Greenville, North Carolina, has worked hard to shed its legacy of racism. In 2007, the City Council voted to join the National League of Cities’ Inclusive Communities Initiative. At the main entrance to the city, a sign proclaims Greenville to be inclusive.

Donald Trump campaigned here in July 2019. His rally turned ugly when someone started chanting, “send her back,” after Trump’s litany of complaints about Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota. Greenville received national coverage on that. The mayor who had welcomed Trump was horrified and wanted to let the world know Greenville is progressive. I was invited along with many other community leaders to brainstorm ways to counterbalance the racist rant. It became clear there is a great deal of hurt and fear in our minority communities. One suggestion was to remove the 1914 Confederate memorial monument from the courthouse, a cry some have been proclaiming since the 1990’s. There was a passionate call confronting us to address the many issues of the Trump presidency.

Fast forward to May 31, 2020, when a peaceful demonstration organized by local Black Lives Matter advocates inexplicably turned violent. The police fired tear gas. Protesters hurled rocks and bricks which damaged several downtown businesses. The Confederate statue was damaged. Several protesters were arrested.

In June, per the County Commissioners, the statue was removed. A group of mainly Black artists proposed to paint a mural with the words, “Black Lives Matter” on a downtown street. The hope was to start a conversation, and indeed it did that. They received approval from the city’s Civic Arts Commission, only to be rebuked by the City Council which until that point had never weighed in on public art. The Council first requested the group to work within a tighter time frame so the street would only be closed briefly, and to use special paint. Then a request was made to change the wording to “Black Lives Do Matter.” The artists agreed, petitions were signed, and many groups in the community sent letters to the Council supporting the project. In November, a vote for final approval was scheduled. A surprise motion was made to change the wording to “Unite Against Racism.” After a wide-ranging discussion, the motion carried four to three with the mayor casting the deciding vote. I thought that was the nail in the coffin on this project. But a compromise was reached, and the mural was completed on December 14. It is beautiful and will definitely provoke conversation. Each letter in the mural has its own theme. The words “Black Lives Matter” appear within some of the letters. Other letters pay homage to African American history, local African American communities, and calls for social justice. The artists, true to their creative natures, didn’t let obstacles deter them from loudly proclaiming, “Black Lives Matter!”

Ann Harrington, ARCWP, wife, mother, grandmother, and ordained priest, is pastor of Free Spirit Inclusive Catholic Community. Her ministries include spiritual direction, interfaith dialogue, centering prayer, retreat leader, frequent letter-to-the-editor writer, and coordinator for the Greenville Advocacy Team.
From the Editor
By: Nori Kieran-Meredith

This newsletter features articles which provide gentle support and warmth for the reader in these difficult times. Deb Trees presents a thought-provoking host of practical ideas for self-care, so vitally needed. Ann Harrington offers a considered reflection on the Black Lives Matter movement as developed in her home town. In a departure from her usual column, Bridget Mary Meehan introduces us to Dr. Ida Raming, one of the founders of the international Roman Catholic Women Priests movement. And, as always, Maureen McGill features a book review of her own, this one provocatively exploring the possibility that God is dual-gendered!

In order to achieve gender justice, Ida believes that women will need to overturn unfair laws. One challenge happened in 2002, when several women from Austria and Germany, including Raming and Mueller, were ordained by a Catholic bishop, contra legem, against canon law. Women involved in illegal ordination, she believes, are a ”prophetic sign of protest against discriminatory teachings and laws.”

According to Dr. Raming, Pope Francis’ theology of women is a major obstacle in the struggle for equality in the Church. His vision of the church (“she is a woman”) is a paradox, because the Church is represented only by men in ecclesial office.

I loved Ida’s passionate challenge to Catholics to affirm the dignity of women, their human rights, and their work for full equality in all ministries in the Church: “Hear my call, my dear Sisters! Embrace your responsibility for this important task.”

All of us in the international Roman Catholic Women Priests movement owe Dr. Raming a depth of gratitude for her brilliant, articulate advocacy for gender justice.

Bridget Mary Meehan, ARCWP bishop, is an author of 20 books on prayer and spirituality. She is dean of Global Ministries University’s Doctor of Ministry and Master of Divinity programs and co-founder of People’s Catholic Seminary.

