UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

LABOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN'S CATHOLICISM

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

JOHN J. BUCHKOSKI

Norman, Oklahoma

2020

LABOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN'S CATHOLICISM

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Kathleen A. Brosnan, Chair

Dr. Jennifer L. Holland

Dr. Jill A. Irvine

Dr. Rhona Seidelman

Dr. David M. Wrobel

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how the United Farm Worker movement inspired Catholic women to adapt their relationship to the environment. Liberal nuns, who had participated in the civil rights movement, initially saw advocating for worker rights as part of their social justice mission. By the 1970s, these women used their positions as teachers, nurses, and administrators to publicize the plight of and agricultural laborers. They incorporated information from the fields into their curriculum and supported fruit and vegetable boycotts by not purchasing them for their hospitals. In the process, these nuns became environmentalists, as they realized the connection between worker rights and responsible stewardship of the land.

This dissertation also explores how laypeople such as Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement (CWM) developed a green form of Catholicism that evolved over the course of forty years. The organization started as an alternative to socialism but soon adopted environmental politics which they eventually used to support the UFW movement. These lay Catholic women supported the UFW as a part of their religious expression. Beginning in the 1940s, lay Catholic women's groups in the Midwest aided migrant workers and their families. By the 1960s, these groups started to fade as Catholics began to question the Church hierarchy in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. In response to changing understandings of Catholicism, many lay Catholic women began to view good works as a valid form of practicing their religion. Other acts of lived religion became an important way to see how the UFW movement spread through an evolving religious framework. Labor movements united Catholic women to contemplate issues of social justice and environmental movements.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was only possible through the help and support of so many people. I received grants and fellowships from Notre Dame's Cushwa Center, the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University, the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming, and University of Wisconsin's Center for the History of Print and Digital Culture. Several archivists, directors, and scholars were incredibly helpful: at Notre Dame, Joe Smith; at Marquette University, Phil Runkel; at the Reuther Library, Daniel Golodner and Troy Eller English; at the American Heritage Center, Bridget Burke, Ginny Kilander, and Molly Marcusse; and at the Wisconsin Historical Society, Jim Danky and Lee Grady. I wish to thank the National Park Service at the Oklahoma City National Memorial for extending me a Pathways internship during my last year of graduate school. Finally, I wish to thank the Hoving and Crawley families for supporting my graduate education with a Hoving Fellowship.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my advisor, Kathleen Brosnan. She pushed me to read more and to find my voice. Her guidance and faith in me always inspired me to work harder. I very much appreciate my committee members: Jennifer Holland, Jill Irvine, Rhona Seidelman, and David Wrobel for taking the time to read my work and help me improve as a writer. I cannot fail to mention Janie Adkins for her administrative assistance.

The only reason I could finish this project was from the love and support I received from friends and family. I thank my parents for their constant encouragement. To my friends, Dan and Trevor, for helping me find levity when I was stressed. I am so fortunate to have two amazing, hilarious, and vivacious daughters. Louise and Felicity, I cannot wait to see what you both accomplish. Finally, I wish to thank Courtney. You are my best friend, my editor, and my

strength. When I thought I could not press on, you were there to assist me. I am so lucky to have you as my partner, and I cannot wait to see what our future has in store.

Introduction:

In 1974, Cesar Chavez reflected on why the United Farm Worker movement (UFW) was successful. He spoke with his biographer, Jacques Levy, about the role of women in ensuring the success of this protest and boycott. He stated, "We pay a lot of attention to the women in the movement. We think they're very special. We can't be free ourselves if we don't free our women."[1] Women performed a major role in the transmission and success of the UFW's message across the United States. Catholic women, in particular, left a record that highlights how their religiosity and their femininity inspired them to adopt the labor activism of the UFW movement, and as a consequence, to develop an environmentalist identity.

The UFW cause fits into the larger story of race and environment in the twentieth century. At the beginning of its involvement in World War II, the United States experienced a labor shortage in agriculture. To replace drafted and enlisted farmworkers the United States reached an agreement with Mexico in 1942 to import laborers through the Bracero program. The agreement proved to be a transformative moment in shaping American perceptions of agricultural labor. There were white Americans, who racialized brown people as agricultural workers and outsiders who took American jobs during a time of prosperity. Moreover, farm owners, managers, and legislators demonstrated little care about Bracero working conditions. In theory, the Bracero program protected Mexican workers. For example, landowners were expected to guarantee Braceros sanitary housing, safe work conditions, and competitive wages. Since Braceros were not naturalized immigrants, employers frequently broke the terms of these contracts without fear of consequence from any judicial force. The new system of Bracero labor became the profitable norm for agricultural labor contracts. States failed to intervene for the next

[1] Jacques E. Levy Research Collection on Cesar Chavez, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Box 1, Folder 129, 3.

couple of decades as workers suffered inhumane conditions in the fields, such as stoop labor and pesticide exposure.[2]

To combat these depredations, ethnic Mexican and Filipino workers formed unions that advocated fair wages, safe working conditions, and workers' compensation for injuries. In the early 1960s, Filipino farm workers organized under Larry Itliong in the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee and Mexican American laborers joined Cesar Chavez's National Farm Workers Association. The two sides joined forces during the 1965 Delano Grape Strike and soon realized the strength of their numbers. A year later, the two sides merged to create the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, and in 1972, they shortened the name to the United Farm Workers.[3]

During the 1970s, California growers signed sweetheart pacts with the Teamster Union, which circumvented open bids for labor contracts and instead gave them wholly to the Teamsters. Once UFW contacts had ended in 1970, lettuce growers in the Salinas Valley did not renegotiate new terms with the UFW but turned to the Teamsters. Similarly, wine owners did not reup their contracts with the UFW. In the summer of 1973 in the San Joaquin Valley and the Coachella Valley, Cesar Chavez and the UFW responded by organizing a strike against vintners, primarily the E & J Gallo winery, which had signed a sweetheart contract with the Teamster

---

[2] For more, see Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011) and Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[3] For more on the history of the UFW see Susan Ferriss and Ricardo Sandoval, *The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers Movement* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997), Richard del Castillo Griswold and Richard A. Garcia. *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), Jacques Levy, *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975), Peter Matthiessen, *Sal Si Puedes: Cesar Chavez and the New American Revolution* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1969), José-Antonio Orosco, *Cesar Chavez and the Common Sense of Nonviolence* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), Miriam Pawel, *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014), Marco G. Prouty, *César Chávez, the Catholic Bishops, and the Farmworkers' Struggle for Social Justice* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2006).

union, after their contract ended with the UFW. Demanding secret elections and freedom from Teamster interference, the grape and head lettuce boycott involved more than 3,500 protesters and lasted five years. In that time, the UFW estimated that they successfully convinced more than 17 million Americans to boycott Gallo wine, head lettuce, and non-union table grapes.[4] Chavez and his followers had many supporters in their radical protest, as the rise of the political left intersected with demands for environmental justice.

Catholic women, from nuns to lapsed laywomen, played a major role in supporting the UFW strikes beyond the American Southwest. Whether religion was central to a Catholic woman's identity or a peripheral trait, it was never absent from their lives. Women beginning in the 1960s broke free from the female essentialist idea of the "Eternal Woman." The eternal woman was obedient and submissive to her husband, and in reference to the cult of domesticity, she was confined to the private sphere.[5] This was what all women, consecrated or lay, were meant to attain if they wanted to be good Catholics. Nuns and laywomen broke free from this paradigm by becoming involved in civil rights and social justice activism. They asserted their own interpretation of what it meant to be Catholic and it led them to support the UFW movement. The feminine push for Catholic social justice had historical roots in Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker Movement (CWM), which supported exploited workers. Many laywomen had an experience of lived religion and learned about the UFW movement from a variety of perspectives, but still asserted themselves by not always being obedient to the Catholic hierarchy. These many changes precipitated around a significant moment in modern Catholic history.

---

[4] All statistics were collected from the UFW's website. "UFW Chronology," accessed on February 12, 2020, https://ufw.org/research/history/ufw-chronology/.

[5] Mary J. Henold, *Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 25.

The Second Vatican Council, also known as Vatican II, created manifold changes that offered women a greater role within the administration of the Church. This council lasted from 1962 until 1965, as Pope John XXIII and later Pope Paul VI met with bishops from all around the world to discuss how the Church should adapt to a changing and modernizing world. Liberal nuns believed that soon they would be equal to priests. In the wake of Vatican II and the liberalization of the Catholic liturgy, Catholic women set out to change the Church and their world through their faith. In addition to fighting for increased roles for women in the hierarchy, liberal Catholic women also embraced social justice, labor reform, and an environmental ethos. During the UFW strike, these women viewed the relationship between labor negotiations and environmentalism as fundamental to Catholic social justice. In the process, women created networks of Catholics around the nation that decried labor injustice.

Throughout this dissertation the terms nun, sister, and women religious are used interchangeably. The word nun specifically refers to women, who were cloistered or closed off from the world to live a solitary life of prayer, while sisters describes consecrated women religious who work with the public. Women religious encompasses both nuns and sisters and is a broad term that encompasses any person who took vows to live a consecrated life. The reason I choose to use these terms interchangeably is because the public and media did so, and the image conveyed by these three terms evokes the same idea. The term religious women can refer to a lay woman or a nun, and it is for anyone who views herself as a religious person.

