Landas 26:1 (2012) 79–97

VATICAN II AND WOMEN*

Helen R. Graham, M.M.

Fifty-four years ago, on January 25, 1959, John XXIII invited eighteen Curia cardinals to accompany him to a ceremony at St. Paul Outside the Walls on the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, the final day of the Octave for Christian Unity. During his address, he made the following "carefully timed announcement"[1]:

> Venerable brothers and our beloved sons! We announce to you, indeed trembling a little with emotion, but at the same time with humble resolution of intention, the name and the proposal of a twofold celebration: a diocesan synod for the city, and an ecumenical council for the Universal Church.

Journalist Desmond Fisher writes that "what they heard stunned them. The new pope—he had been elected only three months earlier—told

*Updated version of a paper delivered first at DeLasalle University, Manila, on November 17, 2012, and again at the Institute of Formation and Religious Studies on August 2013.

[1]Desmond Fisher, "Curial horror greeted John XXIII's announcement of ecumenical council," *NCR* (January 25, 2012). See Fisher's recent article, "A journalist at the council considers what's been lost," in *A Church Reborn: Second Vatican Council 1962–1965*, special 50th anniversary issue of the *National Catholic Reporter* (October 11, 2012).

them he intended to summon an ecumenical council and would they please give him their views about it. … [T]hey looked at the pope, first in amazement and then in horror."[2] It was expected that John XIII would be merely an interim pope who would not make waves!

In his speech at the opening of the council in Rome on October 11, 1962, Pope John XXIII, somewhat tongue in cheek, commented that

> We uttered those words in the presence of the Sacred College of Cardinals on that memorable January 25, 1959, the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, in the basilica dedicated to him. It was completely unexpected, like a flash of heavenly light, shedding sweetness in eyes and hearts.[3]

When the Second Vatican Council opened, there was, it seems, no clear idea of what its result might be. Pope John XXIII insisted, however, that it be a *pastoral* council, and not, as in previous councils, one that would correct heresies. In his opening speech to the Council, Pope John XXIII said that while in the past the Church had always opposed errors, "and frequently has condemned them with the greatest severity,"

> Nowadays, however, Christ's Bride prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations ….
>
> [T]he Catholic Church, raising the torch of religious truth by means of this Ecumenical Council, desires to show herself to be the loving mother of all, benign, patient, full of mercy and goodness ….[4]

---

[2]Ibid. The Curia worked to pre-empt the Council, expecting it to be completed in one session. Two European cardinals protested. The Curia proposals were swept aside. The first meeting lasted 17 minutes.

[3]"Pope John's Opening Speech to the Council," October 11, 1962, in Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (America Press, 1966), 711–712. For the significance of the change of style and vocabulary characteristic of Vatican II, see John O'Malley, "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?" *TS* 67 (2006): 3–33. See also his history of Vatican II, *What Happened at Vatican II* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).

[4]Ibid, 716.

The council met in four distinct sessions each year from 1962–1965, in what John O'Malley termed "the biggest meeting in the history of the world," with some "2,400 council fathers (not counting the *periti*) participating at any given time …. A total of 2,860 attended part or all of the four periods."[5] Women were not at all on the horizon![6]

Women Auditors at Vatican II: Guests in their Own House[7]

Twenty-three women auditors eventually did attend the council. The story of how they got there makes for fascinating reading. Douglas Horton, a Protestant observer, kept a diary which was published in four volumes, one for each of the four sessions. He missed women, particularly since initially he was not permitted to bring his wife Mildred. Early on he wrote in his diary:

> It suddenly came over me, as I sat looking at this vast assembly of almost three thousand people today that it has about it an air of artificiality and that the main reason for this is that there is not a single woman in the whole company. Up and down the nave you look and into the transcepts, nothing but men. It is an abstracted body, incomplete, a torso of true catholicity, speaking more of an outmoded past than of the living present. Let us hope that the world will see something of Rome's strong women at Vatican III.[8]

---

[5]O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 20, 21.

[6]In an article in *The Month*, Rosemary Goldie quotes journalist Katherine Burton who wrote in April 1963, six months before the question even came up, "I think the really big excitement will come when, some day, the curia finds out that there are women in the church. And I have a feeling that moment is now nearing." Rosemary Goldie, "Women in the Church," *The Month* (February 1964): 84. As cited by Carmel Elizabeth McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House: The Women of Vatican II*, reissued (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 45.

