

REIMAGINING THE FRAMEWORK:
THE LEGACIES OF THREE GENERATIONS OF CATHOLIC WOMEN AND THE
IMPLICATIONS FOR MODERN DAY CATHOLICS OF THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

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This work explores the stories of five women. Seemingly unconnected yet at once completely interwoven because of the nature of the Church community, these five women represent three successive generations. Through her tenacity and her love of education, Sister Julia McGroarty created a place for young Catholic women to pursue undergraduate work at the turn of the 20th century. Five decades later, Sister Madeleva Wolff would open access to graduate theological study to both women religious and the laity. During the same years, Sister Kathryn Sullivan pursued what formal theological education she could, eventually earning unanimous election to the Catholic Biblical Association. Shortly thereafter, Doctor Mary Daly and Sister Mary Ann Hinsdale joined the effort to open educational access to women through their pursuit of graduate degrees.

The legacies of these five women demonstrate that positive change within the Catholic Church need not flow down from the hierarchy and offer practical ways for modern-day US Catholics to become changemakers within their own communities.

Dedicated to the Joannas, old and new.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At its very heart, education should be inclusive. Over the last century and a half, women in the United States Catholic Church have worked to ensure that fellow women could experience inclusive education. Through the dedication of these women, the women who came after them were able to more fully participate in education from college to graduate theology programs. Education in this sense served less as a means to an end in and of itself but rather as a means of participating in and being Church. Education became a way to throw open those doors of the community and allowed more and more people to step through them.

Here follows the stories of five women in particular. Seemingly unconnected yet at once completely interwoven because of the nature of the Church community, these five women represent three successive generations. Through her tenacity and her love of education, Sister Julia McGroarty created a place for young Catholic women to pursue undergraduate work at the turn of the 20th century. Five decades later, Sister Madeleva Wolff would open access to graduate theological study to both women religious and the laity. During the same years, Sister Kathryn Sullivan pursued what formal theological education she could, eventually earning unanimous election to the Catholic Biblical Association. Shortly thereafter, Doctor Mary Daly and Sister Mary Ann Hinsdale joined the effort to open educational access to women through their pursuit of graduate degrees.

The legacies of these five women demonstrate that positive change within the Catholic Church need not flow down from the hierarchy. Instead, these changes can come from tactical leadership and solutions offered with the blessing of Church authority.

The history of women's admittance to the realms of graduate theological education is not yet complete. From an ecclesiological perspective, many still feel the same the same barriers to access that women did just decades ago, both within and outside of education. Women, too, also complain of ongoing discrimination. Much work remains in the pursuit of a Catholic community that models Christ's own demonstration of passionate inclusion. The three generations of women portrayed here establish a legacy of positive changemaking as part of the larger Catholic community and offer modern US Catholics practical ways to leave a lasting impact on the Church.

CHAPTER II

A FIRST GENERATION OF WOMEN: THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME DE NAMUR AND THEIR SISTER JULIA MCGROARTY

Beginnings

Marie Rose Julie Billiard was born on July 12, 1751. Her father ran a general store in Cuvilly, France. When she was a small child, thieves attacked the store and traumatized her. Perhaps because of the shocking nature of the attack, she spent the next 22 years of her life paralyzed. Despite her inability to walk and her difficulty speaking, she provided a welcoming environment to neighbors and friends, offering spiritual direction and guidance. She felt called to start a community of Sisters who could serve and help educate the poor. Helped by her friend and the eventual cofoundress of the order, Françoise Blin de Bourdon, Julie began the Sisters of Notre Dame in Amiens, France.

Françoise had been a French noblewoman at the court of King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. During the start of the French Revolution, Françoise found herself imprisoned and waiting execution by guillotine. Freed by Maximilien Robespierre, she left and subsequently founded the Sisters of Notre Dame with Julie Billiard. She was fascinated with Julie's intimate relationship with God. On February 2, 1804, she took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience along with Julie and Catherine Duchâtel. The

three became the first Sisters of Notre Dame.

Later, a priest who served the community prayed a novena to the Sacred Heart with Sister Julie. Afterward, he commanded her to rise and walk, and for the first time in 22 years, she did. She began to travel, spreading the gospel and her characteristic slogan “how good is the good God” wherever she went. The intention of her order was to serve young girls in poverty through education. The Sisters of Notre Dame offered free, poor schools, which were supported by day schools and academies for girls. Eventually, Julie chose to move the motherhouse to Namur, Belgium after expulsion from Amiens by the Bishop. Most of her Sisters followed her, including her co-foundress and friend Françoise.¹

Arrival in the United States and a Short History

A few decades later, in 1840, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur answered Bishop Purcell’s request that they begin educational work in Cincinnati, Ohio. Reverend Mother Ignatius, the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Notre Dame, sent eight Sisters from Namur, Belgium to open a convent and schools for the children of Cincinnati. Led by Sister Superior Louis de Gonzague, the Sisters journeyed across the ocean for six weeks and then from New York to Cincinnati for two additional weeks. They arrived just in time for the feast of All Saints. About one month later, they opened two schools. The first was an academy; the second a school for the poor. Priests and bishops from other

¹ The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, “Our History.”

dioceses, impressed by the work done by the Sisters, asked them to expand into their local areas. In 1844, a group of Sisters traveled from Namur around Cape Horn to reach California. A few years later, Sisters journeyed north from Cincinnati to Dayton. There, with no welcome and little food, they once again opened a school. Many years later, after having established a relationship with those living in Dayton, the Sisters began teaching at the University of Dayton. This was in large part due to their relationship with the Marianist Brothers.

In the United States, the influence of the Sisters of Notre Dame reached beyond Ohio and California. In 1849, the Sisters opened a convent and school in Boston. In 1856, the Sisters journeyed to Philadelphia; in 1876, they opened a convent in Washington, D.C. Meanwhile, the Sisters' original convent in Cincinnati became untenable. Many new Sisters had joined the order. Sister Louise, serving as Superior, saw fit to purchase land outside of the city in a town called Reading. There they established Mount Notre Dame High School, which remains an all-girls high school to this day.² Susan McGroarty, the young girl who would grow up to become Sister Superior Julia, began her service to the Order just outside of Reading, eventually returning to serve as Provincial Superior.

The events set in motion by the Archbishop's call for the Sisters of Notre Dame to come to the United States to teach in his diocese would lead to previously unimaginable Catholic and theological educational advancements for both women and men as the 20th

² For a more detailed look at the Sisters' early time in the United States, see "The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in the United States 1840-1940," from the International Federation of the Notre Dame de Namur Alumnae Associations.

century marched toward the 21st. Where once women were denied entrance into programs based solely on their sex, they now enjoy access to the breadth of Catholic higher education, serving as intellectual giants on faculties across America.³ Sister Julia McGroarty represents the first generation to set educational access, and thus greater access to being and doing Church, in motion.

Susan McGroarty and Her Journey to Orders

Sister Julia McGroarty was born on February 13, 1827 in Inver, Ireland to a family of four and given the name Susan. Her parents, Catherine and Neil, gifted her with her grandmother's name. Her siblings were Patrick and Mary. A few years later, her brother Stephen arrived to be followed by her sister Frances. Susan's father Neil was a farmer in his youth. In his later years, he worked as a businessman in Donegal. He heard about favorable living conditions in the United States and decided to move his family overseas. In 1831, the McGroartys boarded a ship bound for Canada, hoping for a quick journey of six weeks. Rough seas and false calculations on the part of the captain stretched the voyage to 12 weeks. Despite the difficult circumstances, they continued their journey to Cincinnati, Ohio by way of steamboat and later by wagon. Cincinnati was a young city, still vibrant and growing. About twenty-five thousand people lived there. Catholics were a minority at the time, though the city was an episcopal see with a seminary, Catholic schools, and a newspaper entitled *The Catholic Telegraph*.

³ Note that laymen were also denied access to graduate theology programs. As the focus of this paper is the trajectory of women, less attention will be paid to this topic.

The McGroartys were reunited with family in the area, and Neil decided to buy a farm. He called on his earlier experience with farming in Ireland to build a living farming. He later expanded to railroad and turnpike construction. During this time, the McGroarty family grew to include ten children. Susan began attending private school with her sister Mary, though she was such a challenge in the classroom that she was soon sent to a different school taught by Religious. Sister Helen Louise relayed young Susie's antics in her biography *Sister Julia (Susan McGroarty) Sister of Notre Dame de Namur*. Susie had a penchant for danger. Once, she jumped atop an unbroken colt that, startled, immediately galloped away with her. She came back a few minutes later with windblown cheeks and tangled hair, laughing, and exclaimed, "I knew I could conquer him."⁴ Her fearlessness resulted in a broken arm, a broken leg, and a lost tooth.

Despite some of the difficulties her confidence posed, she was well loved. Her lively, dark eyes were said to be her best feature, and as she grew, she continued to possess a vibrant and vivacious personality. Susie continued to attend school taught by Religious. Despite her daily attendance, she still could not read by the age of eleven. Susie's excellent memory had helped hide her difficulty with reading, and ironically, despite all she would do for education, she had no love for it as a child. She remained unconcerned with her class standing and did not focus much effort on her studies. Her relatively uncomplicated childhood would soon meet unanticipated challenges, however. In 1838, Susie's father Neil died of pneumonia. Her mother Catherine remained to care for their ten children, and Susie met grief face-to-face.

⁴ Sister Helen Louise, *Sister Julia*, 10.

Two years later, in 1840, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur arrived in Cincinnati. Eight years prior, Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati had sent a letter to Mother Ignatius, Mother Superior of the Sisters, to request they come to his diocese. Years later, Sister Superior Louise, commemorated his offer in a Christmas letter:

we pray that we may enjoy the happiness of seeing You for many years in our beloved diocese & especially in our Queen City where you received us with so much tenderness twenty two years ago, which time elapsed proving You the best of Fathers. I do not doubt but our Dear Mother Ignatius rejoices now in Heaven for having had the happiness of corresponding to your request thus finding a large field wherein to send her daughters to work at the instruction of youth, so to accomplish the end of our Institute. Daily we thank God for this favor, we feel [sic] happy under your protection, and trust so to act as never to cause You any regret for having admitted us.⁵

Recall that it was Sister Louise herself who had led the group of eight sisters from Namur, Belgium to the United States of America.

The day after their arrival in Cincinnati, the Sisters attended All Saints' Day mass at the Cathedral. They had traveled in plain, French clothes to avoid any possible discrimination based on their religious status. Susie McGroarty also attended mass that day and was apparently wide-eyed at the plain clothes these new "French ladies" wore.⁶ Soon, she began to attend school taught by the Sisters of Notre Dame. Her conduct improved, and she learned to read. She finished her schooling but not before deciding on a previously unopened path: that of a Sister of Notre Dame. On New Year's Day of 1845, she entered the Sixth Street Convent in Cincinnati and became a postulant.

⁵ Sister Louise, Letter to Archbishop Purcell, December 31, 1862.

⁶ Sister Helen Louise, *Sister Julia*, 16.

Susan's cheerful disposition remained as she took on the duties of a postulant. Those outside the convent walls were perplexed by the choice she had made. Sister Superior Louise noted this in a letter sent to the Motherhouse in Namur:

On New Year's day, the niece of our physician entered the postulate. Her coming has caused a great sensation in the city, as she is known to be of a very lively disposition, and the world cannot understand how she could decide to immure herself in a convent. Our boarders, who see how happy and contented she is, are struck with this example.⁷

Even as a postulant, Susan's demeanor made an impact on the Sisters. In her biography on Susan, Sister Helen writes that despite her pleasant disposition, Susan did encounter some difficulties in adapting to convent life. With time, she obediently learned to set aside some of her more childish impulses, like running down the stairs and complaining about sharing. Through attentive listening and the patient guidance of her Sisters, Susan began to shed the marks of the world.

Susan lived among the Sisters as a postulant for one year. One other young woman had joined the community that year, as well. On April 25, 1846, Susan and her fellow postulant celebrated the ceremony of the "clothing" with their community.⁸ The ceremony itself was traditionally simple; only the community attended. Susan received her white veil, as well as a cross and a rosary. She kissed the cross as a symbol that she would take it up and follow Christ. The strange French lady she had met years before was the very same Sister Louise who clothed her in her new veil; this was only the start of their strong bond as Sisters.

⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁸ Ibid., 30.

At the ceremony, Susan received her religious name. She had eagerly anticipated what it would be. Crestfallen, she learned it would be Julia, not initially understanding the honor it conferred. Julia was, in fact, the Americanized form of the French Julie. Susan received the name in recognition of the foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame, Saint Julie Billiart, which was actually a great honor. When she learned this, she became determined to be a “worthy bearer of the name, an imitator of the virtues of the Foundress.”⁹ Over the course of her two years as a novice in the convent, her disposition remained, but her demeanor began to gradually show the marks of responsibility and maturity. She spent much of her time in prayer and in study, but she was also assigned to serve as an assistant at the Infant School. This position afforded her the opportunity to teach her youngest sister Nellie, who was five years old at the time.¹⁰

On August 3, 1848, Sister Julia professed her vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. She took on the black veil, as well as a new role as head of the day school. The Sisters ran several schools: a boarding school, a day school, and a free poor school. Sister Julia herself had attended the day school, so she recognized some of the pupils there. During the first few weeks she ran the school, she had a few difficulties with the students because she was still young, but she navigated these challenges with firmness and fairness.

Sister Julia was not without peers in the convent. Sister Alphonse, a young Sister who had come from a wealthy family in Belgium, came to the US in the years before Sister Julia became an SND. The two women became fast friends. Sister Alphonse had a

⁹ Ibid., 32.

¹⁰ Ibid., 32.

position as head of the boarders, so she and Sister Julia would meet to discuss lesson plans, discipline, and classroom needs. Because of their poverty, the Sisters lacked certain resources, though they quickly determined their greatest need was a common teaching method. During their meetings, the two would work out class outlines and brainstorm ways to overcome their supply shortages. Their greatest fascination and amusement came from science experiments. The two would spend hours in the laboratory, working with what they had to create reactions and set up experiments to show their students. One night, while most of the Sisters ate dinner, Sister Alphonse and Sister Julia were working in the lab. An explosion startled those who were at supper; they soon learned that their Sisters had been working out an experiment when combustible material ignited later than expected. Years later, when Sister Alphonse visited Sister Julia at Trinity College, Sister Julia introduced her as, “my oldest and best friend.”¹¹ Despite their physical separation once Sister Alphonse moved to Reading, Ohio to serve as the head of the new boarding school called Mount Notre Dame, the two women remained united by their early antics and shared experiences in teaching.

Outside of Ohio and Sister Julia’s home, there had been Sisters of Notre Dame serving in Boston, Massachusetts since 1849. These Sisters oversaw a girls’ school. Six years later, the Sisters opened a boarding school there at the request of the Bishop of Boston, and Sister Louise determined she could spare six Sisters to teach at the school, the sixth being Sister Julia. Sister Julia remained in Cincinnati after the initial five had left until Sister Louise was able to release her. When Sister Julia left Cincinnati in 1854,

¹¹ Ibid., 41.

she left both her earthly and her Sisterly family for the first time. Her six years spent teaching in Cincinnati had prepared her for a new role as mistress of boarders at the Roxbury boarding school. In her role as mistress of boarders, she acted as mother, confidant, and disciplinarian to the young women who attended the school. The Sisters had acquired ten acres of land, which included woods, fields, and hills. Sister Julia would frequently take her girls on walks as part of her instruction, mothering them and teaching them.

Sister Julia's stay at the Roxbury convent and boarding school lasted six years. Sister Mary Hyacinth, who had been the superior for the convent in Philadelphia, moved to Reading, Ohio to take charge of the boarding school located just outside of Cincinnati, Ohio. This left an opening in Philadelphia that Sister Julia was to fill. Sister Louise had groomed her to take positions of greater and greater responsibility. After Sister Julia's death, a letter from Sister Louise was found. In it, Sister Louise detailed seven pieces of advice, including a note to "have the greatest esteem for all the rules, above all, those of religious modesty and silence."¹² Perhaps Sister Louise already guessed that Sister Julia would take on roles of greater responsibility within the Order, or at least, she felt she should ensure the younger Sister continued to grow and mature in religious life. Sister Julia's personality and demeanor prepared her for leadership in the community. Her years spent teaching and then serving as mistress of boarders had molded her into a multi-faceted and knowledgeable leader.

¹² Ibid., 51.

The Making of a Superior

In 1860, Sister Superior Louise chose Sister Julia to take charge of the Philadelphia Convent. When Sister Julia moved to Philadelphia, the Sisters who already lived there were amid a move from their original convent to a larger one. There was some chaos as they sorted out the things they had accumulated and became accustomed to their new quarters. This new space had more square footage but was less pleasant. The house had mold and was reportedly a dour-looking place.

Despite the conditions, the school the Sisters ran in Philadelphia had 200 students. The next year, the Sisters opened both a boarding school and a night school. As part of their mission, the Sisters believed in helping the immigrants of Philadelphia through education. After their work during the day, young girls came to the school to learn to read and learn about math, Religion, and finance. This continued for a little while, but the Sisters' Mother-General decided it was too much work for the Sisters after their time spent teaching all day so they eventually closed it. Sister Julia also instituted a school for African American children in Philadelphia which the Sisters ran for five years.¹³

Meanwhile, time pressed on and history continued to be made outside the convent walls. On April 12, 1861, the American Civil War began. This bloody war between North and South spared few men and few families. Sister Julia's family was no exception. Her brothers Stephen, William, and John were all casualties. John was killed accidentally; Stephen and William died of wounds incurred during battle. Once again,

¹³ Britannica, "Sister Julia McGroarty."

Sister Julia met grief face to face. This time, however, she was miles away from her mother and the rest of her family, and she was responsible for the other Sisters under her roof.

After seven years in the ‘new’ convent, the mold problem became increasingly difficult to bear. Sister Superior Julia began to search the city for a more suitable place to live. A friend of hers relayed an opening by West Rittenhouse Square. Sister Julia first decided against it, because it was in an area of the city that was too far from their students and too wealthy. When she went to visit the plot, however, she decided it could work for their needs. She and a fellow Sister donned the guise of elderly widows to avoid prejudice against them. They purchased the land and began working with the architect Edwin F. Durang to design a convent. When the neighbors realized who had purchased the land, they were outraged. Even the previous landowner tried to reverse the sale. Sister Julia had to agree to host no more than 25 boarders at a time to appease the neighbors. As the Sisters spent more and more time living in the neighborhood, their neighbors’ attitudes changes. Some even told the Sisters that they were happy to have such joyful women living next door, and an advertisement for the lot next to the convent listed the Sisters’ presence as a selling feature.¹⁴ Sister Superior Julia governed the house in a particular way such that her fellow Sisters referred to it as feeling “like heaven.”¹⁵ A year elapsed in the new convent, and Sister Julia learned that she would finally be able to make a voyage to the Motherhouse in Namur, Belgium.

¹⁴ Ibid., 66.

¹⁵ Ibid., 67.

Her trip to the Motherhouse had been a dream for the past few years. When Sister Superior Louise returned to Belgium to visit the Mother Superior and her fellow Sisters, she mentioned that it was important for some of the American Sisters to have the opportunity to visit the Motherhouse. Though Sister Julia was Irish born, she was known as the first American Superior because she had received the veil in the United States. Because of this, Sister Louise chose her to go abroad. Arranging for a Sister to visit the Motherhouse was no simple task. Sister Julia needed a travel companion, and she needed to prepare to be away from Philadelphia for months. She arranged to go as far as Liverpool, England with two Sisters of Mercy.

Because she had been the only one from the Sisters of Notre Dame to receive the privilege of visiting Namur, Belgium, Sister Julia viewed herself as an ambassador of sorts. She kept track of her experiences in a journal and sent letters back to the American Sisters when she was able. She sailed during the month of October 1868 and wrote her first letter back to her Sisters, giving an account of some of her adventures with her companions onboard the ship:

The ship was brought to, and we found that the Captain had discovered in the distance a dismantled boat, and we were going in pursuit to see whether we could render any assistance. This was very exciting. Reverend Mother and I entered into the full feeling; we had visions of giving up our cabins, etc., etc.¹⁶

Once they came upon the shipwrecked vessel, they realized any people aboard had already left it on lifeboats. The Captain spread the sails, and they continued their journey to England. A few days later, they pulled alongside another ship headed for New York

¹⁶ Ibid., 73.

City. They looked out and saw “two whales – not the whole monster – who took care to keep their huge bodies under the water; but from time to time we saw their black heads above, and the spouts marked their path.”¹⁷ Her account was a tangible link for the Sisters’ imagination; few had been or would be at the Motherhouse in their lifetime.

After two weeks of travel, Sister Julia arrived in Liverpool. After spending a few days there visiting the convent, she traveled to Belgium by way of Antwerp. Her basic French vocabulary allowed her to communicate with these Sisters, and in general, she noted:

In all the houses I have felt perfectly at home, and I have had to speak incessantly of *notre chère Amérique*. It is like a fairy tale to them, and the least item is of the greatest interest. There exists so much zeal that if ma Mère could only spare the Sisters, I am sure I should have more than one hundred to take with me.¹⁸

Sister Julia spent her first weeks in Belgium visiting various houses there, sharing stories of America and the “New World,” and likewise, sharing stories of her adventures in the “Old World” with her Sisters to the West through letters. The common bond of Sisterhood provided an intrinsic link between her and her hosts.

Both in England and in Belgium, she noted differences in the pedagogy and educational practices among the various houses of Notre Dame. In England for example, she described the standardized testing that took place and its impact on students and Sisters. The government appointed instructors who oversaw administering these tests. The instructors were men who had graduated from either Oxford or Cambridge. If too few students per level passed, the instructors officially reprimanded the teacher and

¹⁷ Ibid., 73-4.

¹⁸ Ibid., 81.

dismissed her.¹⁹ In Belgium, the Sisters ran examinations for their students in the following manner:

Yesterday I was present at the examination of the babies (day-boarders) which was carried on with as much formality as for graduates. They were waiting in the adjoining room, then each entered in her turn, took her place at the table in the middle of the room, and Sister Louise put the questions. These children were between the ages of five and six. I secured the questions, which I enclose for the benefit of our teachers...I asked the Sister if they had a grammar. No. They dictate to these little creatures the absolutely necessary answers, and they study from that. This method is quite different from ours. All their textbooks are small, a kind of outline, even for the seniors; the teachers fill up the sketch and so most of the work falls on them.²⁰

As an educator, she found different pedagogical methods compelling, noting them to her Sisters in the United States. Years later as Superior of the houses east of the Rockies, Sister Julia would continue to advise her houses on teaching methods and the particulars of a Notre Dame education.

The state of education in Belgium was more challenging than it was in Britain.

She wrote to her Sisters in America:

As I told you before, the Ministers are anxious to get education into their own hands, and, wherever they can, they are taking the schools from the Religious. When I was at Vervier, the Inspector was at the orphan asylum for five hours examining one room.²¹

Sister Julia goes on to describe the Inspector giving the children a particularly difficult exercise to conjugate. As an educator, she seems particularly concerned about this prospect. Though she does not describe the same thing happening in religious schools in

¹⁹ Ibid., 76.

²⁰ Ibid., 86-7.

²¹ Ibid., 91.

the United States, the knowledge that the state could intervene colors her tone. She continues with more detail:

The reigning King is a “good man” but wanting in firmness and strength of character, and his ministers, who are all infidels, are fast dragging the nation to ruin. Wherever they can, they take education out of the hands of religious. Last year they took our Sunday School from us, but the children followed the Sisters to the Motherhouse. At Dinant, one year, they dismissed the Christian Brothers, the next, the Sisters, though the city presented a petition signed by almost every person who could write. Fortunately, Ma Mere was able to buy a large hotel opposite the old house, and then all the pupils followed our Sisters. The house was so crowded that they had to build, and they now have sixty boarders, besides hundreds of poor children. There is a real contest going on between Church and State. Pray for this country, it needs it.²²

She wrote extensive notes and letters to her fellow Sisters, creating a catalogue of pedagogical ideas that would ultimately support her in her later leadership roles and influence the decisions she made leading up to the creation of Trinity College in Washington, D.C.

As Sister Julia traveled from Belgium back to the United States, she wrote to her fellow American Sisters. Leaving the Motherhouse was painful for her:

[t]he sacrifice is made. We left our dear Mother amid the tears of the whole Community, novices, and postulants. Oh! Why were you not all there to see how everyone loves us, and how no distinction is made between Americans and Belgians!²³

In later years, once the idea of Trinity started to take on flesh, her tone about the Motherhouse would change. As a younger Sister, however, her writing shows optimism and excitement about the role of the Belgian Sisters and the Motherhouse in her life and that of the US Sisters.

²² Journal of Sister Julia’s first visit to Namur 1869; Namur, January 23, 1869.

²³ Sister Helen Louise, *Sister Julia*, 101.