When using the term liberal, I illustrate the contrary stance that women took to the Catholic hierarchy. Liberal sisters at the time primarily viewed themselves as "New Nuns," a term that encompassed the second-wave feminist ideas that sisters should have the same opportunities as priests within Catholicism. The movement continued into the 1970s, when a few

New Nuns believed that the Church could only be perfected through women. Dorothy Day and the CWM resisted American Catholic bishops that approved of any war. Liberal laywomen viewed themselves in opposition to the Catholic Church over issues such as birth control. They still wanted to practice some form of spirituality but did not want the Vatican to control them. There were of course women who fell in line with all of Church teaching, but I am focusing on those who disobeyed the Vatican's decrees based on their own beliefs.

This history primarily focuses on the Midwest and the East Coast for various reasons. First, this project examines how people outside of the American Southwest responded to the UFW movement. Why were Catholics in Illinois, Michigan, and New York responding to this local movement? The UFW established regional offices in these states and the activists at those locations worked tirelessly to inform the public of the plight of farmworkers.[6] There were other aspects of Midwesterners' lives that motivated them to adopt this movement. For one, the strong background in labor organizing prepared many Catholic Democrats to continue to support other workers, who faced stiff opposition from landholders and opposing unions. This intermingling of the Old Left and the New Left created the perfect circumstances for the Midwest to adopt a new religious framework that focused on the worker.

For similar reasons, New York is relevant to this story because of Dorothy Day's activism. Beginning in 1932, she and Peter Maurin established a new Catholic identity that focused on supporting workers. They wanted to demonstrate that the worker was central to the Catholic Church to prevent them from falling away from religion in favor of socialism. Day's newspaper, *The Catholic Worker*, reached audiences throughout the United States and had more

[6] W. K. Barger, Ernesto M. Reza, and Baldemar Velásquez, *The Farm Labor Movement in the Midwest: Social Change and Adaptation among Migrant Farmworkers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

than 50,000 subscribers. Her essays spread from the East Coast to other parts of America and advocated for union activism from a Catholic perspective. The Midwest, ultimately, was a stronghold for union activism, and as a result, demonstrated the importance of connecting the UFW movement to union families.

The Catholic Church in the Midwest was also more liberal than in other parts of the United States. This region produced organizations such as the National Assembly of Women Religious (NAWR), the National Coalition of American Nuns (NCAN), and the Association of Chicago Priests (ACP). Beginning in 1970, NAWR formed to protest the limited autonomy and authority of women in the Catholic Church. This organization also sought to engage with social justice causes of the time. NAWR and the UFW may have seemed unlikely allies, but religious sisters quickly embraced the movement, rushing to aid the boycott effort in their communities. Catholic laywomen promoted the UFW's message nationally within Church networks and helped popularize the movement. NAWR, NCAN, and ACP embraced environmentalism, social justice, and feminism as part of their modernizing campaign in the Church. Liberal nuns and priests attempted to persuade the bishops to allow for female ordination and permitting priests to marry and wanted to remove all restrictions regarding gender roles in the Church or on marriage for priests and sisters. NCAN went so far as to decry the Church's opposition to abortion. Many liberal priests and sisters were able to find likeminded religious in their communities.

A few Midwestern bishops also felt inclined toward more liberal ideas such as union activism. For example, the auxiliary bishop of Detroit, Thomas Gumbleton, defended Cesar Chavez and the UFW by saying that they were not socialists and rather were working to improve the conditions for Mexican Americans in the fields. Gumbleton is also a pacifist, has worked to welcome LGBTQ people into the Church, to punish priests complicit in the child sex abuse

scandal, and to increase the role of women in Catholicism.[7] While many other Midwestern bishops were conservative, there was this cell of Catholic leaders that sought to promote a more liberal Church as well. In general, Midwest regionalism inspired the brand of Catholicism that appealed to blue-collar workers, and one effective way of doing this was by promoting the Catholic union activities of the UFW. These bishops and priests stood in stark contrast to certain Central California religious members that sought to break up union activism and abetted police in the arrest of UFW strikers.

By focusing on Midwestern historical actors, this dissertation also examines how white Catholics in this region struggled to integrate ethnic Mexican Catholicism. Since the 1930s, Chicago and the upper Midwest had waves of Mexican Americans and migrant workers either take residence or perform seasonal work in their towns. The nature of their work created a new racialized idea of them as well. Historian Mae Ngai argues that U.S. immigration policies created the idea of the illegal immigrant by tightening the security with Mexico and denationalizing Filipinos. Migrants from these countries became important only to the United States for their ability to labor, but the nation denied them citizenship.[8] Other historians have examined the tightening of border security between the United States and Mexico due to the political climate of the twenty-first century.[9] The American public rarely empathized with the laborers for fear of union violence and also due to the racial ideas of ethnic Mexicans, propagated by the media. If

[7] Peter Feuerherd, *The Radical Gospel of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019) and Zoe Ryan, "Vatican Moved Quickly to Punish Gumbleton," *National Catholic Reporter*, November 5, 2011.
[8] Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 27; 99.
[9] Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U. S. – Mexico Border* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), and Kelly Lytle-Hernández, *Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

the UFW was to succeed against their employers, they would need to change this narrative and broadcast their unionization to the rest of the United States.

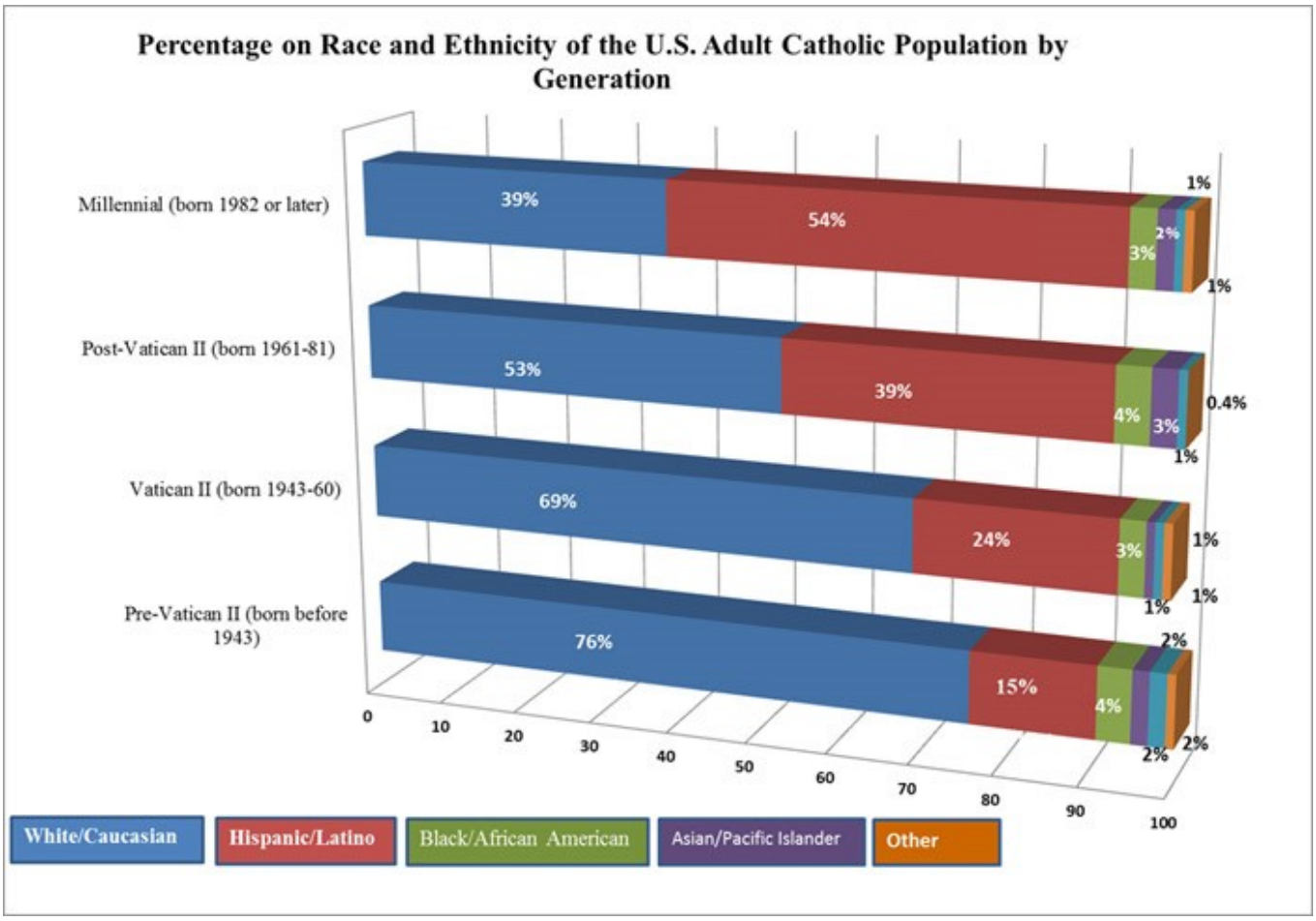

Figure 0.1: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops graph compiled from data collected by the Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) Catholic Poll in 2010. http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/hispanic-latino/demographics/hispanic-latino-percentage-of-race-and-ethnicity.cfm

