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Newsletter

**Golding Centre for Women’s History, Theology and Spirituality
 Volume 12 No2 Nov 2012**

[The Golding Centre is situated within the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy and is named to honour the women Annie and Belle Golding and their married sister Kate Dwyer, women of the late 19th and early 20th centuries whose activism was underpinned by wide reading and in-depth research. Writing and public speaking were integral to their efforts to promote political and social reform. All were committed Catholics.]

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 **Editorial**

**Vatican II and Feminism**

This year the focus has been on the Vatican II Council as a significant event in the life of the Christian Church as a whole and indeed the world. Like all such events it had a pre-history which tends to be overlooked and therefore lessens the depth of general understanding of this pivotal event. Also men and women’s histories converge on such occasions as, indeed, in all human activities but women’s history tends to be disregarded.

Vatican II Council emerged within the wider context of the 1960s. This was a period of prosperity following post-war reconstruction in Europe and the Pacific area in the late 1940s and into the 50s which brought with it a consumer culture generated by technological advances in industry. The factories churned out goods and the burgeoning advertising industry, through newspaper, radio and TV, influenced the buying habits and life-style of the public. The atheistic variety of the influential philosophy of existentialism encouraged an ever-increasing challenging of authority

Many women, who had willingly been confined to the domestic sphere following the Second World War, were experiencing ‘divine discontent’ with their position. At the same time leaders in various areas within the Church were hoping for overdue reforms. The time was ripe for action in the areas of the Church and Feminism.

Key players in these reforms were: in the Church, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, who succeeded Pius XII as Pope John XXIII and called the Second Vatican Council in 1962; and in Feminism, Betty Friedan, married and a journalist with a strong background in psychology and sociology, who published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1960.

After ordination and subsequent doctoral studies, which had a strong historical emphasis, Roncalli was appointed secretary to Radini-Tedeschi, the social-justice minded Bishop of Bergamo. This socially-aware bishop was among the first in the Church to recognise the “femininst question” as an ecclesiastical question and, as his secretary Roncalli had assisted the Bishop in various pro-woman activities, including the establishment in his dioceses of the League of Women Workers. It was from these early days that Pope John XXIII became a lifelong friend of the distinguished Italian feminist Adelaide Coari.

There followed for the young Roncalli, among other things, a stint as a war chaplain during World War I, a diplomatic mission to Turkey and Greece that lasted ten years followed by an appointment to France including the position of being Permanent Observer for the Holy See in UNESCO. In 1953 he was created a cardinal and appointed Patriarch of Venice. Always Roncalli sought to promote friendly understanding among rival groups in every area in which he worked.

Betty Friedan recorded that during the 1950s: ‘I was ‘experiencing a profound discontent, becoming increasingly conscious of the limitations of my narrow domestic world … half-guiltily I took up again my profession of journalism.’ Through her research she discovered that many women shared her experience and she named the false image, to which they were trying unhappily to conform themselves, ‘the feminine mystique’. After a long period of in-depth research Betty Friedan in 1963 published a book by that name which became a world-wide best seller. Among many other pivotal things she declared: ‘The early feminists knew that marriage and motherhood are an essential part of life but not the whole of it.’

She also drew attention to the fact that: ‘Generally psychologists gave their professional approval to this current “permissive” attitude to sex, seeing it as a healthier state of affairs than the previous hypocritical denial of sex. But even the professionals at times express concern at the growing trend and wonder what the next step in salaciousness will be.’ With genuine concern, Betty Friedan declared: ‘The image of woman in another era required increasing prudishness to keep denying sex. This new image seems to require increasing mindlessness, increasing emphasis on things: two cars, two TVs…’

John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* declared: ‘There is an immense task incumbent on all men of good will – the task of restoring the relations of the human family in truth, in justice, in love and in freedom.’(PIT 59-60)

John was to die soon after his great reform project was launched and his wide popularity was encapsulated in a cartoon of a world globe draped with a black sash inscribed with “Ä death in the family”! It was left to Pope Paul VI to address the problem of the absence of women from the council. Indeed he was to meet with Betty Friedan in 1974 when she sought an audience with him and on which occasion he presented her with a medal for her service to women.