In September 1885, Sister Julia began a new mission. Sister Superior Louise's health began to decline. Cataracts formed in her eyes; she struggled to keep up the demanding schedule of a Superior. During this time, Sister Superior Louise's assistant, whose health was also failing, wrote to Sister Superior Julia and the Superior of Boston, Sister Marie de St. Denis, asking them to come to Cincinnati. While in Cincinnati, Sister Louise informed Sister Julia that she was to become the new assistant. After 25 years spent in Philadelphia, this was difficult news to hear. Her vow of obedience made any answer other than yes unspeakable. Shortly after hearing the news, she moved back to Cincinnati to serve at Sister Louise's side. Sister Julia's presence relieved Sister Louise's workload while at the same time preparing her to take on the eventual responsibility of Provincial Superior.

On December 3, 1886, Sister Superior Louise met her earthly end. Word came from the Motherhouse in Namur that Sister Julia would fill her role as Sister Superior. In this new position, Sister Julia was responsible for all Sisters living east of the Rocky Mountains. As a leader, Sister Julia excelled. Her years of educating young women spilled over into the way she was able to care for and direct her fellow Sisters. On her leadership style, Sister Helen Louise wrote:

She was a mother. She loved her Sisters, and they, in turn, loved her. That seems to be the secret of her influence and of their happiness. Of course, her character of Religious Superior required this love to be a supernatural one, but there was enough of the human element in it to make it real and satisfying. Love makes its possessor kind, and indeed it is chiefly by kindness that her affection was shown.²⁴

²⁴ Ibid., 106.

Sister Julia was a caring and compassionate Superior. Her door remained open so that any Sister could enter to speak with her. She made time to visit and tend to the sick of her community. Her influence extended beyond the scope of her regular duties because she allowed it to be so.

Mother Julie Billiart passed on more than just her name to Sister Superior Julia.

Sister Helen writes about Julie's influence on Julia's leadership style in her biography:

Did Sister Julia have a model to guide her in her intercourse with the Sisters? Certainly the life of the Foundress of Notre Dame shows this character of mother in her dealings with the Sisters. She commonly called them 'daughters' in speaking or writing to them, and frequently referred to herself as their 'poor mother.'²⁵

Often, leadership and harshness seem to intersect. Those who distrust their given authority may resort to vicious words and threats to stir those they lead to action.

Modeling a different way to lead, Sister Julia demonstrated that the fouler traits of unstable leaders are unnecessary for ensuring success in an organization or a community. Julia offered a way to serve her daughters while still leading them. Note that Sister Julia, even in her position as Sister Superior, was not a member of the formal Church hierarchy.

Julia's leadership of the Sisters of Notre Dame east of the Rockies included standardization of their teaching methods to ensure consistency across schools. She created a "a schedule of studies and gave every teacher a printed copy, that by fidelity in following the same curriculum Notre Dame schools might attain uniformity and proficiency."²⁶ This idea was likely brought back from her time spent abroad observing the teaching methods of the European Sisters. Her methods were highly successful; at

²⁵ Ibid., 109.

²⁶ Sister of Notre Dame, *An Historical Sketch*, 9.

her death, there were over 1,300 professed Sisters and 92,000 students in the United States.

The Founding of Trinity College

A little over a decade after she became Sister Superior, Julia felt called to create a college for young Catholic women to serve the Catholics of the United States. The idea grew out of the initial intent to create an academy for girls near the Catholic University of America (CUA). In March of 1897, Julia visited Washington, D.C. to look at possible sites. Catholic University, a decade old at the time, had recently refused to admit over 20 applications from women. All the women attended non-Catholic schools instead. The Rector of CUA, Bishop John J. Keane, was aware of the thirst for education young Catholic women had in the late 19th century. In 1895, he had admitted that “[m]any women have applied for admission and the University would be glad if it were in her power to grant them the educational advantage which they desire.”²⁷ Keane insisted that CUA’s Board of Trustees had the sole power to change its admission policy. The Board would not officially accept women as undergraduate students until 1950.²⁸

Sister Julia knew that not all who heard about her project thought it was a worthy cause. She described the situation in a letter to Sister Mary Euphrasia²⁹:

²⁷ The Catholic University of America, “The Archivist’s Nook.”

²⁸ In 1924, the Bishop of Saint Paul, Joseph Busch, petitioned CUA to admit Sister Marie Inez Hilger into its graduate program. In 1925, she earned a Master of Social Work and Sociology.

²⁹ Sister Mary Euphrasia served as Sister Julia’s righthand person for matters concerning Trinity College. She lived in Washington, DC and was instrumental in ensuring the success of the

I am quite amused at the noise the quiet old S. N. D.'s are making for the first time in this country. . . . 'If God be for us, who shall be against us?' I am not in the least troubled. We did not desire nor seek the work; it came to us from higher authority, and provided we get the money I do not fear. I would much rather have the storm before we begin, than a breeze later which might insure a feeling of distrust and thus injure the work. Anyone can see we are only the figure-head. There are many wise and funny things I could write, but I have not the time.³⁰

In a separate letter, Sister Julia wrote:

It is a matter of deep grief to us that a project intended to advance so purely the glory of God, should meet with opposition on the part of a certain element in our country who are incapable themselves of appreciating the influence of woman in society and her power for good in the church whilst at the same time they are ignorant of the spirit of the country which demands an equal education for all³¹

She knew her project had its opponents, yet she persevered. That perseverance paid off as Pope Leo XIII soon granted Reverend Mother Aimee de Jesus permission to proceed with the project.³² The Right Reverend Rector of the Catholic University cautioned Sister Julia to keep her excitement about the endeavor to herself.³³ Perhaps he worried that exuberance might provoke additional investigation by the Pope. Sister Julia guessed that the project would take at least two years and set a goal of opening for the fall semester of September 1900.

On March 31, 1898, the first meeting of the "Auxiliary Board of Regents of Trinity College" convened. These women pledged their time and energy to collect

project.

³⁰ Sister of Notre Dame, *An Historical Sketch*, 14.

³¹ Trinity Washington University, "Founders Day."

³² Reverend Mother Aimee de Jesus was the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Notre Dame at the time.

³³ Sister of Notre Dame, *An Historical Sketch*, 15.

money for building and furnishing Trinity. Several of the women were unmarried including Vice-President Miss Marie Patterson. After the initial meeting, two of the women traveled across the United States to raise awareness about Trinity and secure funding. The following year, on June 21, 1899, Sister Julia dug a shovel into the dirt that would become the foundation for Trinity College. The SNDs hosted a simple ceremony. During that same year, Sister Julia began selecting Sisters who would teach at Trinity. She elected to send two of the chosen Sisters to Namur to observe European educational methods.

On October 25, 1899, in honor of the Infant Jesus of Prague, the Sisters opened the doors to Trinity. 16 Sisters served on the faculty with an additional 4 joining them later in the year. The first class of students totaled 19 including 2 women from Ohio.

The Rector of Catholic University, Monsignor Conaty, addressed these women:

You have been chosen from your whole Order to do this work. ‘Come abide with Me,’ Christ said to his Apostles. Come abide with Me in this grove, where you will break the bread of wisdom to those who come seeking truth at your hands. Your daily Mass and meditation, your evening hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, will be support and rest and light to you. So fear not to face the labor with all its difficulties. You are pioneers in this field, and pioneering is hard work.³⁴

Monsignor Conaty’s words provoke great zeal for the cause of women’s education, yet without the refusal of CUA to admit women, Trinity would not have existed in the first place.

A little over a decade later, Sister Wilfred de Sacré set down the brief history of Trinity College to that point. Reminiscing about the start of Trinity, she wrote:

³⁴ Sister of Notre Dame, *An Historical Sketch*, 23.

Who of us, I wonder, who witnessed the opening of Trinity just ten years ago would have dared to prophesy the future which is now her present and her past? A building hopelessly unfinished, a handful of brave religious, a little group of earnest students, a vast deal of that enthusiasm without which nothing great is ever accomplished, much kindly encouragement from friends, enough discouragement to ensure the stability of the undertaking and mark it with the indispensable seal of the Cross – those were the conditions under which it happened.³⁵

Despite difficult conditions, Trinity College began and with that beginning, one of the first Catholic colleges for women began, as well. Others had come before it, but they were academies for young women that morphed into colleges.³⁶ Sister Wilfred credits the “brave spirit” of Sister Julia with making Trinity a reality, noting that while it was difficult at the start, it was not impossible and not without humorous moments:

Even real drawbacks had their ludicrous side – thus, the ubiquity of the workmen had something sociable about it and their prompt arrival at 7 a. m., perhaps in *your* room, meant that you were decidedly expeditious in getting down to breakfast.³⁷

Sister Superior Julia and her fellow Sisters had identified a problem and paved the way for implementation of a solution. After the refusal of CUA to accept women, Sister Julia could have decided the effort to open additional educational opportunities for women was simply not worth it. She could have seen the cause as too contentious and determined it was something that another Sister Superior would have to bring to reality in later decades. Instead, Sister Julia labored, fashioning her own college, securing her own

³⁵ Sister of Notre Dame, *An Historical Sketch*, 24. One example was the Academy of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in Indiana. It began as an academy and later morphed into a college. Trinity College represents the first Catholic college for women that was not founded from an existing academy.

³⁶ Mahoney, *American Catholic Colleges for Women*, 26.

³⁷ Sister of Notre Dame, *An Historical Sketch*, 25-6.

funding, and digging into the dirt to erect Trinity with her own shovel.

Two years after Trinity opened its doors, on November 12, 1901, Sister Julia passed away. The stalwart of Catholic women's undergraduate education and the foundress of Trinity College was buried just outside of Cincinnati in the cemetery outside of Mount Notre Dame High School. Interred just next to her is her mentor and the French lady she met as a young girl, Sister Louise. Sister Julia's efforts ensured that women had a place to study as undergraduates. This impact would ricochet through the next few decades as other schools opened their doors. Her work in Catholic education was just the first step, however. As the years drew on, and more and more women earned their undergraduate degrees, the desire to move on to graduate school also grew. The next chapter will examine the women who contributed to graduate education for women, both lay and religious, as well as laymen. Specifically, Chapter Three will focus on theological graduate education and the development of a specific place for these people to study theology. The "twin fault lines of women's intellect and power" would continue to stir up new possibilities in the Church of the 20th century.³⁸

³⁸ Brown, *Leading Women*, 83.

CHAPTER III

A SECOND GENERATION OF WOMEN: SISTER MADELEVA WOLFF AND
SISTER KATHRYN SULLIVAN

Sister Madeleva's Creation of a Graduate Theology Program

The woman who would start the journey to open access to graduate theological study for the laity was Sister Mary Madeleva Wolff, C.S.C. She was baptized and given the name Evaline in Cumberland, Wisconsin on June 2, 1887. Her father, August, was a Lutheran who worked as a harness maker. Her mother, Lucy, was a devout Roman Catholic who nurtured Evaline's deep love of God. Evaline was the middle child, with an older brother, Fred, and younger brother, Vern. She excelled in school, and once she reached college age, her parents allowed her to attend the University of Wisconsin. The University was coeducational, even though "[p]ublic opinion of the time regarded coeducation as a dubious, even dangerous, experiment."³⁹ She survived this "experiment," however, and returned to spend the summer at home after a year of study.

Sometime during her break from school, Evaline read about Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana and decided she wanted to study there instead of the University of Wisconsin. Her parents agreed even though it was a financial burden for their family.

³⁹ Mandell, *Madeleva: A Biography*, 28.

To help cover the costs, her brother Fred took a year off from school and worked as an engineer. August and Lucy Wolff valued education, and they respected Evaline's desire to continue to pursue education. During her time spent studying at Saint Mary's, Evaline began to discern a call to religious life. Through encouragement from her teacher and mentor Sister Rita, Evaline began attending daily mass more regularly. Her writing and poetry became focused on God, and she began to live according to the life of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, waking up at five in the morning to attend mass and spend time in prayer with the Sisters. When she returned to Illinois the next year, she returned as a postulant with the Congregation.⁴⁰

After postulancy, Evaline entered the novitiate, receiving the name Sister Madeleva. It was during this time that she began teaching college English courses despite not yet having completed her own undergraduate degree. This was unusual as she was not just teaching other sister students but undergraduate laywomen at Saint Mary's College.⁴¹ Once she completed her own degree, she and three other sisters began to pursue master's degrees at the University of Notre Dame. She earned her MA in English. In 1922, she traveled to the University of California at Berkley to earn her PhD in English literature.

After completing her doctorate, Sister Madeleva began a new mission: founding a college for women. This college, called Saint Mary's of the Wasatch, was in Salt Lake City, Utah. Sister Madeleva was able to freely design the new undergraduate curriculum. Years later, when she worked to found a program to allow women to pursue advanced

⁴⁰ Ibid., 32.

⁴¹ Mandell, *One Woman's Life* 12, 32.

theological degrees, she would pull on these experiences to enlighten her choices.

