

The Seed Keepers

A Publication of the Catholic Network for Women's Equality (CNWE)

Réseau Catholique pour l'égalité des femmes

Volume 24 Number 2, Winter 2013

ISSN 1924-181X

"Very, very impressive newsletter including the articles from members of CNWE. Thank you for letting me read it When someone says to me they are involved in their church, I always think it's about attending mass and organizing bingo's, yearly bazaars, or garage sales. You have also opened my eyes to other aspects of the Church. CNWE is alive, intelligent, current and political - all at the same time."

Yvonne, my new neighbour and friend, sent me her comments the day after I gave her a copy of our last issue. Hers were the first of many received - all of which certainly cheered us on and, as you'll discover in this issue, contributed much to this forum.

Since last issue's publication, we received some really sad, disturbing news including about Roy Bourgeois' dismissal from his Maryknoll community of some 40 years together with the removal of his priestly faculties for his conscientious and vocal support of the ordination of women. Tony Flannery, founder of The Association of Catholic Priests, and member of the Redemptorist order in Ireland, faces a similar fate for the same reasons. And, just as we go to press, thanks to Francis X. Rocca of Catholic News Service, we receive the depressing, nonsensical opinion of Wojciech Giertych, Benedict XVI's personal theologian no less, on John Paul II's 'definitive teaching' on the question of women's ordination. (www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1300417.html) Giertych's logic on this subject is, in my humble opinion, in keeping with much of Roman Church theology – constructed to explain edicts from the Vatican and eventually morphing into 'Catholic Doctrine' / 'the Deposit of the Faith' / 'Official Church teachings'.

But we on *The Seed Keepers* Publication Team have at least some good news for you. And this because we have had great response to our call for your contributions. You will find in this expanded issue responses to Jennifer Waterman's call for change within CNWE – two by members of CNWE (both Roman Catholic WomenPriests) and one from a non-member. We learn about the new Reaching Out project, thanks to Cara Nunnenmacher's introduction along with her time sensitive invitation to raise funds for the project. (Hint: Maybe read it first.) Barbara Billey inspires us by the telling of her Pink Smoke initiative in Windsor and Essex County. Caroline Dawson sets the stage for the upcoming CNWE conference in June with her article on conscience, including one of her own early experiences of conscience. As well, though we're saddened with the loss of CNWE founding member, Nano Pennefather-McConnell, we're happy to have the platform to share part of her story as told by her – thanks to Jennifer Waterman's interview with Nano in the late 1980's.

Please do keep your contributions coming to *The Seed Keepers*!

Finally, I'll add another little bit from Yvonne's oh so complimentary email: *"I liked how Rita Patenaude linked The Seed Keepers to Curiosity, the little Robot on Mars. Jennifer Waterman certainly does ask many thought provoking questions."* Now, I ask you, guess who was first on my list for TSK gift subscriptions?

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Virginia Lafond
Editor





Reaching Out

by Cara Nunnenmacher

Reaching out takes many forms. For instance, we have international aid, sitting with a grieving friend, standing in solidarity with the Idle No More movement, or even speaking words of affirmation to another.

While living in Vancouver in my early twenties, a Catholic Sister said to me, "Cara, you are the word of God." Why hadn't someone said this to me before? Why did I find this statement unbelievable, impossible? The beautiful woman who spoke those words to me continues to shine brightly in my life. Her boldness allows me to find the boldness in myself.

Over ten years have passed since the seed of being the word of God was planted. As the seed sprouted and continued to grow, I moved to Toronto. I wanted to find more women with Catholic roots - women who are a source of strength, courage and guidance. As I found and joined CNWE, I became part of a deeply committed group seeking equality and justice for both women within the Church and in the world. The boldness I experienced ten years ago is alive and well in CNWE today.

From the moment I heard about *Reaching Out*, I was enthusiastic and wanted to support this new CNWE initiative. Rita Patenaude, a member of the *Reaching Out* team, comments: "This spring CNWE plans to 'hold conversations' in at least six centres across Canada, listening to the concerns of women and offering leaflets for CNWE membership. The plan involves working with local members and friends to make the gatherings happen. The dream is an increased number of local groups across Canada gathering, celebrating, and advocating for change."

