

REGIONAL CONTACTS

State of Michigan President

Sr. Beth Rindler
bethrin@prodigy.net
313-891-2192

Detroit

Eileen Burns
eb120246@sbcglobal.net
(586) 751-8592

Grand Rapids

Joe Walker
joewalker@iserv.net
616-285-7995

Lansing

Joe Droste
Drosteja@yahoo.com
(517) 485-7871

Kalamazoo

Kim Franke,
kimfranke4057@hotmail.com
Jim Rose, jrose@juno.com
(269) 544-2486

Saginaw

Ron & Rosemary Moon
roseron@sbcglobal.net
(989) 781-0921

Washtenaw

Arnie Messing
arniemessing@comcast.net
(810) 227-4609

LAY SYNODS

“All the armies in the world cannot stop an idea that has come of age”. I wish I could remember who said that. Are LAY SYNODS coming of age? Perhaps. Church Watch reports in the July-August issue that Lay Synods are catching on. Upstate New York is looking at 2006 for an initial synod gathering. The Fellowship of Southern Illinois Laity (FOSIL) has held six very successful synod gatherings in the last three years. CTA of Michigan is planning such a gathering for its State Conference this year, November 19th.

What is a Lay Synod? Why now? What purpose/s can it serve? Should every catholic diocese have a lay synod? How is such a synod formed? These and many other questions will be addressed at our State Conference. Start making plans now to attend.

Sr. Kate Kuentler will be our presenter. Who is Sr. Kate? The following description should help. It is only a small part of her two-page resume. Sr. Kate has been a member of the American Province of the International Congregation of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. She has a Licentiate in Canon Law (Summa cum Laude) and a Doctorate in Canon Law (Magna cum Laude) from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome. She has additional degrees of Bachelor of Science in Education from St. Joseph/Calumet College in Whiting, Indiana and a Master of Arts in Religious Education From Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Enough! We believe you have the credentials to be our main speaker for the day, Sr. Kate. We look forward to your presentation.

Perhaps what's more important for us to know about her is that as a JUDGE she functions on the same level as Bishop Wilton Gregory, and in fact, has advised him on occasions. She worked in the Diocese of Belleville, Illinois when he was the Bishop of that diocese.

I'm sure we all recall Bishop Wilton Gregory vividly when he chaired the hearings on the sex abuse scandal in his role as President of the US Catholic Bishops. The whole world was watching, so to speak, as some 300 US Catholic Bishops were brought to attention and forced to publicly and quietly listen to numerous tragic stories of abuse by priests.

Sr. Kate, I mean, her honor Judge Kate, and Bishop Gregory are close associates. She should bring us some interesting stories. “People of God Responding to the Spirit, Servant Leadership” is the title of a talk given to Lay

Synods in the past. That gives us a clue to what to expect and may even begin to suggest some answers to the questions above. Stay tuned for more detail in follow up mailings, especially to learn where the conference will be held. We're still working on a place. Just know the plans are coming together for a very informative and spiritually challenging conference, 2005.

SAGINAW BRANCH NEWS

The Saginaw people, like most of the rest of the state, have been cooking in the hottest summer in memory. We did have a very nice service in honor of Mary Magdalen on Sunday, July 31st in the evening. The Catholic Weekly and Saginaw News gave us coverage the day before, and we had about 50 people attend.

We haven't given up on inviting our new bishop to meet with us, although he hasn't responded to us as yet. He has, however, met with the Blue Army and CUFF folks. We'll keep trying, since he promised to be open. The problem maybe is he didn't explain to whom he would be open and listen.

We hope to have a group attend the National CTA Conference the first weekend in November. We will resume our regular monthly meetings in September.

METRO DETROIT

CTA-Metro Detroit believes in education, prayer and Gospel action. The next few month's activities are directed to these beliefs. We will focus on how to reach more members in our large area. A Planning Committee will help roll out Book Club discussion groups.