Migrant workers also brought a distinctive form of Catholicism with them that the American Catholic Church has needed to adopt. The United States Catholic Church has become increasingly Latino, while the white population has diminished significantly as younger generations have left the Church. Yet according to the statistics from the United States

Conference of Catholic Bishops, only seven percent of priests are Latino.[10] As a result, many Midwesterners began to assume that all ethnic Mexicans were Catholic and needed support from Church members to remain faithful to their religion. This contributed to an essentialist misunderstanding of Mexican Americans as all Catholics. Chavez certainly wanted his bishops to support him, however, many others were ambivalent to religion or else wanted to explore other religious possibilities. These distinctive ethnic understandings of both religion and labor trajectories demonstrate the complex and often fraught ways that white, middle-class women encountered when working to promote their causes and assist their communities.[11]

This project focuses on the roles of religious women in sparking conversations about the environment, labor rights, and social justice within the Church. Chapters one and two explore the histories of liberal women religious orders. Chapter one traces liberal Catholicism back to seventeenth-century France to explore the origins of social justice movements in the convent. It also demonstrates how religious women became one of the most important, yet underappreciated, workforces of the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council was an important flashpoint for many religious women who believed that the Church's turn toward modernism would result in their ordination as ministers within Catholicism. Chapter two explores how sisters adopted social justice issues to push for more rights within the hierarchy. The UFW movement was primarily composed of Catholic migrant workers who felt abandoned by their religion. Liberal sisters and priests became a conduit for providing hope to farmworkers and provided a new image of what it meant to be religious, modernist, and environmentalist.

[10] "Hispanic Ministry at a Glance," *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.* http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/hispanic-latino/demographics/hispanic-ministry-at-a-glance.cfm
[11] Gordon K. Mantler, *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown Coalition & the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

The next two chapters expand in scope to examine the work of laywomen's support of the UFW movement. Chapter three explores the long history of lay Catholic participation in social justice and environmental movements by examining the story of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement (CWM). Day and CWM co-founder Peter Maurin combined religion and environmentalism in the 1930s when they created communal farms to dignify all human labor. Day was disgusted by the exploitation of farmworkers, which she channeled into a religious vision of anti-capitalism. This chapter explores the roots of feminist ecological spirituality within Catholicism and how lay people expressed these concerns throughout the cold war.

Chapter four examines the ways that lay Catholic women's activism and religious expression evolved over the course of three decades. Beginning in the 1950s, Catholic women's groups worked with the state to support migrant families. This was a uniquely feministic movement, as attempted men's organizations to support migrant workers failed to maintain membership numbers. By the 1960s, church attendance fell dramatically as Catholics began to disagree with the Vatican's stance on social issues, including birth control. During the 1960s and into the 1970s, Catholic families embraced "Golden Rule" Christianity as a more appealing form of religion. This form of religion emphasized works over strict adherence to church law, asserting that if members were living out the "Golden Rule," or treating others as you would have them treat you, they were morally good.[12] These Golden Rule issues came to the forefront during the mid-twentieth century, and sisters believed that an emphasis on love and social justice could entirely replace the more contentiously conservative debates that dominated the Catholic hierarchy's agenda. The UFW cause became a Golden Rule issue for liberal nuns, who promoted

[12] Nancy T. Ammerman, "Golden Rule Christianity: Lived Religion in the American Mainstream" in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* ed. by David D. Hall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 197.

social justice in schools, in Sunday bulletins, and even within AFL-CIO unions. As a result, supporting the farmworkers' strike created a new idea of how one could be a good Catholic through good works.

Chapter five elucidates how most of these movements fell apart by 1980. The UFW lost respect among supporters because Chavez denounced birth control, cooperated with Philippian dictator Ferdinand Marcos, and condoned abusive behavior toward undocumented migrants. NAWR lost members because it was not radical enough for liberal nuns who demanded immediate change, and it was too liberal for sisters who opposed abortion. By the 1980s, the attempts of nuns to change the Church became less and less likely. Nuns fled their convents by the thousands, and the United States experienced an intense and painful loss of women religious. Many nuns left religious life because they realized that they were lesbians. In turn, the Catholic Church relied on lay people to fill the roles of nuns and distinctly changed the culture of American Catholicism.

This dissertation explores shifting and contentious ideas about the balance between faith, gender, and activism within the American Catholic Church. It examines the role of religion in defining labor practices, food production, and the human relationship with nature in late twentieth-century America. Women religious, people of color, and laypeople sought a greater voice within the Catholic Church. Women worked together to fight for environmental and social justice issues, using their limited power within religion to advocate for change. They fought to protect humanity from the dreadful additives and insecticides that growers and food distributors used on food. They made environmental advocacy a religious issue and a question of morality for Catholics nationwide. Mothers concerned for their children, and sisters concerned for ethnic

Mexican laborers all galvanized into an environmental movement to save the spiritual and corporal bodies of workers and consumer.

Chapter 1: The Ideological Origins of Activist Nuns

At the 1971 meeting of the National Assembly of Women Religious (NAWR), the organization's president Sister Ethne Kennedy, a member of the Society of Helpers (S.H.), delivered a stirring speech about the future of the religious life. "Are we satisfied with business as usual in the Church and world," she queried, "or simply the attainment of more of our rights as many other groups in the Church and world today?" She continued, "The argument that we cannot be whole as human beings, and therefore cannot really serve others until we have our rights is folly and deception. True human fulfillment comes from giving our last ounce for God's people."[1] With this inspiration, NAWR prioritized serving the needy as the justification for its ministry. In concert with its mission to help the poor, the sisters also fully anticipated pushing the American Catholic Church to create more leadership positions for women religious. In doing so, these liberal sisters studied and emphasized the origins of their religious orders and the Catholic Church to demonstrate the ways that women challenged the Catholic hierarchy in the past and the fact that women served as ministers in the early Church.[2] By the 1960s, liberal sisters formed

[1] Thomas Mary Walsh, "Report to Central Office," October 7, 1970, 2, folder 7, box 1, The National Assembly of Religious Women Records (hereafter ARW), University of Notre Dame Archives, (hereafter UNDA), South Bend, Indiana.

[2] My use of the term radical refers to notions of what sisters and academics have called, "the New Nuns" and their fight for autonomy within the Catholic hierarchy. New Nuns were close adherents to second-wave feminism and hoped to become ordained ministers in the Catholic Church. Additionally, they believed that their apostolate, or their vocation's calling, was to be active in helping the marginalized. For more on the New Nuns see Sister Charles Borromeo Muckenhirn, ed., *The Changing Sister* (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1965), Mary Charles Borromeo Muckenhirn, ed., *The New Nuns* (New York: The New American Library, 1967), Institute on Religious Life in the Modern World, *Vows but No Walls: An Analysis of Religious Life* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1967), Suzanne Campbell-Jones, *In Habit: A Study of Working Nuns* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, *Out of the Cloister: A Study of Organizational Dilemmas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), Sara Harris, *The Sisters: The Changing World of the American Nun* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1970), Judith Tate, *Sisters for the World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), Mary Jo Weaver, *New Catholic Women: A Contemporary Challenge to Traditional Religious Authority* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), Barbara Ferraro, *No Turning Back: Two Nuns' Battle with the Vatican over Women's Right to Choose* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1990).

organizations to promote modernism through ideas such as female ordination and social justice movements, and in doing so built on their own tradition of service.

This chapter examines the European roots of a few religious orders to highlight their long-standing dedication social justice in schools and hospitals. The Sisters of St. Joseph Carondelet and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur shared similarities as service-based orders that faced the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror. The anti-Catholic sentiment that flooded France exemplified to nuns the dangers of an irreligious world. During the nineteenth century other orders, including the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, focused on the importance of educating young women which would improve society. Ministering in hospitals also offered women the chance to live out the Gospel through good works and push non-Catholics to consider the charitable acts that the Church might offer to society. When their orders established houses in North America in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, nuns worked in the community to prevent the atheism of the French Revolution from influencing American Catholics. Furthermore, the entrenched Protestantism in the United States appeared to nuns as a threat to the survival of the Church in North America. Their work as teachers and nurses allowed them to tangibly improve society while serving God and the Church.

The history of nuns and their responses to the conservatism of the Catholic hierarchy demonstrate how women have challenged the hierarchy to attain their rights for the future. Sisters have preserved their orders' histories through self-published works since the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.[3] In these works, they highlight how nuns organized and crafted new

[3] Anonymous, *The Life of Blessed Julie Billiart: Foundress of the Institute of Sisters of Notre Dame* (London: Sands and Company, 1909), Helen Louise Nugent, *Sister Louise: Josephine Van der Schrieck, 1813-1886, American Foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1931), Jane Coogan, *The Price of Our Heritage: History of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Dubuque, IA: Mount Carmel Press, 1975), Theresia von Jesu Gerhardinger, *The North American Foundations: Letters of Mother*

concepts of the religious life by focusing on charitable acts in the community. This trend of histories shifted, because by the 1960s, the number of nuns began a precipitous decline. To address this rapid change in religious orders' demographics, ethnographers in the 1970s interviewed sisters about how they struggled with their identity following Vatican II. Out of this trend, emerged other historians, who have examined the ways that women religious reacted against the Catholic hierarchy. Liberal sisters reacted against the suburbanization of Catholicism and how certain orders pushed against this move to subjugate women religious. This historiography serves to articulate that sisters have evaluated their pasts and examined why their orders existed and why they should continue to exist for the future.