[7]Subtitle taken from McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House*.

[8]Douglas Horton, *Vatican Diary* Vol. I (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1964–1967), 63, as cited by McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House*, 19–20.

Journalist Eva Jung-Inglessis told Mercy Sister Carmel McEnroy, in an interview, that already a seed had been publicly planted at a national meeting of the German Bishops before the council. When the floor was opened for questions,

> a young woman at the back said, "I wonder if the women will be invited to the council." People thought, what a silly question! It was self-evident that no woman could ever be invited to a council …. The bishop who directed the meeting was perplexed for a moment and did not know what to say. He finally responded, "Now, to this council, no, but the third Vatican Council, yes." So all were happy.[9]

For the second conciliar session (beginning September 29, 1963), Douglas Horton was able to bring his wife, Mildred, who was given tickets for the opening ceremonies each morning and for special occasions, but who was not permitted to attend the working sessions. It seems that the observers and their wives were treated to special outings and were able to eat in various monastery refectories, a historical first! McEnroy writes that it was "the Reformation women [who] prepared the way for their Catholic sisters to take back some of their own church space."[10]

But it would take a friend on the inside to achieve the needed breakthrough which

> came on October 23, 1963, during the discussion on the church as people of God (*Lumen Gentium*). Leon Josef Cardinal Suenens, archbishop of Milines and a council moderator, said that systematically excluding women from active church participation made no sense in an age when they go almost to the moon. He called for increasing the number and range of lay auditors. He continued: "Women too should be invited as auditors: unless I am mistaken, they make up half of the human race."[11]

---

[9]McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House*, 20.

[10]McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House*, 21.

[11]McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House*, 41.

A week before the reopening of the council for its third session (begun on September 14, 1964), Pope Paul VI announced to a small group of religious women his intention to invite "a few qualified women" to be "a feminine representation, not numerous of course but significant and quasi-symbolical."[12]

Thus were twenty-three women auditors admitted to the last two sessions of the council. Initially they were to be "seen and not heard," but thanks to the intervention of another friend on the inside, council theologian Bernard Häring, who said "that if women were invited, they should have a place in the commissions formulating the documents," three of the women—Rosemary Goldie, a lay leader from Australia, Mere Guillemin, a Sister of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul from France, and Loretto Sister Mary Luke Tobin, president of the Conference of Major Superiors (later to become the Leadership Conference of Women Religious [LCWR])—were invited to attend commission meetings where they were allowed to speak as freely as they wished.[13]

Toward a Roman Catholic Theology of Womanhood

Ivy Helman notes that prior to the 1960s,

> "Roman Catholic theology often addressed women's roles and duties as wives and mothers, only rarely venturing into their lives outside the home …. [S]eparation of women into their own significant theological category began in the late 1880s, [but] it became more focused in the 1930s with *Casti connubii*, only becoming developed fully after 1960 … when the theological language changed significantly" toward developing a Roman Catholic official theology of womanhood. Parallel

[12]McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House*, 50.

[13]Sister Mary Luke Tobin, "Women in the Church: Vatican II and After," *Ecumenical Review* 37/3 (1985): 295–305, here 296.

> with this development in Roman Catholic theology was the growth of the feminist movement.[14]

The Feminist Movement. More than a century and a half ago, 1848 to be exact, the first Woman's Rights Convention was held in New York. In the "Declaration of Sentiments" that followed the convention, Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote that the history of humankind is "a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward women, having [as] its direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her."[15] This first-wave feminism evolved out of women's involvement in abolition in the 1830s.

> Many women fought for freedom from slavery only to realize their own second-class status. For example, some women went to Britain for an anti-slavery conference and were refused seating. This occurrence led some women to form separate women-only abolitionist groups. Gradually, many women began to understand the full nature of their situation in society.[16]

A second wave of feminism emerged in the mid-1960s. In 1968, Mary Daly, borrowing from Simone de Beauvoir's classic *The Second Sex* (1949), wrote her "landmark, scathing critique of the misogyny she observed in Catholicism"[17] (*The Church and the Second Sex*). The

---

[14]Ivy A. Helman, *Women and the Vatican: An Exploration of Official Documents* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012), 1.

[15]"Editor's Preface," in Elizabeth Cady Stanton, ed., *The Women's Bible* (New York: European Publishing Company, 1895), vi.