It was Pope Paul VI along with his successor Pope John Paul II, who would be in the position of necessarily evaluating the mixed fruits of the Council. Betty Friedan lived on to be able to critique the effects of the publication of the *Feminist Mystique* and her various other feminist activities flowing from it. This she did and produced an insightful, humble, honest assessment in her second book, *The Second Stage,* in 1982 as she wrote: “I became aware that something was off, out of focus, going wrong …” and she made the seminal observation: “I believe it’s over, that first stage: the women’s movement. And yet the larger revolution, evolution, liberation that the women’s movement set off, has barely begun.”

Challengingly she declared: ‘’ The second stage cannot be seen in terms of women alone, our separate personhood or equality with men. The second stage involves coming to new terms with the family – new terms with love and with work….”

Following the ongoing “Fifty Years On Evaluation of Vatican II”, which will necessarily involve feminism, will be both challenging and interesting!

**Feature** **Essay**

 **The Realism of Mysticism: St Teresa of Ávila through the eyes and**

 **reasoning of Simone de Beauvoir**

**[In this essay Christine Cameron brings together two feminists whom many would consider to have no common meeting place**. **When Simone de Beauvoir died in 1986 the New York *Times* described her in their obituary as a French writer, leftist, activist and as one who shared the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, her long-term companion. She was said to be best known for her polemical works, especially *The Second Sex*, which was described as ‘a long angry treatise on the oppressed women in society … that became a primer of the international radical feminist movement.’**]

St Teresa of Ávila and Simone de Beauvoir are two strong, independent women, who lived centuries apart but are linked by their *extraordinary* lived experiences. Both dared to challenge the status quo and centuries after the death of Teresa (1582) and some years after the death of Simone (1986), each woman is remembered for the legacy of her visionary endeavours.

This essay offers an interpretation of the realism of mysticism in the lives of Teresa and Simone. It aims to link the commonalities of this S*piritual Awakening* so that its message reaches out across the decades and speaks to ordinary people today. The challenge for ordinary people is to balance their private lives with their working lives so that their moments of reflection – their spirituality - need not be restricted to their private lives but can also be experienced in the workplace. Yves Conger cited in Korac-Kakabadse et al. (2002: 177) said: ‘Increasingly, people are embarking upon a spiritual journey, seeking to discover their true selves, searching for a higher purpose and meaning to their lives.’

In the contemporary world Teresa of Ávila is a canonised Saint and a *Doctor of the Universal Church*, who has been honoured posthumously by the Catholic Church. She fulfilled the criteria of eminent doctrine (teaching that is original, orthodox, and theologically significant); sanctity of life, and acceptance and approval by the Pope and/or his General Council. Simone de Beauvoir is remembered today, as an existentialist, intellectual, philosopher and writer – a person who engaged in political activism. She was also a social theorist, a feminist and one who was instrumental in ‘bringing new ideas to women’s lives’. Simone had an enormous influence on the women of her generation and there are still ‘many women in academia who quote her work’ and who espouse her feminist ideals.

**Background**

Teresa de Ahumada was born in Avila Spain on 28 March 1515. She was the third of nine children born to Don Alonso de Cepeda and his second wife Doña Beatriz de Ahumada. There were twelve children altogether in Teresa’s family. According to her biographers Teresa had a reasonably happy childhood. Doña Beatriz raised her children to be devout Catholics. She died when Teresa was thirteen years of age. Some three years after the death of her mother, Teresa attended a finishing school at an Augustinian convent where she remained for eighteen months but a serious illness necessitated that she leave and convalesce. Unfortunately, the need to convalesce saw the end of her formal education.

