Spotlight: Carol Ann Giannini

My first theological encounter with the Church is still etched in my memory. I was seven years old, a second grader at St. Vincent Academy in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The nun who was our teacher had given the class a mimeographed sheet to color for our religion assignment. It pictured Adam and Eve fleeing the Garden of Eden, heads down to avoid the thunder and lightning emanating from the cloud that hovered over their heads.

My head was full of questions. This didn’t make sense! Several times she passed my desk, her anger intensifying as she did so, unable to listen to my concerns. Finally, determined to speak up, I asked, “If Adam and Eve looked like this, where did cave men come from? Did they devolve because they were bad?”

That evening our Jesuit pastor came to our house. The principal had called to tell him I needed straightening out. I can still see myself on the sofa, my little legs dangling over the edge, not understanding what I’d done wrong. Instead, I’ll never forget his kind face looking down at me as he said, “I hear you had a tough day today, Carol Ann, tell me about it.” I told him what happened, and that the principal was furious and convinced I’d behaved badly.

I was shocked to see a hint of a smile. “I’m not laughing at you, dear,” he said. “I’m smiling because we have a Jesuit who asks the same kinds of questions you did and he’s in trouble too! Someday, the two of you will probably be friends.”

While I never had the honor to meet Teilhard de Chardin, the pastor’s prediction came true in unusual ways, including working with the Dominican scholar Raymond Jude Nogar on his book, The Wisdom of Evolution. Later, as part of the research for his book, The Lord of the Absurd, we explored the cave of the Sandia Man, the prehistoric ancestor who lived in our magnificent mountains.

Since my ordination in 2015, I serve as the Chaplain in a beautiful assisted living facility where I conduct a non-denominational service (the lectionary readings of the day and a communion service), and have Mass in the Memory Unit which is open to any residents from other floors that wish to attend. It is a great blessing to have this experience.

Prompted by a life graced with a warm, compassionate and loving father, and deeply saddened by the division and hatred within our human family, I am planning to build a memorial – The Center for Peace and Reconciliation – as a fitting tribute to my dad’s love for all people.

I consider myself further blessed by the fact that, while friends have accepted and celebrated my new priesthood, I’ve also received assistance and validation in the most unlikely places. Then again, that’s been the story of my life!

Carol Ann Giannini is a mother and priest. She has degrees from Regis University, Denver, Colorado; BA Pastoral Studies, 1985; PS 1988, MA MC: Menninger Clinic; Certification Conflict and Anger Management, 1985. Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis, Missouri; Doctoral studies in Feminist Theology, Preaching; Industrial Area Foundation, National Training for Community Organizers, Santa Barbara, California, 1978; and frequent retreat coordinator/leader in St. Louis, Missouri, archdiocese, 1987-1993.

New News

Moses answered,

“If only all of God’s people were prophets! If only Our God would bestow the Spirit on them all!”

Numbers 11-29

In the spring of 2011, the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests consisting of nine priests set themselves forth as a branch of the International Women Priest Movement. Today, we have over 90 ordained members.

Our Association has four ordained bishops. In June 2018, Bishop Olga Alveraz anointed two women priests from South America, one from Venezuela and one from Colombia. Bishop Mary Eileen Collingwood celebrated in Cleveland, Ohio, by anointing three deacons and one priest; while in September Bishop Bridget Mary Meehan ordained a priest in Albany, New York, and another in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Bishop Michele Birch-Conery ordained a priest in June and is looking forward to ordaining another in mid-November in Detroit, Michigan.

Against all odds the male dominated Roman Catholic Church has put upon us, our prophetic movement grows. Please continue to support us in whatever way you can. Never forget, that by rite of Baptism, we are all called to be leaders.
From the Editor

Refusing the Refusal

Heidi Sclumpf reported this story in the National Catholic Reporter on July 26, 2018.

When a recently ordained deacon in our Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests was refused Communion at Sunday Mass by the parish priest and deacons at her parish church of eleven years, Kathleen Sauline REFUSED THE REFUSAL by insisting she “was hungry and thirsty for that which Jesus called us to share.” She moved to the bottom of the stairs of the sanctuary, hands outstretched and waited until the Communion song was over. Before leaving the church, a Lay Eucharistic Minister offered her communion. Hooray for Kathleen and the Eucharistic minister!

All we priests and deacons, members of our Association are REFUSING TO BE REFUSED. We refuse to honor excommunication for following Christ and serving God’s people. We are not going away. This is our Church. We are increasing and multiplying. Check out New News.

“You are the light of the world. Your light must shine upon others, that they may see your good deeds.”

