

# Introduction

Just yesterday, Anne Buening, a recent graduate of Washington Theological Union, called to share the good news that Cardinal Keeler had appointed her Pastoral Life Director of St. Clement I Parish in Landsdowne, Maryland. “I am the first married lay woman to be appointed to such a position in our diocese,” she added excitedly, “and I want to thank the faculty at the Union for believing in me and awakening me to the possibility that my theological education might one day lead to responsibility for pastoring a parish.” Another graduate, Pat Loughlin, mother of five adult children, is living out her missionary call as pastoral associate in a small Catholic community in rural Mississippi. Such new and inspiring vocational stories multiply as we look around the United States where now 82 percent of lay ecclesial ministers are women.

Women’s ministries go well beyond the parish boundaries to those on the margins of Church and society; they bring their gifts to the work of peace and justice, to education, health care, institutional leadership, and ministry among the most deprived. Despite the marginalization of their voices and the continued struggle to find a place in official ministry, our authors show that women have always been active in the Church, bringing imagination, dedication, and creativity to the living of the gospel in every age.

In our first essay, Linda M. Maloney, herself a transitional deacon in the Episcopal Church, explores various categories of ministry open to women in the Church up to the sixth century. Drawing on the inscriptional and literary evidence analyzed in the works of Ute E. Eisen and Bernadette J. Brotten, she offers a compelling picture of women who were recognized as teachers, stewards, enrolled widows, apostles, and prophets. In addition, she calls into question the assertion that women “never have been” presbyters, indicating that some were ordained as deacons, presbyters, and possibly even as bishops. Moving to the present day, Mary Christine Fellerhoff, past executive director of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and currently Congregational leader, offers a thoughtful look at the changing ministry of women religious over the past forty years. She traces the move from institutional ministry to more individual ministry within the

broad categories of education, healthcare, spirituality and pastoral work, while also indicating a new emphasis on direct service, advocacy, systemic change, and collaborative ministry.

That there is no dearth of models of pioneering, faithful, creative, and collaborative ministry is ably demonstrated in our next two essays, both co-authored by women and men. Robert Ellsberg, Elena Malits, and Patsy Crowley combine their efforts in presenting profiles of three contemporary American Catholic women. Mention of the Catholic Worker, St. Mary's School of Theology, and the Christian Family Movement, immediately evoke the names of Dorothy Day, Sister Madeleva, and Patty Crowley. We find in their stories both inspiration and invitation to simply begin where we are, with the means at hand, to live out our faith in response to the urgent needs around us. The exercise of collaborative, gender inclusive ministry as sign of the church's *communio* is the topic explored by Dianne Bergant, C.S.A., Judith Logue, and Robert Wheeler. Their case study approach will be helpful to other ministers who seek to balance marriage and family life with ministry; their reflection on personal experience of collaboration may be an encouragement to other teams to engage in a similar process of theological reflection.

In addition to our thematic essays, there are three essays which address concerns of significant pastoral import. Scripture scholar, Frank Matera, offers profound insight as well as practical help to those who, like Paul, follow a "call" to preach the gospel in a way that allows hearers to "see the glory of God on the face of the crucified Christ." Rose Zuzworsky explores the challenge of locating God in urban spaces as an ecological and theological concern, appealing for an inclusive approach to ecological problems. Such an approach is enhanced, she argues, by a deep empathy for the particular place in which we live, a care of our surroundings, and a healthy respect for diversity. *New Theology Review's* essay contest allows us each year to recognize new voices in theological reflection on ministry. At the suggestion of our judges, we are happy to publish Terrance Klein's essay on imaging Easter faith. He develops the concept of *kairos* to illustrate the single moment of decision, the "snap of grace," which is Easter faith, suggesting that ministers use it as an alternative or complementary approach to faith as a journey, in attempting to answer the question, "Do I believe?"

Following these articles are our regular feature columns: William Barbieri offers a timely reflection on the ethics of war in light of evolving Catholic social teaching and changing historical conditions; the prospect of war on Iraq occasions a reassessment of just war reasoning and nonviolent resistance. Mary Frohlich, R.S.C.J., surveys recent books on spirituality that may benefit both ministers and educators. She offers a succinct presentation of three categories of books: introductions to spiritual living; multi-author anthologies that survey current developments in the field; and anthologies which open up the historical riches of Christianity. The selection is particularly geared to needs encountered

in pastoral ministry today. Jerome Hall reminds us of what it means to celebrate liturgy according to the mind of the Church, suggesting possible areas for pastoral formation and ongoing catechesis in light of the new *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. Several book reviews round out this spring issue of the journal. We trust you will find much in these pages to interest you.

We warmly encourage you to consider entering the NTR essay contest, details of which may be found in the November 2002 issue. Finally, we are privileged to welcome our new panel of judges who will choose the winners of the theological reflection essay contest for the next three years: Herbert Anderson, Dianne Bergant, C.S.A., and John Welch, O.Carm.

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**Coming in August:**

*Religions of the Book*