

Leading

Leading is the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priest's publication to introduce the general public to who we are, what we do and why.

"We are not leaving the church, we are leading it."

Bishop Bridget Mary Meehan

WWW.ARCWP.ORG

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IN THIS ISSUE

Spotlight
New News
From the Editor
Ask Sophia
The Divine Verb, Part 3
Spirit of the Season



Spotlight: Maureen McGill, Following Her Calling

The old gold handbag sat on the shelf in my closet. It had been one of my favorites when I was a practicing attorney, but I had not used it since I had retired quite a few years ago. I decided to carry it to an art show, when during dinner, I noticed that it had started to crack and peel. When I got home, it was in tatters and had become useless. I had neglected it and stuck it on the shelf.

Why am I telling you about an old purse? Because that unused purse became a symbol of my unanswered call to ordained ministry which I had felt all my life. I had left my calling on the shelf.



Maureen McGill

New News

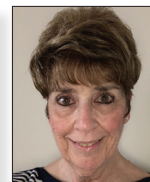
We are pleased to announce a new membership category within ARCWP, **Friend of the Association**. Individuals who wish to collaborate with ARCWP and who are in support of our Vision, Mission, Values and Guidelines can request to join our group. A **Friend of the Association** is a non-voting member of ARCWP receiving general information, invitations to events, annual retreats and ordinations and is remembered in our prayers.

A **Friend's** degree of involvement varies according to an individual's talent and availability. It may include providing a professional service. Any bookkeepers or lawyers willing to donate some time, hands who would like to work with our membership? Is there a retired marketer hiding out there ... someone who loves concocting spread sheets ... someone computer savvy ... one of those with time on her or his hands? We are in desperate need of getting our word out ... with very limited funds to do so. The Internet is free, and an amazing way to advertise, especially for those who have had marketing experience and know what is available.

Any particular talent such as public relations that helps bring attention to our movement would be so appreciated. One might simply wish to give prayer support or financial support. We'll be grateful for any help offered to us. Is God calling you to be a 'behind the scenes' apostle? We surely hope so.



Anne Sabach
Graphic Designer



Joan Taitte
Editor



Cailin Brown
Editor

"Don't neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophetic word when the presbyters laid their hands on you."

1 Timothy 4:14

I had grown up in the Roman Catholic tradition: 12 years of Catholic school, Bachelor of Arts degree from St. John's University in Queens, NY, a law degree from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, and a Masters of Pastoral Studies from Loyola University in LA. Nevertheless, I never found a home in the Catholic Church.

Was it the rigid theology, the lack of compassion and community? Was it the physical abuse I had seen as a child in the Catholic schools? I can remember being terrified in grade school. How could that behavior have been allowed? Or was the all-male clergy a turn off for me? There was no room for women priests in the Roman Catholic Church anyway.

So, I made some false starts. I joined the Episcopalian Church in the early 1970s and was approved for ordination by the vestry. However, the local bishop did not approve me, so I believed that I had moved too quickly. I waited and applied twice more. Even though the vestry continued to approve me, the bishop did not, finally claiming that he "did not perceive the gift of spiritual leadership." What was I to do? Where was I to go?

After my mother's death in 2012, I met some of the women priests from the Association and could hear God speaking to me, "I didn't want you there. I want you here." Their vision of service was also my vision. My Episcopalian friends came to my ordination.

I was 68 years old when I was ordained a priest in 2014. My call to ordination had figuratively sat on the shelf, unused and useless. If you believe you are called to ordination, I encourage you to look into the ARCWP.

"Do not divert from the divine design, the divine plan of your life."

Patty Zorn, ARCWP

Maureen McGill is a wife, mother, busy grandmother, retired attorney, and retired General Magistrate in the State of Florida. She lives with her husband in Pensacola, FL.

continued on page 4



Mary Bergan
Blanchard

From the Editor

I was folding laundry this morning and vaguely watching the news when I heard a familiar flashback quote. Joseph Nye Welch, counsel for the United States Army, was berating Senator Joseph McCarthy for casting suspicion on a young lawyer. Welch thought the accusation was appalling and asked, “Have you no decency, sir, at long last have you no sense of decency left?”

How well I remember that famous line, and watching those hearings on black and white TV. It was more than 64 years ago and most people reading this weren’t even born! I dropped the kitchen towel I was folding, sat down, turned up the TV, and asked aloud, “What’s your point? Why such an old flashback?”

The point was this. The commentator contrasted Welch’s approach to the silence of all other political leaders, and explained that this sentence ended the McCarthy hearings which were rocketing out of control. No one had dared to take on McCarthy but this one man who had the courage to recognize injustice and speak out against it.

