



Summer 1981

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." ---- Peter Maurin

WOMEN

AND THE

CHURCH



WHY THIS ISSUE ?

by Dorothy Armbruster

We asked Dorothy--wife, mother and recipient of last year's Msgr. Shocklee Award for human rights work--to write her reflections about women and the Church. When they arrived, we decided they would serve well as an introduction to the theme of this issue.

In one sense I'm proud to be a woman in the Church. . . as I look around me at the women who have in the past, and who continue to inspire and encourage me in the understanding and living out of the message of Jesus. For example, there are the women in religious orders who were in the forefront of implementation of Vatican II statements.



I don't normally like comparisons to the past. We usually see things with some distortion. Nevertheless, I think it's accurate to say that prior to the Vatican Council, there was a tension, a competition, between the various religious orders. It's been beautiful to see that attitude disappear, and to see the mutuality that has developed between the women religious, and then between them and those of us who fall under the heading of laywomen. We have all benefitted from these altered relationships. . . and have become more accurately "followers of and in Christ."

For many years now the people most responsible for my spiritual direction and enrichment have been women. . . through their perceptions and sense of values. . . and their lived-out examples. This does not negate the male influence, because indeed there have been some won-

derful men who have responded to the Spirit in their lives and have passed along in a give-and-take fashion their insights and struggles, as we continue on our spiritual journeys. And then, beyond a personal level, has been the courage and humility with which some of the Bishops have acted and spoken. . . if only this could sift down to our everyday experience.

The consistent male image in the liturgy is alienating to me, and I'm very discouraged that there seems to be such a hard line drawn against the possibility of women's ordination, particularly when the strongest reasons against it seem to be "tradition" (as was slavery) and because Jesus was a "man." It seems to me that the outstanding attributes of Jesus were precisely those that are characteristically labelled "feminine": compassion, gentle strength, patience, humility. Ironic that we should try to mirror his physical image rather than his spiritual one. At any rate, I find the pew uncomfortable as a woman in today's Church. And I think I hear Mary saying quietly, as she gives birth, "This is my body, this is my blood." How can Christ be wholly male, when he was born of woman?

And this all ties in, I think, with the lack of support of ERA that predominates in the official male Church (again, except for some courageous priests and bishops. . . hooray for them and God bless). It's a real paradox that at the same time we're insisting that women not opt for abortion (and, incidentally, I consider abortion a tragedy in which we all share responsibility), we're allowing women to be denied the economic and psychological strength they could have with an Equal Rights Amendment. We're not creating an environment that is supportive for women with children. And yet we hear, particularly around Mother's Day, those pap sermons that make me, a mother, squirm in my seat. How can men, or how can anyone with the stratified mindset we've lived with, talk to us about motherhood in traditional terms? The possibilities of mothering have barely been tapped.

So, as a woman in the Church, I struggle. . . and yet, through the eyes, the hands and the voices of others who struggle, I feel it's worth it. †

TO OUR READERS

We are aware that the topic of this issue is sensitive and controversial. The articles reflect the deep pain, even anguish, felt by many people in the Church-- let us emphasize in the Church. Our hope is that by listening and attending to this pain, all of us people of God can grow in understanding, compassion and love. "Behold, how they love one another."

THE ROUND TABLE is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. We welcome responses from our readers and will gladly accept contributions to help cover the costs of this publication. The people working on this issue are: Joe Angert, Harriette Baggett, Rosemary Dee, Virginia Druhe, Ann Manganaro, S.L., Mary McCiellan and Bill Ramsey.

WOMEN RELIGIOUS: fears and hopes

by Ann Manganaro SL

I am trying to write something about what it means to be a woman in an official, ecclesial religious community, (a "nun" as most folks say), in this particular time and space which we know as twentieth century North America. I've made many false starts in the last few hours. And even though I know (in general) what I want to say I can't seem to get started, to set the stage, to make a proper introduction. (My dear friend and very finest of English teachers, Sister Emmanuel, would be saddened at how my skills have deteriorated.) But since I can't find the appropriate beginning to begin with, please allow me to plunge in in medias res.

I am passing over all the sorrows and struggles and graces and glories of our past, both remote and recent. Some fears I have, and some hopes, which I would share with you.

There are three tendencies in North American religious life currently, as I experience it, (me, us), which I fear. My first and perhaps greatest fear is acculturation. By acculturation I mean the tendency to take on (and to be taken in by) the mainstream culture: affluence, self-indulgence, apathy, individualism. Once the artificial props of cloister and habit and custom and horarium are gone, if what is left is not a mighty faith, hope and love welling up within us, then the culture all too easily rushes in to fill the

The colonel of the local regiment said to me the other day that the Church is indirectly subversive because it is on the side of the weak.

Its Ford, Maryknoll Sister, shortly before she was murdered in El Salvador



void. Or oozes in insidiously. We can so easily let our lives be filled with trivia, our minds and conversation and time and desires, as well as our mouths, be filled with "junk food." I fear that such acculturation will cause us to forget the high hopes with which we made all those painful wonderful changes in our lives over the last 15 years. I fear we will fail to use the freedom those changes brought for the sake of the reign of God.