During the years I lived in Vancouver, I wished there would have been a local CNWE group. With the *Reaching Out* project, I plan to assist and hopefully attend the gathering held in Vancouver. Planting CNWE seeds where I am from, on the West Coast of Canada, is a call I have discerned and feel is incredibly important. I discovered CNWE online and I reached out. Now I feel driven to assist CNWE to reach out and listen to others.

As a professional jazz and blues vocalist and as a Toronto CNWE member, I will be singing at a *Reaching Out* fundraiser hosted by Toronto CNWE: **Jazz in the Afternoon**. The concert will be held in Toronto on Sunday, February 24th, 2013 from 4pm to 6pm. I encourage CNWE members to extend the **Jazz in the Afternoon** invitation to their friends and families, as this will be a lovely event with great company, music, food and drink - all to support *Reaching Out*.

While *The Seed Keepers* is preparing its Spring issue, *Reaching Out* members will be planting CNWE seeds as they travel to the following six centres, offering small gatherings as a safe place for women to be heard: Sydney, Antigonish, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary and Vancouver. As a result of the *Reaching Out* initiative, new local groups across Canada could emerge and, hopefully, we will see an increase in CNWE membership. This is an exciting time for CNWE.



- Cara Nunnenmacher is a recent CNWE member and moved to Toronto in 2006 from Vancouver, B.C. Cara is a professional jazz and blues vocalist and also has a career in the polar travel industry. For more information about **Jazz in the Afternoon** on February 24th, please contact Cara: caramatthew@gmail.com
- For those who cannot attend the event, Cara will be donating proceeds from the online purchase of her album made by CNWE

Kim Sylvester, RCWP, suggests Changes for CNWE



The short piece by Jennifer Waterman, "Change within CNWE," (Fall 2012)

contains several questions which, in my view, cry out for reasonable as well as inspiring answers. The basis for some of the change she seeks is within CNWE, which has moved through the years after Vatican II trying to determine what action or changes could/should be initiated, or experimented with, not always with clearly imagined consequences. I sense a strong desire to move into the future, a future developing out from CNWE that will reflect its motivation and, possibly, new direction. And to that purpose I offer some reflections on only a few of the questions she poses.

The relationship with ordained womenpriests entails, she says, *"a shift in our relationship to our own organization. Surely we now have to be clearer about our own theology?"* Our beliefs/faith *vis à vis* the Church *"remain inchoate..., but not fully articulated among us."* This is a very perceptive point and will very likely necessitate a clearing away of previously held attitudes and actions.

So how do we change this and move forward? It is always true that we cannot change people and their ideas, but we can change ourselves, which then requires a change in behaviour. Now that CNWE is engaging with ordained women, communication has changed, both within and without the organization. Relationships have changed along side our ways of communicating. This is positive development!

An important point to remember here is that the feminist movement of the 1970s did not desire simply "to include women in the present model of patriarchal clericalism: [it] wanted to transform the church." In fact, this is the

woman who is now an ordained priest, attempting to build open and inclusive Christian community where the role of the priest is to be an animator for this democratic and participatory community - not a ruler over it.

When a community develops from this basis, when the leader seeks to empower the members to transform the model of community, then all work toward and share in the constructive process. Talking about ideas together is a potent force for change.

We need not be fearful of what the Vatican might "do" to us: we are acting according to the Holy Spirit's call to renew the church. We can see that we and many others are disenchanted and disagreeing with RC hierarchical structure. The question is what to do about it? Most of us in one way or another have simply left regular participation in our former parishes. We have become activists through our words and actions. Now we must step forward once again, into a new space on new paths. Here are some ideas, some of which you may already have tried, others of which you may have been fearful - because they do require change.