Upon recovery of her health, Teresa entered the Carmelite monastery of the Incarnation around the age of 21. Over the ensuing years she founded 17 convents and two monasteries. Teresa reformed the Carmelite Order after overcoming much opposition from political and ecclesiastical authorities. It was during this time that she engaged in writing her literary works and creatively met the demands of the Spanish Inquisition. Teresa mastered the art of ‘verbal camouflage’ so that even though she was reported to the Inquisition, she was never condemned.

Simone de Beauvoir, on the other hand, was born in Paris France on 9 January 1908. Simone was the elder daughter of Georges Bertrand de Beauvoir, a lawyer, and Françoise (née) Brasseur, a banker’s daughter. Simone’s mother was a devout Catholic and Simone herself was religious but she lost her faith during her adolescent years. She then became an atheist, embracing this state for the remainder of her life. Simone never married nor had children. She studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and held the position of Professor at that same university for a few years during the Second World War. While exploring her sexuality and leading a controversial lifestyle, including relationships with male and female lovers, Simone’s publications established her as a ‘great political and philosophical thinker’.

**Writing**

Despite her atheist practices Simone wrote about religion, spirituality and mysticism and there are a number of references to St Teresa of Ávila in Simone’s seminal work *The Second Sex* which is considered ‘a classic treatise of feminist literature.’ Of particular interest is the information in Part VI, Chapter 3 – *The Mystic.* In this chapter Simone maintains ‘Love has been assigned to woman as her supreme vocation, and when she directs it towards a man, she is seeking God in him; but if human love is denied her by circumstances, if she is disappointed or over-particular, she may choose to adore divinity in the person of God Himself.’ Simone also compares two women – the saint and the loving woman: ‘In both women there is the same dream, the childhood dream, the mystic dream, the dream of love: to attain supreme existence through losing oneself in the other.”According to Simone, ‘the other’ for Teresa would be God Himself. When referring to mystics, Thierry Gosset in translating Wendy Brennan’s *Women Mystics of the Modern Era* refers to the dominance of St Teresa of Ávila: ‘She was one of the most influential mystics of her period, and her thinking and her spirituality characterise a decisive turning point in Christian spirituality’ (p.31).

In the book of her *Life* [Peers, 1963a:57] Teresa states that she was the recipient of many favours from the Lord. She tells her readers that these were experienced when she was at prayer; either picturing an image of Christ; picturing praying with Him in the Garden prior to His passion or when reading. Teresa also informs the reader that she was not able to control or prevent her visions. She recalls the times when she had to hold on to a support when unexpected levitation occurred during communion or in a public forum. Teresa’s interpretation of these events was that she was aware of a sense of God within her and that she believed that she and the Divine presence were one. ‘This was in no sense a vision: I believe it is called mystical theology’. Teresa [p.58] describes this balance of body, mind, soul and spirit: ‘The soul is suspended in such a way that it seems to be completely outside itself. The will loves; the memory, I think, is almost lost; while the understanding, I believe, though it is not lost, does not reason – I mean that it does not work, but is amazed at the extent of all it can understand.’ Teresa [ibid.] then emphasises that it is God’s will that determines how much the soul understands.

**Simone’s Analysis**

In her work Simone refers to a ‘famous vision of St Theresa [Note – Simone adds ‘h’ to Teresa’s name]’. Her words are similar to the following quotation taken from this author’s book, *Leadership as a call to service. The Lives and Works of Teresa of Ávila, Catherine of Siena and Thérèse of Lisieux* (2012:102): “Teresa’s mystical experiences which heightened her awareness of the presence of God, included her mystical marriage to Christ and a vision known as the ‘Transverberation of the Heart’ which has been described as ‘the piercing of the heart.’”

By her side she saw an angel. He was small, very beautiful, his face radiant. In his hand he held a long golden spear tipped with flame. This he seemed to plunge several times into her heart, and when he drew it out, it left her all aflame with a great love of God. So sharp was the pain that she groaned aloud, yet so sweet that she wished it could last forever, for she knew that now her soul would never rest content with anything but God (Clissold*,*1979,p.59).