My second fear is alienation from the larger Church. I fear alienation especially for those of us whose minds and

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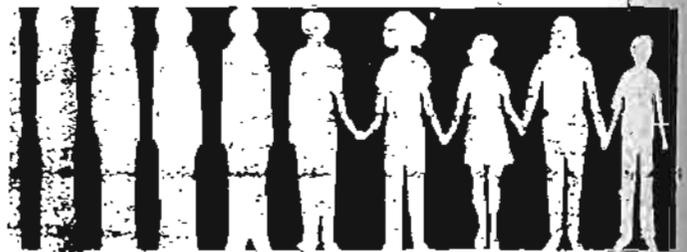
hearts have been deeply touched and transformed by the women's movement. Our Church has been plagued with many kinds of sinfulness in its long history, and sexism is certainly one of the oldest and most abiding. Sorrow and anger are certainly both appropriate responses. There is no easy peace to be made with the perverse, persistent refusal of many within the Church (as many without) to accept women as fully human. What I fear is a hard, bitter, man-hating withdrawal from the Church, not only from its male hierarchical clergy but from the larger body of women and men who struggle to keep faith with the saving power of God acting in Jesus. I fear that we will abandon the Church to its sins. I fear that we will be so preoccupied with those sins that we will be blind to the real goodness and faithfulness of many who fail to watch their (sexist) language, and equally blind to the destructiveness and distortions of a doctrinaire women's consciousness that abandons countless women as well as men to the realm of "hopeless cases."

My third fear is retreat, the tendency of many of us to protect ourselves from the ambiguities and anxieties of twentieth century life. Retreat can take the form of excessive inward preoccupations, whether with prayer or spiritual life or professional excellence or intra-community relationships. Retreat can take the form of rigidly clinging to past achievements or to present schedules, forms, customs that become substitutes for the freely given commitment of mind, heart, soul and strength in love. Or we can retreat by insisting on our own security first, on storing up for the future, on living safe lives, in safe places. Any form of retreat that leaves us safe and secure is also sure to leave us far from the living God.

So much for fears. And what of hopes? I hope for resistance, in myself and my sisters: resistance to the culture, resistance to all its forms of violence and oppression. I hope we can fashion our lives, individually and communally, as a clear alternative to the culture: in our

ways of work and play and prayer, in our dealings with one another, in a clear identification with and presence to the poor and powerless.

And I hope for fidelity. I hope we will stay alive to the riches of our faith tradition. I hope we will be faithful to the full power and responsibility of our vows. I hope we will struggle against the oppression and sinfulness of the Church from within its body, with all the suffering such faithfulness will surely necessitate. I hope we will support each other by prayer and good counsel and sisterly good humor to abide in love, to give and forgive generously in our relationship to the larger Church.



And I hope for courage: to cast off the chains of security and nets of timidity that still bind us. I hope that we will find our strength and our courage not in laws or customs, stocks or bonds, property or possessions, education or institutions, but in our God and in each other. I hope we will have the courage to risk our futures for the sake of those who are abandoned. I hope we will have the courage to risk persecution for righteousness' sake. Then surely we will share in the reign of God.

I think the changes we have faced in the "renewal" of the last fifteen years have been merely preparatory to a much more profound reformation which we need and which the Church and world need from us. Our lives as "official" women of the Church must be patterned far more clearly and boldly according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I hope, most deeply and wholeheartedly, that by God's grace we can and will continue to struggle toward that goal.

Immersed in Her Time for Eternity

by Harry Cargas

(for Siena Catherine Cargas)

"Do not be satisfied
With little things
For God expects big ones."
So wrote St. Catherine of Siena,
Who lived her life
According to that insight.

Born into a poor family,
The 25th child,
Untaught to read or write
She counseled popes and princes,
She comforted sinners and the sick.

In 1970 she was declared
by Pope Paul VI
One of the 31 Doctors
Of the Catholic Church.

A woman immersed in her time,
She has become a person
For all times.
Her Dialogue, a dictated volume
Proves this.
While she worked to heal
Secular and spiritual schisms
Of her day,
She wrote for eternity.
Love is measured
Not by duration,
But by intensity
She would have us understand.
Every drop of love
Is an eternal moment.

Here is what Christ
Said to Catherine:
"You cannot repay the love
Which I require of you,
And I have placed you
In the midst of people,
That you may do to them
That which you
Cannot do to me:
Love your neighbor
Of free grace."



What keeps us from loving?
Unnoticed sin.
"A secret sin
Is when you deprive your neighbor
of that which
You ought to share."
And we read Christ
Further in the Dialogue:
"Self-love,
Which destroys charity and affection
Towards the neighbor,
Is the principle and foundation
Of every evil."

Catherine convinced a pope
To return the Papacy
To Rome from exile.
She sued for peace
Between Florence and the Pope,
Was a diplomat
Amid warring states.
The rulers of Siena,
Milan and Pisa,
Were eager for her diplomacy.

She was undaunted
By her poverty,
A male dominated world,
Her lack of education
And unsophisticated mannerisms.
Catherine achieved much
Because she loved much.

Harry James Cargas, besides being a superb parent and Chairperson of the English Department at Webster College, writes books. They include Harry James Cargas in Conversation with Elie Wiesel and Encountering Myself. His forthcoming book will be called A Christian Response to the Holocaust.

FEMINISM, PEACE AND - INCIDENTALLY - THE CHURCH

by Mary McClellan



Two things struck me most vividly about the General Dynamics' annual shareholders meeting (May 7, Clayton, MO), as a small group of us knelt throughout it. We were there to raise our resolution that General Dynamics "Repent the Trident--feed the hungry instead" and to once again ask the corporate management folks to meet with us. Since we were the last item on the agenda--under "other business"--I had plenty of time to collect impressions as I knelt and fingered my rosary.

The first thing that struck me were all the white, male faces of the members of the board of directors, as well as all the male voices expressing approval of General Dynamics' various weapons during the movie. (Showing a short film about the company's products seems to be a ritual at corporate annual meetings, analogous perhaps to the way we Catholics read from the Gospel in our liturgies.) All of the male/militariness of the situation reminded me of some lines from *Lysistrata*, a Greek play written by Aristophanes in 413 B.C.

It should not prejudice my voice
that I'm not born a man
If I say something advantageous
to the present situation.
For I'm taxed too, and as a toll
provide men for the nation
While, miserable graybeards, you,
It is true
Contribute nothing of any impor-
tance whatever to our needs;
But the treasure raised against
the Medes,

squandered, and do nothing
atum
hat you make
ves and persons hazardous by
imbecile mistake.
an you answer?