In 1934, after a yearlong sabbatical at Oxford University, Sister Madeleva became the president of Saint Mary's College. Sister Madeleva knew that her position as president would mean the sacrifice of much of her own scholarly work. She took office during the Depression. She also knew that the position would bring opportunities her way, including the chance to shape the college curriculum as she saw fit. After just a few months as president, Sister Madeleva and the faculty began to revise the curriculum at the school. She used her talents and her own intellectual experience to enrich the college and form it into "an innovative, forward-looking institution," and by doing so, she generated "positive change in Catholic education and in the Church."⁴² Just as her position as president of Saint Mary's of the Wasatch allowed her to grow as an educator, her role as president of Saint Mary's College equipped her with the skills she would need to establish the first Roman Catholic theological graduate program in the US in which Roman Catholic women were permitted, and even encouraged, to matriculate.

Sister Madeleva continued her work to educate young women. Though she likely realized this herself, Sister Madeleva's close friend Frank Sheed pointed out that there was no place where a non-cleric could study theology.⁴³ Sheed was a prominent Catholic

⁴² Ibid., 39.

⁴³ Mandell, *Madeleva: A Biography*, 184. The Catholic University of America established the Program of Religion in the School of Arts and Sciences in 1932. This program focused on teaching religion, not theology, however. Seven years later, St. Bonaventure opened a master's program in religion that was open to all laity (See Yocum's work *Joining the Revolution*, page 33). Frank Sheed recognized this in noting to Sister Madeleva that the laity did not have access to the study of theology. Yale Divinity School began admitting women in 1932 but placed limitations on the number of women allowed to attend and refused aid to all women. Harvard Divinity School began admitting women in 1955, 12 years after Saint Mary's.

writer and cofounder of the Catholic publishing company Sheed and Ward. Both Sheed and Sister Madeleva recognized that an enormous educational void existed for every member of the Roman Catholic Church who wanted to study theology but was not a cleric. From her own study of English medieval mystics, it is likely she recognized that such an absence was unhealthy for the Church and could lead to stunted development of spirituality among non-clerics.⁴⁴

Sister Madeleva brought the matter of theological education to the attention of the National Catholic Education Association, and in 1943, she became chair of a committee created to search for a solution to the issue. The exclusion of women religious and lay people from the study of theology was “not so much a matter of official church policy...as of certain previously unchallenged attitudes and circumstances.”⁴⁵ There was no official, written statement barring Roman Catholic women from advanced theological study. However, there was disapproval coming from both the Vatican and some American bishops, as the story of Sister Kathryn Sullivan, RSCJ that appears later in this work will demonstrate. Roman Catholic leadership during the years leading up to Vatican Council II was itself undecided about the role of theology and theologians in the life of the church and the development of doctrine. Yet many women, like Sister Madeleva Wolff, CSC, Sister Kathryn Sullivan, RSCJ, Dr. Mary Daly, and Sister Mary Ann Hinsdale, IHM yearned for the opportunity to study theology.

⁴⁴ This same realization led her to speak on behalf of all religious women, whose educational and spiritual formation was severely lacking.

⁴⁵ Mandell, *Madeleva: A Biography*, 184.

The National Catholic Education Association offered concrete support to Sister Madeleva when they elected her to chair of the committee to search for a solution. Madeleva's duties as chair included investigating current graduate programs and seminaries. She worked with the hierarchy of the Church, obtaining the blessing of her friend Bishop Edwin O'Hara. Bishop O'Hara chaired the Episcopal Commission on the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine at the time. With his blessing and support, Sister Madeleva contacted administrators at Catholic University and several other graduate programs, including Notre Dame and Marquette, about the possibility of creating a graduate program in theology for lay people. All these universities refused. Many offered excuses for their refusal, citing difficulties they were having, especially the drop in enrollment because of the Second World War.⁴⁶

Sister Madeleva then petitioned Catholic University again, this time "with the request that religious and other women be admitted to their divinity school. The request was denied."⁴⁷ Frustrated, she mulled over the situation with Bishop O'Hara. He was visiting Saint Mary's at the time, and he "looked around the spacious campus with its new library and suggested that she consider beginning such a program there and assured

⁴⁶ Global Sisters Report, "Sr Madeleva Wolff." Colleges and universities cited the drop in enrollment as a reason why they could not consider Sister Madeleva's request. Male clergy have been exempt from conscription since its inception during the Civil War which makes this response a little odd. Perhaps, because of the nature of the Second World War and the way it touched all aspects of life, colleges and universities truly had no room for special projects. Or perhaps this was a flimsy excuse to continue to exclude women from the study of theology.

⁴⁷ Mandell, *Madeleva: A Biography*, 185. The first woman to earn her Doctor of Sacred Theology (STD) at CUA was Sister Mary Dismas in 1976 (Hinsdale, *Women Shaping Theology*, 143).

her of his backing.”⁴⁸ As president of the college, she knew Saint Mary’s could support a graduate program for women. Bishop O’Hara’s support, as a member of the hierarchy and as chair of the Episcopal Commission on the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, empowered her to carry out this plan. At the next NCEA meeting, she announced the news that Saint Mary’s would offer a six-week long graduate program in theology during the upcoming summer.

In the summer of 1943, the graduate program opened its doors. It began by offering no credit and charging no tuition. Priests were the sole instructors. As time passed, however, women who had earned graduate degrees began to teach in the school. The faculty came to include laywomen and several Holy Cross Sisters. Enrollment rose steadily so that in the 1950s, about 25 students matriculated in the regular academic year in graduate theology courses at the school, and each summer session had at least one hundred students enrolled.⁴⁹ Two years after Sister Madeleva started the graduate program at Saint Mary’s, she began an undergraduate theology program at the school. Hers was “the first women’s college in the country to offer theology as a regular college major.”⁵⁰ It was a leap into the future. Just five decades prior, Sister Julia had labored to found Trinity College in support of women’s education. Now, Sister Madeleva’s efforts helped the Church explore new thinking around the importance of access to theological study for all. From an ecclesial standpoint, this access was an opening of the doors of the Church and a time for rejuvenation in theological study. In her biography of Sister

⁴⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 186.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 186.

Madeleva, Mandell remarks that Sister Madeleva's "decisive action enjoyed the acceptance and commendation of most Catholic educators, priests, and bishops, and quickly gained papal approval," which suggests that Sister Madeleva "filled a pressing need in a nonthreatening, if conventional way."⁵¹

Sister Madeleva's program began by cultivating the approval of the United States Catholic bishops. She looked to the existing ecclesiastical and clerical structures within the Church for approval. At the same time, the school opened new avenues for women religious and laity who sought a theological education. The school served for more than a decade and a half "as the center of graduate studies in theology for women, not only in America but in the entire world, drawing women to campus from across America and around the globe."⁵² It was Saint Mary's that influenced the Vatican's decision to open Regina Mundi, a school of religious studies for women. This speaks to Sister Madeleva's incredible accomplishment. She saw a need and created a solution. The Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, requested that Sister Madeleva send over all documents from Saint Mary's College pertaining to its theological graduate program, including information on its curriculum, to aid his delegates in establishing Regina Mundi.⁵³

On October 18, 1954, Pope Pius XII officially established Regina Mundi as a Pontifical Institute. Pope Pius XII founded the Institute through the Gregorian University in Rome; faculty from the same University staffed the Institute. Until its closing in 2005, Regina Mundi offered a three-year degree program for woman religious to earn a

⁵¹ Ibid., 187.

⁵² Ibid., 187.

⁵³ Ibid., 188.

baccalaureate in religious studies. It also offered a graduate program in religious studies and training for “formators” of woman religious. Regina Mundi did not, however, offer women degrees in theology. This distinction is critically important. The refusal to offer degrees in theology indicates some underlying hesitation in the acceptance of women’s study of theology.

Still, the opening of Regina Mundi was of “great symbolic significance” in the 1950s.⁵⁴ Its opening came about through Sister Madeleva’s example, as well as a request by the Congress of Superiors General in 1952. By locating the Institute in Rome, it “validated the right of the laity, especially women, to study theology in ways that no program in the United States could have in the 1950s” and “suggested a certain transnational character to the widening boundaries of theological studies.”⁵⁵ Regina Mundi, through its initial dependence on the curriculum of Saint Mary’s, demonstrated the importance of Sister Madeleva’s achievement in having established the first theological program for Roman Catholic undergraduate women and the first graduate program in theology open to the entire laity.⁵⁶

Only after Regina Mundi and several other Catholic universities began to admit women to graduate theological study at their schools did Saint Mary’s College graduate program in theology come to an end. Faced with increasing debt, the school officially closed because of financial difficulty. The tiny graduate school at Saint Mary’s lacked

⁵⁴ Yocum, *Joining the Revolution*, 33.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁶ Note that while Pope Pius XII requested the curriculum from Saint Mary’s to aid in establishing Regina Mundi, the new Institute did not offer theology as a course of study. Instead, it focused on religious education.

the name recognition of better-known Catholic institutions such as the Catholic University of America. The graduate program at Saint Mary's ended in 1967, and by 1970, the school had awarded its last degrees.⁵⁷ Altogether, the school awarded 354 master's degrees and 76 doctoral degrees to religious and laywomen as well as some men. Sister Mary Immaculate, CSC writes in her history of Saint Mary's that, in regard to the "theology-for-lay-persons movement...[o]ne would expect the founding school to continue to be a pillar of support."⁵⁸ The president at the time, Sister Mary Grace Kos, CSC, offered two related reasons for closing the school: the absence of sufficient funding to continue it and the opening of a graduate department of theology at Notre Dame. Some were frustrated because they viewed St. Mary's as a place for education specifically for those who would teach. Notre Dame did not have this specific focus. Others believed that Sister Madeleva never intended the school to last for centuries. Sister Mary Immaculate writes that before Sister Madeleva died she:

had said that when the school had served its purpose of initiating graduate theology for religious and lay women, and had given new impetus to the study of theology for lay persons in general, she would be content with its transference to the university level where it properly belonged.⁵⁹

Sister Madeleva's main concern had been the proper education of all, especially religious Sisters, whom she had seen as needing appropriate education in their formation. Sister Madeleva realized that Roman Catholic women needed and wanted to study undergraduate and graduate theology. Her actions made it possible for generations of US

⁵⁷ Sister Madeleva retired from the presidency of the college in 1961; she passed to the next life 1964.

⁵⁸ Sister Mary Immaculate, *A Panorama*, 100.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

Catholic women to earn graduate degrees in theology before existing Roman Catholic educational institutions decided to accept women into their graduate theology programs.

The Founding of the Sister Formation Conference

Sister Madeleva believed in both the graduate education of Sisters and their undergraduate formation. Seven years after Saint Mary's opened its doors to women seeking theology degrees, Madeleva spoke at the 1950 National Catholic Educational Association's annual meeting about the figurative "Sister Lucy" who had to begin teaching before receiving her baccalaureate. Sister Madeleva used the model of Sister Lucy to demonstrate the need for every sister to earn an education before she began to teach in Catholic schools. She "challenged the group of mother superiors and priest superintendents before her: 'Because Lucy becomes a sister, does that mean she does not need to get her degree?'"⁶⁰ Sister Madeleva pointed out that had Sister Lucy not entered the religious life she would certainly have had the chance to earn a degree. She asserted that if religious communities began to train their sisters immediately in 1950, almost every sister would earn her degree within two or three years.

Many factors contributed to Sister Madeleva's speech. 1950 was an important year because Pope Pius XII called an international meeting of the heads of Religious communities, both male and female. He intended this meeting "to urge a renewal in religious life that called for 'theological education and professional credentials for those teaching and doing other professional work.'"⁶¹ Pius XII called another meeting in 1951

⁶⁰ Beane, *From Framework to Freedom*, 7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

for members of teaching communities at which he urged “that the teaching sister have the same professional training as her lay counterpart.”⁶² In the past, many Sisters worked to earn their degrees over multiple summers, sometimes even taking 20 summers to complete them because of teaching duties. The demand for teaching Sisters grew after World War II when young women started to enter religious life in droves. At the height of this unprecedented influx of new members to religious life in the US, the number of Sisters actively teaching had reached about 90,000 in the United States.⁶³

The NCEA meeting in 1951 resulted in a survey that Sisters conducted on behalf of the NCEA. This was just one year after Sister Madeleva’s speech. Sister Mary Emil Penet, IHM, led the group after first offering an impassioned speech on the need for spiritual and intellectual formation of Sisters. Two years later, Monsignor Frederick Hochwalt, who was then executive secretary of the NCEA, issued his approval for Sisters to hold regional, yearly conferences about the formation of their Sisters and for Superiors of teaching Sisters to hold a meeting at the upcoming NCEA meeting. He also agreed to the creation of a conference section dedicated to the concerns of teaching Sisters in the NCEA.⁶⁴ At the NCEA meeting in 1954, the Sister Formation Conference (SFC) met for the first time. During this meeting, members decided the conference’s name, divided the United States into regions for the SFC, established two-day institutes in every region to address key issues, and introduced the idea of the Sister Formation Bulletin as a means of

⁶² Ibid., 2.