Matthew: 5-14, 16

Ask Sophia

Q If women priests are trying to change the way the Roman Catholic Church operates, why do you ordain bishops? Are you not perpetuating hierarchy, only a newer version, one that suits you?

Anonymous

A Although we do ordain bishops in the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests (ARCWP), we do it out of necessity. In order to ordain incoming candidates, we must have a bishop who has been consecrated by another duly ordained bishop in the Roman Catholic Church. Most male Roman Catholic bishops will not ordain women for fear of excommunication. We will be forever grateful to the brave bishop who risked his reputation and ordained the first women bishops in 2003. To safeguard his present position as a leader in the Roman Catholic Church, he remains anonymous.

However, we need women bishops to welcome and ordain new, suitable members into the worldwide women priest movement and consecrate other bishops.

ARCWP bishops are elected by our membership for their wisdom, spirituality and experience. None of their ministerial outreach, sacramental obligations, or liturgical roles are hierarchical. Unlike the bishops in the Roman Catholic Church, all major decisions are reached by consensus with the voting members of the Association.

As equal members of our Association, the bishops embrace collaboration as they interact with other bishops, our Circle Leaders, Program Coordinators, and Program Companions. They support all members spiritually, provide theological insight, and encourage members in their ministries. Along with their role in ordaining candidates, they, like all those ordained, administer the sacraments. Bishops are on call and available to the global community to communicate our mission and vision, and offer their presence as the need arises.

Mary Bergan Blanchard, MEd, LPC. Mother, grandmother, teacher, author, missionary. Counselor at parish church for twenty years.

If you wish to donate to our cause, please send to ARCWP, 5342 Clark Rd., PMB #1073, Sarasota, FL 34233.

arcwp.org

Visit us at arcwp.org or bridgetmarys.blogspot.com

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.
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.

“To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.”

John Henry Newman

Our Creator Spirit has fashioned us as perfectly imperfect human beings. As a result, our lives experience constant change. We have come to know through history that physical, spiritual, and intellectual growth is always happening, always in the process of transformation, always a creative force driving change. This process gives birth to new insights and produces new forms of expression.

These insights within the religious arena find the hearts and minds of Christians today interpreting the Bible very differently than people did in the Middle Ages, or even in the 1950s. Through study and the influence of the Holy Spirit working in people of good will, the religious truths from these holy writings rise to the surface, leaving mistaken theories and cultural expressions and thoughts behind. Atonement theology, introduced by St. Paul and based on the belief that the death of Jesus was the only way to repair damages from our fall from grace in the Garden of Eden, is now abandoned by a growing number of Christians. The unfortunate concept of atonement has caused spiritual havoc among the faithful for many centuries. While it served as a popular motivator to keep Christians pounding their chests in supplication, this veiled instrument of control kept the faithful a great distance away from the truth of their own worth and dignity.

Without this stranglehold, we can return to the “original blessing” of our lives taking flight, and the “original sin” concept discarded for what it is – a theological construct that drove people to believe that Jesus of Nazareth died for our sins in exchange for the return of God’s favor. This mistaken belief masks the fact that Jesus spoke truth to the powers of his day and was crucified for it. He asks us to remember the cost it requires to do the same in our lives.

We are being led forward by the in-breaking of God’s Spirit of Life. This Spirit is moving and shaking things up as the Roman Catholic Priest movement takes hold across the globe. Launched in 2002 on the Danube River, it is an example of spiritual birthing within the Roman Catholic Church today. Similar to the suppression of many historical figures who maintained their truth of spiritual insight and physical discovery, ordained women are not yet formally acknowledged by Vatican authorities. Nonetheless, we embrace a prophetic role as other performers in different or warmer climates.

But as the weather turns colder, the days shorter, their life fades, and the leaves and vibrant hues wither and die. The morning glories will leave their seeds, resting until intense sunshine brings them back to life. Winter’s barren trees are not dead. Their life is dormant, and we mourn that we can’t see and feel and enjoy their summer gifts. The lifeless stalks of chrysanthemums are used for mulch and returned to the earth, but new shoots will respond to the loving care of Mother Nature.

We do not mourn the change in our trees, nor our flowers. We miss summer fun and the casualness the warm weather affords us, but we look forward to rebirth, to spring.

What a lesson to be learned. All life must wither and die, but with whatever finality death can manage.

As winter nears and November, the month honoring those gone before us, approaches, must we mourn our loved ones with sorrow and certain finality when all nature tells us differently? Miss their presence? Absolutely! Bury their presence when their body dies? I hope not.

I cannot mourn the dead. It would break my heart. We cannot minimize our losses, but denying a constant presence might be a gloomy refusal to face a different kind of reality. Their spirits never die. Their presence is there.