**55 Years of Struggle for Women’s Ordination in the Catholic Church**

*by Ida Raming, RCWP
Reviewed by Bridget Mary Meehan*

This book is a must read for anyone interested in women’s ordination and the historical foundation of the Roman Catholic Women Priests movement. It provides a comprehensive collection of documents, events, and footnotes about the journey of Catholic women toward a renewed priestly ministry in the Church.

Theologian Ida Raming presents a comprehensive collection of historical documents about the 55-year struggle for women’s ordination. This book is a treasure trove of information. Ida Raming and her friend Iris Mueller were pioneers for the admission of women to priesthood and all other Church ministries. This book recounts manipulation and brainwashing by the Vatican to stifle open dialogue, including the Vatican’s attempt to pass on discriminatory teaching as dogma binding for all times. Raming states that Vatican resistance to women priests has no theological justification.

One of the major issues for the all-male hierarchy is the question of power. Raming writes: “Men do not want to share the power that is associated with ministries and service. . . . I am not giving up, because I trust and believe that truth will overcome – the truth will prevail in the end – and not lies!”

In order to achieve gender justice, Ida believes that women will need to overturn unfair laws. One challenge happened in 2002, when several women from Austria and Germany, including Raming and Mueller, were ordained by a Catholic bishop, contra legem, against canon law. Women involved in illegal ordination, she believes, are a ”prophetic sign of protest against discriminatory teachings and laws.”

According to Dr. Raming, Pope Francis’ theology of women is a major obstacle in the
The author of this book is clearly a scholar. His work is well researched with numerous end notes and bibliography, and his mastery of the Hebrew language is evident.

Rabbi Sameth gives a detailed account of the development and the hidden nature of the tetragrammaton, YHWH, which many associate as God’s name. Those who only read the Bible in English may have little knowledge of the significance of YHWH, or even that God was once known by a personal name. The actual pronunciation of YHWH has been lost for generations.

This book begins by giving an account of ancient peoples through to the more recent history of Jewish migrations. The author starts with what he calls the Cradle of Civilization, that area of the Middle East around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which is described as thoroughly polytheistic. He includes the Israelites in this form of worship. Rabbi Sameth notes that Jews may have prayed to a dual-gendered God. To a Christian reader, that statement is shocking. How could the ancient Israelites, the people who brought Abrahamic monotheism to the world, have worshipped a dual-gendered God?

As the reader is invited to look at Egyptian worship, the author introduces a trigrammaton, YHW. Scholars believe that this is the archaic form for God’s name. The trigrammaton developed into YHWH which later came to be understood as God’s name. Rabbi Sameth believes that it was kept secret and was only ever uttered by priests.

The Egyptians believed that the name of God was replete with magical powers. Keep in mind that the Israelites spent many years in Egypt, and that culture had to have some influence on the Jewish people.

Only when one reads the Bible in Hebrew can one see that there is a dual-gendered deity. The rabbis discouraged the general public from penetrating obscurities and hidden things. On the other hand, the priests were encouraged to probe deeply into the mysteries in the biblical texts. Rabbi Sameth looks into the possibility that YHWH is meant to be pronounced HuHe, or perhaps to be read backwards as HeHu. “Hu” may stand for the masculine characteristics of God, and “He” may denote the feminine. This is a fascinating thesis, worthy of further investigation and study.

Maureen McGill

Ten Commandments for the Paranoid
When Facing the Pandemic
by: Nori Kieran-Meredith

And God declareth:

I. I am in charge.
II. Butt-eth out of others’ business.
III. Thou shalt trust Me and our relationship.
IV. If thou maketh a mistake, I shall righteth thy path.
V. What hath been revealed in the light, do not thou question in the dark.
VI. Thy anxiety cometh from the powers of hell, and availeth thee naught. Searcheth out the path of peace.
VII. Thou wast never meant to deal with impossible situations. When thy fears becometh insurmountable, turneth them over to Me.
VIII. Should thy anxiety overwhelm thee, writeth it down, taketh it outdoors, appendeth it to thy clothesline, and leaveth it there. Thou wilt be safe outdoors with Me.
IX. Giveth thanks in everything.
X. Thou shalt remember that I love thee. Everything worletheth to thy good. Even this.