Our CTA-Metro Detroit member list will be organized by geographical areas to facilitate the discussion of a soon-to-be-named (i.e., we haven't picked it yet ☺). CTA-Metro Detroit will meet in small groups to discuss the book, and every few chapters will meet as the entire group, followed by some communal prayer. There is a movement underfoot to bring a well known author to the area. Aren't you excited!!

We will also be updating our mailing list. We want to ensure that we have accurate information for anyone who wants to receive the newsletter and other communications.

Stand tall, CTA-Metro Detroit! We were wonderfully represented in Oak Ridge, TN at the 60th Anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One of our members,

Judy Burkhardt, was arrested, and another member, Ron Dale, is her "sponsor" or "advocate" - staying in Oak Ridge until her release.

I need to say a personal word of thanks to Beth Rindler and Julia Archer. They have worked unending hours to ensure a smooth transition of our local chapter. Their commitment to CTA is unwavering. You are simply the best, ladies. Thank you.

If you want a voice at a Planning Committee meeting but don't have time to attend, feel free to contact Beth Rindler, Eileen Burns or Julia Archer. This is YOUR organization.

Eileen Burns

Metro Detroit Chairperson.

OOPS!!!

Whenever an editor sends material to a printer meant for a large readership, the editor should have a second person check the copy before it goes to the printer. Before volunteers begin preparing the material for a large mailing they should check the pieces for errors.



In the recent mailing of the dues/membership request neither of the above occurred. Instead of a return envelope asking for \$20 dues (which traditionally is sent in the Spring) the return envelope included the appeal information for larger amounts (which traditionally is sent in the Fall).

For those of you who have been generous in your response, your donation has been applied to your dues/membership and the remainder to the appeal. For those who haven't yet responded we would welcome \$20 for a single person or \$35 dues for a household.

Sister Joan D. Chittister

From The Thinkers: A life dedicated to her faith,

and to questioning its policies

By Mark Roth, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

When Sister Joan Chittister was 7 years old, she raced home from school one day, bursting to tell her mother what she had learned from her teacher.

She ran, Chittister recalled, because she wanted to get home before her stepfather, who was Presbyterian.

The nun had taught her that day that only Catholics go to heaven. When her mother calmly asked her what she thought of that, she said, "I think it's wrong."

"Why'?" her mother asked.

"Because Sister doesn't know Daddy," Joan replied.

"And then my mother said, 'And what did you say, Joan?' and I hung my head. I said, 'I didn't say anything.' I was so ashamed of my self.

"My mother put her arms around me and she said, 'I'm very proud of you, darling. That's very wise. When you grow up, you can tell Sister later.'"

You might say Sister Joan Chittister has been doing that ever since.

Chittister, 69, is entering her sixth decade as a Benedictine nun, based in Erie. Known worldwide as a speaker and writer, she has just authored her 32nd book, "The Way We Were: A Story of Conversion and Renewal, about the changes the Benedictine sisters have gone through since Vatican II.

Her 2004 book, "Called to Question: A Spiritual Memoir," last month won an award from the Catholic Press Association as the year's best hardcover book on spirituality.

The struggle to resist.

In that volume, Chittister wrote at one point about the struggle she has faced living in a church whose official policies she often disagrees with.

Best known for her belief that the Roman Catholic Church should be open to women's ordination, Chittister wrote:

"There is no doubt that women need to tell their stories. But at the same time, there comes a time when you are too tired of trying to be heard in a place like the church where no one wants to hear you. Then, you walk out of it, past it, beyond it. And often, invisibly. They think you're still there, but your heart is long gone and your spirit is free. I know."

None of which means that Chittister plans to formally leave the church or to violate its rules against ordaining women. As she repeats the answer she has often given, "I have always broached the question; I have never breached the discipline."

But the way she has broached the question has landed her in hot water more than once.

In 2001, when she was the keynote speaker at the National Catholic Education Association, the Rev. Kris Stubna, who was then secretary of education in the Pittsburgh diocese, said the diocese would not subsidize or give continuing education credits to any Catholic teachers who attended.

