

Features



Rosalie Muschal-Reinhardt, a religious studies teacher at Nazareth Academy, is a member of the national Mary's Pence foundation board.

Foundation to offer outlet for talents of 'poor' women

By Teresa A. Parsons

Rosalie Muschal-Reinhardt likes to imagine what she could accomplish with a nickel donation from every spectator who crowded the stadium for a single major-league baseball game.

Mary's Pence is an attempt to put that fantasy to work by connecting grass-roots support directly to programs and projects that aid poor women.

"It's something to give women who have no money a glimmer of hope that their dream may come true," explained Muschal-Reinhardt, a Fairport resident who serves on the national Mary's Pence foundation board. "Can you imagine the things this world has been denied because women have not been able to express their creativity?"

Mary's Pence was conceived from the frustration and anger of a group of Chicago-based Catholic women who were denied a request for funding from the Archdiocese of Chicago, according to Maureen Gallagher, the foundation's national coordinator. The women, who worked as volunteers with female inmates at Chicago's Cook County Jail, had personally raised three-quarters of the \$20,000 salary needed to hire a women's chaplain for the jail, but were unable to find the last \$5,000 to meet the warden's budget deadline.

Out of concern for the lack of Church funding for similar ministries to and by women, the group decided to organize a national foundation that would redirect resources toward "those with the least power in our Church and our society."

"Money is the issue," Muschal-Reinhardt said. "I don't think you have to be too astute to notice that women and money have been separated."

Although the foundation aims to serve "poor women," Mary's Pence organizers will not rely on income as the ultimate indication of who is poor and who is not. "We have learned not to categorize," Muschal-Reinhardt said. "There are middle-class women who are poor, who have no access to funds. When we say poor women, you might be surprised what they might look like."

She noted that lay women in particular often lack the support base that could provide them with finances to study theology or the technical expertise to establish an outreach program. Muschal-Reinhardt recalled that by the time she earned her master's of divinity degree in 1977, she had spent more than \$50,000. "The numbers (of other women) who dropped out were incredible; meanwhile, the men (most of whom were seminarians) generally went for free," she said.

Mary's Pence intends to offer women grants and scholarships, technical assistance in grant-writing and legal areas, and enlarged support networks to develop such ministries as women's shelters, legal services, housing advocacy, economic development and centers for creative liturgy, theology and healing.

When the foundation was incorporated last July, its organizers asked Muschal-Reinhardt, a religious studies teacher at Nazareth Academy and an early activist in the Catholic feminist movement, to serve on its board along with such other notable women as theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether; author and lecturer Sister Mary Luke Tobin, SL; and Dagmar I. Celeste, first lady of Ohio and wife of governor Richard Celeste.

Mary's Pence was named for the three Marys of the Gospels — Mary of Nazareth, Mary of Bethany; and Mary Magdalen. The foundation's title also recalls Miriam, the prophet of Hebrew Scripture, and "Las Marias," the nameless poor women of the world.

The name also obviously parallels Peter's Pence, the annual collection for the maintenance of the pope and his charitable works. Although Gallagher conceded that Mary's Pence was conceived at least partly out of anger, she said that board members have since channeled that anger in a positive direction.

Organizers now disavow any intent to counter other Church collections. "If you're for something, you're not necessarily against the other," Muschal-Reinhardt explained. "All we really tried to do was establish an option... Some people don't give to the Church because they see that women don't have decision-

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Diocesan evaluation underway on pastoral letter on women's concerns

By Lee Strong

When the committee writing the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on women's concerns released its first draft in April, its members requested that individuals, groups and dioceses throughout the country study the document and submit evaluations to help guide them in writing the final draft.

Their request is being respected in the Diocese of Rochester — as is appropriate for the home diocese of one of the letter's writers, Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

On June 4, the diocesan Commission on Women met to assess the document, and its report is currently being readied for release. The Women's Ordination Conference has held three evaluation sessions: at Good Shepherd on June 14; at Corpus Christi on July 13; and at St. Mary's in Rochester on August 24. The Religious Education Council will evaluate the letter on September 1, and diocesan pastoral assistants will be offering a critique of the document on September 22. In October, the Mercy Prayer Center will offer four Tuesday-night sessions, each focusing on one section of the document.

But even as the evaluation process continues, groups across the country are waiting for the release this fall of a document on women from Pope John Paul II. The document is a response to concerns raised during the 1987 Synod of Bishops' discussion of the role of the laity.

Volunteers, rare volumes sought for used book bazaar

The Judicial Process Commission of the Genesee Ecumenical Ministries needs volunteers for a used and rare book bazaar from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 17, at the Downtown Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St. Rochester.