Although the Church represented an edifice of conservatism, women molded liberal identities within Catholicism.[4] Nuns were skilled teachers and administrators who often used their expertise to help lay people and push for greater autonomy in the Church. Their founders and foundresses wanted sisters to play an integral role in supporting the Church's mission of reaching everyone who sought truth and healing. However, as the Church grew and anti-Catholicism became less prevalent, these sisters who once combated Protestantism did not have an ideological opponent to combat. Instead, they looked inward to modernize the Church. After the Second Vatican Council, sisters began to organize and find new social justice projects which

---

M. Theresa Gerhardinger (School Sisters of Notre Dame, 1977), Mary Lucida Savage, "The Congregation of Saint Joseph of Carondelet: A Brief Account of Its Origin and Its Work in the United States," Ph.D. diss. (Catholic University of America, 1923).

[4] See Mary Henold, *Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 4, Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, *Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*, *Monroe, Michigan* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1997), John J. Fialka, *Sisters: Catholic Nuns and the Making of America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), Lara Medina, *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina Religious-Political Activism in the U.S. Catholic Church* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), Susan Carol Peterson and Courtney Ann Vaughn-Roberson, *Women with Vision: The Presentation Sisters of South Dakota, 1880-1985* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), Marguerite Vacher, *Nuns without Cloister: Sisters of St. Joseph in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Lanham: University Press Of America, 2010), Paul Hofmann, *The Vatican's Women: Female Influence at the Holy See* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002).

they could use to serve those in need. Sisters first supported the civil rights movement and then became involved with the UFW. Sisters organized a union of women religious to reignite the social justice flame that had attracted many of them to the religious life. They returned to the roots of their orders to struggle for a new form of Catholicism. Out of this push for new social justice movements, sisters felt called to embrace environmentalism and its humanitarian elements.

Religious Life in France and Missionary Life in the United States

The history of religious orders underscores the fundamental importance of women in Catholicism. Sisters served as teachers and administrators in important Catholic institutions and established their autonomy within schools and hospitals. Sisters had a long history of joining religious orders to aid their local communities. In the example of French orders, young Catholic women understood the violence that could overwhelm society in an anti-religious nation. The histories of religious orders during the turbulent French Revolution, helped nuns understand their role as essential to the survival of their faith. European nuns endured periods of persecution that galvanized their identity and demonstrated the value of their mission as teachers and administrators.

In 1650, the Jesuit priest Jean Pierre Medaille officially founded the Sisters of St. Joseph in Le Puy, France.[5] These sisters taught young girls, managed orphanages, and provided healthcare to the sick.[6] The order, however, began in secret during the 1630s. Catholic teaching instructed women to either marry or enter the convent, where they would be isolated into lives of

[5] Mary McGlone, *Anything of Which a Woman is Capable* (St. Louis: U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, 2017), 19.
[6] Savage, "The Congregation of Saint Joseph of Carondelet," 10.

prayer. During the seventeenth century, sisters began breaking out of the cloister to work in schools and orphanages. These early attempts by sisters to engage in social justice work failed when bishops forced them back to the cloister. This idea of the cloister developed during the first millennia. Over the course of centuries, Church leaders became afraid that they could not protect their virginal nuns from invaders. To protect these sisters, bishops crafted the idea of the cloister, a way to separate women religious from the rest of the world. To bishops and priests, this was their way to preserve Catholic womanhood, and any sister who left the convent risked losing her virginity and tarnishing the masculinity of the Church that swore to protect them.[7]

Important figures in the Catholic Church rallied to the support of the Sisters of St. Joseph and other women who wished to leave the cloister and serve the poor. For example, Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, a French priest and nun who were dedicated to the poor, fostered religious orders focused on service. They referred to the women in their order as "good girls of the parish," rather than nuns.[8] These "good girls of the parish" served the poor and provided education to those who could not afford it.[9] They established a new framework and form of religious life that allowed women to pursue careers outside of their convent's walls.

This new framework of religious life created a second path for women to become a nun. A woman could either dedicate herself to the works of mercy (i.e. hospitals, schools, or church administration) or to a contemplative life, a life dedicated solely to prayer. Once a woman found a religious order that met her interest, she began her time there as a postulant. If she continued

[7] McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*. McNamara uses the history of the cloister to criticize the basis in tradition that prevented women from becoming priests. For example, women who took their vows could only enter the cloister as an element of the Council of Trent.
[8] Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac formed a religious order independent of the Sisters of St. Joseph, called the Sisters of Charity.
[9] Michael Novak, "The New Nuns," in *The New Nuns* ed. Mary Charles Borromeo Muckenhirn (New York: The New American Library, 1967), 23.

after a few months, then she became a novice, after a year, she then took her temporary vows. Finally, if she decided to become a nun, the candidate placed herself prostrate on the ground and took three perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This lengthy process required sisters to consider each step prayerfully. Once a woman became a full member of a religious order then she reported to the hierarchy of the convent. As a result, there were hierarchies within religious orders with the mother superior at the head who reported to a priest.[10] This structure demonstrated the bureaucracy under which nuns operated, and it was an effective system. Sisters dedicated to the works of mercy became so essential to the Church and inspirational to other women that French bishops quickly approved of the Sisters of St. Joseph's constitution and these orders grew rapidly until the Reign of Terror.

During the French Revolution and the subsequent Reign of Terror (1793-1794), the new French deputies of the National Convention suppressed all religious organizations and forced many nuns to conceal their religious identities. The Church lost much of its property, and the National Convention executed priests, bishops, and sisters, including five Sisters of St. Joseph.[11] This period of religious intolerance greatly influenced the trajectory of religious life for other orders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, Julie Billiart, who later founded the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in 1804, was both an invalid and a daily communicant when the Revolution began. When her parish priest was replaced by one who pledged loyalty to the state, she spoke out against him and was forced to flee, hidden in a hay wagon. These experiences shaped her order and her beliefs about the need to protect the Faith. She became a

[10] For more information see, Elizabeth Eisenstadt Evans, "Steps and Stages of the Formation Process of Women Religious," *Global Sisters Report*, https://www.globalsistersreport.org/resources/steps-and-stages-formation-process-women-religious-38381, accessed on January 29, 2020.
[11] *Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet Constitution*, https://csjcarondelet.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CSJ_Carondelet_Constitution_-_English.pdf.

strong promoter of religious education because she opposed the secularization of schooling. Theology had previously been a mandatory aspect of education but fell to the wayside during the French Revolution. Billiart held similar concerns regarding conditions in England and the United States where "enemies of the Church are energetic and persistent in their endeavours to secularize education, to prevent the teaching of religion, to banish the name of God from schools, to blot out the thought of Him from the minds, the love of Him from the hearts of children."[12] While educators had not removed religion from the classroom, they taught Protestant prayers and theology instead of Catholic ones. This impassioned statement on the conditions of education magnified the need for women religious to perform their role as missionaries who could evangelize to children.

In 1836, the Sisters of St. Joseph established their first roots in the Americas in the Diocese of St. Louis. This diocese encompassed Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa, and Indian country.[13] Here they worked with immigrants and indigenous people. The sisters faced significant challenges from the physical landscape and the people they encountered. Missionary sisters who left France and Switzerland faced a rude awakening upon arriving in the United States. They traded in either urbane French cities or the beauty of the Alps for the underdeveloped and marshy Missouri. Sister Scholastica of the Benedictine order, who arrived in Missouri a few decades later, depicted the state's positive and negative features. She noted "The rising and setting sun,

[12] Anonymous, *The Life of Blessed Julie Billiart: Foundress of the Institute of Sisters of Notre Dame* (London: Sands and Company, 1909), xix. A few decades later, German sisters established the School Sisters of Notre Dame and established an order specifically intended for education.
[13] Savage, "The Congregation," 27.

the starry sky at night are marvelous." However, she despised "the dirt on the paths we have to take to get to church and the pigs searching in the garbage; these are not so attractive."[14]

In the nineteenth-century United States, nuns engaged with people from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and often faced opposition in the form of anti-Catholicism. Nativist tracts portrayed nuns as the victims of duplicitous priests. In one pamphlet, entitled "Nunneries in France," the author tells the story of how Jesuits tricked two young women into joining the convent. The story is told through a series of letters from a novitiate to her mother describing their daring departure from the convent after they witnessed a few of the other cloistered nuns poisoning themselves to escape its turmoil. Arabella Smith, one of the novitiates, remarks, "O heaven! That such houses can endure, when Sodom and Gomorrah are constituted the everlasting marks of God's vengeance on base and degenerate man!"[15] Many Americans viewed nuns as innocent women tricked by Jesuits to sacrifice their lives in the service of the pope. French nuns entered the United States at a challenging time to be Catholic, but they stood against the oppression and fulfilled their intended goals in society. Sister Mary McGlone, a historian of the Sisters of St. Joseph, described their experiences: "Through it all, whether in partnership with collaborating clergy and laity or struggling with dictatorial priests or bishops, the Sisters of St. Joseph maintained amazingly strong ties."[16] They endured hardships and became strengthened through the trials of moving to the United States.

---

[14] Alberta Dieker, *A Tree Rooted in Faith: A History of Queen of Angels Monastery* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 19.

