper, and particularly for RCWP: at this moment of change and development in the movement, when women are being ordained as priests, should all candidates for priesthood, whether male or female, be required to take at least one course in feminist liberation theology as they prepare for ordained ministry? From my perspective, this would offer some common ideas and language to a movement that is increasingly diverse and in danger of losing its feminist inspiration.

Victoria Rue is a member of WOC's Board of Directors and she writes to us from Watsonville, Calif.

Holy Land

BIBLICAL WOMEN
May 20-28, 2008

Inclusive Biblical History
Dr. Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ



"Theodora, Episcopa"

Rome
EARLY CHRISTIAN WOMEN
May 28 - June 5, 2008

Women in Antiquities
Dr. Janet Tulloch

Franciscan Spirit Tours is sponsoring two special pilgrimages exploring the roles of women in biblical times and early Christianity. These pilgrimages will include visits to sites where women preached, ministered and served as spiritual leaders in their communities. View centuries-old depictions of women being anointed, presiding over religious services and holding office in the early Christian church.

These journeys will be led by biblical scholars Dr. Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ and Dr. Janet Tulloch, co-authors of *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*.

They may be taken either separately or combined for one incredible experience. Independent study credit is available.

For information, contact John at 646-736-7964 or email at info@FranciscanSpiritTours.com.

***** PLEASE INDICATE YOU WERE REFERRED BY THE WOC NEWSLETTER and WOC will receive a contribution.*****



Call for Essays:

How Do You Envision an Inclusive Catholic Church?

WOC has always defined our mission as a combination of the ordination of women *and* the “renewal of priestly ministry.” By that, we mean a more egalitarian and communal model of ministry — one in which you cannot simply add women and stir.

In defining our objectives and activities, it is important that we deepen our structural analysis by continuously asking ourselves: *What Church do we want?* Because our membership is central to our life and ministry, we are asking you to join this dialogue.

Another example of the “differences among us,” is the use of the term coined by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, discipleship of equals. Some of the ordained women priests use this term to describe the communities they are forming, while others claim that having a true discipleship of equals means that there is no need for ordination and the separation it creates between the laity and clergy.

What do you think? What structures do you envision that will help create an inclusive church with a renewing priestly ministry?

We’re asking for submissions that are **1,500 words or fewer to be sent by November 30**, explaining how you answer the following questions:

- How do you envision an inclusive Catholic Church?
- What would the ideal church look like to you?
- What is a renewing priestly ministry?
- Which liturgical traditions and systems of governance should be preserved? Which need change and how?

We are looking for a variety of responses and we want to ensure a diversity of philosophy, age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, socioeconomic class, education level, and ordination status. A few responses will be included in the 2008

World Day of Prayer for Women’s Ordination prayer service. Our goal is to put these responses together in a resource that will be distributed and put on our website.

With your essay, please include information about how you fit into the demographic categories listed above. We understand that for many people these are sensitive subjects, and the information you provide will be kept confidential — it will not be printed with your submission either in the prayer service or resource booklet unless you give us written permission.

Send your submission by **November 30** to Nidza Vázquez at nvazquez@womensordination.org, fax to 703 352-5181, or send to WOC, P.O. Box 2693 Fairfax, VA 22031

Call for Presentation Proposals

Women’s Ordination Conference, Roman Catholic Womenpriests, CORPUS, and the Federation of Christian Ministries invite you submit a proposal to present at the 2008 joint conference...

“Inclusive Ministry and Renewal in a Complex Age”

July 18-20, 2008

Hyatt Harborside Hotel

Boston Logan International Airport

Sub-Themes:

Inclusive Ministry

- *Interfaith and culturally diverse environments*
- *Inter-religious cooperation in an ecumenical community*
- *Challenges and opportunities of gender and marital inclusion*
- *Ministry in the workplace and within one’s profession*

Renewal

- *Preparation for today’s ministry (e.g., education, training, certification, endorsement)*
- *Forming new faith communities*
- *Ministering to unmet needs*
- *Ministering through alternative channels*

Complex Age

- *Transitioning out of traditional structures and into new forms*
- *Movement of spirituality transcending religion/religious affiliation*

Application deadline: December 1, 2007

To propose a workshop, complete the Presentation Application available at WOC’s website, www.womensordination.org, or contact Tom and Michaelita Quinn, Conference Co-Chairs, quinnems@aol.com, 203-792-4848, 93 Post Road, Danbury, CT 06810

“Hide it Under a Bushel...No!” My Journey to the Priesthood

By The Rev. Jessica Rowley



“No one lights a lamp and then hides it or puts it under a basket.

Instead, it is put on a lampstand to give light to all who enter the room.”