Institute's prayer group to begin meeting soon

The weekly meetings of the SSJ Spirituality Institute's Bible Study and Prayer Group will begin Thursday, September 1, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. The meetings, which will be led by Ruth R. Roy, will take place at the Sister of St. Joseph Motherhouse, 4095 East Ave., Rochester.

"We know it's coming and it's fairly clear it will have some kind of modifying effect on the thinking that will go into the second draft (of the bishops' letter)," said Sister Joan Sobala, SSJ, a member of the ordination conference.

Sister Sobala said that based on discussions she's had this summer, she's aware that people from across the country are waiting to see what the pope says.

"The feeling is that it will be one of those statements that move us more deeply into the issue," Sister Sobala said. "Any Roman document is important insofar as it presents us with a way of looking at reality which we can then test against our experience of the Holy Spirit."

Toinette Eugene, who is a consultant for the bishops' committee writing the pastoral letter, noted that even if the pope's document wasn't forthcoming, the bishops have had to keep Rome in mind as they are preparing the pastoral.

"The bishops have the problem of trying to reflect the expectations of Rome and the current realities in the Church, and yet say, 'We have to raise the issue of women in society and the Church,'" the Colgate Divinity School provost noted.

In light of the balancing act they've had to perform thus far, the bishops have made a good attempt to be reflective and to listen to the voices of women in the first draft, Eugene

said. The provost, who spoke at the August 24 evaluation session at St. Mary's, outlined the process the bishops used in writing the first draft. She also offered some reflections on responses to the document thus far, and pointed to areas in the document that she thought needed revision.

One major problem with the document at this point is that the bishops, in trying to be inclusive, have incorporated repetitive statements and conflicting views which tend to cancel each other out, Eugene observed. She also noted that the document raises issues, but does not offer solutions. "What are we going to do with it?" she asked. "What are the proposals for action?"

One action already being taken is the creation of a scholarship fund for women at St. Bernard's Institute. Although the fund is not directly linked to the pastoral, its intention fulfills one of the pastoral letter's general thrusts: preparing women to assume more leadership positions within the Church.

Crusade

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Interest in Rochester's crusade has also been piqued by the Rev. Graham's visit to Buffalo August 1-7. Turnout for the Buffalo crusade, which was originally scheduled for May, apparently did not suffer from the delay or the 90-degree heat and humidity. Officials reported that on average, more than 17,000 people attended each of the first six days' services. The crusade's final night drew a capacity crowd of more than 20,000 to Buffalo's Pilot Field.

In addition to the Buffalo and Rochester crusades, Rev. Graham has scheduled appearances in Hamilton, Ontario, in October, and in Syracuse, N.Y., the following April.

Kirchoff, for one, believes that the Rev. Graham's concentration on upstate New York is no accident. In November, 1986 — more than half a year before the crusade was announced — he began joining other local residents each week to pray for a renewal of the Rochester area. "(The Rochester crusade) didn't just happen. It was prayed into existence," he said. "It's

In a letter announcing the creation of the fund, Bishop Clark pointed out that one way to attack the sin of sexism mentioned in the pastoral letter is to provide greater educational opportunities for women so that they can assume positions of responsibility in the Church. He made a donation to the fund and is encouraging others to do so. Currently, the fund has \$12,000 in donations and \$4,000 in pledges towards its target of \$50,000. The first scholarship from the fund is scheduled to be awarded in 1989.

"It's just a matter of conscience," observed Jura Litchfield, director of development at St. Bernard's. "Women are the majority of the people in the pews. They make up a majority of the people on committees and they do a lot of the work in parishes."

"They are excluded from some leadership positions, but we believe with time, more positions will open and women need to be prepared," Litchfield said. "This is the future of the Church."

the Lord's work, and He won't let it fail!"

As for what the crusade can accomplish, Catholic participants hope it will revive their parishes "pew fodder" — those whose faith has lost its life and vigor.

"For St. Charles Parish, I hope it will bring back people who have fallen away from going to church, that it will enlighten them to make them feel they want to be in fellowship with other people and they want to feel good about themselves," Liddle said.

New retreat group set to meet in September

A new "At Home Retreat" group will begin holding sessions on Monday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. beginning September 19.

The "At Home Retreat" is based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and is given to a limited number of women in the home of one of the participants. The group meets weekly for two hours over a period of 13 weeks.

Call Sr. Anna Louise Staub, SSJ, at (716)586-8291, or Kathy Murty at (716)436-1284 for information.