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KALAMAZOO BRANCH NEWS

Jim Rose and Kim Franke, CTA members from Kansas and now residents in Kalamazoo, are eager to organize the CTA members in the area. For further details, call them at 269-544-2486 or write jrose@juno.com.

CTA-MI is grateful to Kim for accepting the position of treasurer in the organization upon the resignation of Joe Orlando, the former treasurer.

By Beth Rindler, SFP

Joan D. Chittister

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And last year, she spoke at a conference on women's ordination in Dublin, Ireland, despite attempts by the Vatican to prohibit her appearance.

After Vatican officials ordered Chittister's superior, Prioress Christine Vladimiroff, to bar Chittister from speaking, Vladimiroff met with the sisters in Erie and all but one of them voted to oppose the ban. Chittister delivered her address, and the Vatican backed away from its threat of a "just penalty."

Sitting in the lounge of a home in which her office is located near the Lake Erie waterfront, Chittister said she would like to be known for her advocacy for the world's poor and her pursuit of peacemaking. But like it or not, as the Roman Catholic Church struggles to find enough clergy to serve its parishioners, the issue of women's ordination, not to mention married priests, won't go away. Neither will her uncomfortable questions.

"I have simply argued for years that if a woman is not half a person, if she is really a full person, if her baptism is really as authentic as anyone else's baptism, and her call to discipleship is as deep as anyone else's, then don't we have to discuss the theological implications of this as a church?"

"Now, I have said I don't see any reason at this stage to deny women ordination. But the real question is, I fear that if we don't study this as a church, to the point where the next step is obvious to everyone, no matter how painful, it will affect the church deeply."

She believes in change.

To those who argue that God's revelation through the church calls for priests to be men, she asks some more questions.

"Is everything we were ever to know about religion, about faith... did we know all that in the year 3 A.D.? Did we ever learn anything about it since?"

"Now it seems to me that we have. For instance, we learned, thanks to the Protestants, that people could

read the Bible for themselves and not lose their souls.

"We learned that you could hold a telescope and it could tell you more about the cosmos than the Book of Genesis did.

"We also learned that you could charge interest for the use of money which we once considered a mortal sin and still be considered a moral people..."

"We even learned you could have black skin and be a full human being, and therefore we had to stop segregating our churches, our schools and our society."

So it seems quite possible to her that all the answers about women and the priesthood are not in yet.

Joan Chittister is not the only nun who has spoken out on women's ordination and other controversial issues. But she has been doing it longer than many others, and her life experiences have taught her from the beginning what it means to be different.

Her father died when she was 3, and when her mother married a Protestant, she became the only girl in her Catholic school "whose parents weren't both Catholic."

Today, when Catholics are "just as likely to come home married to Hindus or Muslims as Lutherans," she says, it is hard for younger people to imagine the sense of scandal that a Catholic-Protestant marriage once caused. These tensions "broadened me and deepened me," she recalled.

"There were a lot of things as a little girl that I had to think through."

She entered the convent at the age of 16, and almost immediately faced her next test.

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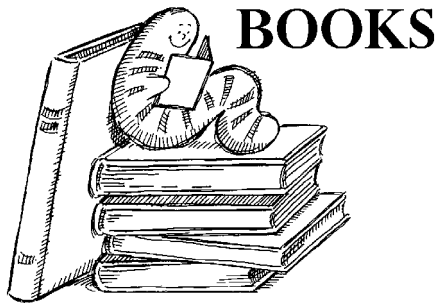
Please, let us know your

email address so we can keep you informed of late breaking news between newsletters.

Send email addresses to:
eb120246@sbcglobal.net.



CTA MICHIGAN PROMISES NO OTHER USE WILL BE MADE OF THE LIST.



DANGEROUS TALK:

A Review by Rosalie Riegle

Good Catholic Girls: How Women are Leading the Fight to Change the Church by Angela Bonavoglia (NY: Regan Books, 2005)

Strong women are dangerous to the Roman Catholic hierarchy, no doubt about it! Why? Because they speak out and act out in countless ways, challenging the Church they love to become the Church it can be. Angela Bonavoglia, a self-described “itinerant Catholic,” has interviewed many of these change-makers, listened to their “dangerous talk,” recorded their stories of success and failure. The result is this fascinating compendium, well-indexed, delightfully conversational, and chock full of wonderful stories.