... d thing that struck me also con-
cerned the movie. I had shut my eyes and
was trying to center myself and pray when
an amplified voice suddenly boomed forth,
"G.D.'s world"! My eyes flew open and I
saw a picture of the world taken from
outer space. It was a moment of acute
cognitive dissonance for me because one
of our group of Trident repenters was a
rabbi, and he had reminded me that some
people in the Old Testament tradition, out
of reverence, do not pronounce the word
"God." Rather, the vowel is dropped, and
the resulting word is "G.D." So I experi-
enced sharp mental confusion as I heard
the words "G.D.'s world" and understood
them to refer to the world's largest wea-
pons producer. A crazy kind of sanity
soon returned to my mind, however, as I
remembered that the Navy had "christened"
(oops--there it goes again!) its newest
General Dynamics nuclear submarine the
"Corpus Christi." (Named after the city
in Texas, you understand, no connection
with the historical character.) Well,
at least consistency if not sanity.

I thought to myself, "Maybe there are,
in fact, two separate 'G.D.'s worlds."
I remembered my friend Bernard Lee
(who had heard it from his friend
Bernard Loomer) talking about how there
are two kinds of power: linear power
and relational power. Linear power
is hierarchical and coercive: you
do what I tell you because I have the
power to force you. Linear power is
probably best typified in military

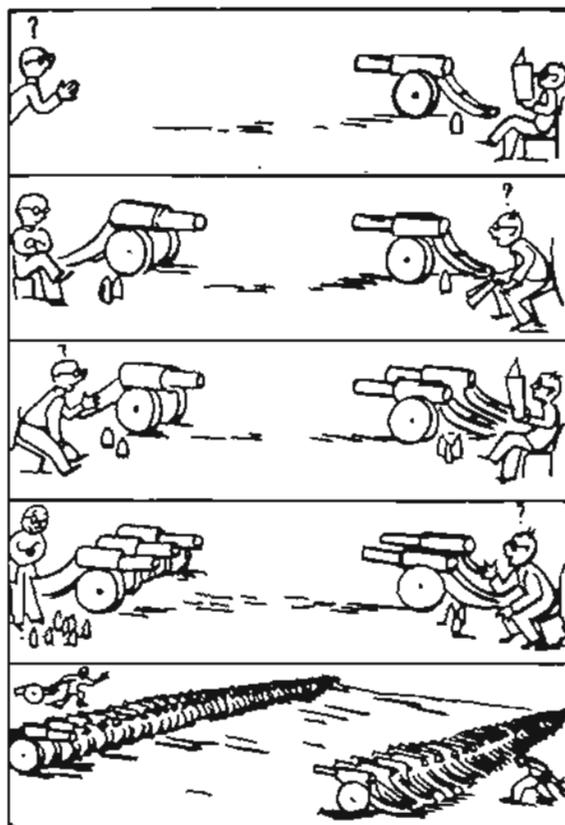
Mary McClellan is an attorney who lives at Karen House and serves as a member of the Archdiocesan Human Rights Commission.

organization and reflects what has traditionally been considered a masculine type of power. Relational power, on the other hand, is decentralized and consensual: you choose to do what I ask you or we talk about it because we are related. Mutual submission, it is called in the New Testament. Women seem to have more expertise at relational power--or at least it is denigrated often enough as being "sissy" or "feminine." But I think women do in fact have more experience using relational power, if only because we've effectively been denied access to much exercise of linear power.

But then the realization struck me with sickening force that there are not two separate worlds. We are all one interdependent whole. If those folks who rely on linear power for their security end up pushing the nuclear button (and that is the logical last step in the linear power process), there will be no immunity (at least physical) for women, babies or other believers in relational power. We will go to destruction together, believers non-believers alike. This means to me that an especially intense invitation is issued to those practitioners of relational power to give witness for the faith that is in them, "lest those who are our executioners today may at some future time be our accusers for the suppression of truth." (The Prison Meditations of Fr. Alfred Delp, who was executed by the Nazis in 1945.)

I think feminism is of critical import today, then, because it strikes me as a race between learning to value things traditionally considered feminine (and therefore devalued, e.g. nurturance, gentleness) and a nuclear holocaust. As Martin Luther King put it, "The choice today is not between violence and non-violence. It is between non-violence and non-existence." I, along with Jim Douglass, consider Ghandi and King (and presently, the feminist movement) special gifts from God for this century, graces to help us nurture and care for God's beautiful creation . . . to choose life.

Then I realized it was time to pay attention. I heard Tom Kegelman of our group being called "naive" (another word associated with women) for suggesting that we stop making the Trident. I heard Rabbi Bruce Diamond introduce our resolution to repent the Trident. I heard Al Sprehe refute management's allegation that it had met with us. More painfully, I heard him mocked for using the word, "chairperson." And I heard Bill Ramsey of our group begin to list the times the company had refused to meet. I thanked God for these gentle men. Emma and I agreed with our eyes that the moment had come to display our banner, "Repent the Trident -- feed the hungry instead." I heard Emma reply to David Lewis' assertion that the company bore no responsibility for making the Trident because it was the government's decision. She said, "The blood is on your hands," and we poured blood on each other. Bill Ramsey suggested that we pray in order to give management an opportunity to consider whether to meet with us. But he was immediately dragged out and arrested, while David Lewis quickly adjourned the meeting.



Weapons do not make us secure.

I think it was the blood. "Pardon us, friends, our breach of good order, but so help us, we could not do otherwise. . ." Maybe, just maybe, it was the sight of two women acting strongly, that threw the place into such disarray. But I doubt it.