Clissold refers to this ‘encounter’ as ‘the orgasm of the mystic nuptials,’ and says that this rapture was immortalised in marble by Bernini, the sculptor and architect of Italian Baroque in the seventeenth century. This marble sculpture is known as *St Teresa in Ecstasy* and is still to be seen in the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, in Rome. Simone’s comments on Teresa’s ‘ecstatic phenomena’ include:

St Theresa in a single process seeks to be united with God and lives out this union in her body; she is not the slave of her nerves and her hormones: one must admire, rather, the intensity of a faith that penetrates to the most intimate regions of her flesh. The truth is, as she herself understood, that the value of a mystical experience is measured not according to the way in which it is subjectively felt, but according to its objective influence. St Theresa poses in a most intellectual fashion the dramatic problem of the relation between the individual and the transcendent Being.

Teresa wanted to communicate her mystical experiences to others and leave a legacy of her work. What Teresa experienced in contemplation compelled her into action. She went on to write *The Interior Castle* which is considered a masterpiece and ‘one of the most celebrated books on mystical theology in existence’ (Peers, 1963b, p.189). Teresa’s cultivation of spiritual awareness was intended to generate within others a response to general awareness and self-awareness. For it is when listening to the inner voice that a person recognises what the body, spirit and mind, are communicating (Spears, 1998:4).

These sentiments Simone equates with the desire for action:

Ecstasies, visions, talks with God – this inner experience is enough for some women ... [others] feel impelled to transmit it to the world through acts. The connection between action and contemplation [then] takes two very different forms ... women of action like St Catherine, St Theresa, Joan of Arc ... know very well what goals they have in mind and who lucidly devise means for attaining them; their visions simply provide objective images for their certitudes, encouraging these women to persist in the paths they have mapped out in detail for themselves.

Simone had a great admiration for this Saint of Ávila whom she placed in the category of powerful people, a sainted soul, a mystic whose acts and writings ‘rose to heights that few men have ever reached’ (p.161). For Teresa reform and a desire to return to the primitive rule became an ambition if not an obsession. In *Teresa of Avila: The Progress of a Soul* (1999, p.67), author Cathleen Medwick comments:‘But no one really expected women to initiate reform. They were too suggestible, too weak-minded, to make such changes unless under the rigorous surveillance of men.’ Teresa determined to found a new community that embraced poverty and austerity. Though a female, Teresa was proud of her strength and courage, ‘It is obvious that God has given me more than a woman’s share of it*’* (p.38).

In the previous paragraph there are comparisons between male and female, strength and weaknesses; however for a person to achieve interior silence, gender is irrelevant. Listening to the inner voice is described by Gardiner (cited in Spears, 1998, pp.116-117) as being attuned to a “‘quiet presence,’ … [which is a place] ‘where leadership and the Spirit meet.’” Gardiner quotes Gandhi’s insight, ‘faith is nothing but a living, wide-awake consciousness of God within.’ For Gardiner, Teilhard de Chardin says it best when he emphasises the importance of the spirit, ‘We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.’ Gardiner concurs and quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson, ‘The highest revelation is that God is in every man [and woman].’

Simone de Beauvoir senses in Teresa an innate presence that gives her an extraordinary insight into the reality within and the reality without, resulting in a spiritual awakening which transports her to another reality, a mystical reality. Simone clarifies her fascination for Teresa:

 ‘There is hardly any woman other than St Theresa who in total abandonment has herself lived out the situation of humanity: we have seen why. Taking her stand beyond the earthly hierarchies, she felt, like St John of the Cross, no reassuring ceiling over her head. There were for both the same darkness, the same flashes of light, in the self the same nothingness, in God the same plenitude’.

Simone explained:

Mystical fervour, like love and even narcissism, can be integrated with a life of activity and independence. But in themselves these attempts at individual salvation are bound to meet with failure: either woman puts herself into relation with an unreality: her double, or God; or she creates an unreal relation with a real being. In both cases she lacks any grasp on the world; she does not escape her subjectivity; her liberty remains frustrated. There is only one way to employ her liberty authentically, and that is to project it through positive action into human society.