[16]Helman, *Women and the Vatican*, 2.

[17]Sara Corbet, "Mary Daly 1928—Gyno-Theologian," in the Sunday Magazine of the *New York Times* (December 26, 2010): MM 14. Of Daly's visit to a session of Vatican II, Corbet wrote:

> Like any good Catholic studying God in Europe, she went to Rome. Sitting in St. Peter's Basilica in 1965, Daly watched a session of the Second Vatican Council, a spectacle of cardinals and bishops—"old men in crimson dresses"—droning on in Latin. And to one side, a smattering of black-habited nuns. "When the veiled nuns shuffled to the altar rail to receive 'Holy Communion' from the hands of a priest,"

book "got her fired, briefly, from her teaching position [at Boston College], but as a result of support from the (then all-male) student body and the general public, she was ultimately granted tenure. … [The] Boston College Jesuits worked uneasily with Daly for more than three decades."[18]

By the 1980s, the feminist movement had become global. Feminist theologies were being developed on all continents.

> Asian feminist theologies emerged as a response of Christian women to … multiple forms of oppression. It began as a grass-roots movement when Christian women gathered to read the Bible and raised questions based on their life experiences. Different ecumenical networks, including the Women's Desk of the Christian Conference of Asia, the Women's Commission of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, and the Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology, have nurtured the women's theological movements in Asia.[19]

As Ivy Helman notes, the "historical development of feminism [has] affected the Roman Catholic Church and sparked the construction of a theology of womanhood."[20] Before we take a look at some of the official documents, first a little detour into theological education for women.

Theological Education for Women: It is hard to believe that until the mid-20th century, theological education for women was non-existent! It was only in 1943 that Holy Cross Sister Mary Madeleva

---

> Daly wrote later in an essay, "I felt that I was observing a string of lowly ants at a bizarre picnic."

[18]Tom Fox, "Mary Daly, radical feminist theologian, dead at 81," *National Catholic Reporter* (January 4, 2010): http://ncronline.org/news/women-religious/mary-daly-radical-feminist-theologian-dead-81 (accessed Janury 5, 2010).

[19]Kwok Pui-Lan, "Feminist Theologies, Asian," in Letty M. Russell & J. Shannon Clarkson, eds., *Dictionary of Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 101. The Asian Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) has been producing *In God's Image*, "an Asian Christian women's effort to provide a forum for expressing our reality, our struggles, our faith reflections and aspirations for change," for almost thirty years now.

[20]Helman, *Women and the Vatican*, 8.

Wolff, then president of Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana (1934–1961), established at Saint Mary's the pioneering Graduate School of Sacred Theology for women.[21] This was the first school to grant master's and doctor's degrees in Sacred Theology to religious and lay women. For more than a decade, St. Mary's was the only institution to do so.[22] Theological education for women only began in Rome in 1954 with the opening of Regina Mundi Institute. Regina Mundi closed its doors in 2005.[23]

In the Philippines, the Sister Formation Institute (SFI) came into being two decades after Sister Madeleva established the first school of Sacred Theology for women at St. Mary's College. At that time, SFI provided a one-year program of basic theological and scriptural education for young sisters in formation. We did not begin a degree program until 1990 when SFI became the Institute of Formation and Religious Studies (IFRS), almost fifty years after Sister Madeleva's

[21]For example, in an interview for Catholic-Net, Sister Sara Butler, MSBT, makes the following comment: "I studied for my master's degree at the Catholic University of America. This was 1961, and women weren't admitted to theology, so I got a degree in religious education. I never felt anything like resentment over that at all, but I do remember thinking it was really quite, I don't know, remarkable." Sheila Gribben Liaugminas, "Change of Heart on Women Priests," http://www.catholic.net/index.php?id=159&option=dedestaca (accessed October 27, 2012).

[22]Saint Mary's College is a private Catholic women's college founded in 1844 by the Sisters of the Holy Cross. Holy Cross Sister Madeleva Wolff, who was the first woman religious to receive a doctorate from Berkeley, California, served as the first dean and president of the College of St. Mary-of-the-Watch in Salt Lake City, Utah (1925–1933). She served as president of St. Mary's College, Notre Dame (1934–1961) (http://www3.saintmarys.edu/departments/religious-studies [accessed August 19, 2012]).

