Spotlight: Peg Bowen, Support Member

You might be surprised to learn that the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests has a few members who are neither “women” nor “priests.” We have male and non-ordained members too. In 2012, I officially joined ARCWP as a non-ordained Support Member. In keeping with our vision and mission of ministering within a community of equals, in 2015 ARCWP’s constitution and bylaws were revised and Support Members became full voting members eligible to hold an elected position.

I began my journey within this movement with my dear friend, Bridget Mary Meehan, in an ecumenical, charismatic prayer group in the 1980s. A few years later, this led to forming our own Women’s Eucharist Group which met monthly for several years. My thoughts at the time, and now, were that the gender and marital status of the ordained was irrelevant to their vocation. I discerned that ordination was not my calling, but that I could contribute in other ways. For nearly 40 years, I have participated in and coordinated retreats, liturgies, prayer groups, choirs, and parish councils.

Presently, I manage an office for a small government relations firm involving administrative work. The position involves dealing with sensitive information, government filings, and communication with clients and senior management. I have enjoyed my work there for many years.

My husband Bob and I are fortunate to have a large and loving family which keeps us busy and provides a great deal of support and joy.

I was elected to the Circle Leader Team of ARCWP. I bring all these experiences and skills as a Support Member to the position to help our team manage the day-to-day operations of our association. We have many extraordinary members who give of their time, talent, and financial support to grow the movement and manage our organization. But there is still more to do to grow our movement.

If you are interested in keeping in touch with us, please see page 4.

Peg Bowen

New News

Yes, yes! It appears that people have heeded the message that good people must do something because we are able to report a good deal of good news.

This past January, thousands of women and men marched in cities throughout the United States for women’s rights. Many wanted to encourage women to run for office, or at least, to ‘get out and vote’. Others were protesting sexual abuse in the workplace and domestic violence. All were seeking the dignity and respect as a gender that men take for granted. Gandhi and Martin Luther King would rejoice. We are now experiencing social change by peaceful demonstrations! In the wake of our latest school massacre in Florida on March 14, approximately 185,000 students from 3,100 schools marched to demand the President and Congress take a sensible approach to gun control. They will no longer tolerate the idea that it is simply an accepted fact that some deranged person, seeking fifteen minutes of fame, will invade their school without warning, maiming and murdering innocents.

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is when good people do nothing.”

Attributed to Edmund Burke
Irish philosopher

The following statement appeared on Facebook, February 23, 2018: Students have: Forced CNN town hall; gotten new commitments from Senator Rubio; pressured POTUS to call for bump stock ban; led advertisers to leave the NRA; raised millions for their march. It’s been nine days.

(As an aside, I find it noteworthy that the continued on page 4
From the Editor

Hooray! After thousands of years, the Women’s Movement has gained solid momentum. The feminine gender stands beside men, not as underlings, slaves or second class citizens, but with the same dignity that men for centuries have claimed just for themselves. Last year’s March on Washington is considered one of the largest protests noted in world history. And the enthusiasm is not waning. Thousands turned out for this year’s march.

Due to educational opportunities, professional advancement, personal wealth, and social media, women’s outraged voices are finally being heard.

This agitation is nothing new. In 1431, Joan of Arc was burned at the stake supposedly for being a heretic but also for daring to lead men and dress in men’s clothing. Suffragettes began voicing their demands for change in the mid 1800s and finally gained the right to vote in 1920. Serious issues arose in the 1960s. The fight for racial equality and women’s rights ran parallel courses.

ARCWPs primary purpose is equality for women in the Church that includes ordained ministry and decision-making roles. When I groused about the stubbornness of the hierarchy to a friend, she replied, “If the Spirit cannot enlighten the hierarchy, She will enlighten the people.” And that is already happening! With a strong voice, women are claiming their birthright.