I immediately perceived a parallel between his speaking out and the Women Priest Movement and our members. Fighting injustice takes courage. It is easier to accept, to go along, rather than to promote change. So people ask, “What are these women priests doing? Why are they rocking the boat? If they are so disgruntled, why don’t they go somewhere else?”

That is not what we are called to do.

*“It’s not the size of the dog in the fight,
it’s the size of the fight in the dog.”*

Mark Twain

When one loves something, one does not abandon it. We are not at war with the Church. We are simply determined to goad it into ridding itself of useless tenets and patriarchal rules and enter the twenty-first century.

The Church is no different than sterling silver that needs an occasional polishing to get rid of the tarnish. It has modified its behavior over the centuries. If not, we would still be watching innocent women burned at the stake, infidels losing their lives if they did not become Christian, and people paying for indulgences that forgave them for sins they intended to commit over the weekend.

We are not buying a new set of flatware. We are determined to polish up the sterling in the Catholic Church. Women Priests are here ... and we intend to stay and grow. ♦

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

Ask Sophia

Q *If you really are Roman Catholic priests, why aren’t you saying Mass at our parish church? Why aren’t the priests talking about you?*

Charlotte Colbert Mudd

A Although we have been validly ordained in the Roman Catholic Church by the rite of apostolic succession, the Church does not recognize us as priests because we are women. The Church does not want to admit we are valid. We do admit we are illicit, as our ordinations do not adhere to the current law of the Church. As you can read in the article published by *The Guardian* and referred to in this issue (*see page 4*), the Church’s refusal to accept us, and even further, to condemn us, is deplorable. The women priest movement believes the Church’s position is contrary to the message of Jesus and needs to reform its understanding of Gospel inclusivity.

Unfortunately, the Church has a history of ignoring the place of women in its archives. It also has the power to make certain the rank and file toe its line. Pope John Paul II has said, “No women priests ever.” This is the party line.

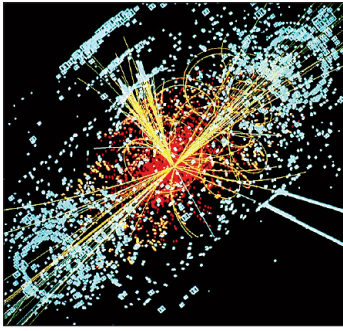
If a bishop wishes to remain in good standing, he must obey the Vatican’s decrees, and so must the priests who promise to uphold the bishop’s decisions. If one decides to defy the Vatican’s ruling and speak in favor of women priests, that person would face automatic excommunication. Father Roy Bourgeois, a Maryknoll priest for 40 years, was expelled from his order for speaking out on behalf of women priests and attending a woman’s ordination. He was excommunicated and defrocked.

At this moment, most diocesan priests are in their 60s and 70s. Unless a priest is independently wealthy through his family, he would be literally out on the street. Many priests rely on their diocese in their old age for a pension that allows them to live sensibly after they retire. This proposes a dilemma for them. I do not personally know one priest who is not in favor of women’s ordination. Some do speak of it from the altar. Most do not, however, for fear of being excommunicated, defrocked and expelled from the life they have graciously given in service to the people of God with no resources to survive.

More and more parishes are closing. Vocations to the priesthood are at an all-time low in this country. In the future, rather than see their people in parishes without sacramental services, it may well be that women priests will be accepted under certain conditions.

O Holy Hope! We’re back! The Spirit of Good and wisdom is moving. Let’s have faith and wait and see where the movement goes. ♦

Charlotte Colbert Mudd, business woman, retired recruiter for the State of California, Sun Microsystems and others.



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.

Past discoveries of our physical universe have plunged us into a new era of understanding the creative force that drives change. This change manifests itself in the physical world as ancient and contemporary scientists, along with expansive pictures from the Hubble telescope, obliterate the ancient thought of the world being held in a dome on a flat surface. We know now that the cosmos is a dynamic force that continues to expand and recreate itself. The physical dimension of life is not its own change maker, however. The intellectual and spiritual dimension of human life also reinvents itself in remarkably new ways. One important focus of our Creator's imagination lies in Biblical Hermeneutics, our interpretation of the Bible texts.

Historically, as global societies became more sophisticated and learned, their perspective on and interpretation of biblical texts began to change. Serious scripture scholars employed varying methods of studying the sacred texts which resulted in formidable research and increased knowledge of the culture from which they were written. Exploration of the times and the authorship of biblical books revealed that many were edited to update these texts with a specific time period's understanding of religious and societal thought. Many scholars grew increasingly discomforted with literal interpretations of the texts as the written word was often composed using diverse literary forms that conveyed symbolic meanings. Archaeologists also discovered hidden drawings and fossils that provided real documentation that contradicted past claims that women did not hold leadership roles in the Early Church communities. Spiritually, we can no longer seriously consider that there was a literal fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden. Because science now informs our understanding of how the physicality of the universe develops, we know that humankind is forever changing in form and intelligent capabilities. To give credence to the myth that one act of a perceived disobedience caused pain and sin to enter the world is light years behind

continued on page 4

Mary Eileen Collingwood, MTh., is a wife, mother, grandmother and educator, who serves ARCWP as bishop. She lives in the Cleveland, OH, area and serves St. Bridget Inclusive Catholic Community as co-president.