[23]In his column in the *National Catholic Reporter* for June 17, 2005, John Allen wrote of the closure of Regina Mundi: "There's some sad news this week with the closing of Regina Mundi, the first center of studies in Rome explicitly created for the theological education of women, and long a symbol of the intellectual coming of age of women in the Catholic Church. Ironically, Regina Mundi marked its fiftieth anniversary just last year" (http://www.nationalcatholicreporter.org/word/word061705.htm#eight [accessed October 27, 2012]).

initial project. IFRS is in the process of planning brief renewal programs for the updating of those who have been in the field.

The women's movement gained momentum in North America in the early 1980s.

> The Sisters of the Holy Cross who sponsor [Saint Mary's] college had in the era following Vatican II initiated summer programs for the spiritual enrichment of women religious. The convergence of the contemporary women's movement and the intense interest in spirituality made a women's college like Saint Mary's a likely and promising place for a center of Spirituality.[24]

In March 1984, The Center for Sprituality at St. Mary's College was formally inaugurated. It was also proposed that an annual lecture be established on a theme concerning "Christian Spirituality, especially as this theme relates to women of the Church." The texts of the lectures would be available in published form. Paulist father Kevin A. Lynch, president and editorial director of Paulist Press, "agreed to publish annually what came to be known as the Madeleva Lecture series."[25] The first Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality was delivered by Monika Hellwig on March 23, 1985.[26]

---

[24]Dlores R. Leckey & Kathleen Dolphin, eds., *Monika K. Hellwig: The People's Theologian* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2010), vii–viii.

[25]Leckey & Dolphin, *Monika K. Hellwig: The People's Theologian*, viii.

[26]Among those who have delivered the annual Madeleva lecture are: Sandra M. Schneiders (twice), Joan Chittister, Elizabeth A. Johnson, Margaret Farely, Rosemary Reuther, and Kwok Pui-Lan. A reunion of Madeleva lecturers was held in 2000 to share their wisdom. Elizabeth Dryer writes of this reunion:

> We were also acutely aware of speaking to those women who have suffered grievously from unjust ecclesial laws, customs, practices and attitudes. We wanted to speak to those who have been fired from church positions without due process and in some cases without cause; to those who have been silenced, ridiculed, ignored or dismissed because they are women; to those who are not invited to share power and be included in decision-making; to those who are suffering battle fatigue from long and faithful commitment to change. We wanted to offer a word of hope and courage to those who are disheartened or impatient

Toward a Theology of Womenhood: Ivy Helman's book, *Women and the Vatican*, provides answers to questions about women, from the perspective of the Roman Catholic Church, through an exposition of official Church documents. She notes that from the perspective of theology, such questions cannot receive a satisfactory answer prior to the 1960s, even though some documents beginning in 1880 do mention women. The 1960s brought significant changes in theological language especially toward defining a Roman Catholic theology of womanhood.[27]

It was Pope John XXIII who, in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, observed what he termed the three characteristics of our age: 1) the working classes have gradually gained ground in economic and public affairs; 2) women are now taking a part in public life; and 3) nations have either achieved or are on the way to achieving independence.[28] Concerning women, the pope further stated that

> Since women are becoming ever more conscious of their human dignity, they will not tolerate being treated as mere material instruments, but demand rights befitting a human person both in domestic and in public life. (*PT* 41)

This concern of John XXIII was echoed two and a half years later in Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* which states:

> … with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. (GS 29)[29]

And again in *Lumen Gentium* we read:

---

with change that seems to come at a snail's pace. (Elizabeth A. Dreyer, "In the Tradition of Sister Madeleva," *America* [June 17, 2000])

[27]See Helman, *Women and the Vatican,* 1.

[28]John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (Paulist Press, 1963), nos. 39–42.

[29]Walter M. Abbott, ed., "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," in *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), no. 29. Sister Mary Luke Tobin was a member of the committee that drafted *Gaudium et spes*.