- + Break out of the clerical church structures that may still live within you. For example, see yourself as equal in many ways to the clergy - possibly even superior in education and experience, and definitely worthy to analyze how things have gone so wrong in the church for decades in our time. Find answers to your questions from current groups and sources such as CNWE, "Call to Action" or "FutureChurch".

- + Continue to keep abreast of the feminist

Leadership Conference of Women Religious refusing to bow down to the Vatican. There are websites devoted to many renewal movements and ideas, such as www.cnwe.org; www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org; www.womensordinationworldwide.org; www.womenordination.org

+ Create a liberating church community. Think of and proclaim your communities as a liberation from patriarchy and its hierarchies. We reject patriarchy in all of our social structures. Why support it as an appropriate structure for the church?

+ Create theology based on your own reflections and discussions and reclaim your life and authenticity from clericalist distortion. Hear what Rosemary Radford Reuther says on this point:

*We understand theological education and teaching as our own reflections on the meaning of reclaiming our authentic life from such distortion. Ministry is the active work and reflection upon that life; it is also the building of redemptive communities as the bases from which to challenge systems and ideologies of oppression and injustice.**

Open up the idea of a discipleship of equals in prayerful study and discussion with your small group community. Education must empower and make the educated into peers of the educator. Claim your empowerment to create a community which is a discipleship of equals.

Of course, mature leadership is important, but not all are called to lead; many need to learn first how to challenge old forms and help create new ones. But all have a role to exercise in developing new sacramental, scripture-based, equality-structured small groups where ministry becomes *function-based*, not the role of a few privileged clerics. We are all disciples of Christ in renewed communities, and all decide on its sacramental, spiritual, educational, and service activities. This is a clear demonstration of discipleship of equals, liberating and mutually enhancing.

CNWE was created to facilitate change for women in the RC church. I believe it must now break out further into new ministry to facilitate the construction of broadly-based, inclusive, liberated, redemptive, ministering communities of equals in all aspects of Christian life. ♀

* Rosemary Radford Reuther. *Catholic Does Not Equal the Vatican: A Vision for Progressive Catholicism*. New York: New Press. (2008) p. 142.

The New Roman Missal Petition

Mary Ellen Chown, Co-ordinator of CNWE's National Work Group, reports:

On December 5, 2012, CNWE members Jocelyn Rait, Virginia Lafond and I, along with liturgy consultant, Dr. Susan Roll, met with Archbishop Terrence Prendergast of Ottawa to present CNWE's petition expressing dissatisfaction with the New Roman Missal. We went to the meeting with the strong support of CNWE members and with the signatures of over 400 Canadians on the petition.

During the meeting we outlined to Archbishop Prendergast four main concerns with the New Missal: it overemphasizes an understanding of humans as unworthy before a 'monarchical' God; it does not use inclusive language; the move to a literal translation of Latin results in long, awkward sentences and obscure vocabulary, and the process of development of the New Roman Missal ignored a widely approved previous draft. Archbishop Prendergast responded to our remarks by saying that it will take time to acclimatize to the New Roman Missal and its more poetic and courtly language but that a heightened sense of God as "Creator, Master, King, Judge and Lord" will eventually increase the conscious participation of the people in the mass. We then shared the vision and work of CNWE with the Archbishop and he agreed to share CNWE's letter and petition with the members of Vox Clara (a committee established to advise the papacy concerning English-language liturgy). The tone of the meeting was respectful and we closed by leading a reflection adapted from St. Teresa of Avila. The CNWE petition and letter was sent to all of the English-speaking bishops of Canada in early January 2013. ♀

As to the question, "What is the eucharist that we celebrate with our ordained women priests?",

Marie Evans Bouclín, RCWP,
Bishop for Canada, answers



Some twenty years ago, a group of Sudbury CNWE members gathered to pray and study Scripture, hoping to eventually form a base community. Our first action as a group was to write to the Bishops of Northern Canada, assuring them of our prayerful support as they headed to Rome for their *ad limina* visit. They would petition John Paul II to allow the ordination of Native married men. We supported this because, as we wrote, "we believe the Eucharist to be the *fount and summit of the whole Christian life* and that the Eucharist, and therefore the very survival of the Church, is being sacrificed on the altar of a male, celibate clergy." Eucharist was so important to us that CNWE Sudbury organized the 2003 annual CNWE Conference around the theme "Building Eucharistic Communities".