Luke 11:33

“For centuries the church has hidden half of its light under a bushel basket,” preached Bishop Peter Hickman, Presiding Bishop of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion. “Today, with the ordination of Jessica to the priesthood, more of Christ’s light can shine for the world to see!”

On September 7, 2007, only a few weeks after my twenty-fifth birthday, I was ordained to the sacred order of priests. I thank God every day for leading me to this moment so early in my life. I stand on the shoulders of so many bright lights that have come before, whose courage and prayers kindle the flames of women in the church today. This is the story of one flame.

My Journey of Light

Five years ago I was a Roman Catholic student at Marquette University trying to respond to a restlessness in my heart (St. Augustine would be proud). I visited convents, studied theology, worked in university ministry, and then — the clincher — I fell in love. Not the good Catholic boy my grandfather had in mind for me, but a talented and passionate man headed for seminary in St. Louis to pursue a call to ordination in the United Church of Christ (UCC). Joe and I were married in 2004.

Through Joe, my narrow visions of church exploded. Christ was present with uncomfortable grace. I experienced God as bigger and the church as more expansive than I had ever imagined. Faithfulness began to take a different shape. I needed to discern my call in a world bigger than the one that raised me.

Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Mo., caught me as I fell from good standing with the church that nurtured me from infancy. In Eden’s ecumenical environment, the diversity of the Body of

Christ blossomed. I fell in love with get-up-and-dance gospel music. I marveled at expertly crafted sermon events, and I wept as we gathered around Christ’s table — ordained, lay, African American, Caucasian, evangelical, progressive, Unitarian, Trinitarian, all ages and nationalities, from a dozen different denominations — God’s catholic church.

I have found that to be in relationship with those who are different from me gives clarity to my own life and faith. As I pursued my Master of Divinity degree in such a richly diverse environment, I was able to name my call to ordination and also claim my Catholicity in ways I never could before.

I have found that to be in relationship with those who are different from me gives clarity to my own life and faith.

Though my sense of call to serve God’s church as a Catholic woman became clearer, the next step was always shrouded in mystery. From my perspective, I have always simply made choices that were placed in my path and I have journeyed to places I never imagined I could go. I am beginning to see that the Spirit is always faithful. She led me to encounter God through the rich liturgy and sacraments of the Roman Catholic tradition as a child. She spoke to my heart during moments of fear and doubt when I could not see the road ahead. Most recently, She led me to the Ecumenical Catholic Communion where I have been able to answer my call to serve the people of God with integrity and authenticity.

The Ecumenical Catholic Communion

I encountered the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC) through the community of Sts. Clare and Francis in 2005. There was no dramatic epiphany, no crash of lightning or booming voice. But there was community — community willing to live in the tensions — Catholic but not Roman, free but bound together, nurturing but also prophetic, eucharistic but not exclusive. The people of Sts. Clare and Francis were and are Christ for me. Through our relationship, they recognized my light as I recognized theirs. They called me to serve in their midst, first as deacon

and now as priest. I could not be more proud to serve side by side with these faithful disciples, my brothers and sisters. They have taught me what it means to be church better than the best ecclesiology text book.

Our Future

The spark of the divine that exists in all of our hearts can only grow into a flame if fanned by others who recognize and encourage the light to grow. I have been fortunate to have had many such persons in my life — parents, teachers, priests, pastors, mentors, and friends. I pray that my service with the people of God may be a catalyst for many more bright lights to pierce the darkness.

There is an eleven-year-old girl who visits our parish with her aunt and participates in our liturgical dance ministry. Following the ordination liturgy, she strode toward me full of confidence to say, “I want to be a priest someday.” May her light and the light of so many other young girls never be subjected to gloomy, confining spaces, but placed on a lampstand to illuminate the truth of women’s dignity and call.

The spark of the divine that exists in all of our hearts can only grow into a flame if fanned by others who recognize and encourage the light to grow.

The Rev. Jessica Rowley writes to us from St. Louis, Mo. To learn more about the Ecumenical Catholic Communion and her parish, Sts. Clare and Francis, visit: www.stsclareandfrancis.org and www.catholiccommunion.org



Young Catholics Gain Skills and Set Priorities

By Nancy Olivas

Amid the backdrop of the cozy Cenacle Retreat Center in the hip neighborhood of Lincoln Park in Chicago, the Young Feminist Network held its 2007 National Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion Training Retreat. Intentionally set in conjunction with the Women-Church Conference, the retreat was held two days before the conference began.

Since the last retreat in January of 2006, the leadership team and YFN members have breathed new life into the Young Feminist Network by creating a new brochure, finalizing the five statements that lay out the most important issues to YFN members, and designing the 2007 training.