⁶³ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 27.

communication among congregational members.⁶⁵ Marjorie Beane asserts that “[w]ith the forming of the Sister Formation Conference, a vehicle for institutional change was put into action.”⁶⁶ The SFC recognized the need for Sisters to earn their degrees before teaching, but it also emphasized the importance of spiritual formation for all Sisters. The SFC “worked toward structuring and promoting a total education that would insure a well-developed intellectual and spiritual life for women religious.”⁶⁷ Because of its work, the SFC acted as an agent of change in the professional and spiritual lives of sisters across America. The Sisters involved in creating the SFC, especially Sister Mary Emil Penet, IHM dedicated themselves to ensuring that religious sisters had the tools they needed to thrive in both their professional and religious vocations.

Around the same time that the Sister Formation Conference was established, the College Theology Society (CTS) began. In 1953 Sister Rose Eileen Masterman, CSC made a “resolution to found a professional society for those teaching theology to undergraduates.”⁶⁸ She and her professional counterparts wanted it to be akin to other professional academic societies. The CTS would be open to clergy, Religious, and laity. All members had to meet requirements for higher degrees in Sacred Sciences, the Philosophy of Religion, or the equivalent. Theology at the time had:

a relatively marginal status as an academic discipline in most undergraduate curricula at Catholic colleges and universities in the mid-twentieth century. So the founding of a professional society of teachers in that discipline took

⁶⁵ Ibid., 28.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁸ Yocum, *Joining the Revolution*, 9.

imagination, foresight, and more than a modicum of courage.”⁶⁹

Sister Rose viewed the study of theology with deep respect and emphasized that theology’s role involved integrating all people in the mystical body of Christ. The CTS influenced the further development of programs for all who wished to study theology. There were other women during Madeleva’s time who experienced exclusion from the field, including Sister Kathryn Sullivan, RSCJ.

Sister Kathryn Sullivan and the Vatican’s Refusal to Confer an Honorary Degree

Sister Kathryn’s story echoes the experience of so many other women religious when they tried to study theology in the 1920’s, 30’s and early 40’s until Sister Madeleva began the graduate program open to women in the early 1940’s. Kathryn was born in 1905. She began her undergraduate studies at Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart in New York in 1922. Afterward, she earned her Master of Arts in History at the University of Pennsylvania and began doctoral work. She then entered the congregation of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. During her novitiate, her Novice Mistress inquired about the state of her dissertation. To graduate, Sister Kathryn needed to take one more class at the University and then defend her dissertation. Her Superior permitted her to take this class and work on her dissertation for no more than half an hour after dinner each evening.⁷⁰ During the period called the “novitiate,” it was, and still is,

⁶⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁷⁰ Osiek, *Kathryn Sullivan*, 11.

largely unheard of that a novice would be given permission to finish her doctoral work.⁷¹ Fortunately, Sister Kathryn's Novice Mistress recognized the importance of her finishing her doctoral degree and allowed her the flexibility to accomplish this goal.

In August of 1938, Sister Kathryn joined the faculty of Manhattanville College in New York City as a professor of history. Beginning in 1946, Sister Kathryn taught more Scripture than history after studying under a priest named Father John E. Steinmueller.⁷² Two years later, she was listed as a research professor of Scripture at the college.

According to Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ, the author of Sister Kathryn's biography, the title of "research professor" of Scripture "was probably a recognition that [Sister Kathryn] did not have, and was never to have, an academic degree in the subject, which would have been impossible for a Catholic nun at the time."⁷³ Sister Kathryn had come to teach Scripture through the help of Father Steinmuller, who had recognized her abilities and her desire to learn and teach about the Bible.

Father Steinmueller himself had received money from his Bishop to attend seminary when he was just a teenager. He felt that he should repay this gift by helping others who thirsted for education and knowledge. In the early 1940s, Sister Kathryn was placed in charge of a three-day meeting of Catholic biblical archeologists meeting at Manhattanville College. There, she and Father Steinmuller first met. In his growing professional relationship with Sister Kathryn, he recognized that she was the perfect

⁷¹ The novitiate is a period of training and preparation for religious after the time of their postulancy and before they make vows. Canon law of the Catholic Church requires a canonical year or a year of study removed from the things of the world.

⁷² Father Steinmueller would go on to found the Catholic Biblical Association.

⁷³ Osiek, *Kathryn Sullivan*, 13.

candidate for him to mentor. Father Steinmueller approached Sister Kathryn and her Superior about the possibility of tutoring her in Scripture and theology for two years. In this way, he felt he could offer her the equivalent of a doctorate in both areas. Sister Kathryn had already studied Greek and Latin for both her masters and doctorate degrees in history, so she only had to learn Hebrew. For the next two years, Father Steinmueller tutored her in theology and Scripture for two days a week.

After her tutoring came to an end, Kathryn continued to work with Steinmueller. They co-authored guides to both the Old and New Testament for lay Catholics in the early 1940s which were well received. The success of these projects led to Father Steinmueller calling Sister Kathryn with exciting news. The tenth annual meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association (CBA) had just ended, and during it, Kathryn had been “unanimously elected to active membership, the first woman to become an active member of the organization.”⁷⁴ This was an extraordinary move, as the requirements for active membership included having earned an advanced degree in Scripture. Even today no one may become an active member of the CBA without an Licentiate of Sacred Theology in Scripture or a completed PhD in Scripture. In electing Kathryn to active membership, the CBA acknowledged that her two years of schooling by Father Steinmueller were equivalent to a graduate degree in theology and Scripture and also that there was no real way “a Catholic woman could have earned such a degree.”⁷⁵ This

⁷⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 24. Sister Madeleva’s program was established in 1944, but Sister Kathryn already had the knowledge, and it would have been nearly impossible for her to receive permission to take courses so far from her home. Besides, she most likely knew more than enough to have taught courses there herself.

move by the CBA in awarding Sister Kathryn active membership signaled that the group of Roman Catholic scripture scholars who made up the CBA in 1947 not only recognized that Sister Kathryn was a peer of theirs in her knowledge of theology and Scripture but were willing to ignore institutional convention and tradition to make that publicly known. In addition, it confirms that Sister Madeleva's insight that women ought to have the opportunity to study theology and Scripture, as well as her vision and courage in establishing a graduate school of theology for women at St. Mary's College, were not anomalies isolated from similar, concurrent developments in the US Catholic world.

In 1958, Sister Kathryn published her own work on Scripture. In that same year, her friend Cardinal Spellman asked if she would work to earn a doctoral degree in Scripture. She replied tactfully indicating that she would love to do so but simply did not have the time to complete it.⁷⁶ Cardinal Spellman assured her that he would assist and wrote to the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities. He indicated that he knew of a person who had the credentials for a doctorate in theology but could not spend time at a university because of active ministry. The Congregation responded in writing that the person should be made a bishop. Cardinal Spellman replied that the circumstances prevented this. The Congregation wrote again, this time indicating that Cardinal Spellman need only send the name and the Congregation would draw up the honorary degrees.⁷⁷ Cardinal Spellman sent her name, and the Congregation replied informing him that "it was not possible to confer these honorary degrees on a woman."⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ibid., 36.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 37.

What Kathryn received instead was a pleasant thank you letter from Cardinal Pizzardo of the Congregation. The response of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities when they learned Sister Kathryn was a woman indicates not only the complete lack of opportunities for women to study theology but also demonstrates an attitude from the Vatican that affected the entire Body of Christ. The Congregation believed that a woman should not have a degree in theology; therefore, they would not confer a theological degree on a woman. Hiding behind the impossibility of such a feat, despite no official Church doctrine or teaching on the subject, highlights an underlying culture of exclusion. Their refusal to offer Sister Kathryn an honorary degree that they had been prepared to give to a member of the clergy with the exact same credentials demonstrates their firm resistance to women studying theology and most likely explains the absence of any Roman Catholic graduate program before Sister Madeleva's that would accept women. What remains unanswered is why the Congregation found no value in women earning advanced degrees in theology at Roman Catholic institutions.

During this same year, Sister Kathryn was elected to the position of vice president of the CBA. Ordinarily, the vice president of the CBA succeeded to the presidency the following year. Sister Kathryn, however, served her term as vice president but did not succeed to the presidency the next year. The Association was unwilling to elect Sister Kathryn, most likely for a few reasons.⁷⁹ The CBA was already under scrutiny from various Congregations of the Vatican and American bishops for its members' beginning use of the historical critical method to interpret Scripture. The bishops had been schooled

⁷⁹ Ibid., 44.

under the pre-1943 model of biblical scholarship and were suspicious of any approach to reading the Bible that they perceived was ungrounded in Catholic tradition.⁸⁰ They read the Bible allegorically, morally, and eschatologically. As Catholic scholars began interpreting Scripture using the historical critical method, the hierarchy responded unfavorably.

Overall, the Association challenged common practices of Catholic educational institutions at the time. It understood the struggle women faced to enter into theological studies, as exemplified by Sister Kathryn, and it recognized the unwillingness of the Vatican to allow women admittance into the realm of theology. It was through Sister Kathryn Sullivan's tenacity, as well as that of people like Sister Madeleva Wolff, and the support of key members of the priesthood and episcopacy that the attitudes of the Church hierarchy at large began to shift and publicly accept the phenomenon of women studying theology.

Sister Kathryn was tactful in her dealings with the bars to women studying theology at the time and found ways to overcome the barriers placed before women. She had earned a doctorate in history at an Ivy League school, which likely helped remove some of the obstacles to her study of and lecturing on Scripture. It may have also helped some justify her studying theology. Perhaps some believed Sister Kathryn would be the exception and not the rule because she had already proven that she was intellectual enough to study theology. Kathryn was fortunate to have ordained friends and mentors

⁸⁰ 1943 marked a public acceptance by the Vatican of the change in biblical scholarship. Pope Pius XII wrote the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* which called for new translations of the bible based on the recovered original texts. Archeological developments also made it possible to usher in a new age of biblical scholarship.

who were willing to fight with and for her. Both Father Steinmueller and Cardinal Spellman attempted to work around the blockades that had prevented her from earning a doctorate in theology by their respective tutoring of her and petitioning the Vatican on her behalf. Sister Kathryn demonstrated outright that women had a desire to study theology and that women were capable enough to do so. Her persistence in continuing to learn and do theology despite the hurdles placed in front of her helped ensure the third generation of women who would come after her would have more opportunity than her to earn a degree in theology. Even when progress seems small, every little piece combines to move the Church to its most inclusive and most Christ-like self.

CHAPTER IV

A THIRD GENERATION OF WOMEN: DOCTOR MARY DALY AND SISTER
MARY ANN HINSDALE

Doctor Mary Daly and the Struggle for Hierarchical Approval

After Sisters Julia, Madeleva, and Kathryn, there was a third generation of women who sought advanced study. Because of the work that these Sisters had previously accomplished, women like Mary Daly were a step, or at least an inch, closer to greater acceptance into the realm of advanced theological study. Mary Daly was born in 1928. She earned her undergraduate degree in English at the College of Saint Rose in Albany, NY, which was founded and staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. The college required that all students minor in philosophy but did not permit any woman to major in philosophy. Upon graduation, she set out to earn a Master of Arts in philosophy. She earned a full scholarship to the Catholic University of America. The scholarship was conditional, however; the awardee had to pursue a master's degree in their undergraduate field of study. Because of this, Daly instead pursued an MA in English.