You’ll hear my friend Barbara Blaine, a victim of clergy abuse, who founded the now-influential SNAP (Survivor’s Network of those Abused by Priests). Of course there are stories of Joan Chittester and her order, the Erie Benedictines, who defied the Pope and won. As Linda Pieczynski of Call to Action said, “The Vatican blinked. It just shows you what can happen with solidarity.”

Other women speak of similar solidarity—reshaping theology through their work and courage in signing the Madeleva Manifesto, which urges feminist theologians to join together for a “far-reaching transformation in church and society” and asked all of us to protest and resist all structures that “treat women and men as less than fully human.”

One chapter focuses on abortion, clearly a hot-button issue among progressive Catholics. We hear of efforts to force Network to take a strong-pro-life stance, one which would weaken their good work in Washington on behalf of the poor. Bonavoglia asks why the greatest sin of the 21st century Catholic Church “is not nuclear proliferation or ethnic cleansing, not prisoner torture or land mines, not hunger or homelessness, rape or murder, but ending a pregnancy, even at the zygote stage?”

Dangerous talk, hard-hitting talk, truthful talk about rewriting church history, mandatory celibacy, gender sexual ethics, and women’s ordination, with an interesting interview with Mary Ramerman, ordained in Rochester by Old Catholic Bishop Peter Hickman and the community of the faithful of Spiritus Christi.

Yes, “good Catholic girls” are in the vanguard of change, and this riveting book tells their stories well. Read it and then go and do thou likewise!

NOTE: The book is available at a 45 % discounted price. The market price is \$25.95. Your price is \$14.30 plus postage if sent via mail. Contact Sister Beth Rindler, SFP at 313-891-2192 or bethrin@prodigy.net.



Joan D. Chittister

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Overcoming polio

“I entered the Benedictines Sept. 8,” she said. “I got polio Oct. 15.”

Her case was severe enough to paralyze an arm and a leg and put her in an iron lung for months. It took her four years to recover, and there was a question of whether she would be able to continue her religious vocation.

From that ordeal, she learned endurance and a sense of balance. Those who recover from polio know, she said, that they must always use their limbs but never too much.

Chittister also realized from that experience that ‘you can make a wonderful life out of all the pieces you are given. There is no magic set of pieces for a good life or a happy life. You can choose how you deal with the circumstances of your life.’”

There were other painful lessons along the way: her mother, a brilliant woman who Chittister believes could have been a doctor in another time and place, suffered from progressive Alzheimer’s disease the last 28 years of her life; her stepfather had a lifelong drinking problem, and its physical toll contributed to his death after an auto accident several years ago.

But none of these ordeals, she said, ever affected her faith and that has much to do with her understanding of who God is.

“I’ve always been very clear about the fact that God is God, and humans are human.

“Let me give what seems to be a very remote example. I’ve been arguing for 20 years that to pray to God to eliminate nuclear weapons, if what we’re praying for is a magic act by God, that is some sort of blasphemy. “We made nuclear weapons, and we can eliminate them when we decide to. This was not an act of God.”

She knows that some people cannot accept a God who can’t or won’t fix the overwhelming problems that exist in the world. Getting

beyond that view is a matter of spiritual growth, she believes.

“When your spiritual life and your faith life are in their infancy, God is a lollipop God. Heaven is Disneyland, and the divine is a Fourth of July magic act. But as you grow, you realize that that wasn’t a picture of God it was a picture of you, and of your needs. “We’re always trying to whittle God down to size, because we can’t think about anything bigger than we are.”

Her belief in the essential mystery of God, and of not knowing the end of the story, has strengthened her on her sometimes bumpy journey in the Catholic Church, Chittister said. But she feels the pain of seeing what the church is doing to many faithful women.