Teresa realised the importance of maintaining an active state within the mystical state. Brennan (2003, p. 8) quotes Bergson that ‘perfect mysticism is action.’ For St Teresa of Ávila, the realism of mysticism was her ability to balance her contemplative life with her active ministry. Both Teresa and Simone experienced spiritual awareness, albeit in different degrees and ways. Awareness is being in touch with the spiritual, existential and cosmic realities and sensing and responding to their interconnectedness (Capra cited in Spears, 1998:119). When ordinary people have an awareness of a mystical reality and then translate this experience into their everyday lives, they enhance their spirituality; they become aware of the importance of balancing their contemplative lives with their active lives – their private lives with their working lives – they assume stewardship of the sacredness of life (Sims, 1997)!

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Christine Cameron

 **LETTER from LONDON**

This year’s annual conference was held in Dublin, hosted by the School of Education at University College Dublin and organised by Deirdre Raftery and Louise O’Reilly. The theme ‘Vocation, Education & Care’ attracted participants from Britain and Ireland, North America and Australia and even a participant from South Africa! Themes ranged from Mary Ward’s legacy to education and identity building, missions and archives. The highlight was the rousing plenary by Dr Phil Kilroy on writing the history of women religious and the critique of feminism.

**Next year’s conference returns to London and will be organised by Kate Jordan and Ayla Lepine at the Institute of Historical Research on 6-7 September 2012.** The theme is ‘Materializing the Spirit: Space, Objects and Art in the Cultures of Women Religious’. This conference will take a broad and diverse view on what constitutes ‘material culture’, emphasizing the conception, production, and meanings of the many material outputs of convents and monasteries. Papers are welcomed from a diverse range of disciplines: scholars from social and religious history, art and architecture, theology, anthropology, psychology and beyond are invited to offer fresh and innovative perspectives in order to illuminate ways in which women religious in Britain and Ireland created and were formed by material histories for more than a thousand years. Conference organisers are Ayla Lepine and Kate Jordan. For more details contact: [kate.jordan.09@ucl.ac.uk](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/h/e6r435i6rmw6/?&v=b&cs=wh&to=kate.jordan.09@ucl.ac.uk). The call for papers will be out shortly.

Carmen Mangion

Birkbeck College, University of London

Book Review

**Susan Smith, *Call to Mission: The Story of the Mission Sisters of Aotearoa New Zealand and Samoa* (Auckland: David Ling Publishing, 2010). Pp. 372**

Based on a doctoral thesis at the University of Auckland, this book traces the foundation and development of the religious congregation of Notre Dame des Missions – Our Lady of the Missions – in New Zealand and Samoa, together with wider contextual issues. The author’s interest in the involvement of women in mission history has found expression in her *Women in Mission: From the New Testament to Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007).

The foundress of the Mission Sisters (the title popularly used in New Zealand), Euphrasie Barbier, was born in Normandy at a time of vigorous resurgence of the Church in France following the destruction wrought by the Revolution and the upheaval of the Napoleonic wars. It was a time of both burgeoning promotion of ‘home’ missions for the restoration of Catholicity in France and a broadly based involvement in ‘missions étrangères’ – foreign mission fields, a 19th century impetus of which France could be regarded as the heartland. This was readily facilitated both by civic and ecclesiastical administrators in France’s overseas colonies and the concern of the S.C. of Propaganda in Rome to establish Vicariates in overseas mission territories and its entrusting these to mission-oriented religious institutes.