[15] *Nunneries in France: Comprising a Series of Letters between a Nun, a Novice, and Their Friends; in Which Are Unfolded the True Character and Corrupt Practices of Roman Priests* (New York: Wright, Goodhue, 1845), 44. American Antiquarian Society, G526 N972 N845. For more information about nativism and Catholicism during the mid-nineteenth century, see Jay Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* (New York: Galilee Trade Press, 1987).
[16] McGlone, *Anything of Which a Woman is Capable*, ix.

Religious orders spread to all corners of the nation and greatly outnumbered priests at nearly four to one.[17] During the 1920s and into the 1930s, the Sisters of St. Joseph added three provinces in St. Paul, Minnesota, Albany, New York, and Los Angeles, California where they practiced apostolates for teaching and mercy. They worked to fulfill their order's dedication to "the practice of all the spiritual and corporal works of mercy of which woman is capable and which will most benefit the ... dear neighbor."[18] They established and administered universities, such as Mount St. Mary's University in Los Angeles in 1925.[19] The Sisters of Mercy, which originated in Ireland in the 1830s, established hospitals and a wide range of schools from elementary to college throughout the Great Plains, during the first half of the twentieth century. Other religious orders moored their institutions in the American West because the region's lower population provided them with the opportunity to make a bigger impact on society. The women called to these missions did not wish to enter a cloistered convent but wanted to affect material change in society and they left a large impression on their religious communities. For many women, joining a religious order existed as one of the few ways that they enter the public sphere and make an impact on society.[20]

Women religious made a significant impression on society through their work. According to historian Timothy Walch, "there were more than forty thousand sisters working in

---

[17] This figure has remained consistent throughout U.S. history. For additional years, see the Center for Applied Research for the Apostolate, https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/.
[18] "Introduction," *Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet Constitution* (St. Louis: CSJ Publication), 7.
[19] Sister Dolorita Marie Dougherty, Sister Helen Angela Hurley, Sister Emily Joseph Daly, and Sister St. Claire Coyne, *Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1966), 303. The university is still operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.
[20] The historian Carol Coburn states, "By 1920, Catholic sisters had created or maintained approximately 500 hospitals, 50 women's colleges, and over 6,000 parochial schools, serving 1.7 million schoolchildren in every region of the country." Carol K. Corburn and Martha Smith, *Spirited Lives: How Nuns Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 3. See also, Margaret M. McGuinness, *Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), Anne Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Boylan argues that these organizations did not threaten the patriarchy but rather reified and reaffirmed the familial and maternal qualities of women.

the United States, the majority in parish classrooms" in the early twentieth century.[21] By 1915, nuns operated half of all hospitals in the United States.[22] In Chicago during the first half of the twentieth century, sisters taught more than one million children from various ethnic backgrounds, and their schools united ethnically diverse churches within the archdiocese.[23] Nuns were an indispensable aspect of Catholic institutions. They existed as a daily reminder to laypeople of the service offered by Catholicism and a reason to faithfully tithe. .Churches and schools were central to the Catholic culture and identity that developed in cities throughout the United States.[24] They persisted a visible presence in the lives of lay Catholics and persisted as a relevant force in the eyes of young Catholic women who wanted to make a difference in the world.

A Sister's Choice: Coming of Age in the Great Depression

Sisters who joined the religious life in the 1960s grew up in the tumult of the Great Depression. During the 1930, Catherine Pinkerton, who joined the Sisters of St. Joseph, recalled her parents considered purchasing a home, but deciding against it. "Dad sat us down and said, 'Mother and I have decided not to buy that house,'" Pinkerton recounted, "I asked, 'Why,

[21] Timothy Walch, *Parish School: American Catholic Parochial Education from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 134. Catholic immigrants felt more comfortable at Catholic schools than at public ones due to the pan-Protestantism that was preached there. See John C. Carper and Thomas C. Hunt *The Dissenting Tradition in American Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).
[22] Mary Kelly, and Maureen Anthony, "The Last Generation of Sister Administrators: Insights about the Transition of Catholic Hospital Leadership," *American Catholic Studies* 125, no. 3 (2014): 35.
[23] Chicago helped build the largest and most diverse Catholic school system in the world. The historian James W. Sanders articulates this feat was accomplished by George Cardinal Mundelein who had a vision of "welding together national churches into a consolidated system throughout the Chicago metropolitan area." James W. Sanders, *The Education of an Urban Minority: Catholics in Chicago, 1833-1965* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), ix.
[24] Bernadette McCauley, *Who Shall Take Care of Our Sick?: Roman Catholic Sisters and the Development of Catholic Hospitals in New York City* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 14. See also, Barbra Wall, *American Catholic Hospitals: A Century of Changing Markets and Missions* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

Daddy?' He said, "Because something terrible is going to happen in this country, and there will be people who won't have food or housing or jobs and we have to help them. And that was my first lesson in justice."[25] The Pinkerton family were not alone in believing that their faith should determine their charity toward others. During the 1930s, various lay Catholic organizations aided in America's relief efforts, and their service fostered a sense of justice in young women who later joined the religious life.

Catholic Action, founded in Europe in 1924 and organized in the United States in the 1940s, and the Catholic Worker Movement, founded in 1933, mobilized to meet the material and spiritual needs of Americans during this national crisis. The 1930s through the 1950s represented the apex of these Catholic organizations. women, such as Dorothy Day, led these organizations and devoted their lives to promoting social welfare. Their devotion and novel methods of addressing the social and spiritual needs of impoverished individuals inspired many young women. As historian Amy Koehlinger observes, many young women became imbued "with a vital sense of the apostolate, of the importance of activity in the world, which they had learned and absorbed through Catholic Action programs in their youth."[26] This sense of the apostolate, or working for God, also provided sisters with a sense of independence. In later interviews about their decisions to join the religious life, many nuns spoke of the authority and independence of religious life. Beth Ronan, a Glenmary sister, wanted to be a sister because "It meant being a woman of power…They were important people, important to the Church, people showed them respect, they talked about important things."[27] Pinkerton and Ronan were two of the hundreds of

[25] Christine Schenk, "Sr. Catherine Pinkerton, Network lobbyist and justice-seeker, remembered," *Global Sisters Report*, January 11, 2018.
[26] Amy Koehlinger, *The New Nuns: Racial Justice and Religious Reform in the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 32.
[27] Helen Lewis & Monica Appleby, *Mountain Sisters: From Convent to Community in Appalachia* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2015), 10.

other women who took their vows in the hopes of achieving various goals. Certain sisters wanted autonomy, while others wanted to assist those in need. The common denominator among nuns was that the religious life offered them the ability to have independence in a world which afforded women little.

As young women contemplated taking the habit, they received a variety of responses from their families. Many families supported their daughters' decision to join the religious life. In most places, to have a son or daughter join the priesthood or religious life provided the family with special social standing in their Catholic communities.[28] However, a few women considering this path faced resistance from their family members. Sister Mary Pascal recalled, "Other sisters have had to fight their families and their friends to come here (to the convent). But I haven't done anything. I didn't have to fight anyone to be a Sister of the Blessed Sacrament."[29] In a few instances, sisters faced a harsh backlash from their parents. Sister Pat Drydyk, who became a crucial figure in farm workers' rights, fought her parents over her vocation and afterwards rarely communicated with her mother.[30] In an interview, Sister Casey recalled, "My parents were very sad at my entering and opposed it."[31] Author Catherine Whitney's *The Calling* similarly examines the sense of loss that some parents felt when their daughters entered the convent. Sister Barbara's parents felt pride that their daughter had made this decision, but, "There would be no

---

[28] See, Campbell-Jones, *In Habit,* 75 and Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920* (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[29] Sara Harris, *The Sisters: The Changing World of the American Nun* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1970), 34.

[30] Brian Titley, *Into Silence and Servitude: How American Girls Became Nuns, 1945-1965* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 86.

[31] Marie Thérèse Gass, *Unconventional Women: 73 Ex-Nuns Tell Their Story* (Clackamas: Sieben Hill Publishing, 2001), 20-31.

wedding bells, no babies, no nighttime chats around the kitchen table. Their daughter would never belong to them again."[32]

As young women came of age, they made sacrifices for their religious calling. This calling highlighted to them the importance of serving God and the less fortunate through a religious life. Pragmatically, many did not wish to get married. Many either had asexual or homosexual orientations but did not know how to process their queer identity. Within Catholicism, if a woman did not marry, the only other possible option was to become a nun. Thus, the religious life was a safety outlet for women who did not feel inclined toward marriage.[33] Other women chose the religious life because they wanted to make their families proud. Having a priest or nun in the family was a high honor for a family. A few were academics who knew that they would receive free education and time to explore scholarly pursuits. Others joined because they wanted to use their role to promote peace. Of course, many felt trepidation by what they would lose: contact with family, having children, and the outward appearance of normalcy. Catholic women still chose this vocation despite the sacrifices, until the late 1960s, when the numbers of women in religious life dropped precipitously. This decline also occurred for a variety of reasons.

The Decline

Beginning in the 1950s, many nuns increasingly experienced a series of existential crises regarding their role in the secondary education and hospital work. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, American nuns had long been essential to the material goals of the U.S. Catholic

[32] Catherine Whitney, *The Calling: A Year in the Life of the Order of Nuns* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1999), 47-8.
[33] As I will explain in chapter five, many nuns came to the realization that they were lesbians based on their attraction to other sisters.