“Every time I speak to a group, afterward people flow up to the dais, basically women, and I have now heard the phrase ‘I was raised Catholic’ so many times it breaks my heart. “All the surveys indicate that well over 50 percent of the church supports a married priesthood and the ordination of women, for instance. So what you have here is a body approaching critical mass. And if the church ceases to grow, if it refuses to deal with these questions, the church will become a cult, not a church.”

When Catholic women ask her what they should do, she has this characteristic advice:

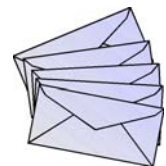
“I always tell them, if you’re going to leave, don’t leave quietly. And if you’re going to stay, don’t stay quietly.”

Mark Roth can be reached at mroth@post-gazette.com or at 412-263-1130

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HELP US REACH YOU

Please make sure your newsletter is properly addressed. Let us know if you are changing addresses. If you alternate summer and winter addresses, let us know that and we can alternate our mailings.



Send changes to

CTA of Michigan
P.O. Box 12161
Hamtramck, Michigan, 48212

It's Nomination Time

Attention members!

In order to comply with our bylaws, we must hold yearly elections of officers. This year the offices of President and Secretary must be filled. Profiles for these positions are below. You may nominate yourself or another paid member of Michigan CTA.

Please fill in the name of your candidate and return the ballots to the Nominating Committee no later than September 30th. We will contact the people to determine their willingness to accept the nominations to the positions. Voting will be by mailed ballots of paid members.

Thank you, Nominating Committee, Julia Ann Archer and Marianne Botorowicz.

Please return your ballots to CTA of Michigan
PO Box 12161
Hamtramck, MI 48212-2764

Position Profiles

The Mission of Call to Action of Michigan is to be a prophetic voice for systemic change toward freedom, justice and inclusivity within the Catholic Church.

Elected officers will serve for a term of 2 years and may be reelected to the same office for 3 consecutive terms.

Duties of the President: The President will provide focus and direction to CTA of Michigan. The President will chair all board meetings and general meetings. The President will work with local branches and will represent CTA of Michigan at National meetings. The president will have input to the newsletter and will assist in the preparation of the budget and all legal documents. The President will be the primary contact for the media. The President will prepare press releases, in consultation with the Executive Board.

Duties of the Secretary: The Secretary will be responsible for keeping written records of CTA of Michigan meetings. The Secretary will oversee the production and distribution of the Newsletter and will prepare correspondence with the membership. The Secretary may appoint individuals to assist in the production and distribution of the Newsletter, but remains responsible for the Newsletter.

Ballot Form

Position: President

Nominee _____

Address _____

City/Zip _____

Phone # _____

E-mail _____

Nominated by: _____

Phone #

E-mail

Position: Secretary

Nominee _____

Address _____

City/Zip: _____

Phone # _____

Email _____

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Religion, Money, Politics:
*What's God got to do
with it?*

2005 NATIONAL CONFERENCE
will take place in Milwaukee, WI -
November 4 - 6.

Register now to receive your discount!

**For online registration and all conference
details go to www.cta-usa.org.**

Call To Action's annual national conference is a celebration of over 3,000 people creating "the church they want to be." Presentations focus around the themes of spirituality, church reform, and peace & justice. The conference liturgy and a variety of daily prayers are often a highlight.

THE ELEPHANTS*

will be hosting

Fr. Richard McBrien,

former Dean of School of
Theology at Notre Dame

Monday, October 10, 2005

at Sacred Heart Church, 1000 Eliot (I-75 @ Mack), Detroit,
1 - 3 PM. Fr. McBrien will address "*Critical Issues Facing
the Church.*" Lunch offered beforehand for those who wish it.

Please send a note to P.O. Box 644, Farmington, MI 48332 if
you would like to attend and/or participate in lunch.

The next general meeting of the Elephants will be September
12, 2005 at St. Ives, 29350 Lahser Road (@ 12 Mile Road),
Southfield, MI at 12:30 PM

*The Elephants are an organization of priests of the Archdiocese of
Detroit strongly supported by participating laity, who seek renewal
of the Church of Detroit.