(continued from page 1)

+ Exercise: yoga, walking, hiking, swimming;
+ Quiet listening and contemplation;
+ Creative energy where we can lose ourselves in the effort, bringing out our passion: drawing, painting, knitting, crocheting, photography;
+ Reading;
+ Taking a nap and just relaxing;
+ Visiting and interaction with friends or family;
+ Journaling and free writing;
+ Listening to music, singing, and maybe even dancing!
+ Playing games;
+ Boating and fishing;
+ Taking a stroll on the beach;
+ Community competition: jogging, running, golf, sports of all sorts;
+ Cooking and baking;
+ Watching your favorite TV show or movies;
+ Traveling on a mini vacation just to go!
+ Facial or mani-pedi, spa-treatment or bubble bath;
+ Gardening;
+ Engaging in spiritual direction and counseling;
+ Doing NOTHING

Intention and gratefulness are essential ingredients for self-care. You can cook for others, but what about the joy of cooking? You can read a book for knowledge, but what about reading for pleasure? You can walk to exercise or lose weight, but what about just to commune with nature?

Please join me in enhancing your body, soul, and spirit. Make a commitment to give yourself the best gift of love you offer to your community. Take the deep dive into your own happiness and wellness. Legitimize your self-care!

Debra Trees, ARCWP, is working on her Masters in Ministry through People’s Catholic Seminary and Global Ministries University. She is a wife, mother, and professional audiologist for the past 35 years.
The Naming – A Satirical Musing
By: Jill Striebinger

As my ordination draws near, I’ve had the time to ruminate on a name for our future community’s Roman Catholic church. Originally, I chose the name “Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth,” as I want it known that God is She, not only He; yet neither . . . In order to express some equality between men and women, we need to acknowledge that God is She . . . that to get to God as neither, God must be named as She. In polite company, we must be able to say and acknowledge She without everyone cringing.

It is only the first paragraph, yet I have digressed . . .

I picture the unnamed woman in Luke 7:38, “As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.” For some time, it was thought that she was a prostitute and that she was also Mary Magdalene. This notion came from Pope Gregory in 531 AD who conflated this repentant sinner with Jesus’ best-known female companion. This was hardly surprising, as women are always being confused, condemned, and forgotten, then disappeared. We were then and still are now treated as interchangeable, like batteries.

Let’s try to pull it together, a name for a church community: The Unnamed Woman Catholic Church. Nope – needs to appeal to a wider audience. First Believer – too Protestant. Saint Jane Doe, too crime scene! Think . . . Think . . . who was that woman who was the hero (we don’t say heroine anymore) in the Old Testament? Jael? Okay Saint Jael (Ya-ël). Oh, we can have a lovely processional hymn:

From the Song of Deborah and Barak in Judges, chapter 5 (begin music)
Most blessed of women be Jael,
the wife of Heber the Kenite,
of tent-dwelling women most blessed.
He asked for water and she gave him milk;
she brought him curds in a noble’s bowl.
She sent her hand to the tent peg
and her right hand to the workmen’s mallet;
she struck Sisera;
she crushed his head;
she shattered and pierced his temple . . .
There he fell—dead.
(Judges 5:24–27).

Oh, my! What am I thinking? I need help. Let me call my sister Michelle. My dear childhood friend, confidant, and soul sister is very excited about our church idea. Okay, she wants to meditate on it, but for now she is getting, “Shedding Light,” “Shining a Light,” “Returning to Light.” . . . She’ll get back to me. Let me call Beth, my dear friend, who was so excited about the idea of our community that she is creating an inspired logo in fabric art. She says, “Mary of the Universe” . . . “um, too New Age” . . . “okay, try googling . . .” I quickly write down all her suggestions.

One image is of the unknown woman humiliating herself in perpetuity with the hope that she will be lifted up from outside of herself; and, the other is of Mary, Queen of Heaven, resplendent in all her glory. We’ve been on our knees long enough; heaven is manifest. Being humble before God is internal, it’s about standing in the truth of who you are without shame. As I drift away, She tells me to move on, create content, tell fun stories.

And so I do.

* * *

Find Jill at maryqueenheavenearth.com
to read her new blogs and to see what she’s up to!

Jill Striebinger, ARCWP, is a deacon and a Shinpiden Reiki Master. She attended People’s Catholic Seminary and has completed advocacy and peer advocate certifications through Parents in Partnership and Federation of Families. Jill holds a Master of Science in Management Information Systems, and her business background is in strategic, organizational, process, and system redesign. Jill is married to her wonderful husband, David, and is the mother of Eric, a beautiful angel. She volunteers as a parent advocate for other families with children who have autism.

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The Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests consists of 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 principal 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.