I hope you enjoy this issue. ♡

A Meditation

Resurrection! Jesus the Cosmic Christ does not rise alone. He raises the dead, not just after his own death but past, present and future. Jesus is our hope as he heals us to wholeness and holiness not once but throughout our lives. No matter our actions, our words – our hurting another or ourselves, Jesus the Cosmic Christ raises us from the dead. We rise through Jesus, called again to be more loving, caring, compassionate to all whom we meet. Resurrection into new life is an unending event.

How do these words contribute to your joy and experience of Easter this year?

Alleluia!
This is the day that God has made:
Let us rejoice and be glad!
Alleluia!

Ask Sophia, Part 2

Q I am no longer a practicing Catholic because of the Church’s refusal to treat women as equals. I’ve heard there are more than thirty million Catholics who, over the years, also have left the Church. What are their reasons?
Maureen O’Brien

I n the last issue, we discussed people’s leaving because of an unfortunate encounter with one person misrepresenting the spirit of the Gospel.

However, recent surveys yield several other possibilities: Catholics Leaving the Church, Pew Surveys, Center for Applied Research (CARA) in the Apostolate plus others. Saint Mary’s Press recently published a joint survey with Georgetown University on the Young Leaving Church that explores the subject thoroughly. It concluded that dropouts, both old and young, “stopped believing the Church’s overall teachings, and gradually drifted away from Catholicism”.

Others complained their spiritual needs were not being met. They stressed that people today are seeking community, a sense of belonging to a group, a feeling that currently seems lacking in most contemporary parish settings. Also, as the laity became more educated, it resented being told to follow the Church’s theological teachings.

Many left.

Again, the Catholic education system, so popular in the past, fulfilled many needs. I grew up in a city which hosted eight Catholic high schools. Two remain. Besides providing the spiritual and moral standards of the times, these small communities afforded a way of life for their students: friends, education, recreation, sporting events and all kinds of extracurricular activities. Coupled with a secular culture that once respected church-going as an integral social responsibility, the idea of being a member of a church thrived.

But, to quote Tennyson, “The old order changeth, yielding place to new.”

We are living in a period of rapid change. A computer I buy on Monday might be obsolete by Friday. However, take heart and never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit. Hand-wringing and lamenting for a past gone by gets us nowhere. We should carefully study the past and reconsider and dispose of what no longer makes sense.

The women priests’ movement is an excellent step towards including the voices of half of the world’s population in this process. ♡

Maureen O’Brien was educated in Catholic Schools. She has served as Executive Director of the Leukemia Lymphoma Society in the Upstate New York-Vermont Chapter for nineteen years.
The Divine Verb: 
Our Creator’s Imagination

VERB: (L. verbum) a word that conveys action, an occurrence, a state of being.

IMAGINATION: (L. imago, imaginari) the faculty or action of forming new ideas, images, or concepts of external objects not present to the senses.

Charles Robert Darwin, geologist and biologist, studied all species of life that descended over time from common ancestors, from which he produced his scientific theory of evolution. In 1859 these results were published in his book, On the Origin of Species. Darwin’s discovery eventually became known as the unifying theory of the life sciences in which natural selection was embraced as the basic mechanism of evolution.

Following the acceptance of Darwin’s theory of evolution by science professionals in the 1950s, it was Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit and distinguished paleontologist, who wrote in his book, The Phenomenon of Man, that “The world appears like a mass in process of transformation.”

In 1995, the Hubble telescope revealed a plethora of never-before-seen galaxies, including some of the most distant star systems ever discovered. This offered astronomers a window onto what the universe looked like only a short time after the Big Bang. Hubble found the first evidence of supermassive black holes at the center of neighboring galaxies, which is vital in hunting down extrasolar planets that have the proper conditions to foster physical life. Perhaps most crucial of all, Hubble’s studies of supernovae have contributed to the theory that a mysterious force known as “dark energy” could be causing the universe to expand at an accelerated rate. Everything was moving!