The young Euphrasie, born 1829, was strongly drawn to the foreign missions and, in 1848, joined the recently formed Sisters of Compassion of Our Lady (initially Sisters of Calvary), founded with this purpose. Seeing it desirable to master English, the small congregation re-located to England, where they were soon pressured into increasing involvement in ‘home’ missionary outreach, made urgent by the revival of Catholicism in England and the needs of spreading Irish immigration. Euphrasie soon held a position of trust in the congregation, but her desire for foreign missions seemed thwarted. Through contact with Marist Sisters in London, she found a new avenue in her native France where , in 1861, she was able, under Marist auspices, to found her own congregation of Our Lady of the Missions. At the same time, Euphrasie had a strong contemplative attraction, insisting on monastic structures such as enclosure walls and parlour grilles. This was to lead to difficulties with Marist clergy on Pacific islands where Sisters, following their formation, were soon involved.

En route to the islands and a field also for their initial missionary outreach, four Sisters, in 1865, arrived in New Zealand at Napier, a town of some 4000 Europeans in the Wellington diocese led by Marist Bishop Viard. The Sisters, with only one fluent in English, were soon involved in teaching in the local Catholic school, an occupation destined to absorb them and their future members as a needed service to New Zealand’s growing and soon dominant white population. A period of extraordinary expansion followed: prior to Vatican II, the congregation staffed 58 primary schools and 14 secondary schools for girls, these latter all providing accommodation for boarders from the hinterland. (p.63). Nor did they neglect the Maori population, beginning with a Providence for Maori children in 1867, which was later re-named St Joseph’s Maori Girls’ College; in other areas, they sought to assist where they could. In 1897, a community from New Zealand made a foundation in Perth, leading to further houses, all similarly engaged in education, in Australia.

Euphrasie Barbier’s prior objective for her institute – foreign missions among non-Christian peoples – had led her Sisters to the Pacific in collaboration with the Marist Fathers, who had taken responsibility for the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Oceania in 1836, which at the time included New Zealand. After difficult negotiations with the Marists, involving also the Marist Tertiary women already working with them in the Pacific, Euphrasie was able, by 1871, to allocate three Sisters from France to the Marist mission in Tonga and three similarly in Samoa. The following year she undertook a four years’ visitation of her houses in New Zealand and these islands, to which a foundation on Wallis Island was added. Her insistence on monastic features of enclosure, always a point of difference with the Marists, and on her own autonomous direction of the Sisters led to their complete withdrawal from what was then the Vicariate of Central Oceania by 1880. Their non-involvement in foreign missions remained a submerged awareness in the growing New Zealand province, formally established as such in 1907 (with later division) and the institute’s oldest foundation, as it began from France and later from the Roman mother house to expand into other regions.

Following the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and the call for all religious institutes to undertake overseas missionary involvement, Mission Sisters from New Zealand returned to Samoa in 1970, to take up a variety of mission works there. Sisters were also able to collaborate in other mission areas where the institute was involved. At the same time, in New Zealand, the religious life adaptations following the Council led to diversification of ministries and further ministry-related educational opportunities for the Sisters. The author, Sr Susan Smith, after teaching in New Zealand and serving in Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea and Ethiopia, has taught in the Catholic Institute of Theology, Auckland, and since as an Adjunct Lecturer in the University of Auckland’s School of Theology. She has brought to this study her own lived experience and a wealth of meticulous, clearly presented detail, both in her text and accompanying tables, maps and illustrations.

Rosa MacGinley pbvm

 Forthcoming Conferences

**What is Early Modern English Catholicism? 28 June- 1 July 2013**

This conference will be held at Ushaw College to celebrate the contribution of Eamon Duffy’s work to changing notions of how early Modern English Catholicism is understood. The aim of the conference is to attract an interdisciplinary range of speakers to discuss different ‘sorts’ of Catholicism. It is designed to explore whether the term Catholicism covers a broad spectrum of interest or is necessarily more narrowly defined. It is questioning perceived notions of what is actually meant when Early Modern Catholicism is mentioned in the English context.

The plenary speakers will be Eamon Duffy (Cambridge), Brad Gregory (Notre Dame), Thomas McCoog (Fordham) and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge). The period under consideration will be, in the long term, from the 16th century break with Rome, the years of uncertainty and the Marian restoration, through the periods of recusancy, persecution and the Glorious Revolution, to the Jacobite movement and the Catholic survivalism of the 18th century.