Spirit of the Season

"Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth."

Psalm 65:1

The glory of the summer season is upon us. Flowers are in full bloom. Petunias have outgrown their pots. Sun flowers turn their faces to the sun and budded chrysanthemums await their turn to offer us their golden and rosy hues.

The harvest is in, though tomatoes are still ripening. Zucchini and summer squash are prolific. Fruits are in season and a ripe Carolina peach will allow its juice to run down your hand when you bite into it. Spirits are high. Children are learning to swim and avidly pursuing the art of performing the perfect 'cannonball'. Dad is cleaning the grill, because the 4th of July is approaching. Sounds idyllic?

It is.

But, we need to consider those who carry burdens and find this kind of rejoicing unimaginable ... the grieving, the poverty stricken, the elderly with no families to care for them, children with none of the harvest to eat, and worst of all, those who cannot understand their conditions. They feel alone. They feel neglected.

It is true, we have no say in shaping the major terms of our lives ... what our gifts are and when and where and into what situation we are born.

"We bloom where we are planted."

This is a fact not easily accepted. Regardless, as we mature, our choices are unending. We may reach for the stars, become useful and mirror the beauty and hope provided for us this season. Since God has decorated our lives with such natural grandeur, let us drink it in, absorb it. God loves us and is asking us to think of others in need, and spread joy.

Whatever our circumstances, kindness is within the reach of all.

*Good people,
Most royal greening verdancy, rooted in the sun,
You shine with radiant light in this circle
of earthly existence.
You shine so finely, it surpasses understanding.
God hugs you!
You are surrounded by the arms of the mystery of God.*

Hildegard of Bingen

12th century Benedictine abbess, gardener, cook, herbalist, musician, and mystic. One of four women Doctors of the Church.

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The Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests are women and men committed to a renewed model of ordained ministry in an inclusive community of equals in the Roman Catholic Church. We seek equality for women in the Church that includes decision-making and ordination.

“In Christ, there is no Jew or Greek, slave or citizen, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28

In 2002, on the Danube River, seven women were validly ordained Roman Catholic priests. The principle consecrating Roman Catholic male bishop, who ordained our first women bishops, is one with apostolic succession in communion with the Pope within the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, all qualified candidates, who are presented to our bishops for ordination, are ordained in apostolic succession by the laying on of hands. According to man-made Canon Law, the Church may consider us illicit, but our ordinations are valid.

The Divine Verb, continued from page 3

the current understanding of the creative force of natural phenomenon. We are living in an enlightened world that embraces the reality that all life is born, dies, and is reborn again, constantly witnessing new life and new forms of expression. This process causes pain, as does behavior that results from poor choices that are freely made when a creature strives to survive. These elements of human behavior are experiential events that form us in ever-new, ever-changing consciousness that propels us forward in creating and beholding our Creator's Imagination.

The Gospel of John (10:10) states very clearly that Jesus is the one “who came that they might have life and have it abundantly.” The Spirit of our Living God gives us the energy to continue forward on this exciting adventure, discovering new possibilities as we draw closer to this abundant life. ♦

This is Part Three 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

We already have a few **Friends** who are assisting us in our mission. One is Anne Sabach the graphic artist who designs and puts together our contributions to *Leading* every three months. Joan Taitte and Cailin Brown are two of our five editors.

Please join us. Check out our website for more information: <https://arcwp.org/en/friend-of-the-association/> ♦

Catholics angry as Church puts female ordination on par with sex abuse.

On April 17, 2018, *The Guardian* published an article decrying the Vatican's decision in 2010 to equate female ordination with sex abuse.

“Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society, called the document ‘one of the most insulting and misogynistic pronouncements that the Vatican has made for a very long time.’ Vivienne Hayes, the chief executive of the Women's Resource Centre, said ‘the decision to raise women's ordination to the level of a serious crime was *appalling*. We would urge the Catholic church to acknowledge that women's rights are not incompatible

with religious faith.’

“Ceri Goddard, chief executive of the Fawcett Society said: ‘This statement follows a series where the Vatican, an institution which yields great influence and power not only in the Catholic community but also wider society, has pitched itself in direct opposition not only to women's rights but to our equal worth and value.’ ” ♦

ARCWP Annual Retreat

The Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests will meet in Fort Myers, Florida, for their Annual Retreat from July 12-15, 2018. Be assured of our prayers and support during this holy communing of members as we gather in prayer and companionship. ♦

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

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.

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