In scientific language, our universe began with a bang. In theological language, it began with a Creator. This single creative event from which all life has emerged, began more than 13 billion years ago and continues in an ongoing process known as “cosmogenesis.” Judy Cannato defines this term in her book, Field of Compassion, as “the ongoing evolution of a universe created through God’s self-communication, which is love. She continues on to say that it is the nature of the Holy Spirit to do something new, to surprise us with insights that draw us to a new place in our relationship with God and others.”

The Theology of Blessing Tackles the Meaning of Humility
Humility, an Old Word Reincarnated

This piece is an abridged version of a homily given by Kim Panaro during a recent Eucharistic Celebration in the Upper Room, Albany, NY. – Editor

So many people in our world struggle with low self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy and self-loathing. As the 21st century moves us away from Atonement Theology in favor of a Theology of Blessing, it would seem to be going backwards to embrace old concepts like humility. Humility has often been synonymous with promoting a sense of guilt, unworthiness and of being “less than”.

Author CS Lewis said that “Humility does not mean thinking less of yourself, it means thinking of yourself less”. In other words, it isn’t about putting ourselves down, it’s about moving beyond the “me” in favor of the “we.” It is the paradox of letting go in order to gain all … forgetting oneself to find oneself, embracing death to gain life. It challenges us to understand that the cross is about letting go of selfishness and egoism just as Jesus did.

Jesus witnessed unconditional radical love for all regardless of gender, social status, adherence to religious legalism or past behaviors, which made him such a threat to religious and political leaders. So they killed him in the most degrading and painful way they knew, crucifixion. But, the intended humiliation at the crucifixion was not effective. His focus was on love of others and God.

“Humility does not mean thinking less of yourself, it means thinking of yourself less.”

CS Lewis, Author

How about you and me? Do we embrace this holy humility? Do we place our hopes on the path of complete self-emptying and sacrifice of our egos in order to live as Jesus? It is not simply about doing good works, or being a social worker or social activist. Those are part of the work but they are not the goal itself. The goal is love. We don’t need to think less of ourselves but by thinking of ourselves less, we take the power away from the injustices and hurts in our lives in favor of the joy of living for others and for God.

That is holy humility. What do you think?

Kim Panaro, MSW, is a mother and practicing social worker who also serves in the Upper Room Inclusive Catholic Community in Albany, NY.
The universe is evolving as an ongoing energy reaching into the future, changing and reforming matter and concepts into new and surprising realities; never stopping, always moving forward. Scientifically proven in the physical world, we also experience this same dynamic in the spiritual realm. The Life-giving Spirit continues to raise our consciousness and broaden our understanding of the formation of life, both in our development as a species, and as a reflection of the Divine Creator.

This is Part Two of a continuing column that offers an overview of God’s creative energy alive and moving forward within the ever-expanding Universe.

New News, continued from page 1

United States government is either unable or unwilling to keep track of people who buy assault weapons or purchase an arsenal of weapons of any kind. I have recently moved from New Mexico to Georgia. My supermarket with stores in many states has kept note of my move and continues to send me coupons in the mail for my favorite purchases. I never informed them of my move, never gave them my new address; yet, because they consider me a good customer, they have tracked me down. Interesting.

Mary McAleese, former President of Ireland, was banned by the Vatican from taking part as a principal speaker in the Women’s Day Conference which was to take place within the Vatican. Her inclusion in the conference was opposed by Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life.

The Association of Catholic Priests criticized both the decision to prevent McAleese from speaking at the conference and the removal of pictures of same-sex couples.

On March 8, McAleese spoke outside the Vatican as a guest of the Jesuits claiming, “Failure to include women as equals has deprived the Church of fresh and innovative discernment – left the church flapping about awkwardly on one wing when God gave it two.”

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If you wish to direct your donation to a particular category, such as ordinations, newsletter, or education, please indicate and we will be happy to oblige. All interest and support of our movement is deeply appreciated.

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