The importance of Eucharist for the survival of our Church is pivotal. It is at Eucharist that we remember Jesus, as he asked (Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:19-20 and 1 Cor 11: 23-25) - who he was, how he lived, what he taught and what being a disciple of Jesus means for us. Jesus challenged the religious and political authorities of his time, and it cost him a horrific death. But God raised and vindicated him. And our Christian tradition has taught for centuries that what we celebrate at Eucharist is the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus, a "sacrifice" pleasing to God. It has, in large measure, failed to teach us to live the Jesus Way.

Joan Chittister says, "We are at a cross-over moment in time". Just as we no longer believe the earth to be the centre of the universe, nor that God is a male patriarch and exacting

judge, so our understanding of Eucharist must change. Thanks in part to theology coming from women's experience of oppression and abuse,* Eucharist-as-Sacrifice, meaning the sacramentalized killing of a victim to appease an angry, abusive God is no longer acceptable. Nor is it consistent with Jesus' teaching about building the reign of his *Abwoum* God by eliminating injustice, oppression, and all the accompanying inhumanities humans inflict on one another.

And so, Roman Catholic WomenPriests are re-writing Eucharistic liturgies that embrace what Michael Morwood and others would call a "New Story". Keeping a liturgical *action* that is recognizably Roman Catholic, we exchange sacrificial (and exclusively male) language for one of thanksgiving, blessing, and inclusivity. We gather to remember Jesus. Calling upon the Spirit to "come upon these gifts to make them (and us) holy", we seek the courage and wisdom to live the Word and the Way. Worship centred on the "sacrifice" of the crucifixion is tantamount to worshipping violence. Victim theology, sacrificial worship and violence, self-inflicted or otherwise, as redemptive must give way to a theology of compassion, for ourselves, one another and creation. What do you think?♀

*Seminal writings on this: Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, ed. *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press. (1989); Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker. *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us*. Boston: Beacon Press. (2001) ♀

Dolores Campbell,

Sydney, Nova Scotia,

offers her opinion and shares her abiding questions

I received a copy of *The Seed Keepers* from my sister-in-law in Ottawa. I was interested in the piece by Jennifer Waterman and since I have written about church matters for almost a year now, I decided to put some of my thoughts on paper. I am a Catholic, but as I like to say, a 3-D Catholic, dispirited, disillusioned and disenchanted, but one who continues to attend Mass and be involved in my parish community. Having worked as a parish secretary for two parishes over the course of my working career, I am so surprised that, having retired 13 years ago, I began to question much of what I had accepted as gospel for some 30 years. Fortunately, I have been part of a questioning group. We have met monthly for about 8 years and have discussed what we all once accepted but now no longer believe.

I have been fortunate to have had a number of pieces accepted for publication by our local secular newspaper and have received more positive response than I would ever have expected. In fact, the only negative response (in print at least) came, as one might suspect, from a priest, one of what appears to be a new breed emerging from seminaries in the last few years. They are reactionary in every way, clinging to everything that comes forth from Rome and instructing us who do question that we must accept and never dissent from those teachings.

I have written about the ordination of male deacons in our diocese that has taken place over the past year or so, asking why, since deacons may not celebrate Mass or hear confessions, women couldn't also serve in this ministry. As well, I have questioned the Vatican's stand against the ordination of women to the priesthood only to be given the usual Pope John Paul II statements on that topic. Some years ago I interviewed, for *Catholic New Times*, a nun who had been appointed to administer parishes in northern New Brunswick and who baptized, celebrated marriages, presided at funerals,

presided over parish councils, etc. She was a vibrant and energetic woman who was permitted to carry out her ministry by what I assume was an intelligent, liberal-minded bishop who recognized her faith and her ability. Eventually I heard that another bishop brought her ministry to an abrupt end.