Church, founding and administering institutions that bound lay Catholics to their faith and garnered the respect of non-Catholics. One problem facing women religious throughout the United States was the superficial distinctions between orders. The historian Patricia Wittberg, S.C., locates the source of this problem in the way bishops founded religious organization in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries when they founded religious organizations. While many orders had originated in Europe, bishops across the country founded new orders to addressing the needs of the swelling ranks of Catholic immigrants. The Catholic leaders were "likely to borrow from already written, 'generic' constitutions and to make only minor adaptations."[34] With a weakly defined constitution, many of these orders then became associated within the Church hierarchy with a particular ministry. For example, the School Sisters of Notre Dame's constitution proclaims, "As [Jesus Christ] was sent to show the Father's love to the world, we are sent to make Christ visible by our very being, by sharing our love, faith, and hope." Similarly, the Sisters of St. Joseph strove to reflect St. Joseph's care for Jesus by helping their neighbors "with the same care, diligence, charity, and love with which this glorious Patriarch served his reputed Son."[35] These constitutions focused on the corporal works of mercy, but simply changed the wording to reflect their same mission. In Europe, these orders formed in

[34] Patricia Wittberg, *The Rise and Fall of Catholic Religious Orders: A Social Movement Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 140.
[35] Sisters of Saint Joseph, *Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph* (New York: O'Shea, 1884), 4.

different countries or regions of a nation, but once they arrived in the United States and set up their American chapters, there was little that distinguished one order from the next.

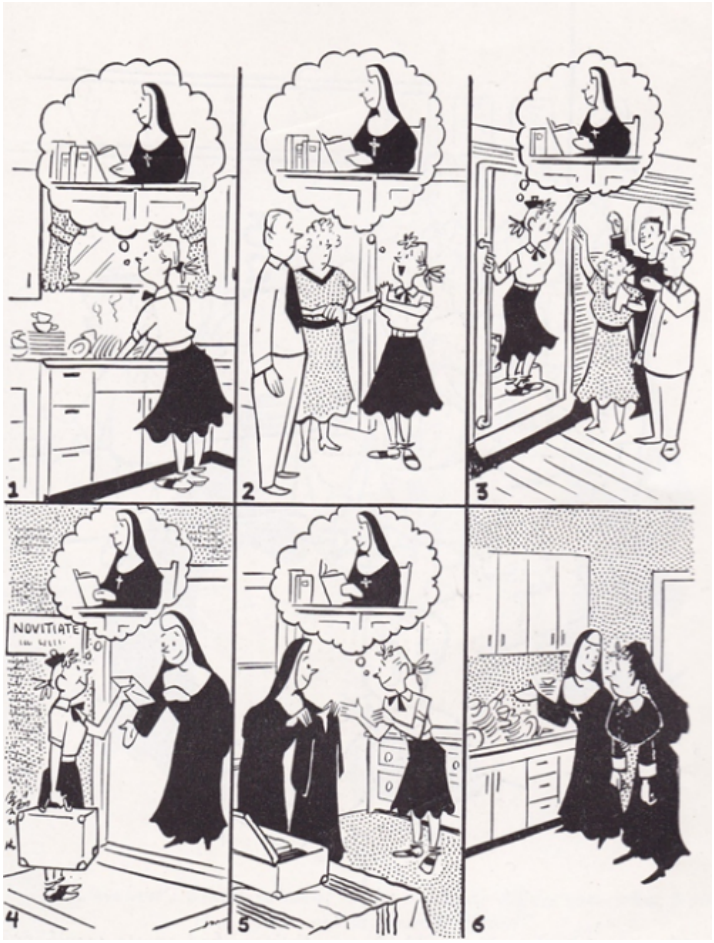

Figure 1.1: Joe Lane, Our Little Nuns, 1954

The women who chose to become brides of Christ wanted the ability to make an impact on society. As Sister Gertrude Donnelly pronounced when reflecting on why women chose to become consecrated, "She was not attracted, in entering religious, by the idea of teaching or nursing primarily, she wanted to help save the world – no less!"[36] However, one of the changes that happened over the course of the twentieth century is that the immigrant Church Americanized, and Catholics streamed to suburbs.[37] According to intellectual historian Michael

[36] Gertrude Donnelly, *The Sister Apostle* (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1964), 14.
[37] This history is explored in greater detail in chapter two as I describe the Americanization of Catholicism.

Novak, "Many of the sisterhoods came to this country with the Catholic immigrants from Europe and, at that time, to teach and to nurse was to attend to society's severest needs." Novak interviewed Sister Mary Peter Trexler who stated, "Too often sisters are considered a money-saving device for a middle-class society with middle-class values. And people want to keep them middle-class.'"[38] Nuns became affordable teachers and administrators for parochial schools and hospitals, respectfully. There were even comics that satirized this aspect of convent life.

Cartoonist Joe Lane demonstrated the lofty dreams that a young woman had of becoming a novitiate and having the chance to become an intellectual, only to witness her life revolve around washing dishes (Figure 1.1).[39] In essence, many sisters felt discouraged by the loss of the progressive and justice-oriented strain that had attracted women to religious life for centuries. While many sisters were had intellectual aspirations, there were others who believed that they were not properly trained to fulfill their careers within the convent. Many sisters felt unqualified to teach or administrate at hospitals because of their youth and lack of education. This issue first manifested in the late 1940s and the early 1950s. The process of suburbanization led to the founding of more Catholic churches and schools, which in turn created a demand for more teachers. Most nuns joined a religious order while they were still in high school or had just graduated. They were simply unprepared to leave their homes and immediately begin teaching students who were potentially the same age as them. This anxiety contributed to an increase in the number of sisters leaving the religious life primarily in the United States.[40]

---

[38] Novak, "The New Nuns," 13.
[39] Joe Lane, *Our Little Nuns: A Book of Cartoons Created Exclusively for Extension Magazine* (Chicago: The Catholic Church Extension Society, 1954).
[40] There were a multitude of issues that also contributed to the decline of the religious life. Beginning in the late-1960s, second-wave feminism made it socially acceptable for women to have the ability to choose what she wanted to do with her life. During the 1950s and earlier, however, Catholic women could either marry or enter the religious life.

To stem the loss of nuns, in 1952 Pius XII held a meeting with the International Congress of Major Superiors. He professed, "Whether it be for teaching, the care of the sick, the study of art or anything else, the Sister should be able to say to herself, 'My superior is giving me a training that will put me on an equality with my secular colleagues.'"[41] In response to the Pope's statement, Sister Mary Emil Penet organized a committee called Sister Formation Conference of the National Catholic Education Association in 1953. This organization created the foundations for sisters to receive the education necessary for them to accomplish their roles in their orders. A year later, more than 150 centers opened their doors around the United States to assist nuns in earning an education.[42]

This movement led to an outpouring of many success stories in which sisters in specific teaching orders not only attained a bachelor's degree and even went on to attend graduate school. For example, Pinkerton held both a Bachelor of Science in education and a master's degree in English and education. Sister Theresa Grekowicz, an Immaculate Heart of Mary sister from Michigan and a major figure in social justice causes, received a Bachelor of Science in biology and education and later earned a master's degree in biology later.[43] The Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary had a brain trust of sisters during the 1960s with "forty-one sisters studying for master's degrees, thirty-two for doctorates and fourteen doing post-doctoral research – at such universities as Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Chicago, California (Berkeley), the Sorbonne, Oxford, London, Munich, and Venice."[44] Others chaired departments in universities and hospitals. Sister Marie Augusta Neal, who was a voice for NAWR, chaired the department of sociology at

[41] Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, *Out of the Cloister: A Study of Organizational Dilemmas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 3.
[42] Harris, *The Sister,* 7.
[43] Jeffrey S. Ghannam, "Sister Theresa Grekowicz Obituary," *Detroit Free Press,* December 8, 1989, 27.
[44] Novak, "The New Nuns," 16.