> There is … in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex, because "there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female. For you are all 'one' in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). (LG 32)

At the conclusion of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI, specifically addressing women, said:

> [T]he hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of woman is being achieved in its fullness, the hour in which woman acquires in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved. …
>
> Women … make it your task to bring the spirit of this council into institutions, schools, homes and daily life. Women of the entire universe, whether Christian or non-believing, you to whom life is entrusted at this grave moment in history, it is for you to save the peace of the world.[30]

A decade later, Pope Paul VI, addressing participants at the National Meeting of the *Centro Italiano Femminile,* said

> Within Christianity … since its very beginning, women have had a special dignity, of which the New Testament shows us many important aspects …; it is evident that women are meant to form part of the living and working structure of Christianity in so prominent a manner that perhaps not all their potentialities have yet been made clear.[31]

Again, another decade later, in his encyclical *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pope John Paul II cited the text of Genesis that "God created [*adam*] in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27) as "the immutable *basis of all Christian anthropology*."

> This concise passage contains the fundamental anthropological truths: man [*sic*] is the highpoint of the whole order of creation in the visible world; the human race, which takes its origin from the calling into existence of man and women, crowns the whole work of creation;

---

[30]"Address of Pope Paul VI to Women," December 8, 1965, reproduced in Helman, *Women and the Vatican*, 28–29.

[31]Paul VI, Address to Participants at the National Meeting of the Centro Italiano Femminile (December 6, 1976), as cited by John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignitatem* (August 15, 1988), no. 5.

> *both man and woman are human beings to an equal degree*, both are created *in God's image*.[32]

But toward the end of the encyclical one realizes that man and woman are only equal up to a point, as John Paul II reiterates the teaching of *Inter Insigniores* that

> Since Christ, in instituting the Eucharist, linked it in such an explicit way to the priestly service of the Apostles, it is legitimate to conclude that he thereby wished to express the relationship between man and women, between what is "feminine" and what is "masculine" …. This is clear and unambiguous when the sacramental ministry of the Eucharist, in which the priest acts "*in persona Christi*," is performed by a man.[33]

In 2004, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger issued a letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church, entitled "On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World," which sparked a host of reactions and commentaries. Among them is this response of Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister:

> Two positions vie for ascendance here, one only serving to negate the other. First, the document waffles between two anthropologies, two

---

[32]John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* 6. See also Pope John Paul II, "Letter to Women" (June 29, 1995), on the occasion of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, China).

[33]John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* 26. Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Declaration Concerning the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood," *Inter Insigniores* (October 15, 1976). This teaching was reiterated for a third time in John Paul II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, "Apostolic Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone" (May 22, 1994), in which he issued the following strong assertion:

> Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk. 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful. (no. 4)

For an analysis see Ladislaus Orsy, "Stability and Development in Canon Law: The Case of Definitive Doctrine," in *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 105–114.

> theological world views, and tries, in vain, to satisfy both. It reinforces the notion of a dual anthropology—that men and women are essentially different creatures as a result of their sex organs—and it blurs it at the same time. Women, it assures us in one segment, are fully "human" and made in the image of God. Women have their own unique role to play in the economy of salvation, in other words. Men and women are, therefore, equally responsible to nurture and take responsibility for the human enterprise. In another place, however, the other anthropology is equally clear. Sex—femaleness—not personhood, not the nature of what it means to be human, determines our role in life, the document argues. The natures of men and women are determined by their sex, it says unequivocally, and women are, therefore, determined to be the caregivers of the family and the partner most responsible for the success of family life. A "boys will be boys' theology of marriage, which for centuries kept women in damaging relationships, lurks threateningly near the surface here.[34]

When Pope Francis was leaving Rio after World Youth Day, July 29, 2013, he was asked by reporters regarding women in the Church. John Allen reports briefly on what he said:

> Argued for the importance of women in the church, yet said John Paul II "definitively … closed the door" to women priests. He called for a deeper "theology of women" beyond disputed questions such as whether they can be lectors at Mass or head Vatican agencies such as Caritas Internationalis.[35]

Most news outlets were falling over each other, racing to move the pope's comments about "gay persons"—his term. News flash: the pope reiterated Catholic teaching, both about homosexual activity and about the ordination of women as priests.

While the global media zeroed in on the Pope's comments regarding homosexuality, Phyllis Zagano has paid attention to what "the pope did not rule out—nor has any church teaching ruled out—the restoration of women to the ordained order of deacon. In fact,

---

[34]Sr. Joan Chittister, "To the 'experts in humanity': Since when did women become the problem?" *NCR* (August 2, 2004), accessed online August 3, 2004.

[35]John Allen, "Pope on Homosexuals: 'Who Am I to Judge?'" *National Catholic Reporter* (July 29, 2013, aboard the Papal plane).

he led right into the current international discussion about women in the diaconate."[36]

It is clear that the feminist movement has definitely been an influence in the efforts of the official Church toward a development of a Roman Catholic theology of womanhood.