Reading Jennifer Waterman's column in *The Seed Keepers*, I find myself agreeing with her as to what happens now that some women have, in fact, been ordained. The more I think, read and discuss problems within the Church - the desire for control that emanates from Rome and the many teachings against homosexuality, birth control, ordained women, etc. - the more I wonder why women would want to participate as priests in such an environment. I am no theologian but have received support from clergy who have studied theology and who agree that as Catholics, we have a right to question and even dissent.

Our diocese is now planning for a congress to be held in October of 2013 with a view to carrying out the New Evangelization as put forward at the recent synod in Rome. The planning group is telling us that the laity must be involved, but no criteria have been outlined as to how the laity will be chosen as delegates to this congress. A suggestion that pastors and parish councils might rifle through applications and decide who will attend is meeting with opposition.

When I read of the work being done by CNWE, of which I am not a member, **I wonder how women can continue to be seed keepers, if the seeds we are keeping are those of a faith that is still mired in the past, refusing to change, refusing to accept what women have to offer, allowing no questions or concerns to be voiced and silencing those brave theologians and others who have dared to speak out.** I find it hard to say I believe in the "Holy Catholic Church" when I recite the Creed at Mass. I can only see it becoming harder to do so. Yet, because I need to be part of a worshipping community, I will continue to attend Mass, all my questions and concerns set aside for at least an hour. ♀

Conscience, Conflict and Compassion

by Caroline Dawson, IBVM, a long time member of CNWE

We all have a conscience; but our experiences of conscience are ambiguous. In some way they are connected to being a faithful Catholic Christian and following God's will. What was your image of God as a child? My image was of an old man sitting on a throne very high up in the sky, holding a book. I was never sure of what was written in the book. Was it a list of all my sins and failings, or was it details of what God wanted me to do to follow his will and please him? Note two things: God was male, and the emphasis was on doing rather than being.

One of the least known principles of Catholic moral teaching is the supremacy of conscience – the belief that someone comes to a moral decision or conclusion which may be fully or partly not in line with perceived Catholic moral teaching, but is the right moral choice for that person. This teaching is not about extreme individualism, reasoning "I am going to do what I want to do, and I don't care what you think." Supremacy of conscience involves paying attention to the faith tradition, being in dialogue with others, and taking seriously the dynamics of one's own spirituality and faith in the context of life experience. In other words, a criterion of conscience is the ability to make up one's mind for oneself about what ought to be done. Notice that the criterion is for oneself, not by oneself. The mature conscience is formed and exercised in community in dialogue with other sources of moral wisdom. Moral maturity means one must be one's own person, authentic and committed to interior freedom. As Richard Gula puts it, "Conscience operates when the moral backbone is on the inside rather than the outside."

Conscience must be differentiated from the superego, a Freudian term. Some distinctions are helpful: conscience responds to an invitation to love; in the very act of responding to others, one becomes a certain sort of person and co-creates self-value. Superego commands us to act for the sake of gaining and tends to be a dynamic responding to the demand of values. Superego tends to be static by merely repeating prior commands, unable to function creatively in a new

situation. (I would suggest consulting the works of feminist moral theologians Lise Cahill and Margaret Farley for further understandings of conscience.)

A personal note: In the fifties I attended a Catholic girls' high school. Each year we had a three day retreat usually led by a Jesuit priest. I really enjoyed these experiences until grade twelve when the retreat director gave us a false conscience, telling us in no uncertain terms that we were not to date any boys who were not Catholic and we were certainly not to marry anyone but a Catholic. My boyfriend was not a Catholic and several of my friends had fathers who were not Catholic. The principal of the school became aware of how upset we were. Her solution was to invite back another Jesuit priest who quickly helped us to undo this false conscience and replace it with freedom and true conscience.