Proposals for 20 minutes papers are invited on any theme falling within this broad field. Proposals are to be sent to james.kelly@durham.as.uk by 15 January, 2013.

**Men and Women in Early Christianity, Melbourne, 3-5 October, 2013**

This conference is convened by the Centre for Early Christina Studies at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) in association with the Asia-Pacific Early Christian Studies Society and will be held on the Melbourne (St Patrick’s) Campus of ACU.

 The Keynote speakers will be:

\*Professor Mathijs Lamberigts, Faculty of Theology, History and Church, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium.

\*Professor Claudia Rapp, Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies. University of Vienna, Austria.

\*Professor Elaine Wainwright, School of Theology, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

The history of these centuries is rich in the history of women and their relationship with men such as that of Jerome with Paula and Macrina with her famous brothers Basil and Gregory. Human nature in its essence persists across the centuries and this early period of Christian history is highly relevant to contemporary feminists. More detail can be found on the website: [www.earlychristiancenturies.com.au](http://www.earlychristiancenturies.com.au)

**History of Women Religious Conference (USA) – June 2013**

This will be the ninth triennial conference on the history of women religious in USA and will be at St Catherine University, St Paul, Minnesota with the theme **Women Religious Through the Ages: Managing Individual and Institutional Realities.**

 Proposals for papers or panels are invited on the following themes or issues that have shaped and/or continue to influence the evolution of congregations of women religious:

Community governance, ethnic, linguistic or racial tension, demographic composition, inter-congregational cooperation, changing ministries, relations with clergy, hierarchy and secular institutions, spiritual tradition, emerging models of religious life.

Disciplinary approaches include history, sociology, anthropology, theology, religious studies, literature, communication, cultural studies, art, architecture and material culture.

Proposals of a one page abstract accompanied by a one-page CV are requested by August 15, 2012 and to be sent to Elizabeh McGahan, Department of History and Politics, University of New Brunswick.- Saint John Campus, PO Box 5050, Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada E2L 4L5. Email: emcgahan@nbnet.nb.ca

 **Of Interest**

**The friends of the Veech Library**

Recently there has been established an association called The Friends of the Veech Library. This important collection of books was originally located at St Patrick’s seminary in Manly but moved to a purpose built library in Strathfield when the Manly seminary was relocated there as The Catholic Institute of Sydney in1996 and is a valuable resource close to the Australian Catholic University.

As Rev Dr Gerard Kelly, the President of the Society, points out:

The Veech Library is a significant treasure bringing together rare and important works that record and highlight the Catholic tradition in Australia, especially New South Wales.

The aim of the Friends is to promote and support the Library and encourage interest in its diverse collections. The Friends will hold various talks, exhibitions and other events throughout the year.

In fact the Veech Library is the principal theological information resource of the Catholic Church in New South Wales. Its history reaches back to the 1840s when the first Catholic library was established near the site of the present St Mary’s Cathedral in Sydney. This Benedictine collection was expanded following its subsequent moves to Lyndhurst (Glebe), St John’s College (Sydney University) and St Patrick’s College (Manly).

The Library contains a collection of over 100,000 items with a focus on theology, spirituality, philosophy, ethics, biblical studies and church history. The Library also holds nationally recognised significant Special Collections which include a wide range of material from medieval manuscripts to 21st century publications. They include rare editions and volumes with unique inscriptions providing provenance and association with many leading clerical and lay figures prominent in Australian Catholic history.

Anyone interested in becoming a Friend of Veech contact the Catholic Institute of Sydney (02) 9752 9500; email: gkelly@cis.catholic.edu.au

[This Newsletter is produced by the Centre for Women’s History, Theology and Spirituality. Please address all correspondence to the editor Dr Sophie McGrath rsm, Email:sophie.mcgrath@acu.edu.au]