Women in the Immediate Aftermath of the Council

Seven years after the close of Vatican II, martial law was declared in the Philippines. Religious women found themselves dodging the water canons of the military in the streets as they joined students, workers, farmers, and many others in protest against the martial law regime.[37] The situation in the Philippines had been rapidly deteriorating in the years prior to martial law. Among the highlights of this period was the famous La Tondeña strike (1975), which saw significant numbers of priests and religious out in the street in solidarity with the workers. Sr. Mary John Mananzan writes that it was at this time that she had her "first encounter with military brutality and experienced helplessness before the reality of force and institutional violence."[38] A number of religious were arrested during these years and spent time in prison as

[36]Phyllis Zagano, "What the Holy Father meant to say …," *National Catholic Reporter* (August 14, 2013).

[37]It was mostly religious who joined the protest movements along with workers, farmers and students in the early days of martial law. Laity of the upper class only came out after the assassination of Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino on August 21, 1983.

[38]"Redefining Religious Commitment Today," in Sr. Mary John Mananzan, ed., *Women Religious Now: Impact of the Second Vatican Council on Women Religious of the Philippines* (Manila: Institute of Women Studies, St. Scholastica's College, 1993), 139.

political detainees.[39] We were learning what being religious women in the last quarter of the 20th century might demand of us.

Inspired by a study made by Sr. Augusta Neal on the religious women in the United States 20 years after Vatican II, Sr. Mary John Mananzan, O.S.B., undertook a survey assessment of the impact of Vatican II on the life of the Church on the occasion of its 25th anniversary in 1990. Religious women were chosen for the survey because it was believed that among Church sectors, it was perhaps the women religious who "experienced the most radical changes within the past two-and-a-half decades …. Aside from the purposes of documentation, the study will hopefully serve as a basis of policy decisions and a help in the redirection of religious congregations of women."[40]

In addition to the publication of the results of the survey, eight religious women who had celebrated their silver jubilee were asked to write testimonies of how their mind had changed since Vatican II.[41]

Women and the Second Vatican Council at Fifty

On the twentieth anniversary of Vatican II, Sister Mary Luke Tobin wrote that

> an emerging women's movement in the Roman Catholic Church has captured attention worldwide because it is challenging an intransigent and patriarchal tradition of that church and is making serious headway

[39]Perhaps the most prominent was Sister Marianni Dimaranan, C.F.I.C., who spent about 47 days in prison in full habit.

[40]Sr. Mary John Mananzan, ed., "Foreword," in *Women Religious Now: Impact of the Second Vatican Council on Women Religious of the Philippines* (Manila: Institute of Women Studies, St. Scholastica's College, 1993).

[41]Those who provided testimonies include the following: Sisters Virginia Fabella, M.M.; Emelina A. Villegas, I.C.M.; Mary Rosario B. Battung, R.G.S.; Bonaventure Tanjuakio, C.F.I.C.; Helen R. Graham, M.M.; Julma C. Neo, D.C.; Consuelo Varela, I.C.M., and Mary John Mananzan, O.S.B.

> towards its goal: restoring the equality in theory and practice which belongs to a Christian and Catholic theology of persons.[42]

She cites one "compelling statement" from paragraph 29 of *Gaudium et spes* which she claims "leaves no uncertainty about the intentions of the authors of this Vatican Council document to eliminate from the church the sin of sexism."[43]

While she credits the wider women's movement in general for the growth in consciousness among women in the Church, she focuses on the struggles of Roman Catholic women in the years following the Second Vatican Council.

In their preparation for the 1987 World Synod of Bishops on the Laity, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO) drew up a report which reviewed "developments in the discussion of women's place in the church since Vatican II." Tobin continues:

> The report expresses concern that many women leave the church because the church is insensitive to their desire to "participate fully" in its life and mission. WUCWO concludes its report by listing a number of matters which call for a response at the official level. These include: need for changes in the education of the clergy, including study of the rightful role and dignity of women in the church; the importance of having women as well as men conduct these programs; the problem of exclusive language in the documents and liturgies; positive affirmation of the vocation of single women; relative absence of women from advisory or decision-making bodies or positions in the church.[44]

The optimism that many of us felt in the early post-conciliar period (when we were very young) has been on the wane for the past several years. Among the events that are out of sync with Vatican II thinking

---

[42]Tobin, "Women in the Church: Vatican II and After," 295–305, here 295.