The retreat focused on three main areas: developing the leadership and activist skills of YFN members, providing feminist spiritual nourishment, and furthering the commitment to diversity and inclusion.

A review of WOC's her-story and five strategic goals, as presented by one of YFN's founding members, Laura Singer, opened the floor for discussion of how the younger members of this movement will interact with one another and bring the message to the public. Thanks to the informative panel on grassroots activism, facilitated by Marissa Valeri of Catholics for a Free Choice, tools for growth were described literally and metaphorically through the analogy of a flower's life cycle, beginning with seeds that will flourish with rain and sunshine. Retreat participants learned the essentials of finding allies, maintaining contacts, and mobilizing supporters.



Retreat participants (left to right, front to back): Theresa Yugar, Nidza Vázquez, Johanna Hatch, Lauren Ivory, Tracy Robison, Nancy Olivas

Another founding member, Theresa Yugar, returned for the retreat with a panel on feminist theologies. Theresa, along with Nidza Vázquez and Tracy Robison, articulated some of the differences between Latina, Mujerista and Womanist theology, and there was a particular emphasis placed on the image of the Virgin Mary. "Reclaiming Mary" became the theme for Thursday evening's discussion, as participants considered her role as a special feminist contribution to faith seekers.

With diversity and inclusion being a key component in WOC's overall mission, Tracy led an eloquent and interactive panel that explored these topics. She facilitated two exercises: the first questioned one's personal experience of privilege, or lack thereof. The second used illustrations as a means of visually representing each person's first encounter recognizing gender, race, sexuality and religion. Members of WOC and YFN will continue to engage issues of diversity and

inclusion as an important part of our vision and mission.

Near the end of the retreat, participants prioritized YFN's actions for the next year:

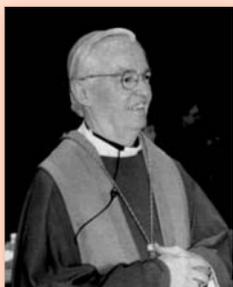
- 1) increasing membership by sending YFN brochures and WOC newsletters to campus ministers and specific individuals at Catholic universities,
- 2) promoting the use of feminist prayers and inclusive language,
- 3) encouraging diversity and inclusion,
- 4) promoting conversation on the national listserv about issues of interest to young Catholic feminists.

The upcoming leadership team election is also a priority, and it will engage more members in leadership roles.

The final discussion returned to an issue that carried over from the last retreat — men's role in YFN. Two years ago, some participants expressed a need for women-only space. As a result, the national YFN listserv became women-only. That decision was revisited this year, and the group decided to open the discussion to the full membership and to make a decision once the members provided their input.

As the retreat came to an end, the participants had the sense that the seeds were planted, watered, and nourished. Now the flower is ready to blossom.

Nancy Olivas lives in Los Angeles, Calif. and has been an active YFN and WOC member for three years, and an YFN leadership team member for the last two.



Bishop Frank Murphy Scholarship For Women in Ministry

\$1,000 Awards for the 2008-2009 Academic Year

Scholarship funds must be applied towards educational

expenses. Recipients are also required to submit a follow-up report explaining how the award impacted her growth.

For women who are:

- Members of the Women's Ordination Conference

- Enrolled or accepted in a certificate or graduate program of theological or ministerial study
- Willing to promote WOC goals and programs at their institution of study

Candidates must submit:

- Letter of recommendation from a mentor testifying to the candidate's commitment to WOC goals
- Personal statement describing how her future ministry will uphold the mission of WOC
- Resume or Curriculum Vita
- Proof of enrollment

Application materials must be postmarked by January 30, 2008.

Scholarship winners will be announced in June 2008.

Please address all inquiries and applications to:

Scholarship Committee
 Women's Ordination Conference
 P.O. Box 2693
 Fairfax, VA 22031-0693
 (703) 352-1006
 nvazquez@womensordination.org
 www.womensordination.org

See WOC website for more details.

WOC Welcomes New Board Members

WOC is proud to introduce the newest members of our national Board of Directors. We extend our appreciation to the many WOC members across the United States who voted in this year's election.



Joanne Bray, Greenwich, Conn.

I am delighted to be a new member of the vibrant, gifted, committed WOC Board. Given the ages of our current board, in their 20's, 30's, 50's, 60's, who are primarily (not exclusively) an Anglo American group, my interest is in learning how diverse ages and challenging racism can support WOC to raise up all women supported by meaningful ministries. As an activist of over 20 years within the women-church movement, and previous WOC Board member, the values I bring are creating community, listening deeply to ever **widening** groups of women, and illuminating historical context to understand our journeys — past and future. We are creators of all things new, rooted in a past we must understand. M.S. Ed., Trainer in Healing and Empowerment



Jamie Manson, New York, N.Y.