Emmanuel College in Boston.[45] This new emphasis on higher education enhanced nuns' sense of authority and gave them a broader knowledge base with which to oppose societal injustice. Throughout U.S. history women religious were extraordinary individuals who, as one historian has noted, "were at the forefront of American efforts to provide women with education, ideas of self-worth and self-motivation, and the means of economic independence. For many women, the very act of choosing the religious life was empowering."[46]

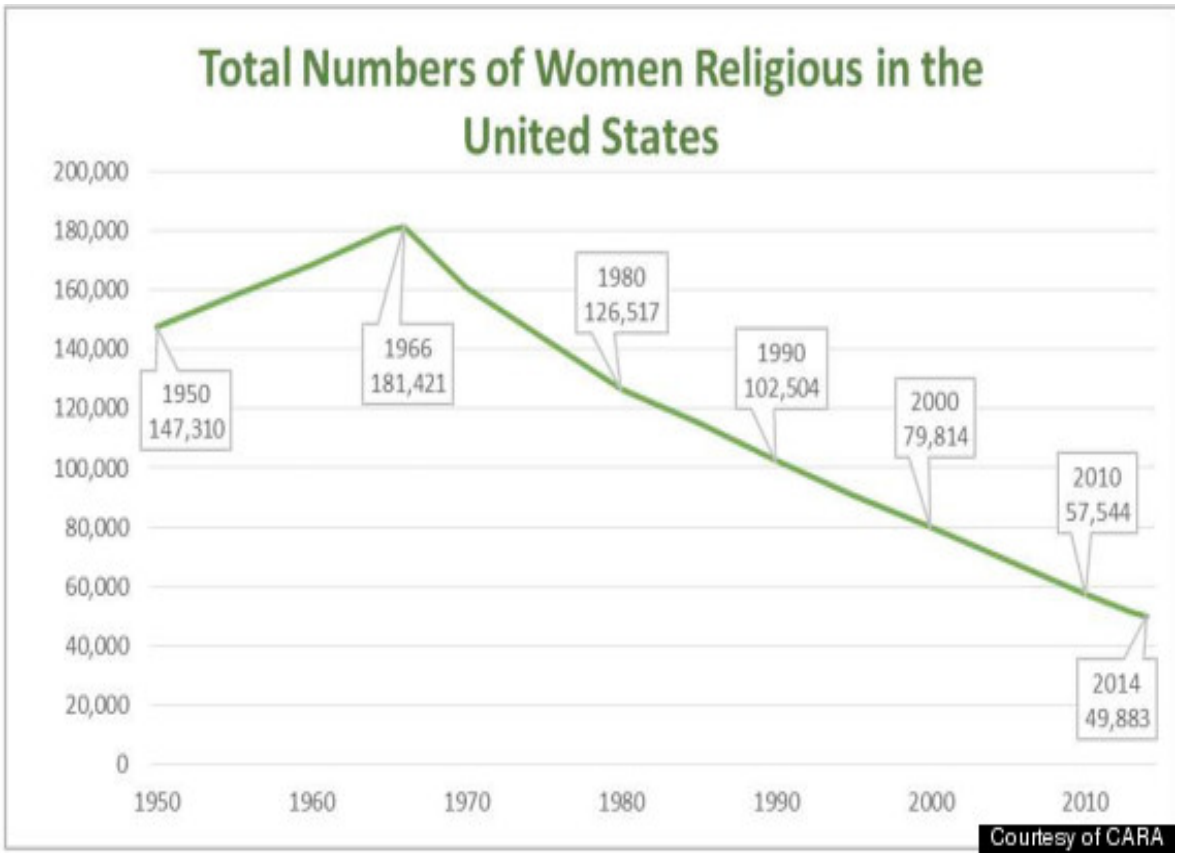

Figure 1.2 CARA's chart of the declining numbers of women religious in the United States. Courtesy of CARA and Georgetown University.

[45] Sister Marie Augusta Neal, "Freedom of Expression in the Church," in *The New Nuns* ed. Mary Charles Borromeo Muckenhirn (New York: The New Library Press, 1967), 83.
[46] Bernadette McCauley, "Nuns' Stories: Writing the History of Women Religious in the United States," *American Catholic Studies* 125 (Winter 2014): 67.

Ironically, educating sisters increased the rate of them leaving the religious life. For a few, attending college allowed them to contend with secular ideas and befriend non-Catholic women. These experiences prompted many sisters reconsider their choices beyond joining the religious life or marrying a Catholic man. Events of the 1960s increasingly prepared women for such alternatives. Second-wave feminism made it more acceptable for women who wanted to be independent. Statistics compiled by the Center for Applied Research for the Apostolate reveal that in 1965, religious orders had "179,954" sisters, but by 1970 that number had decreased to "160,931" (See Figure 2.1). The downward trend continued as more women left the religious life and fewer women chose to enter the religious life.[47] Orders began to question if they were out of date. Could they continue to exist unless they changed their strategies for recruiting new postulants? Sisters, who in the 1960s went to college and stayed with their religious order, believed that they could use their roles in Catholicism to modernize the American Church and revive their orders. These sisters, who called themselves "the New Nuns," contended that they needed to make a radical disjuncture from their current condition and push back against the hierarchy to take claim of their legitimacy.

The Future of Nuns in the Second Vatican Council

From the start of religious orders in France to the mid-twentieth century, Catholic ideas about religion evolved immensely. Liberal religious orders formed in times of strife and dissent. By the 1950s, sisters labored in defined roles without experiencing the struggles of their predecessors. Instead, the Second Vatican Council proposed ideas that appeared to change the

[47] Center for Applied Research for the Apostolate, "CARA Religious Life Research," Georgetown University, https://cara.georgetown.edu/services/religious-institutes/, last consulted September 28, 2019.

role of religious women in the Church, opening doors for greater responsibility and participation, which in turn, reinvigorated sisters to once again become agitators. At this council of the world's Catholic bishops, they discussed how to modernize the Church by increasing the responsibility of laypeople and women religious in Catholicism, among other efforts.[48] This very suggestion of greater participation for women and lay ministers sent shockwaves throughout the Church. Many priests believed that soon they could marry, and sisters hoped that they could become ordained. Some Catholics welcomed the changes, but others became anxious that their Church, grounded in centuries of tradition, would radically transform. If gender equality came to fruition, then women religious previously relegated to participating in the marginal roles would have a platform to reform the very nature of the Church.

The Second Vatican Council emerged as one of the greatest revolutions to sweep the Catholic Church and appeared to be a godsend for nuns seeking greater autonomy and responsibility within Catholicism. During this Council, the bishops of the world convened to decide how to bring ancient Roman Catholicism into the modern world. A sect of bishops feared that Catholicism lost membership and claim in different nations because of the appeal of Communism. On the other hand, other bishops feared the break from tradition because they believed that modernism would corrupt the ancient origins of this religion. The Church changed many of its exclusive stances. For example, the Church made a positive turn toward world religions and made a statement that salvation is possible for anyone, even for atheists and agnostics, if they abided by natural law and lived an ethically good life. As the theologian Hans Küng described this event, "There was a new, fundamentally positive attitude to modern progress, which had long been ostracized, and to the secular world, science, and democracy

[48] I explore this idea in greater detail in chapter two.

generally."[49] Furthermore, the Church promoted engaging with social justice issues and expanding the role of the Church to the community outside of the parish walls.

Furthermore, the Second Vatican Council openly considered revising and revitalizing the roles of nuns in the Catholic Church. These ideas first emerged because the council called for an equality in religious orders. Before Vatican II, the Church instituted that a major superior ran the house and she oversaw her "subjects" or "inferiors" as a few orders' constitutions referred to the other nuns. In the aftermath of the Vatican II, women religious – a few of whom had viewed themselves as obedient and humble brides of Christ – now received the call from their bishops to "govern themselves in collegial, co-responsible, and participatory ways."[50] Sisters had already pushed for autonomy by operating in schools and hospitals, but now had the official support of the Vatican to change their religious orders. Nuns used this power to establish equality within their orders and seek out collaboration with other nuns, who shared their vision. expanded their worldview to understand the similarities that they shared with many of the other religious orders. This new authority helped many nuns articulate the understanding that they could collectivize and form an alliance analogous to the conference of bishops.

The college of bishops also sought to significantly revise the role of the laity by granting them a voice in the life of the Church. Rather than maintaining a strictly hierarchical approach to Catholicism, they planned to democratize the faith. Through a series of papal encyclicals, the Church advocated for major changes in the hopes of gaining greater participation from the laity and women religious.[51] The most obvious changes were in how priests said the mass. Before, the

---

[49] Hans Küng, *The Catholic Church: A Short History*, trans. John Bowden (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 183.
[50] Margaret Susan Thompson, "Context – Part Three," in *Building Sisterhood*, 230.
[51] Mark Massa, *The American Catholic Revolution: How the Sixties Changed the Church Forever* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.

priest spoke the liturgy in Latin and faced away from the congregation. After Vatican II, churches now spoke the vernacular and priests faced the congregation. Progressives witnessed another victory in that women – both lay and religious – could become lectors and read the scripture to the rest of parish during the service. Before the council, women could not even set foot on the sanctuary, which is an elevated platform where the altar stands. These changes in the mass became emblematic of modernization. Outside of the mass, the lay apostolate promoted the idea that laymen and laywomen needed to live their religion out in public every day. Liberal sisters who joined the convent in order to save the world welcomed Vatican II's changes and pushed for greater authority within the Church.

Organizing for Change

Shortly before Vatican II, nuns in the United States organized into unions to promote their roles within Catholicism. They organized into networks or associations in the hopes of channeling their energies into productive means of change. In the late-1950s, the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSW), later called the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), provided mothers superior and abbesses with strategies for structuring their orders and running schools or hospitals. The three main goals on which the organization unanimously agreed were to "promote the spiritual welfare of the women religious of the USA; insure increasing efficacy in their apostolate; foster closer fraternal cooperation with all religious of the United States, the hierarchy, the clergy, and Catholic associations."[52] The organization grew out of the need to instruct the superiors of religious orders on how to help all sisters feel welcomed in the convent.

[52] "LCWR History," lcwr.org/about/history, accessed on January 30, 2020.

Optimistic after the Second Vatican Council, liberal sisters believed that the papacy's call for greater participation in their religious orders would one day lead to gender equality in the Church. Vatican II established policies of *aggiornamento* (modernization) and *ressourcement* (return to the sources) to develop what more liberal bishops believed would be a more authentic form of Catholicism.[53] NAWR and liberal sisters embraced the Council and argued for a greater role for women based on their interpretation of early Church history. NAWR believed that the early Church relied on women as deaconesses to deliver the faith to others by reading scripture and performing sacraments.