Persistence. . . our by now somewhat exhausted group seized on a statement by David Lewis that management might meet with us. Minus Bill, we proceeded to the corporate headquarters of General Dynamics with two films in hand, one about the Jewish holocaust and one about the nuclear holocaust (War Without Winners). Persistence. . . we said we would stay as long as necessary to show the films. We were arrested.

Perhaps persistence is for relational power what brute force is for linear power. I'm not sure. An appreciation for beauty and a strong sense--an unquenchable sense--of hope seem equally important (so that we do not fall asleep or let our lives dribble away). So that we stay alive and pert and perky. And able to appreciate such moments as when the singing of the group outside the meeting ("And into plowshares turn their swords") became so clearly audible inside the meeting in almost perfect synchopation with the reading of the profit statement. Or the remark of the police officer as we collected our belongings and left the county jail the next morning, "let me know when your next demonstration is. I want to be there."

I had finished all fifteen decades of the rosary by this time. . . they were good enough to let me keep it in jail. It is a



prayer given to us by a woman and recommended to be prayed for peace. . . this woman said, "God fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich empty away." I'm pretty sure she was a feminist: "God brings down the mighty from their thrones and raises up the lowly." It was her labor that brought the "corpus Christi" into "G.D.'s" world.+

excerpt from **Woman Survivor in the Church**

by Joan Ohanneson

We may control our money, our bodies, our behavior, and our labor, but if we go thirsty at the wellspring of the spirit, then all of us, men and women alike, will pass into that final grayness which is a life without God.

We have come to a time of trembling, of holy questioning about who we are and who we should become, for ourselves as well as for others. This is not a question simply of women's rights but of the future of humankind: the future of person, of marriage, of family, of community. But it is important to remember that all honest questioning should be without terror, for though questions imply risk, risk leads to growth, and growth is the promise of new life.

(Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980)

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A Letter To Her Priest

Dear Priest:

I write this letter with some caution. Perhaps a conversation would be more appropriate. It is difficult for me to be sure I can establish the context of my remarks in a letter. The context is deep love for the Church, deep appreciation of the way our parish community has nourished me these past three years, and deep appreciation for the ways you as pastor lead without dominating and continually call others to serve.

Yet our liturgies become more painful to me every week, it seems, and to many others I know. The problem is this: I am a woman, I am not a man. There was a time when "man" meant "women, too". For so many of your parishioners those days are gone. Women are not a sub-category of men - not economically or socially or psychologically or spiritually. Women have taken their place beside men, as equals, under them no more. We who know so well the power of Word in our faith should be able to see the crucial importance of reflecting this truth in the words we use in prayer together.

I know it is no one's explicit intention to exclude me and all women from participation in salvation and the life of God. But that is what our words says. God saves man. God loves man. Love your brother. Intention does not suffice. We are so often a church that does not speak to women, or about women, or permit women to speak. And it is painful to me. Love does not ignore people. Yet the church consistently ignores the presence of women. I believe it is this unintentional exclusion of women from our language of prayer and church

that makes it conceivable for a Vatican document to state that women do not image Christ. For we have created a church that does not image women.

Further, we have created a God that does not image women. I remember being taught in grade school that church teaching is that God is neither male nor female. That was the last I've ever heard of it. With our language we create a male God. Now how am I to identify with that God? By suppressing my womanhood? And how is the feminine side of you to relate to God? Where do we find the feminine made sacred in God? How is the feminine in the image of God? To press Mary into service here would be idolotry.

Do you understand why this matter becomes so important to me? I don't care if the world of commerce or law or philosophy ever recognizes me, but I care desperately when I am excluded from the language of God and of church.

Well, even at that, I am not going anywhere. I will be here in our church for long years to come, God's grace provided, but I am here bruised and denied. I know that you are not the whole church. But there are some ways that your position makes it possible for you to begin the healing. You could educate and remind the parish staff of the importance of non-sexist language on a pastoral as well as theological level. The texts used for the Mass - readings, prayers and canons - could be prepared ahead of time in non-sexist language.

We are a church in a sexist society, and we we each participate in that sexism. I do not believe I am free of it. I don't expect anyone else to be. But could we at least move toward that freedom and express it clearly in our words as well as our life together?+

The author of this letter requested to remain anonymous.

FEMINISM AND LIBERATION

by Dorothea Soelle

I think my concern for the question comes out of a certain direction I see the women's movement moving towards, which is a very anti-Christian direction. Many women, as I understand it, see power, patriarchy and religion to be an oppressive trinity which rules over them in which women could not any longer find a place, so they break away because the tensions and contradictions between the Church and the women's movement seem to many people to be irreconcilable.

Let me phrase the question like this: "Is it possible for a liberated woman (whatever that is) to stay in the Judeo-Christian tradition and to find new roles for women, and consequently for men?"

I think I would like to list 4 points of sexist oppressiveness in mainstream Christianity. One, concerning the Bible; two, the church; three, the role of women in this tradition; and four, the power relationship between the Godhead and the people.

Now first about the Bible, in which sense I think it is hard for a woman to deal in this book. The Judeo-Christian tradition has not only a preferential option for male God images, it is almost exclusively masculine in its God-images; in its God-talk about the king, the ruler, the father. Other God-images as God the mother, which show up occasionally in the Bible, are suppressed in this patriarchal God-talk. And that means, of course, also that other possible qualities of the Godhead are not expressly talked about in the framework of this religious language. So we don't hear too much about God's tenderness, or God's consoling power, and out of the diversity of God images we find in the Bible, the tradition has only chosen a few with a certain male character. . .