Ron Rolheiser stated recently that the centre of our moral life is the invitation to love God and to love your neighbour as yourself, and to let God and others love us. He probably learned that in Grade One as you and I did. I'll make bold to add this: Have courage and integrity. Do not avoid conflict but have compassion for yourself and for those involved in moral decision-making. Remember, God is with us in the process. ♀

The 2013 CNWE Conference and Annual General Meeting will be held at Cambrian College, Sudbury June 21 - 23, 2013

Conference Focus:
Primacy of Conscience

Keynote speakers:
Louise Akers and Catherine Cavanagh

Cost: \$240 (based on double occupancy and early registration). More details to follow.

Pink Smoke Over Windsor and Essex County

We call them Pink Smoke parties. Before you get the wrong impression, nobody was smoking the funny smelling stuff favored by some youth today. However, energy was high and conversation heated among those who have gathered to view *Pink Smoke Over The Vatican*, the documentary by filmmaker Jules Hart about the controversial movement of women becoming priests in the Roman Catholic tradition.

Since late August of 2012, 22 practicing and former Roman Catholic women and one retired male Anglican Bishop have met in four separate groups to view the film in the homes of participants. The outcry of pain and hope has been significant. The desire has strengthened to raise awareness about the injustice of exclusion of women from ordination as Roman Catholic priests, and to create systemic change. **At the last gathering, women shared intimate details of their experience of oppression within and outside of the church. They also discussed their vision for a new Roman Catholic faith community and ended the meeting with spontaneous communal prayer.** The presence of the Spirit of God was palpable.

At the last session of *Arise Together in Christ* held at my local church, the facilitator posed a question from the study guide about seeking justice. I wondered with the group if they had heard of the Roman Catholic Women Priests (RCWP). No one had. The ensuing conversation was lively with obvious curiosity exhibited by members of the group. One man initiated a discussion about married men becoming priests, and quoted scripture supporting this stance. Another woman queried whether consecration of the Eucharist by a woman priest was valid. I explained how RCWP are ordained through

apostolic succession, thus rendering this and all Sacraments, at their hands, valid. The facilitator ended the open and lengthy discussion by fixing his eyes directly on me, warmly inviting a question, "What are you planning to do?" I wasn't expecting this, but with a generous smile, I replied, "Stay tuned!" There was exuberant laughter among all of us. (I didn't tell them that I was hoping to become one of the RCWP.)

As far as future initiatives go, others are on a waiting list to see the film and many have received information packages about the history of women priests compiled by archeologist, Dr. Dorothy Irvin. Several people from various groups met for a Winter Solstice event "to enter the darkness and to discover the light of Christ within" through a reflection on the Visitation (Luke 1:39-45) using a contemplative and creative process. During the social time that followed, one member of the group opened a conversation about the RCWP. A few newcomers had not heard about them and were eager to come to the next showing of the film.

We continue to follow the movement of the Spirit of God who guides and invites us into new territory, into deeper expression of the evolution of Christ as God's love. Stay tuned for more Pink Smoke over Windsor and Essex County. ♀



Barbara J. Billey,
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Thanks to Jennifer Waterman and her archives:

We remember Nano

“Living Christ honestly was key to Nano’s life.”

Iknew Nano Pennefather-McConnell for about thirty years, and what a gift that was. When she was 78, I interviewed her for the CNWE Newsletter so I’ve chosen some of her shared thoughts to put us in touch again with this very engaging and engaged woman.

Her observant family was a strong early influence; however, for Nano both her parents “seemed to be a little in advance of what was being taught me in school.” Early on, she was able to “see the differences between progressive and conservative Catholics ... and could see that there were God’s rules and church rules.” She commented, “In the thirties it was a struggle for some to pay the convent school fees, and I was so shocked one day when one of the nuns in class virtually identified a student who had not yet paid hers. That is my first memory of all not being well in the institution of Christianity. I became aware that people weren’t living Christ honestly.” Living Christ honestly was key to Nano’s life.

Two early spiritual experiences profoundly affected her. The first happened when she was nine in the Aylmer woods near a lake as she suddenly saw the sky fully reflected in the surface of the water. “This must be heaven” she thought, “and I’m not supposed to be here.” She felt she had witnessed something she should not have, but the moment remained always for her a symbol of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The second experience happened not long after. The family drew their water ‘from a deep, dark well.’ Looking into it one day, she saw “the bottom of the well was full of stars. The coming together of heaven and earth had happened again. It was very powerful.” While amazing to her, she did not share these experiences. She told me, “I wasn’t going to risk it; little girls didn’t have such experiences.”