While studying at CUA, Daly had a premonition. She had a vision of herself teaching theology, but this was unheard of in the fifties. It was shortly thereafter that she picked up a Catholic magazine at a newsstand in Grand Central Station. She saw an ad

for a “School of Sacred Theology” offering a PhD in theology for women. Daly recounted the memory:

As soon as I arrived back in Washington I wrote to the President of Saint Mary’s, whose name was in the advertisement. She was Sister Madeleva, the well-known poet. Her response came immediately by way of a telegram offering me a scholarship plus a part-time job teaching English at St. Mary’s. Within a few months, armed with my [masters] I was on a train to South Bend, Indiana.⁸¹

At Saint Mary’s, she learned of Saint Thomas Aquinas and, though she was officially studying theology, she “could finally begin to acquire a philosophical *habitus*—a habit of thinking philosophically in a rigorously logical manner.”⁸² At 25, she earned her PhD in Theology from Saint Mary’s. She describes feeling unsatisfied with this degree. Hoping to obtain her PhD in philosophy, she applied to the University of Notre Dame. They refused her admission to the doctoral program in philosophy “solely on the basis that [she] was a woman.”⁸³ During that same time, she had a falling out with Sister Madeleva. Daly had organized a revolt against one of the professors at Saint Mary’s as she and her supporters were frustrated by the professor’s methods.⁸⁴

After Notre Dame’s refusal to admit her, Daly turned back to the Catholic University. She describes her feelings at the time in this way:

I thought that if I got the highest of degrees in theology—which for a Catholic then meant the doctorate from a Pontifical Faculty of Sacred Theology—I would have a chance of getting a job teaching challenging courses to very bright students and have time for my own work. Since The Catholic University of America was the only university in the United States which conferred that ultimate degree, I wrote to the Dean of the School of Theology, repeatedly, and received no reply

⁸¹ Daly, *Outercourse*, 50.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 51.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁴ Daly omits the identity of the professor.

for a long time. I had studied Latin, Greek, Hebrew, as well as German and French. I had more than the equivalent of an M.A. in philosophy, and a Ph.D. in religion, but they could not bring themselves to reply. The crude bigotry of that wretched institution was blatant in this case. The only ‘problem’ was that I was a woman, and they didn’t even have the courage to say that with minimal courtesy.⁸⁵

Her rejection by the Catholic University, while deeply upsetting, provided her the motivation to look elsewhere. She learned that in both Germany and Switzerland the faculties of Catholic and Protestant Theology were “incorporated into the State universities, and the German and Swiss governments did not permit exclusion of women on the basis of sex.”⁸⁶ The only problem that remained was financial.

She wrote to the Bishop of Pittsburg, John Wright, knowing that he had supported male lay theologians in their study. He responded by offering her a loan of twelve hundred dollars from the Medora A. Feehan Fund. She applied for a Fulbright scholarship with the Germans and the Swiss. The Swiss offered her a scholarship. At the same time, she learned that she could teach at Rosary College’s junior exchange program in Fribourg, Switzerland. This would allow her to attend the University of Fribourg and earn her Sacred Doctorate in Theology (STD). The priests and seminarians with whom she attended school considered theological scholarship done by a woman to be laughable, but despite this, Daly writes that she did not feel personal contempt from them. Their attitude “seemed to be a combination of fear, astonishment, and admiration.”⁸⁷ She was one woman among 200 men. She earned her doctorate in 1963. Daly was the first

⁸⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 56.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 62.

woman to earn the Doctorate in Sacred Theology at Fribourg. The Faculty of Theology, however, refused to allow her to take the “Anti-Modernist Oath” upon completion of her degree. Such an oath was a prerequisite for anyone to teach in a Pontifical Faculty of Theology, like the Catholic University.⁸⁸ By preventing Daly from taking this oath, they effectively prevented her from being able to teach at any Pontifical Faculty of Theology. Despite Daly’s best efforts, she would never enter the halls of the Catholic University of America as a theology student or as a professor of theology.

Dr. Mary Daly’s journey as a laywoman diverges from that of Sisters Madeleva and Kathryn. She had no loyalty to a vow of obedience and was outspoken in her beliefs. In later years, she would come to refer to herself as a post-Christian, and after teaching at Boston College since the 1960s would end up retiring after a male she refused to admit into one of her classes on feminism sued her.⁸⁹ Her story represents a different path from those who remained in the Church and worked to make change from within it. Even six decades later, the anger Daly must have experienced in earning the same degree as clerical men around her and yet remaining an outsider continues to reverberate. What did the Church have to offer her? It seems her answer to that question was nothing. The leaders of the 20th century Church with whom Daly interacted were exclusionists unwilling to see the culture of their Church changed. Sadly, these men modeled a failure of the hierarchy to respond to and serve the needs of the People of God.

⁸⁸ This refusal both relieved and disgusted Daly. She agreed with many Modernist ideas and felt she would perjure herself by taking the oath, but she was disgusted by the implications of the Faculty’s refusal to allow her to take it.

⁸⁹ The New York Times, “Mary Daly.”

Daly's anger built up so intensely that she left the Catholic Church altogether. Her theology grew to support a matriarchal worldview in contrast to the stifling patriarchal atmosphere she confronted face-to-face throughout her education. Though she continued to teach at a US Catholic college, her departure from the Catholic Church meant that she could no longer make meaningful waves from within the community. Unfortunately, when institutions and communities not only fail to respond to people's needs but purposefully treat them without the respect and dignity they deserve, anger and eventual abandonment of those institutions ensues.

Sister Mary Ann Hinsdale, IHM

Women's admittance to the study and doing of theology in the Catholic Church of the 20th century involved struggle, tenacity, and anger. As the distance in time grew from Sister Julia's early work to open undergraduate Catholic education to women, more and more women, like Mary Daly, looked for admittance into educational programs that would provide them with the rigor they desired and afford them the opportunity to study the subjects that fascinated them. Sister Mary Ann Hinsdale, Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM), is part of this same third generation of American Catholic women scholars who have earned doctorates in theology. Her lecture "Women Shaping Theology" documents her own personal difficulties and blessings on the path to becoming a theologian. Sister Mary Ann grew up during the forties and fifties. She attended Catholic schools with her years at a Catholic girls' high school coinciding with the years of Vatican II. IHM sisters staffed and administered her high school. These resourceful and intelligent women

helped to pioneer an engaging and forward-thinking curriculum. They were also part of the Religious community which introduced the idea of the juniorate, “a period of two to three years following the novitiate in which sisters would remain at the motherhouse to complete their college degrees.”⁹⁰ This arose as a way to circumvent the taboo of women studying and practicing theology while also ensuring religious were well-educated beginning with their time of formation, likely a direct result of the Sister Formation Conference.⁹¹

Sister Mary Ann entered the IHM congregation in the fall following her high school graduation along with seventy-four other women. Just a few years later, the community would have only five postulants; the world was beginning to shift. It was during this initial formation that she and two other Sisters in formation received the opportunity to study in Freiburg, Germany. This was no coincidence; rather, it was part of an idea developed by Congregation’s General Superior, Sister Margaret Brennan, IHM. Sister Margaret had earned her PhD in the 1940’s from Saint Mary’s College. She realized that her Congregation would need theologians among its ranks “[s]o that women’s voices, scholarship and experience could be heard in a male-dominated church.”⁹² She sought to develop ten women theologians from the Order who would receive their education at preeminent theological institutions in Europe and North America.⁹³ Because of Sister Margaret’s plan, Sister Mary Ann traveled to Germany to

⁹⁰ Hinsdale, *Women Shaping Theology*, 26.

⁹¹ Refer to Chapter III for additional information on the SFC.

⁹² Marygrove College, “2010 Award Winners.”

⁹³ Hinsdale, *Women Shaping Theology*, 29.

pursue studies in German so that she when she began her graduate studies, she could read the work of German theologians in their mother tongue.

When she returned to the United States after a semester in Germany, Sister Mary Ann moved to a formation house in Washington, DC where she would study for her Master of Religious Education. It is important to note that Sister Mary Ann pursued a Master of Religious Education rather than a Master of Theology because the School of Theology at Catholic University was still composed almost exclusively of “seminarians and clerics pursuing ecclesiastical degrees and was not especially hospitable to women.”⁹⁴ Sister Mary Ann does mention that the situation changed with the eventual admission of laypeople to the program. Their admission was allowed once the Catholic University of America (CUA) established a new School of Religious Studies in 1973.⁹⁵

In the mid-1970s, Sister Mary Ann decided to pursue a doctorate in theology after she realized that a PhD would allow her to teach at the university level. She became a graduate student at Saint Michael’s Institute of Christian Thought in Toronto. Attending Saint Michael’s meant she was one of the few women who were studying theology there. She was often the only woman in her classes and notes that her “experiences [were]

⁹⁴ Ibid., 31.

⁹⁵ Yocum, *Joining the Revolution*, 31. In 1889, CUA had established a School of Sacred Sciences, which the University later divided into two separate schools of philosophy and theology. In 1932, the University created the Program of Religion within the School of Arts and Sciences. In 1923, John Montgomery Cooper published a series of essays on teaching religion to the laity as opposed to theology. He was a priest teaching at Catholic University of America at the time and had earned a doctorate in Sacred Theology. Cooper wrote that theology as a discipline should remain in seminary. Religion, as a “method to draw students into considering how to live as fully committed Catholics,” was an important subject to teach the laity (see *Joining the Revolution* page 31).

similar to that of many other women who were the first to integrate Catholic seminaries and theology schools during that time.”⁹⁶ After she earned her PhD, Sister Mary Ann moved on to teach theology. In fact, her “first professional position as a theologian was in a seminary,” which she admits “may sound strange, especially because Roman Catholic seminaries are no longer the most hospitable places for women to study theology, or for feminist theologians to teach!”⁹⁷ When she first began teaching, however, seminaries were an ideal place for women to study and teach theology in that they offered challenging, intellectual environments and had a myriad of resources available to aid in their study and teaching.

Sister Mary Ann’s story offers a firsthand account of the third generation of women theologians. These women, through the hard work of women like Sister Julia, Sister Madeleva, Sister Kathryn, and Dr. Mary Daly before them, were able to enroll in doctoral programs and graduate from them. She admits that “[t]rying to make sense of these gaps between proclamation and praxis in the Church presents a considerable challenge for anyone who teaches.”⁹⁸ The heartbeat of her story is hope and action, and she recognizes that, “[t]he fact that women’s social location often finds one situated on the margins...offers a vantage point from which one more easily sees these inconsistencies and contradictions.”⁹⁹ Because of this, women can offer fresh insight, especially in their study of theology. Mary Ann reminded her audience during the 2004

⁹⁶ Hinsdale, *Women Shaping Theology*, 38.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 50-1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality about:

how great a debt U.S. Catholic women theologians owe to the visionary, systematic plan that revolutionized the professional training of women religious and the impact it has had on the education of later generations of North American Catholic women.¹⁰⁰

The plan to which she refers is the plan of the Sister Formation Conference. It allowed more opportunity for women to become degreed theologians, and it gave more women an opportunity to speak and be heard. Beyond this, and admittedly a more radical reading of the consequences of women's education, the opening of graduate theological programs for religious and laywomen created a dramatic shift in how the Church operated. It took gentle prodding, support from elements of the hierarchy, money, time, and some anger sprinkled throughout, but eventually, Catholic educational institutions of America became places where women had the opportunity to study theology.

Consequences of Graduate Admittance

This third generation of women, here modeled by Dr. Mary Daly and Sister Mary Ann Hinsdale, IHM, contributed to the entire body of Christ through their struggle to see the doors of the institutional Church thrown wide open. It is vitally important that the Church listen to all voices. When any member of the community is silenced, every person within it suffers. Without women contributing to the life of the Church and aiding in the development of doctrine, the Church breathes as if through one lung instead of two. Sometimes too, as in the case of Daly, the silencing rips the Body apart, making it

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 12-13.

necessary for those silenced to remove themselves from the Body completely rather than remain in their designated roles. Women contribute unique perspectives to the Church and add to the overall health of the entire community. It is imperative that all people, not just women, have a platform to be heard and are not only permitted but encouraged to participate fully in the life of the Church.

CHAPTER V

ECCLESIOLOGICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF THE LEGACIES

OF THESE THREE GENERATIONS OF WOMEN

Pope Francis insists that the Church must penetrate the world. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis makes his point explicitly, stating:

I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: “Give them something to eat” (Mk 6:37).¹⁰¹

The Church community of colleges and universities is certainly bruised, hurting and dirty, because it has allowed itself to be open to the pummeling. The beauty of the community present throughout universities is that it allows Christ to take root in meaningful ways in the lives of young people. Education acts as a till, ripping up old soil and freshening it through new thought patterns and exposure to opposing perspectives. At a time when the media portrays the Church as a fading institution with little relevance

¹⁰¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Paragraph 49.

in the modern world, universities are exactly the place where it can thrive and grow.

Later in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis recognizes this trait of colleges:

Universities are outstanding environments for articulating and developing this evangelizing commitment in an interdisciplinary and integrated way. Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture, even in those countries and cities where hostile situations challenge us to greater creativity in our search for suitable methods.¹⁰²

Universities offer a platform for encounter with Christ, and Sister Julia as an educator, helped bolster that platform. Julia, in her efforts to create a space where Catholic women would be able to study after high school, set in motion a chain of events that would ripple throughout the 20th century. Though she faced objections, she persisted. Despite the Catholic University of America's refusal, as well as the refusal of other prominent universities, to allow young women to study in its classrooms, Sister Julia pressed on to create a solution that benefited the entire Church. Today, Trinity College continues to serve young women. When upper middle class and wealthy white women sought education elsewhere in the 1960s and 1970s, Trinity was able to reimagine itself as a bastion of education for minority women.¹⁰³ Rebranded as Trinity Washington University, the undergraduate school remains single-sex. Sister Julia's vision of inclusive education lives on in the Trinity of the 21st century.