It is with great joy and hope that I join this amazing community of women on the WOC Board! My own call to ordination led me to earn my Master of Divinity at Yale Divinity School (YDS) in 2002. Working among ordained women from over thirty different denominations at YDS has given me great insight into the struggles of the stained glass ceiling faced by all women in ordained ministry. I also served as pastoral associate at St. Francis Xavier Church in NYC. This experience offered me a unique view into the ways in which the priesthood must transform in order to provide a life-giving, safe environment for ordained women. I am passionately interested in sharing all that I have learned in the Catholic and Protestant worlds, and very eager to work with a community of women to develop responses to these injustices that are intellectually and spiritually formational.



Amy Listerman, New York, N.Y.

I am excited to become more active in WOC and I am very happy to take on the responsibility of being a Board member. I have been a member of WOC for several years and have been deeply concerned and interested in the topic over the past decade. When I look back to my college years at the University of Notre Dame one of my regrets is that I didn't get involved in this issue then, since it could have been a great forum for discussion and action. One area of expertise I bring to the board is in the area of finance and business strategy. I have both a finance/accounting undergrad degree, an MBA, and am also a CPA.



Elisabeth M. Tetlow, New Orleans, La.

I have been a member of WOC for 29 years, during which time I discerned my own call to sacramental ministry, graduated from a Jesuit seminary, taught biblical and women's studies at Loyola University, and published five books in support of the equality of women in the Catholic Church. Over the years I witnessed significant shifts in the movement and the church. As a Board member, I hope to help deal with current issues now facing those who support the sacramental ministry of women in the church, including a biblical and theological grounding of the nature of such ministry, the significance of the change in the papacy, and the emerging age gap among us in the movement.

WOC BOARD OF DIRECTORS Pre-Nomination Form

Board pre-nominations must be postmarked by January 18, 2008

Nominators Name: _____

Phone _____

E-mail Address: _____

I am a member of the Women's Ordination Conference, and I am proud to nominate the following candidate to serve on the National Board of Directors for Women's Ordination Conference:

Pre-Nominee's Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

____ I have informed the pre-nominee of my selection, and she or he has indicated willingness to serve on the Board if elected.

____ Please contact the pre-nominee on my behalf to determine if she or he is interested in serving on the Board.

On a separate sheet, please include reasons for nominating this person.

You may nominate yourself, and/or more than one candidate.

Return to:
WOC Nominations
P.O. Box 2693
Fairfax, VA 22031-0693
Fax: (703) 352-5181
e-mail: woc@womensordination.org

Upcoming events

November

November 1-2: Regional Representatives Training, Milwaukee, Wisc. WOC's Ministry of Walking With Women Called will train ten women, two from each of the five regions of the country, to create a national network of support for women discerning their call to ordination. Contact Nidza Vázquez at nvazquez@womensordination.org or (703) 352-1006.

November 2-4: Call To Action 2007 Conference, Milwaukee, Wisc. "From Racism to Reconciliation: Church Beyond Power & Privilege" For more information, visit www.cta-usa.org.

November 11: Roman Catholic Womenpriests Ordinations, St. Louis, Mo. Bishop Patricia Fresen will preside during the priestly ordinations of two women at 3:00 p.m. at the Central Reform Congregation. For more information, contact Michelle Hudson at 636 933-0387 or divine_shalom2007@yahoo.com

November 12: Event during the U.S. Bishops' Meeting, Baltimore, Md. WOC and the East Region of RCWP are planning a Eucharist and panel discussion in conjunction with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Contact WOC for more information.

November 16-18: SOA Watch Vigil, Fort Benning, Ga. Thousands will gather for the Vigil and the Nonviolent Direct Action to Close the School of the Americas. For more information, visit www.soaw.org.

November 16-20: Combined annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature, San Diego, Calif.

- **Nov. 16, 4:00-6:30 p.m. Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network**, Conveners: Mary E. Hunt, Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, Ritual (WATER), Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Harvard Divinity School, R.S.V.P. requested: 1-301-589-2509, mhunt@hers.com
- **Nov. 16, 5:30-7:00 p.m. Latinas in Theology: Feminist Intercultural Theology in the Context of Divided Societies**. Participants: Maria Pilar Aquino, University of San Diego, and more
- **Nov. 16, 1:00-2:00 p.m. Women-Church follow-up conversation** Anne-Marie's Coffee Shop. Contact Theresa Yugar, theresayugar@hotmail.com

December

December 12: Celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. For more information, see page 9.