Three very important years for Nano were those she spent in London as part of the Canadian Air Force. Nano described it in the following way, “There was something of the Persephone myth about it all. You know in the original myth

Persephone chooses to go in to the Underworld because she learns the dead have no one to comfort them; we women personnel were comforting the living dead.” - the airmen she met on a daily basis. Her closeness to the realities of war and her meeting with men and women of other Christian traditions challenged her obedient adherence to Catholic teachings.

After studies at the University of Toronto on her return to Canada, Nano became a social worker, discovering that “the basic premise of case work in the 40s and 50s was that society is OK and that the individual must adapt to it I kept finding social situations that weren’t possible to adapt to!” She joined the Institute of Social Action in Ottawa and explored the Church’s social teaching and found it not being readily applied. The radical positions of the Institute enabled her to think for herself more rationally according to Church principles. As she said, she “wasn’t just obeying without thinking any more.” The major shifts in Nano’s thinking now began: she supervised some young priests in their first pastoral year learning marriage counselling at Catholic Family Services. She “realized the limitations of their training and taught them to recognize this and how to refer people with psychological and social problems to specialists.” Gradually her thinking evolved as she read a lot around Vatican II; she kept abreast of issues. Her own children’s attitudes to the Roman Church changed and their re-evaluations challenged her. Nano, ever the learner, became a student at Saint Paul University and began to open up even more.

In 1981 she went to the founding meeting of CCWO (Canadian Catholics for Women’s Ordination) in Toronto after meeting progressive women thinkers at Saint Paul. Together they formed a small Ottawa group and went down to Toronto. Coleman, her husband, “had been coming home from Saint Paul himself with stories of women wanting to be priests, a shocking idea to me”, she said. “I wanted to meet these women!” About that initial meeting, Nano commented: “I sat on the fence at that first meeting ready to jump to whichever side was safest!”

Fifteen years ago she declared to me, "Have I ever changed since then! Who says you can't change when you get to a certain age! A number of clear thoughts came to her. One was: "You don't have to sit at the feet of bible professors." All her reading and sharing gave her "an inner permission to trust my own thinking." Another thought shifted her image of God, and God as Holy Spirit became far more engaging for her than the old God the Father image. "I am your sister" was another startling thought she had about God. She said, "I was delighted with it and it felt right." The various ideas opening Nano up in the 1980s she felt moved her past only intellectual enquiry so that she "could listen to God." She found "a guiding framework" for her attitude to change in the Church. However, Nano was not one to judge others: "I don't judge the right wing harshly," she said. "I recognize when I hear what they say that I used to think as they do. It's hard to let go of authority if you don't believe in your right to think for yourself - and don't know how to do it." Nano was ever compassionate.

Nano was a writer and declared, "Writing is an important part of my spiritual self, whether it's my poetry, my memoirs, the movie script on my war experiences ... or my many articles for my parish magazine *The Voice*." Her writing was a freedom for her, I think.

Nano had a particular attitude to prayer. Each day she and Coleman read from *Living with Christ* and prayed together. Yet Nano said: "Prayer is more community for me; I like community, which includes my parish church, and the women's groups I belong to - Faith and Feminism, CNWE, and the Women's Ecumenical Prayer group on the Bible.... It is only because of these women I can keep going to church, where I'm frustrated and irritated often." Nano strongly valued our "need to share our individual experiences and see how they come together." She spoke out but did not find doing so easy; she went for spiritual

*She sews into the night
 Keeping rhythm with the moon and stars
 Hands moving deftly over red silk
 Slippery
 Wanting
 The needle penetrating stitch by stitch
 until the last breath is drawn
 A sigh released
 To reveal the design of what once must always be*

direction because she was afraid her criticisms might "be an ego trip." Nano never became pretentious or inflated.