¹⁰² Ibid., Paragraph 134.

¹⁰³ The Georgetown Voice, "The Fall and Rise."

Years later, Catholic University would offer another refusal to another Sister.¹⁰⁴ When Sister Madeleva looked for an existing educational institution that could serve the needs of her teaching Sisters, Catholic University once again failed to offer support. Much like Sister Julia, Madeleva leveraged her leadership skills, looked to her relationships with members of the Church, and drew from a well of courage to create a solution without the help of CUA or the other existing Catholic universities that refused her proposal. This solution, the creation of a graduate theology program at Saint Mary's University, involved the hierarchy of the Church without calling upon these men to act. This fact is hugely important. Julia and Madeleva responded to the needs of the Church through leadership with *support* from the hierarchy. As women and as Sisters, they found ways to enrich the entire Church without demanding already overextended bishops and priests drive their chosen solutions.

Yet, education here represents a way of participating in and being Church, not simply a means to an end. It also demonstrates one way Religious and the laity were able to create positive change in the US Catholic Church. Today, leadership offered by Religious and the laity in the context of the Church community can make a tremendous impact. Bishops and priests remain important, but those outside of the collar can drive change, too. Instead of waiting for action from Pope Francis or the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, modern-day Churchgoers can take heart in the stories of Sisters Julia, Madeleva, Kathryn, and Mary Ann. In Mary Daly, too, the entire Church

¹⁰⁴ The blame does not rest completely with Catholic University. That institution followed accepted cultural and Church norms of the time just as the other Universities that refused Sister Madeleva's proposal did. The complex topic of dissent from accepted opinions and sources of authority is one for another paper.

community can find a tangible example of what happens when the Church fails to respond to people's true needs. With the inclination to work hard, much can be accomplished with a plan in mind and the willingness to hear many "no's" before that final "yes" comes.

Racism and the Catholic Church

While this paper traces the stories of five women in their search to make education accessible for fellow women, there are still others who continue to feel purposefully excluded by the Catholic Church. Dr. Shawn Copeland highlights the atmosphere of racism and unwelcome that persists in the Church in the United States. In fact, many white theologians shy away from the topic of racism in the Church, unwilling to address the roots of evil and choosing instead to hide from the failure of the institutional Church to make a meaningful impact during the Civil Rights Movement. As of 2010, only about 20 people of African-descent living in the United States held PhDs in Catholic theology.¹⁰⁵ The flight of wealthy white Catholics and their Churches to the suburbs has most certainly had a hand in these low numbers. From an ecclesiological perspective, with fewer African-Americans holding PhDs in theology, the entire Body suffers. Copeland finds strength in the theologians who do choose to speak out against racism in the Church:

Scholars like these, both black and white, work in the service of faith—exposing racism's sin against the body of Christ, its defilement of the sacrament and

¹⁰⁵ Massingale, *Racial Justice*, 162.

celebration of the Eucharist, its disruption of the bonds of charity and love that draw us into union with God and one another, and its mockery of the self-gift of the One who nourishes us with his very flesh and blood.¹⁰⁶

The courage of confronting the sin of racism is the same courage that the three generations of women described above had in confronting the misogyny of their own times. In the traditional and sometimes rigid atmosphere of the Church, exposition of wrongdoing can seem terrifying and without benefit. Yet, the community aches for the exposition. It is time the laity participated in throwing open the doors of the Church.

The Beauty of Diverse Celebration as Modeled by the US Hispanic Approach

Modern-day white Catholics seem to take heart in attending Church services that consist of worshipers who look like themselves. Ecclesial sameness drives comfort rather than challenge, but where is the richness that comes from a diverse community gathered to worship? Perhaps the comfort that keeps the regulars coming is the same comfort that keeps the newcomers out. Theologically, too, diverse worship within the Catholic Church contributes to a fuller experience of Christ and the sacraments. Roberto Goizueta explores this in his book *Caminemos Con Jesus: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment*. He argues that US Hispanics view the person as sacrament and that the US Hispanic community is fundamentally sacramental. Goizueta notes that recognizing something as a sacrament is to recognize the “intrinsic value” present in the concrete being or object.¹⁰⁷ This relates to a description he gives of the popular devotion

¹⁰⁶ America Magazine, “Black Theology.”

¹⁰⁷ Goizueta, *Caminemos*, 49.

of the reenactment of Jesus crucified as the community watches during Holy Week. Just as the Eucharist involves the particular physical presence of bread and wine, Good Friday reenacted involves the particular physical presence of human persons. The service is not a silent, meditative experience. Rather, it truly involves members of the Church, as well as sounds, smells, and even foot travel. Goizueta notes the agonizing moments as the Roman guard nails Jesus to the cross. One hears and sees not only the hammer but also the gasps coming from the crowd and the tears streaming down believers' faces. These are the concrete functions of sacrament, and here, Jesus as a physical *person* functions as the ultimate sacrament. The recognition of the importance of the concrete nature of the sacrament then points to the deeper realization that the sacrament reveals the supernatural and the Absolute. During the Good Friday reenactment, the believers in the crowd weep not just because they remember the physical pain Jesus endured but also because they recognize the Absolute present in this sacrament. The first step is in this community recognizing the particular and natural present as they reenact the crucifixion. The second, transformative step is in this community recognizing and loving the Creator to whom this reenactment points. The community mediates this sacramental experience, illustrating the bridge between Jesus as physical person and Jesus as Creator. Many Catholics have complained about how boring and personally unsatisfying the mass is, yet Goizueta's description makes the events celebrated by the US Hispanic community seem anything but tedious.

Goizueta argues that the US Hispanic understanding of religion is that it is a living out of relationships. This includes the belief that human relationships have meaning in and of themselves; they are not instruments or tools used to "make" or "do"

life better. Implicit in this understanding of religion is the view that the preferential option for the poor is a necessary and inherent part of human relationships. Goizueta's concern is emphasizing proper praxis, which means recognizing this understanding that the poor are not instruments to be manipulated but rather human beings who bear Life and Truth.¹⁰⁸ One must realize that social justice is merely a “byproduct” of having real relationships with the poor. In this understanding, achieving a just society is, paradoxically, never the desired end because that end holds the poor as objects. Goizueta repeatedly highlights the idea that the preferential option for the poor exposes the failure of others to embrace beauty and Truth. He believes this is a fundamental rejection of what human relationships truly demand, that is, walking hand-in-hand through life. Christ modeled this behavior while He walked on earth. His tendency was always inclusion and invitation rather than sameness and exclusion. Sisters Julia and Madeleva, in caring for the “poor” and excluded women of their time, modeled the behavior of Christ and continue to serve as models for modern-day Catholics looking to transform the Church around them. Sisters Kathryn and Mary Ann, as well as Mary Daly, also serve as archetypes of transformation. These three generations of women followed the path of Christ in their efforts to break down and through barriers to inclusive education.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 106-7, 211.

How the Suffering of Women Relates to the Suffering of Others

Working toward inclusive education was not without suffering. Elizabeth Johnson explores the experience of women suffering as it relates to the image of the suffering God in her book *She Who Is*. Johnson uses female metaphors to illustrate women's particular experience of pain in the world. One female metaphor is degradation, which includes beatings, sexual assault, and other forms of abuse brought on by virtue of women's place as females within a male-dominated society. Johnson examines this experience through several examples. The first is the story of the Bethlehem woman from Judges who is raped, tortured, and killed at the hands of men. The second example is a list of women who were tried as witches during the Inquisition and then executed; this list is an example of officially sanctioned degradation of women by male leaders. The third example comes from a poem written by Michele Najlis detailing the suffering of Nicaraguans detained by the government. Johnson uses all three examples to illuminate the unique experience women have of suffering. Johnson goes on to argue that the experience of suffering particular to women is one way women share in the *imago Dei* and the *imago Christi*. She points to her three examples as illustrations not just of women suffering but of Christ marred in his own suffering. Johnson elaborates, arguing that the painful experiences of women are shared by God. Therefore, in Johnson's view, when a woman is raped, God is likewise violated. The exploration of women's experiences of suffering as shared by God gives rise to an understanding of God as One who stands in solidarity with the abused.

The experience of women suffering is one example of an application of Johnson's theological method using the category of experience. The experience of suffering that African American Catholics and US Hispanic Catholics have in the modern-day Church is akin to that of women like Dr. Mary Daly just a few decades ago. Johnson uses the category of experience as part of her theological method, specifically the experience of women suffering within patriarchal systems. An example of this suffering is the use of solely masculine pronouns to express the fullness of God to the exclusion of feminine pronouns. To Johnson, exclusive use of male depictions of God is a tactic employed purposefully to diminish the dignity of women.¹⁰⁹

If exclusive use of male depictions of God diminishes the dignity of women, then the exclusive use of white depictions of Jesus diminishes the dignity of those human beings who are not white. Yet even with evidence that Jesus was likely a man with brown eyes and black hair, images of Him as blue-eyed and pale dominate Churches.¹¹⁰ Part of this depiction is normal: people appropriate Christ to themselves as a natural part of life. Yet, in the face of all of the other issues the Catholic Church experiences and in the face of rampant low-attendance and low giving, is it not time that this comfort were abandoned, too? The "nones" of the United States complain that the Catholic Church is outdated and fails to model the true diversity of the world around it. Standard churchgoers may feel alienated as the community inside Church walls begins to more accurately reflect the community outside of it, but others will want to come to Churches that accurately represent the diversity around them. In abandoning a purely white

¹⁰⁹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 38.

¹¹⁰ Live Science, "What Did Jesus Really Look Like."

portrayal of Jesus and in living out inclusivity, the Catholic Church community may actually find itself growing rather than continuing to shrink.

The success of Sisters Julia and Madeleva in throwing open the doors of Catholic education to women and men outside of the priesthood speaks to the ability of those within the Church to make positive waves. Acceptance of the status quo rarely leads to earthshattering change. Had Julia and Madeleva accepted the educational structures and methods that existed around them, women like Dr. Mary Daly and Sister Mary Ann would not have had the same opportunities they did. Positive change builds upon positive change. The importance lies in starting the pursuit and in having the courage to continue despite challenges.

A Role for the Laity: Two Viewpoints

In particular, Sisters Julia and Madeleva represent gendered models for transformation of the Church from within its own structures. More specifically, they represent the contributions of religious women. Richard Gaillardetz, in *By What Authority* explores what the contributions of the laity can be in the modern Church. He understands authority to be less about power and more about a quality of relationship. Through revelation, human beings come to understand that they are called to be friends of God and share in Divine life. The Church, considering this, is not a military structure with generals at the top of the pyramid who receive privileged information and then pass it down through a chain of people to the lowest ranking. Instead, the Church, as ordered spiritual communion, consists of members who all share in the revelation and the self-

gift. Gaillardetz's understanding of this spiritual communion influences his understanding of the role of the laity as part of the Pilgrim Church. The community of equal persons is one in which "all are called by virtue of their baptism, to submit themselves to hear God's Word, and discern God's will in the concrete circumstances of the community."¹¹¹ The laity participate in the Catholic imagination together with the ordained. They, as Newman described, breathe together with bishops, priests, and deacons.¹¹²

Gaillardetz dives deeper into the role of the laity in his article "Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction." He continues to develop his picture of the Church through this exploration. He makes clear the importance of the laity in the life of the Church; the laity are called to active participation in the Church's apostolate. These, then, are not women and men who sit idly in churches with no firm role. Rather, these are people who share in the priesthood of Christ. Gaillardetz describes the laity as people who have authority and expertise. He cites *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* as Church documents that shape his understanding. Gaillardetz acknowledges the distinction between the roles of the ordained and the laity, but he asserts that these roles exist in a common matrix. He emphasizes the idea that the Church is in the world and both the laity and the ordained are called to minister in this world.

Promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Co-Workers in the Vineyard* focuses on an ecclesiological vision that emphasizes both the spiritual foundations of lay ecclesial ministry and the difference between the lay and the

¹¹¹ Gaillardetz, *By What Authority*, 62.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 111.

ordained. The spiritual foundations of lay ecclesial ministry grow out of the Sacraments of Initiation, as well as a life lived nourished by the Church. Within the Church, the roles of the laity and the ordained remain distinct, though all people are called to share in the life and love of God. Each member of the body has a specific function that cannot be duplicated by another. *Co-Workers* also calls upon the apostle Paul to illustrate a specific ecclesiology. Lay ecclesial ministers are “co-workers in Christ Jesus.”¹¹³ They play a specific and important role. The ecclesiological vision of *Co-Workers*, then, consists of an ordered Church in which all people share in the life of Christ. The emphasis in this vision remains on the distinct functions each member performs. That is, if the laity are to be the feet, then they cannot and should not be the hands. In this way, each person contributes to the building up of the kingdom to the fullest extent possible.¹¹⁴

There are points where the ecclesiological visions of Gaillardetz and the USCCB as seen in *Co-Workers* converge. The most important is perhaps their joint emphasis on the Sacraments of Initiation, especially baptism. Both visions find their focus in baptism. A person is called by God and becomes a member of the Church through this Sacrament. In this, a member of the Church can share in the responsibility and even authority entrusted to the Church by God. The second point of convergence, which relates to baptism, is that of the common priesthood. Through water and ritual, women and men share in the life and work of Christ. Gaillardetz illustrates this practically through his explanation of Saint Paul’s use of the term *koinonia*. *Koinonia*, meaning

¹¹³ See Romans 16:3-16.

¹¹⁴ USCCB, “Co-Workers in the Vineyard.”

communion or participation, refers to participation in the Body of Christ. Gaillardetz argues that the Church was and continues to be one in which all members participate in the sacramental life by virtue of their baptism. *Co-Workers*, too, exhibits this understanding of the Church as a community of people who share in the common priesthood. Through baptism and confirmation, every single person takes on the mission of the Church, assuming roles and functions that contribute to the building up of the kingdom. These are important and meaning points of convergence that allow a common conversation between the two to continue.

Where the ecclesiological visions diverge is in their treatment of the role of the laity and the way in which it is to exist in the life of the Church. Gaillardetz notes that one could use a specific reading of *Lumen Gentium* to support the “traditional lay-clergy distinctions” and a contrastive view of the laity.¹¹⁵ However, he argues in favor of viewing the Church as “in” the world, with secular experiences common to both the lay and the ordained person.¹¹⁶ The roles, he acknowledges, are distinct, but this distinction is not found in baptism. His emphasis on this seems to be a way for him to combat an overly-clerical understanding of the Church.

On the other hand, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard* views the roles as easily distinguishable. The document also highlights the danger of any blurring of the lines. The roles are collaborative, but they are most certainly specific. The laity, though sharers in the common priesthood, receive their authority to serve as lay ecclesial ministers from bishops or their delegates. They cannot take on the authority to serve of

¹¹⁵ Gaillardetz, *By What Authority?*, 22.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 125.

their own volition. Rather, they discern a call from God together with their families and then receive permission to live out the call from their local bishop. These two views of the authority of the laity and their place within the life of the Church stand in direct contrast to each other. Though Gaillardetz does not propose the laity take the place of priests and *Co-Workers* does not propose priests take the place of the laity, the language expressed by either side captures a certain picture of the Church. What is truly at stake here is the way in which Catholics live out their lives as part of the Church. Sisters Julia and Madeleva represent non-clerical members of the Church who played a crucial part in transforming it. A sketch of their ecclesiology would align more closely with Gaillardetz's understanding of what it means to be Church while still fitting in with the USCCB's explanation that authority flows through the hierarchy. In their pursuit of inclusive education, Sisters Julia and Madeleva included key members of the hierarchy while still living out their given baptismal authority.

Stretching the span of the Catholic Imagination, one finds a multitude of portraits of the Church. The portrait of the Church that arises from investigating the life and work of these three generations of women, as well as the one painted by Gaillardetz, is one in which Religious and laity both receive the authority to lead, shape, and ultimately transform the Church through the hierarchy. By virtue of baptism, the laity take on not only the title of Christian but also enjoy divine permission to become changemakers within Christ's Church.

But Still, Why Be Catholic Today At All?

The opening of education speaks to so many other areas across the Catholic Church. As written above, it uproots traditional notions in the Church and illuminates where other work is to be done, specifically around racism in the Church.¹¹⁷ The important lesson from an ecclesiological perspective is in recognizing that throwing open Church doors never bastardizes Christ or His message, as well as understanding that the laity can be the ones to throw open Church doors. The humility of Jesus is such that He allows Himself to be contained in a tiny vessel that appears as bread to the naked eye. In return, His demand of the community is that as hands and feet each member deliver Him those people in need.

Still, with a history of failing to heed Christ's call to inclusion, from excluding women from Catholic education to allowing rampant racism in the Church to bishops lying to protect their friends, why might a modern parent baptize her child into the Church or encourage her child to attend Catholic schools and universities? Despite the failures and the sin of the Church, Christ still resides at the heart of the Body. Through the sacraments, members of the Catholic community experience the love and grace of God. The theologian Louis-Marie Chauvet advocates a symbolic way of understanding sacraments that goes beyond the classic way of emphasizing causality and instrument but is not the contrary of it. This classic way explains sacraments as both a means of

¹¹⁷ Certainly there are other areas of the Catholic Church that require more investigation. This paper is not the space to talk about them but some of the highlights are: reopening the diaconate to women, exploring the prospect of women priests, and further investigating marriage and the priesthood.

salvation and a medium through which God gives grace.¹¹⁸ Chauvet remarks that the cultural milieu of the Church affects the potency of the classic way in describing sacraments. Modern thinkers, he believes, end up viewing sacraments as tools that are part of a quasi-automatic nature without fully appreciating the depth Thomas Aquinas' language meant to convey. In light of this, he proposes a symbolic way which moves the modern closer to the mystery, allowing her to better conceptualize what the Church believes.¹¹⁹

Chauvet details several examples of symbols to demonstrate his point. One example is that of the Berlin Wall and everything the image of that Wall might communicate to a person without words. The efficacy of the symbol exists in its ability to conjure feelings and ideas without explicit thought on the part of the observer. Chauvet then details four traits of symbols, including the idea that they "fit together."¹²⁰ For example, a stone from the Berlin Wall in isolation is simply a piece of rock. When joined to the whole, the symbol functions properly; the stone conjures the entirety of the Berlin Wall and all that it suggests. An isolated symbol ceases to have the efficacy that a symbol joined to the whole has. The use of symbol, then, assists moderns in appreciating the whole of Christian identity that sacraments both reveal and form.

Chauvet's pastoral approach likewise reflects his belief that the Church exists within a particular cultural milieu. In deference to this milieu, pastors and worshippers

¹¹⁸ Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, xxiv-xxv.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

alike ought to recognize that the path of renewal for Christian communities operates in tandem with socio-cultural assumptions. Chauvet details the rite of passage of baptism, remarking that rites of passage “symbolically integrate” threatening events into the culture.¹²¹ For example, naming a new child creates a sense of comfort amid the chaotic occurrence of birth. Similarly, the symbolic nature of baptism continues to hold cultural significance even in a secular society. He uses the example of parents who seek baptism for their child because they want the child to “be like everybody.”¹²² Parents, motivated by socio-cultural assumptions, might request baptism even without consciously understanding the weight of their desire. Here, Chauvet argues, the weight is “*symbolic*” and pastors might create heartache by failing to clearly recognize the impact denying the request will have. The sacrament, neither a tool nor a magic trick, links the parents to the whole, functioning as a symbol of the hope that these parents will embrace the Gospel. Chauvet’s symbolic understanding of sacraments in the Catholic Church provides context for why many remain in the community despite its collective failings. Likewise the symbolic nature of education continues to hold cultural significance in today’s secular society just as it did in 1899 and just as it did in 1943.

A Timeless Church

The Catholic Church is one that has existed for centuries. Yet the post-Vatican II modern-day United States Catholic Church has become detached from its history. The

¹²¹ Ibid., 173.

¹²² Ibid., 181.

Church of today has become centered on those who are presently gathered for worship, but this narrow vision does not represent the sum total of the community. The Church exists, and Catholics come to it; it does not vanish when the mass ends. This Church is the one in which Sisters Julia, Madeleva, Kathryn, and Mary Ann worked and continue to work! This is a Church that is both the here and now and the yet to come. The communal and timeless nature of *this* Church is wherein the hope resides. If the Church is merely what exists in this moment, it is a weak stand-in for what Christ bequeathed to the People of God, but if the Church is one that stretches forwards and backwards, and even spirals outside of the human perception of time, it is then something that has God at its center. Teilhard de Chardin aptly describes this as the divine milieu. Like babies in utero surrounded and nourished by life sustaining amniotic fluid, humanity exists in the glory of God, the divine milieu that sustains all people and all creatures.¹²³ That same divine milieu sustained the three generations of women profiled above. These women demonstrate that refreshing change can exist within the bounds of the community. Both Religious and the laity can indeed throw the doors of the Church wide open. In this knowledge, there is hope for the future of the Catholic Church in the United States.

¹²³ For more on the divine milieu, see Teilhard de Chardin's *The Divine Milieu*.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Sister Julia McGroary, Sister Madeleva Wolff, Sister Kathryn Sullivan, Doctor Mary Daly, and Sister Mary Ann Hinsdale represent three generations of women who sacrificed to open greater educational opportunities, and thus greater Church access, to other women. Each saw true needs and worked to address them. Their response in the face of adversity was not to throw up their hands and accept their current situations as final. Instead, they found ways to offer solutions to the hierarchy. These solutions were complex, well thought out, and included assistance from bishops without demanding they explicitly become involved. In taking inspiration from these women, it is important to note that they were empowered by the Church community first and the hierarchy second. In the face of modern-day Church scandals and sin, this knowledge remains key. The Church of 33 AD and the Church of 2018 AD are part of the same body, exist in the same divine milieu, and find strength in the same God. Despite sin and adversity, the Catholic Church continues to reflect the light of Christ in the multitude of faces that make up this Body.

It seems the most important thing the laity can do is to ensure they are not mere followers of the status quo but leaders who truly allow Christ to light up the places and spaces they inhabit. It is easy to ignore the challenges, but this is not what Christ demands. It is not what the Church of the 21st century needs. Knowing that the changes

will be painful and that the conversations surrounding those changes will not be easy is no excuse for refusing to start.

Ecclesial change grows out of the depths of human hearts passionately in love with God. Paul emphasizes the communal nature of the Church:

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.¹²⁴

Each member of the community plays a key role in ensuring the Body can function. In the stories of these three generations of women, it becomes evident that the Body needs every member to participate fully. Sister Julia’s efforts to found Trinity College, Sister Madeleva’s tenacity in establishing a graduate theology program, Sister Kathryn’s persistence despite refusal to recognize her scholarly abilities, Doctor Mary Daly’s experience of exclusion, and Sister Mary Ann’s pursuit of a doctorate of theology stand in direct contrast with the notion that change in the Church must come from the hierarchy.

¹²⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:21-26, NRSV.

Possibilities for Further Research

Briefly touched on in the work are the additional possibilities that exist for further research. There remain areas of the United States Catholic Church that feel forbidden to the laity or to certain races and genders. Rather than offering healing, time may only make current divisions wider and more defined. To stop this growing divide, the Church community, including the Church hierarchy, must examine itself and work diligently to root out sin and exclusionist tendencies. As Sisters Julia, Madeleva, Kathryn, and Mary Ann modeled, though many may see the need for change, few will have the courage to work with the hierarchy to enact it.¹²⁵ The laity has the power and the talent to offer meaningful solutions to the entire Church. The burden rests on them to ensure the Church reflects the truest image of Christ possible. Integral to positive change is cooperation by disadvantaged and disenfranchised members of the Church community. Dr. Mary Daly's personal experiences are a powerful reminder that exclusion leads to anger that bears little lasting fruit within the Church itself.

Final Thoughts

Perhaps Saint Julie Billiart guessed at what was to come through her order, directing her Sisters to "set self completely aside in order to devote yourselves unreservedly to the interests of the good God. Never will I suffer amongst us those souls

¹²⁵ Few may have the encouragement, too.

without courage, those womanish hearts which cannot endure anything.”¹²⁶ Pope Francis offers a similar sentiment in *Gaudete et Exsultate*:

Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy. On the contrary, you will become what the Father had in mind when he created you, and you will be faithful to your deepest self. To depend on God sets us free from every form of enslavement and leads us to recognize our great dignity.¹²⁷

The stories of Sisters Julia, Madeleva, Kathryn, and Mary Ann represent hope for what the future of the Church may be. These were women who were unafraid of holiness. They live and breathe as part of the very same Church that started on the heels of a crucifixion and has survived for two thousand years. This Church is a Church made up of strong, talented women and men who have the expertise to make positive change from within. They need only take the first step.

¹²⁶ Sister Helen Louise, *Sister Julia*, 45.

¹²⁷ Francis. *Gaudete*, 32.

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