Now mainline religious tradition has in a way made a reduction out of these many and diverse images of God. They only chose a few, namely the father, the ruler, the king -- namely, the male images with specific male characteristics and forgot other God images. . . . And that's a reduction from a broader religious sense, a broader diversity of different images. It makes it hard for women to live in this tradition, because women, then, under this oppressive male tradition have only two options to deal in the tradition. Either they identify intensively with the powerful father. They choose to love him in a daughterly manner. I know many women of which I would say that they reconcile their tensions in the traditional God because they happened to love their earthly father and still are daughters, in a way. That's one way, and the other way is to become homeless, in the Christian tradition, to leave the house of the Christian tradition.

This article consists of excerpts from a talk given by Dorothea Soelle at Christ Seminary SemineX in March. She is a feminist theologian who teaches at Union Theological Seminary in New York and is active in the European peace movement. Her books include Revolutionary Patience, Not by Bread Alone, and Suffering.

The tradition, then, does not meet their needs - the needs of these liberated women. Or better to say the tradition defines their needs as child needs, and reduces their religious feelings and understandings into a childish religiosity, and they offer this to women to live with. And it isn't enough to live with. If this becomes unacceptable for a woman come of age, she will leave the Bible. The tradition to her then seems oppressive and/or dead.

The second thing which bothers women, I think, in dealing with tradition, is the Church as an institution basically run by men. Men being pastors and priests, leaders, bishops, decision-makers and executives. The whole physical make-up of the church is male. And when the Pope talked about the necessary similarity between Christ and his representatives, the priests, he made very clear that the male God needs a male priest, and that maleness was the basis of the similarity. In other words, women could not represent Christ because they have no penis. So, it was a very clear statement. . . .

Now this has to do with the third point I wanted to make, namely, the role of women in the patriarchal tradition. The predominant role model for women in this Christian tradition is a model that is based on submission. The basic character of the women is to be submissive. The Virgin Mary symbolizes this role for us. She looks downward in humility. She is spoken to, not speaking. She is the receiver, not the giver. She is to respond to questions, not to ask questions. And since this role model is not too attractive for an active, self-conscious, independent woman, the tradition that believes in this model becomes empty and meaningless. I think this is the process that still goes on, so far as I understand it, that the tradition itself has emptied itself. It doesn't speak to people. It's just dead, because it has this wrong understanding of the role of women.

The fourth point I want to mention is the underlying theological image of the relation between God and humans, which is modeled, under the concept of domination rather than of mutuality. God is above. God is in power. God is all-powerful, all-knowing, over against the powerless, unknowledgeable being on earth. God's strength is experienced through our weakness. God is praised at the cost of putting us down. Some people call this piety, to put God on top, on high, so that you put people down and tell them how weak and helpless, powerless, sinful, etc. they are. God's total otherness is played up against our sinfulness. . . .

Now these seem to me the most striking examples of how patriarchy is a hindrance, a block, for women today, to become Christians and to root themselves in this tradition which has so much damaged women. Now, how can liberated women work through this tradition? I mean there is the possibility offered to us by the moral majority and many other powers of this society to go back into her father's house and play again the role of the obedient daughter. I think, threatened by this option, many women of my generation and even more so of younger people feel that they have to abandon Christianity because otherwise they would lose themselves. They would lose their dignity, their freedom. . . .

Now the other option is to work critically and creatively in the framework of Judeo-Christianity tradition. Some people have chosen this, and I mention for example Rosemary Reuther, Elizabeth Fiorenza and myself, just to mention a few who try to be faithful to these feminist issues and to themselves and at the same time try to interpret the Judeo-Christian tradition in a different way - namely, not against women, but with women. And that's what we call feminist theology. . . .

One of the points of feminist theology is that it needs new subjects, namely women, to do it. Now as well as in other liberation movements, as black christians ask, "For what is a christian good for if he comes with the king of the oppressor?" Or as they say, white people have white thoughts in their heads. Or Latin American christians asking, "How can the gringos teach us theology?" Just by the mere fact of being white, rich North Americans, it makes their thought different because their bodies and their society is different. And in the same sense, women are asking themselves, "Why do we need a God whose significant quality presents nothing than the male ideal, namely, to have power?" Women becoming new subjects of their own theology leave the specific Egypt of oppression, and separate themselves voluntarily from the given culture. That happens through the fact that women are leaving golden cages of marriages, they leave elitist educational institutions as well, because they know what we need is the best education for everyone, and not just for the elite.

I think the theology from which we can learn most is theology done by those on their way out, by the Exodus people, and not from those who stay in Egypt. The best theology we can find today comes out of those who did not stay in Egypt. That is to say also, that new feminist theology arises from below and not from above, because there is no above for women. This new thology does not mirror domination, but liberation. . .

Now I think the common ground where the women's movement and christian tradition meet is liberation. So if the christian tradition can be understood as a teaching of liberation and not a teaching of oppression, I think the battle about this is not finished. It still goes on. The majority of christianity is on the side of the oppressor, and wants us to understand that christianity has nothing against oppression. On the contrary, it loves it. But if christianity is really a force belonging to the forces of liberation, then it is open for women as well and women can and will find their place. . .



Fritz Kichenberg

I had an interesting talk with some radical Catholic nuns a little while ago. I asked them about the ordination of women and how far this struggle is in the Catholic Church and then the one of them told me like this, she says, "Listen, some of us are still struggling for that. More of us, we think it wouldn't even be good to have it now, because if the Pope now would suddenly change his mind and open up for women we would have a generation of women going into the institutionalized church and becoming priests as we have already. They wouldn't transcend the concept of priesthood as it is historically developed so far. They wouldn't do more than we have had already. So it's much better for us to stay, so to speak, in the pockets of the institution, or to work subversively and not to become visible priests right now in this situation, until the concept of a different priesthood is more developed." And sometimes I wish we had the same thing in the Protestant church. . .

The more radical feminist movement goes beyond the ERA and NOW, or some of these liberal goals and wants to create different role models. The point is not to become vice president of General Motors. The point is that General Motors has to be structured so that we don't have vice presidents or presidents, but we have workers' control. . . We don't want to be like all these men climbing up the ladder and if we are a little higher, we are better. . .