I asked her how she felt about being regarded by many in CNWE as Grandmother of the movement. She told me she found it scary and it could be a burden. As she said, for her the antidote to all that was "to keep on being who I am and not let myself be restricted by anyone's expectations of me. I just have to be myself."

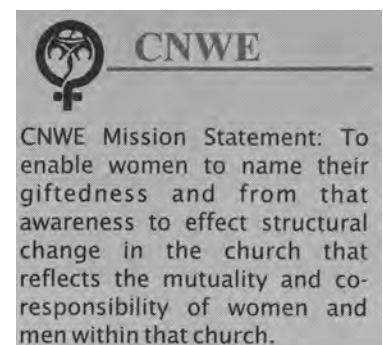
As she grew older, Nano found she had more and more difficulty with the clergy's exclusiveness and their adamant refusal to include women in leadership roles. Her biggest dilemma, she said when she was 78, "was to find where I - and many women - fit into the Catholic Church. Do we



Phyllis Holmes,

continue to support a sinful structure that goes against an authentic relationship with the God we know? How long do we continue to allow ourselves to be victims? Can I stand up and refuse to support such a Church - or am I still tied to my fear of upsetting the fathers who have been of help in my being where I am today yet see my questions as unfair criticism... ?" She had no time for what she called "the semantic gymnastics... rationalizing the infallibility of the statement against ordaining women."

Nano was a wise and loving woman, a central figure in CNWE for many, many years. We offer praise and thanks to her and for her. ♀



Notes from your TSK Publication Team:

~ The DVD, ***Pink Smoke Over the Vatican*** (see Billey, p.8), is easily accessible and the cost including shipping and handling is less than \$30. Check it out at <http://pinksmokeoverthevatican.com/>

~ We also want to recommend some good reads and a lecture (for those in or near Ottawa): **Gary Macy, William T. Ditewig and Phyllis Zagano, *Women Deacons: Past, Present and Future***. Paulist Press. (2011) These three experts on the question of women in the Roman Catholic diaconate take on the question from historical, contemporary and future perspectives. Macy, a professor of medieval theology, has published research on both women priests and women deacons from the early Church through the Middle Ages. Ditewig, himself an ordained married deacon and former secretary of the U.S. Bishops' Secretariat for the Diaconate, has been banned from speaking in several dioceses for his advocacy of women deacons. Zagano, senior research scholar in religious studies and Celtic spirituality, has been a prominent advocate of women deacons for over twenty years.

*****One of the authors, Phyllis Zagano, will give a guest lecture "Women Deacons: Transforming the Church," at Saint Paul University in Ottawa on International Women's Day this year - March 8, 2013, 7:00 pm. The lecture will be presented by the Centre for Women and Christian Traditions at Saint Paul and is supported by the Glasmacher Fund.**

Küng, Hans. *My Struggle for Freedom: Memoirs*. Ottawa: Novalis. (2003) and **Küng, Hans *Disputed Truth. Memoirs II***. Toronto: Novalis (2008)

Hans Küng has been a voice for truth and freedom for over forty-five years. His personal story is endlessly fascinating, especially as he and Joseph Ratzinger started out on roughly the same path as theologians, but then diverged completely, Ratzinger embracing the hierarchy and ascending to the very top as Pope Benedict XVI, Küng enjoying international fame as a charismatic speaker and deep thinker, but as often as not in trouble with the Vatican. Highly recommended. Jocelyn Rait

Judt, Tony. *Ill Fares the Land*. Penguin Press. (2010)

Overview of what's amiss in our current way of living; short, well-written, focuses on the West and raises issue of the demise of what used to be known as the Left.

Griswold, Eliza. *The Tenth Parallel - Dispatches from the Fault Line Between Christianity and Islam*. Picador. (2010)

New York Times writer covers Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Griswold is a bit sloppy at times in her choice of wording but conveys plenty of information. Not cheerful but worth reading. Jenny Waterman ♀

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Vol. 24 No. 2 Winter 2013

ISSN 1924-181X

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