[43]Tobin, "Women in the Church: Vatican II and After," 295–305. Sr. Mary Luke Tobin was a member of the committee that drafted *Gaudium et Spes*.

[44]Tobin, "Women in the Church: Vatican II and After," 304.

are: the failure to implement Episcopal-collegiality,[45] the silencing of theologians,[46] Vatican Investigation of Women Religious of the United States,[47] the doctrinal assessment of the LCWR conducted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) and released on April 18, 2012,[48] Benedict XVI's efforts to "reform the reform" which is quite visible especially in recent liturgical decisions,[49] and

[45]See Ladislaus Orsy, "Episcopal Conferences: Communio among the Bishops," in *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 16–34; Ladislaus Orsy, "The church inherited conflicting intents on collegiality," in *A Church Reborn*, special 50th anniversary issue of the *National Catholic Reporter* (NCR) (October 11, 2012): 22. Tobin, "Women in the Church: Vatican II and After," 295–305.

[46]See Bradfor Hinze, "The controversies of post-conciliar theology," *A Church Reborn*, 39.

[47]See the Apostolic Visitation Website at http://www.apostolicvisitation.org/en/about/sistermaryclare.html; see also Thomas Fox, "Women religious visitations to begin in April," *NCR* (January 12, 2010); Joan Chittister, "Apostolic Visitation: Why 'Bother? Why be Bothered?'" *NCR* (June 23, 2010).

[48]The CDF was previously known as the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition. For an official copy, see "Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious" (http://www.usccb.org/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&pageid=55544). See also "LCWR Statement from Presidency on the CDF Doctrinal Assessment" (http://lcwr.org/media/lcwr-statement-presidency-cdf-doctrinal-assessment); Kim Lawton, "Legacy of Vatican II at heart of dispute between Vatican, US Nuns," *Religion News Service* (August 7, 2012). Numerous articles have been published, too many to record here.

[49] More recently, Benedict XVI's *Summorum Pontificum* (July 7, 2007), his *motu proprio* concerning the liturgy, has revived interest in the destiny of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* specifically and, more generally, the role of Vatican II in the theological orientation of Benedict's pontificate …. Starting in 2005, and not only through the *motu proprio* of July 2007, the pontificate of Benedict XVI has put considerable effort into emphasizing the need for a "reform of the liturgical reform." (Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* [Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2012], 205)

many more. We live in a very critical time for the reception of Vatican II, but this would require another paper.[50]

What might be women's role in the Church of the future?

Women in the Church of the Future

I cannot pretend to have insight into what the future might bring, but I have been profoundly inspired by the response of the leadership of the LCWR in the face of a very deep crisis in the lives of the eighty percent of religious women's congregations who are represented by the LCWR. So I bring this paper to a conclusion on a note of hope in the midst of profound crisis. In her presidential address at the 2012 LCWR Assembly, Franciscan Sister Patricia Farrell spoke of living in a "time of crisis," and she added "that is a very hopeful place to be," as transformation is preceded by crisis.[51] She cautions not to make too much of the doctrinal assessment as "it is not the first time that a form of religious life has collided with the institutional Church. Nor will it be the last …. There is an inherent existential tension between the complementary roles of hierarchy and religious which is not likely to change."[52]

Pat Farrell goes on to suggest six ways to navigate the shifts for each of which she provides commentary: 1) through contemplation, 2) with a prophetic voice, 3) through solidarity with the marginalized, 4) through community, 5) non-violently, and 6) by living in joyful hope "in the face of all evidence to the contrary." She believes that "God is calling to us from the future … we are being readied for a

---

See Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in I* Sacrosanctum Concilium (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012).

[50]See Orsy, *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates.*

[51]Patricia Farrell, "Navigating the Shifts," Presidential Address at the LCWR Assembly (August 10, 2012), 1. Downloaded from the NCR website (accessed August 11, 2012).

[52]Farrell, "Navigating the Shifts," 1, 2.

fresh inbreaking of the Reign of God." And she finally concludes her presidential address, with an expression, originally in Spanish, from the days of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile: "They can crush a few flowers but they can't hold back the springtime."[53]

[53]Farrell, "Navigating the Shifts," 3, 12.