The point is to create a different earth and that's the deepest understanding of the women's movement right now. +

BLUE RIBBON SERVICE: a letter from her sister

Frances Padberg, SSND, convenor of the St. Louis Task Force on the Ordination of Women, received this letter from a sister-friend in Chicago.

Dear Frances,

I just came from one of the most freeing experiences of my life--low key, no fanfare, not even earthshaking--just very freeing. We stood at the CTU (Chicago Theological Union) ordination and wore blue bands. (Of course, I dressed very "feminine" in my yellow dress). There were 36 standing. Most of the others in the church wore blue ribbons to show support - it was the deacons' choice of witness. I was handing out leaflets and was amazed at the response and support from the people.



Before the service the Bishop made the deacons take off their blue ribbons or he wouldn't ordain them. He also told other participants in the service to take them off. It was a real shock to many people because they saw themselves as so moderate. The Bishop had also sent word that the press was to be barred and had auxiliary forces there to keep them out. One woman participant graciously told the Bishop she would be glad to take her ribbon off after the service. Some complied. After the ordination part some of the deacons quietly put theirs back on - so did some participants. The ceremony was stopped for quite some time while the Bishop enforced his desires - it radicalized a number of the guys quickly - especially when this part was followed by giving the Gospels and exhorting the men to live by what they believe. The incongruence was overwhelming.

At the part of "ready and willing" (where the Bishop asks those to be ordained to express their willingness) a number of women who were standing called out from the pews. The mood was electric and very effective. The Bishop's actions really helped a lot. Early in the Liturgy of the Word, _____ had enough. She had published her reasons for participating in the ceremony amid much ambiguity and conflict. She left the sanctuary - heels clicking on the tile floor - where she had been singing in the choir, picked up a blue arm band and went to the pews and stood. Talk about effective! And _____ got angry enough that she stood the service in the choir, right in the sanctuary - and afterwards had the chance to tell the Bishop how disappointed she was with her church. . . .

For me it was just a sense of strength and peace and giving expression to the God who lives and acts so deep inside me with power that forever amazes me. So much of my life seemed to come together in those two hours. What is there left to say? . . . Take care. . . .

Your Sister, Lynne



A Letter To Her CHURCH

by Linda Hatch

Last Christmas I received this letter from The Archdiocese of St. Louis:

"Someone very close to you asked me to send you this letter."

This is an invitation to "come home for Christmas". I am inviting you to return to your spiritual family, The Catholic Church, this Christmas.

All our parishes will have special penance service and extra hours for confession. Just make a good sincere confession once again and come to Holy Communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Then I know you will have a truly merry Christmas.

If there is any problem, just bring it to any priest or write to me. We will do everything we can to help.

With my prayers for all the joy of Christmas for you and yours.

In Christ,

Most Reverend John L. May
Archbishop of Saint Louis

Well, there are problems, but I will not bring them to any priest or to Reverend May. Why should I? This invitation to "come home for Christmas" touches a very sensitive issue for me. It attempts to address something I have been dealing with since I was twelve years old - i.e., my relationship to the Catholic Church. Before I was twelve, the Catholic Church was not something out there. Rather, it permeated my whole experience. I was born and raised in Latin America where in a real way experience is Catholic. At twelve years old I came to the United States to a Catholic high school. The education I was receiving there sparked questions in my mind which I would bring to my teachers. Finally, I was sent to the Reverend Mother with my questions. "Who are you," she asked

me, "to put your mind up against the great minds of the church?" This twelve year old replied, "I am the Church."

Ancient wisdom, these words, wisdom even now I fail to grasp totally. It was hard to keep feeling that way during the next fifteen years when so little of my experience was affirmed or verified by the people who wished to author me. I felt their authorship was aimed at creating a compliant Linda, a Catholic whose Catholicity was defined merely by belief in the doctrines of the Church and a "good sincere confession." That I was even sent this letter shows me that these authorities still define me out of the Catholic Church. "Come home for Christmas," they say as though I am not here. Well, slowly, painfully, I am recognizing my home in the Catholic Church. Gently, and with great care people who are close to me are saying, "You are home and I am your sister, your brother." They are saying that with their lives.

When I received this letter, I felt violated, angry. I still do. The letter says that someone very close to me wanted it sent, yet the letter shows me that the person can't be very close to me. That person must know little about my spirituality and struggles and is acting out her/his own concept of church. I feel especially angry at the Archdiocese of St. Louis for encouraging and participating in this violation of my spirit.

But I will make a confession, nevertheless. I will make my confession here publicly in this issue of the Catholic Worker Newsletter which is taking so seriously my being as woman in the church. I will make my confession in the spirit of making myself more visible to those who do not see me when they look around our home. And I confess in the spirit of reconciliation.

Linda Hatch is one of those rare people who has sat in at both abortion clinics and the offices of General Dynamics. She is a mother of two children and is married to Tom Carron.

I confess that I feel significant pain around the things that I will confess here.

I confess that I need women.

I confess that I need women who will minister to me,

women to whom I can confess, women who will baptize my babies, women who will herald me into the life of spirit upon my death.

I confess that I need these women to be ministers in their own right and not just emissaries of a male dominated hierarchy.

I confess that it is difficult for me to take seriously the call of a church to partake in the Sacraments when that Church excludes me from creating a central sacrament.

I confess that I need power.

I confess that I want to be (priest-ess)-entially, not just by all-of-a sudden recognizing the communal nature of sacraments, se-(man)-tically.

I confess that I reject a centralized, hierarchical, male-controlled church authority.

I confess that I reject authorship of my being that is not rooted in deep knowledge and experience of my being and to which I have not given my permission.

I confess that I need you not to scrutinize my faith for ways that it violates your concepts.