March

March 25: World Day of Prayer for Women's Ordination. For more information, see pages 1 and 11.

To have your event listed here, contact nvazquez@womensordination.org or 703-352-1006 or 888-476-9196.

Like what you read? Join WOC today! Women's Ordination Conference — Membership Form

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____
E-mail _____

Type of Membership

Individual: \$45 Regular (\$25 Student/Limited Income) \$50 International (USD)

I am also enclosing an additional gift of: \$20 \$35 \$50 \$75 \$100 \$250 Other \$ _____

I am paying by: Check (payable to WOC) Credit Card US Money Order

Card: Visa MasterCard

Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

I am called to ordination. Yes No Maybe I have included names and addresses of friends who might be interested in WOC.

I am in my 20's or 30's and would like information about Young Feminist Network.

Can we trade your name with other church organizations for use in direct mail campaigns? Yes No

Can we give your name and contact information to WOC members in your area who are trying to do grassroots organizing? Yes No

** Only requests from WOC members and donors are honored. In addition, the data will be limited to a reasonable geographic region solely for the purpose of local organizing.*

Please send with check to:

Women's Ordination Conference, P.O. Box 2693, Fairfax, VA 22031

WOC Merchandise

T-Shirts – 100% Sweat Shop Free

NEW

Front: "Good Catholic Girls..."

Back: "Stand Up for Women's Ordination!"

Mini Tees: \$20

(Ts3, Baby Pink or Baby Blue: S, M, L, XL)

Regular Tees: \$18

(Ts4, Black or Lavender: Youth M, L

Adult S, M, L, XL, XXL; Pink: S, M, L)



NEW

Front: Small WOC Logo

Back: Priestly People Come in Both Sexes

Regular Tee: \$18 (Ts5 Black or Purple:

all Ts4 sizes available [see above])



Women's Work - Inspiring scene of 12 historical women celebrating the Last Supper, short sleeve (Item Ts7, White, L, XL \$18), long sleeve (Item Ts10, White, XXL, \$5)

To view WOC's merchandise online, visit www.womensordination.org under Merchandise

To place your order, call 703 352-1006, email woc@womensordination.org or visit our website to print an order form. Standard shipping and handling costs (\$3 for most orders) are not included in the price of the merchandise. Please allow up to three weeks for delivery.

Women's Ordination Conference

P. O. Box 2693
Fairfax, VA 22031-0693
USA

Baseball Hats

Great Quality, 100% Sweat Shop Free

One size fits all purple hat with WOC logo embroidered on front (H1 \$15)



Purple Stoles

Made by women in Nicaragua

The purple stole was adopted as the international symbol for women's ordination in 2001. The women who made these stoles are a part of a sewing cooperative in Nicaragua called Taller de Corte y Confeccion Mujeres (Women's Workshop of Cutting and Sewing). WOC thanks Mary's Pence for connecting us with these women. (Item St1, \$15 ea.)

Rainbow Purple Stoles

Made in Mexico, these handwoven stoles are brilliant purple with touches of all colors of the rainbow. (Item St2 \$30 ea.)

Bumper Stickers - Guaranteed to

turn heads (\$1 ea., 6/\$5, 20/\$15)

- Ordain Women or Stop Baptizing Them (Item Bs1) blue
- Ordain Women or Stop Dressing Like Them (Item Bs3) red
- Priestly People Come in Both Sexes (Item Bs4) purple

Books

- Angela Bonavoglia, *Good Catholic Girls: How Women are Leading the Fight to Change the Church*, 2005, hardcover, signed by the author. (Item Bk1, \$12.50)
- Miriam Therese Winter, *Out of the Depths: The Story of Ludmila Javorova, Ordained Roman Catholic Priest*, 2001 (Item Bk3, \$5)
- William Cleary, *Prayers to She Who Is*, 1997 (Item Bk4, \$5)
- WOC, *Liberating Liturgies*, 1989 (Item Bk2, \$5)

Buttons - Great for stimulating conversation

- Ordain Women (Item Bt1) \$2
- Equal Rites - Ordain Women (Item Bt2) \$2
- Priestly People Come in Both Sexes (Item Bt3) \$2
- Poped Out (Item Bt5) \$1



Cards

- Women's Work Note cards: A 10-pack of cards depicting 12 historical women at Da Vinci's famous "Last Supper" painting. (Item Cr1, \$12/pack)
- Equal Justice Reserve Note: WOC's "funny money" calls for the equality of women and men as "common currency" in the life of the Church. (Item Cr3, \$5/10 bills)

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