It is our task to get in touch, to talk, to rehash the good memories together … to complain to your mother that your chicken fricassee never turns out as yummy as hers, to brag to your husband that your tastes in cars paid off. Your choice lasted 20 years, even though he thought it was dowdy. Remind your best friend who died too young, you have a bone to pick with her. “You promised we’d grow old together!” Then cherish the laughs you did have.

Respect the spirits of the faithful departed. I don’t believe they have departed at all. Think about it. As the flowers resting in winter, we will see them all again … another kind of spring. ♦

Spirit of the Season

“… the year before had separated them with whatever finality death can manage.”

Sister Mary Bertrand Degnan, R.S.M., “Mercy Unto Thousands”

“… with whatever finality death can manage.” What a phrase, loaded with faith and hope and applicable to all of nature! Including us. We are approaching autumn, a harbinger of waning visible life, performing differently in various regions.

I grew up in the Northeast. Nothing can compare to the breathtaking upper Adirondack Mountains and the Berkshires, even the display of aspens in Colorado in September. The land of maple trees, willows and oaks hogs the universal scenic stage with its blaze of color, eclipsing all other performers in different or warmer climates.

But as the weather turns colder, the days shorter, their life fades, and the leaves and vibrant hues wither and die. The morning glories will leave their seeds, resting until intense sunshine brings them back to life. Winter’s barren trees are not dead. Their life is dormant, and we mourn that we can’t see and feel and enjoy their summer gifts. The lifeless stalks of chrysanthemums are used for mulch and returned to the earth, but new shoots will respond to the loving care of Mother Nature.

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Leading Staff

Mary Bergan Blanchard

Cailin Brown, Anne Sabach, Joan M. Taitte

Mary Bergan Blanchard

Sabach Design, sabachdesign.com

arcwp.org

newsletter.arcwp@gmail.com

bridgetmarys.blogspot.com

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Unlikely Prophets by Janet Blakeley, ARCWP

Two elements in today’s readings caught my attention. The first was Amos, the unlikely prophet. Those ‘in the know’ were displeased with his claiming to be a prophet. They muttered amongst themselves. “He was not sophisticated, not educated. Doesn’t speak well. Something of a ‘nobody’ really.”

But Amos, in his pure simplicity, said “Yup. That’s me. And the Holy One has asked me to speak for him to all the other people! Ain’t that grand?” And without waiting for their responses, he hurried off to begin speaking for God.

From my arrival at Retreat on Thursday, I began to listen attentively to what God wished to say about unlikely prophets. Friday, Wanda talked to us about the importance of listening to God, how she and her co-presider Miriam have listened, and have recognized signs and the amazingly rich variety of ministries resulting from that attentiveness. I sat quietly thinking. “This is really wonderful.”

And then God gave me a nudge. Actually it was more like a pointed jab in the ribs to get my attention. God said, “Unlikely Prophet”.

Indeed, here was Wanda, not having what one would immediately see as a commanding presence. In other words, she did not resemble Charlton Heston in the role of Moses in “The Ten Commandments”!

In the first place, she was a she! She did not speak the King's English but peppered her sentences with spicy references, and softened her words with a sweet Southern accent. She was jolly, natural, and friendly. She accepted God’s call and eagerly waited to hear more. She spoke to all kinds of people and they felt themselves invited in. The ministry grows and grows!

So, if the human expectations of maleness, sophistication, correctness, etc., are not God’s criteria for a prophet, what are? Apparently the first is to be happy in your humanity. The next is to have a love of people so great that you are bursting to share your greatest treasure with them. But above all the desire to know what God wants said and done … enough so that you are willing to listen, wait, and watch for the signs.

The second element that caught my attention was Jesus, the prophet par excellence, sending out not one but 12 unlikely prophets. Neither sophisticated nor highly educated, they were happy in their humanity, and showed themselves willing and ready to listen to the directives of Jesus, which on that day were to “Go, cast out unclean spirits, and heal the sick.”

“God chose us in Christ to be holy and to be full of love.”

Second Reading Ephesians 1:3 14

They had absolutely nothing to bolster their confidence or give them comfort. Jesus was specific about that. “Take nothing with you!” Not even a little note card to pull out when trying to remember the steps to casting out demons!

Look around you. We are a motley crew of unlikely prophets, are we not? And Jesus sends us out today. Are we prepared? Do we know enough? Do we get the words right? Are we strong in all the areas where we will need strength? Does it matter?

Like all unlikely prophets before us, we have a loving commitment to listening to God, knowing that is the only way to discern what and how God wants things done. ♦