I confess that I need you to scrutinize my faith for ways that it can create you and us.

I confess a desire to know the spirit known as Linda Hatch, to take her seriously, to guard her.



I confess a need to know the woman in the Great Spirit and to love Goddess.

I confess to fear of Goddess, to not taking her seriously, to ways in which I betray her. (The cock would surely crow more than three times were I to list these ways I deny Goddess.)

I confess to the ways that I section the Spirit, allow the Spirit to enter the world only partially by taking God more seriously than Goddess.

Through Christ,

A-(wo)man

Her Prayer on Leaving an Ordination

by Harriette Baggett



"You can have the power
and the glory
of your carpeted offices
and big musty churches.
Just give me the homes,
the streets,
the hungry,
the lonely,
the elderly,
the rebellious youth,
the dying ...
the kingdom." *

*From testimony of a Catholic woman
in *We Are Called*, published by the
Women's Ordination Conference.

* * * * *

"Let us pray for all the women who feel deep pain at being excluded from the possibility of being a priest of today's ceremonies."

That simple prayer stuck in my throat. My trip-hammer heart could not get it out before the bishop took over and declared an end to the "prayers of the faithful."

Obviously, I don't have the guts to be a priest. But other women do. Driving away from the ordination service, replaying the whole scene, I further prayed, against the background of the elect: "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven." At this point I said to my poor seat mate - "and they do mean men." And then we all had to sing "You Are My Sons" and that really is the big deal - being sons.

I went on to pray, against my replay of all that, "O, Holy Spirit, make up for their arrogance - for the consequences of their arrogance." No, that's not what I prayed. That was all a later judgment. What I really prayed was "Make up to the Church all the loss of women's gifts. Those gifts that could be and could have been more effective in bringing about the Creator's Will on earth, as it is in heaven." "Bear with us and enlighten us all to do your will and have mercy on our weakness -- the blindly weak and the enlightened weak and bless the gutsy women and the rare gutsy men."

Harriette Baggett lives at Karen House and recently received her Masters of Divinity Degree from Christ Seminary Seminex. She became a grandmother earlier this year.

From Cass House

by Peggy Saunders

Hello and Happy Summer to all of You!

As I reflect on the past months, I realize that lots of new life has occurred here since our last newsletter. Some of the newness is on the level of physical improvements in house and neighborhood. The plumbers' and electricians' unions have helped us transform the room by the back door into a laundry, so that women don't have to drag kiddies and laundry down to 14th Street--a real blessing!

The stone wall that surrounds the yard has been slowly disintegrating. Instead of resorting to signs warning, "Watch out for falling rock", we asked Don Forrester to work on it. He was happy to leave the unemployment lines and help us out.

An exciting improvement in the neighborhood has been the opening of O'Fallon Place Apartments just across the road. Some of the units are open to low income families, and many of our family guests were accepted there. When keys were given out on May 1st, eighteen of our guests moved out. It was quiet for the first time since December! It didn't take long, however, before the house was full again. Hopefully, O'Fallon Place is just the beginning of more housing in the city. Perhaps soon there will be similar opportunities for single women and mental health patients who have no place to go.

The greatest gift of life over these months has been our volunteers. I only wish I could print everyone's name, since it is through them that new life is generated at



our house every day. Since I'm in the kitchen, I haven't missed a day of giving thanks for the fresh generous faces who come to cook, clean, take house, serve the meal, bring goodies or drop in to say hello. If there's anything that keeps Cass House running, it's without a doubt all of you who care enough to give some time.

New life also brings moments of change, and there will be some changes this summer. Tim Guthridge will be leaving us in June to look into religious life and finish his college degree. I will be leaving in July to work on a pastoral team in western Iowa. The Lord always provides, however; and Donna Anderson and Nancy Piekarski have recently joined our community.

We pray that all of you may discover New Life throughout this summer. Come on down to Cass House--we'll be happy to share some of ours with you!

Peggy Saunders lives at Cass House, plays the guitar and is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Clinton, Iowa.

From Little House



by Mary Ann McGivern

Tom Kegelman finished the second floor bathroom, so we had a "shower" and backyard barbecue on May 29 to celebrate. Paul Sutton awarded Tom a statute certifying that he is TOP DOG.

Thanks to Bud Goldkamp, the wiring is completed and we are hooked up to Union Electric. We still need a new roof and tuckpointing, as well as floors sanded and walls and window frames painted. Sharon Cummins' tomato plants washed away in the rain, but the impatience Alan Ritter gave us is blooming. Sharon is ready to try tomatoes again and put in an asparagus bed as well.

Dave Innocente from the Montreal hospital-ity house and Paulette Peterson (Petey), who is a friend of many New York Workers and our dear friend, have both stayed at

the Little House. Velma Shearer from the Church of the Brethren in Dayton, Ohio, came to challenge Monsanto's nuclear weapons production, and Holy Cross Father Joe Callanan and Sister of Mercy Barbara Riley journeyed from Connecticut to call for disclosure of dangerous chemicals used by General Dynamics workers. The Little House isn't big enough for all this company, so they spent the night at Karen House.

Sharon, Paul, B.J. Lauer and Mary Ann McGivern are the Little House permanent community. In the fall, Charlie and Virginia Mesmith and their daughter, Elizabeth, will be moving into the Little House. Francis Annis has lived in an apartment in the Little House for 14 years, so when her new neighbors, the Mesmiths, arrive, we will be full---except for the company.

Mary Ann McGivern, S.L., has been with the St. Louis Worker community since 1977. She works for the St. Louis Economic Conversion Project.

Salvation at 19th and Warren

by Bill Ramsey

Ancient scrapes, steel on stone,
a clatter, listen closely...
a rhythm as ancient
as the clash of steel on stone
twelve or maybe fifteen strong,
old and young, a family, a tribe.

Human hands grasping steel on stone
holding on to what is to be salvaged,
bricks,
breaking away the mortar that has crumbled,
tossing the broken and cracked,
hopefully stacking the whole, the solid,
the unbroken remnant.

The sun filters through the exposed structure,
beams on beams
each now its own spire,
the skeletal remains of a pious era,
stripped of all its liturgical decor,
its walls in piles,
its altar a shell of concrete,
an ecclesiastical dinosaur of the getto's
pre-history.

Steel on Stone, sun on ebony faces,
eyes that know each other,
hands that sense what is to be salvaged,
And all the while, this ancient rhythm,
twelve, maybe fifteen hearts beating close,
a song of salvage, of salvation.



Bill Ramsey is a member of the Karen House community, works for the St. Louis Economic Conversion Project and does the layout for the Round Table.

From Karen House

by Bill Miller

Awhile back I stumbled across a pamphlet that the National Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote, entitled "To Live in Christ Jesus, Pastoral Reflections on the Moral Life." The title has stayed with me until this very day, perhaps because it has kind of a beautiful, soulful rhythm to it, and also because I have been stuck over and over again by the question, "just what does it mean to live in Jesus Christ?" Isn't this discovery, this incarnation, what we're about? Yet how do we get a handle on this holy embodiment? A recent departure from Karen House and an act of resistance by two community members (and others) speak to me as responses to these questions and have given me a glimpse of what it means to live in Christ Jesus.

In their pamphlet, the Bishops state, "God's commandment to love is new not simply because of the scope and unselfishness of the love involved, but because it calls us to love with a divine love called charity. . ."



Karen House

I read that statement and look at Delores' quiet service among us and realize how she has taken this Gospel guideline to heart. One could feel that she was there, not making waves, but just doing what was needed to help people feel loved and to create a home at Karen House. Her quiet, simple way left her free to love simply - by baking a coffee cake, helping someone feel included or defusing a tense moment.

Delores' desire to be with the poor and to serve the poor has found expression in her decision to work as the director of an abused women's shelter at a North Dakota Indian reservation. It has been a dream of Delores' to serve native Americans for a long time. When her dream finally came true, she left as quietly as she served.

The Bishops state that "we are challenged to grow in holiness according to our own personal gifts and duties, and above all by loving service, which guides and energizes all the paths of holiness."

Delores' life is true to this statement, an unpretentious witness of a way to live in Christ Jesus.

The second incident which gave me a perspective on what it means to live in Christ Jesus occurred within a different dimension of the Christian life. On May 7th, two of our community were arrested for protesting the corporate policy of General Dynamics as builder of the Trident nuclear submarine. (See other article in this issue.) For over two years, they and other members of St. Louis Clergy and Laity concerned had been trying to meet with the corporate leaders of General Dynamics to discuss the social, moral, and economic implications of the Trident submarine. The group has been consistently denied a meeting. The bishops' statement expresses the desires of CALC well when it says that businesses and corporations are "to define their roles not in relation to narrow self-interest but in relation to the well being of all members of this society, especially the poor and the vulnerable." They also state that these corporations are "to seek for all a good life encompassing a broad spectrum of values in addition to economic ones."

General Dynamics clearly violates these norms of the Church. In our neighborhood, the poor and the vulnerable have been left in the dust by the policies of such corporations and by our government. A sort of domino effect takes place, it happens there, we feel it here. General Dynamics is the world's largest military contractor.

Bill Miller lives at Karen House, plays the guitar and is Associate Editor of Harvest, a publication of the Christian Life Communities.

Its policies not only increase the suffering of the poor each day, the life and well being of the whole world is threatened and made less secure by its insistence on creating technology of such mass destruction. The Bishops state that "modern warfare is so savage that one must ask whether or not it can be morally justified." They go on to say that "with respect to nuclear weapons, at least those with massive destructive capacity, the first imperative is to prevent their use. As possessors of a vast nuclear arsenal, we must be aware that not only is it wrong to attack civilian populations, but it is also wrong to threaten to attack them as a part of a strategy of deterrence."

So, with the Gospel, the teaching of the Church, and the backing of the CALC group as their only "weapons," Mary and Bill and three others insisted on meeting with General Dynamics. They poured their own blood as a symbol of the destruction that the Trident is doing right now to the poor peoples of the world and will do to all of us in the advent of a nuclear holocaust. Again, General Dynamics refused their request for a meeting and arrested them for refusing to leave and disturbing the peace.

So, Mary and Bill, along with Tom, Emma, and Bruce, await trial and sentencing. They have spoken up for, spoken in the name of the people of God. They have tried to help us see the contradiction insaying "Lord, Lord," while at the same time condoning or acquiescing to nuclear weapons. So while General Dynamics has received these five as criminals, we must hear that our church commends in highest terms possible "those who fearlessly and openly

WITHOUT WORLD DISARMAMENT..



resist any military command in conflict with the natural law." (The Church in the Modern World).

"The cross of Jesus Christ shows us the deficiency of other value systems. Jesus yielded up his life for us in perfect loving union with the Father's will, and this is the meaning of his life which also gives meaning to our lives as his followers. If we can acknowledge selfishness as folly and self-sacrifice as victory, if we can love enemies, be vulnerable to injustice and, in being so, still say that we have triumphed, then we shall have learned to live in Christ Jesus."

In ways humble and ways heroic, such people are for me the beautiful interweaving of charity and justice which is at the root of the Catholic Worker tradition. Through them I catch a glimpse of what it means to live in Christ Jesus. To live in Christ Jesus, yes it is our faith, it is our passion.+

THE ROUND TABLE

ST. LOUIS CATHOLIC WORKER NEWS

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KAREN CATHOLIC WORKER
1840 HOGAN 63106

ELLA DIXON HOUSE
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