The nuns pointed to evidence from the ancient Church, when women served as deaconesses in Catholicism. Church historians note that women, in the first and second centuries, most likely performed sacraments and were likely deaconesses. This tradition ended a few centuries later when the papacy declared that Catholic ministers could only be men because Christ's twelve apostles were all men. Thus, NAWR leaders believed that they would restore a more authentic form of Catholicism by allowing women to serve as deaconesses. NAWR leaders also cited Galatians 3:28 which reads, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."[54] For women religious, they interpreted this passage as an example of how biology should not decide who could lead in the Church. Furthermore, in NAWR's opinion, once a person made a vow of celibacy, his or her gender, or sexuality, should no longer matter as in the case of the ascetic saints Jerome and Paula of Rome.[55] These two religious figures lived together as a holy man and

[53] Thomas J. Shelley, *Greenwich Village Catholics: St. Joseph's Church and the Evolution of an Urban Faith Community, 1829-2002* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 187.
[54] For more on this see, John Wijngaards, *Women Deacons in the Early Church: Historical Texts and Contemporary Debates* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2006).
[55] McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, 3.

woman in a religious society without having a sexual relationship. The potential for these types of unisex societies ended with the middle ages as popes created cloistered convents to protect consecrated virgins from Huns and other marauders who threatened to rape and defile women. To New Nuns, the symbolic idea of the cloister lingered on them, and they believed that this prevented them from having equality with men in society. The late 1960s became the time for women to break free and to reenter the world by returning to the practices of the early Church.

Women religious faced an uphill battle in their efforts to join the Church hierarchy. Historically, the Church denied female ordination and the diaconate. The diaconate is an ancient office in Catholicism that emerged out of the need for assistants in the daily operations of a parish community.[56] Before Vatican II, men who wanted to enter the priesthood first became deacons and then a bishop ordained them. After Vatican II, the diaconate changed. The college of bishops allowed married men to become permanent deacons. This transformation of the office went back to the ancient traditions of Catholicism when anyone could become a deacon or deaconess. The bishops, however, reserved this new opportunity only for men. Liberal sisters would not be deterred by this decision. For liberal nuns, they still saw this move by the Vatican as the chance for sisters to become deaconesses. The change to restore deaconesses would need a sympathetic Pope to confirm this decision, and they had Church history on their side. Sisters in the LCWR turned to the Bible to argue their cause that "deaconesses who regularly saw after Jesus and his disciples and who, being women possessed of women's exclusive strength, stood

[56] In the Catholic Church, the diaconate is the first of three ranks in ordained ministry. Deacons preparing for the priesthood are transitional deacons. Those not planning to be ordained priests are called permanent deacons. Married men may be ordained permanent deacons, and single men may be ordained with a commitment to celibacy. Currently, deacons can provide baptisms, read the Gospel during mass, and preach a homily. All of these are duties that typically only a priest can complete for a church service to be valid (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Diaconate," http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/diaconate/index.cfm).

by at the Crucifixion after the Apostles deserted."[57] This push demonstrated a resolution to restore the female diaconate that brought an upsurge of support for this movement.[58]

In the 1960s, newer organizations emerged that represented the demands of liberal nuns. The New Nuns formed out of their dissatisfaction with suburbanization and pushed to participate in social justice issues. While the LCWR served the heads of religious orders, the modern organizations of nuns sought to serve all nuns by giving everyone a vote. This effort reinforced the Vatican II notion of creating more egalitarian structures. Before, conservative bishops had held onto a tradition that sisters could not enter non-Catholic churches.[59] However, sisters tested more than physical boundaries of a church, rather they were testing social and political boundaries with civil rights marches, anti-Vietnam protests, and denuclearization campaigns. They believed that this was their moment to effect change in the world and to fulfill their calling to the religious life.

NAWR formed in 1968 at the height of Christian organizing. It believed that nuns could work with priests and bishops to promote female ordination. In September 1969, Sister Ethne Kennedy, of the Society of the Helpers of Holy Souls, met with nuns from different orders to explore the possibility of creating an organization that would work pursue social justice and expanding the roles of women in Catholicism. In a missive that Kennedy wrote to the Cardinal of Detroit, she stated, "The desire for (NAWR) has been expressed by more than 30 diocesan senates and councils as well as thousands of women religious with no such affiliation. It is hoped that in the not too distant future the NAWR will be able to meet with the National Conference of

[57] Harris, *The Sisters*, 6.
[58] "Resolutions for Restoration of Diaconate for Women," November 17, 1974, 1, folder 1, box 31, Leadership Conference of Women Religious of the United States Manuscripts (hereafter cited as CLCW), UNDA.
[59] Koehlinger, *The New Nuns*, 1.

Catholic Bishops."[60] NAWR aspired to represent the voices of more than "160,000 women religious" throughout the United States and eventually expanding internationally.[61] Kennedy articulated the concerns that the Catholic leadership would not meet with women about modern problems and that this lack of communication would have disastrous ramifications on future Catholic policy.

At its first meeting, the NAWR task force identified a set of goals. Each goal centered on organizing women religious and giving sisters direction to become more autonomous within American Catholicism. For example, the first objective was "to give impetus and direction to the organization of groups of women religious." The second objective was "to work for greater participation of women religious in the decision-making process and implementation of decisions on local and national Church levels." The third objective was "to provide channels through which women religious may speak with one voice."[62] Through this approach, NAWR hoped to reunite other women religious who were splintering off from their religious orders to live on their own. "History," as NAWR Chairperson Kennedy wrote, "may consider this present half-century the age of councils. If by the year 2000 woman has acquired peer relationship with man, in the church and the world, the growth of sisters' councils, national and international organizations, may appear less phenomenal. But right now, in 1969, their rapid development merits documentation."[63] NAWR, in her opinion, represented the beginning of distinct changes for the future of women religious in Catholicism.

---

[60] Letter from Ethne Kennedy to John F. Cardinal Dearden, October 28, 1969, folder 1, box 5, National Assembly of Religious Women (U.S.) Records (Hereafter, ARW), UNDA.
[61] Ethne Kennedy, "Reports on the Founding of NAWR," April 17-19, 1970, 1, folder 1, box 9, Association of Chicago Priests Records (hereafter cited as ACP), UNDA.
[62] "Third Annual Convention of Women Religious, Cleveland, April 17-19, 1970," Press Release, folder 1, box 9, UNDA.
[63] Ethne Kennedy, "Fellowship/ Pooled Resources/ Insight-Experience," *Newsletter: Task Force NAWR*, (November 1969), 1, folder 48, box 1, ACP, UNDA.

In April 1970, NAWR held its third national convention and gained more members across the United States and Canada. From a membership of about 1,500 sisters in 1969, NAWR increased to 4,000 sisters from more than seventy diocesan seats.[64] They deemed themselves to be more radical than their contemporaries because they crafted programs that sought to alter American Catholicism. NAWR pushed for women in the diaconate and the priesthood. Additionally, they fought for laypeople, priests, and sisters to have a vote in democratically selecting bishops. Ethen Kennedy described that NAWR "sprang from the vision of American Sisters, Sisters whose renewal in their own communities had freed them to hope and dream beyond the frontiers of their own communities to action in an open Church and world."[65] She and many of its members pushed for a radical reimagining of Catholicism that focused on what the Church could accomplish by embracing gender equality.

Kennedy firmly believed that the late 1960s and early 1970s offered a moment of distinct possibilities for women religious in North America. She contended, "Sisters ask to be inserted into the ecclesial process of decision-making, to participate from the grass roots with bishops, priests, laymen," Kennedy contended, "so that the creative insights of women religious can influence church thinking and action."[66] Her argument rested on the assumption that Roman Catholicism had become too weak because of its reliance on men willing to be celibate. Sisters believed that their faith would enter a post-gender time in the future. They hoped that bishops would not preclude women from entering the seminary and instead, all people could assume all leadership positions in Catholicism.

---

[64] Formerly known as the National Assembly of Women Religious, the organization changed its name in the late 1970s to appeal to all Catholic women in a period of declining membership.
[65] "NAWR: not Just "Nunny" Business," *National Catholic New Service*, April 8, 1971, 4, folder 7, box 1, CARW, UNDA.
[66] Ibid., 2.

There were examples where women used biology to defend the power of their sex. Sisters elevated the femininity of the Virgin Mary to explain the power of women in religion. Sister Elizabeth Carroll, a member of the Sisters of Mercy, argued, "If the spirit utilized the female powers of Mary's body to incarnate the Son of God, the Church may well recognize His will to use other female powers."[67] The Virgin Mary's example also contrasts the stereotype of the emotional woman. For example, in the Gospel of John 19:25-27, Mary and other female followers of Christ were present at Christ's crucifixion, despite his male apostles abandoning him out of fear. This example demonstrates the ways that New Nuns understood their femininity by using the Virgin Mary as a paradigm for why women deserved a say within the Church. They even underscored this point that a few people had not received the word of God because women did not have equality to men in Catholicism. As a result, in a rationale for the restoration of the diaconate for women, the committee believed that "The Kingdom of God is less fully proclaimed and less completely established."[68] Promoting liberal reforms, NAWR hoped that bishops would revise rules pertaining to ordination and discontinue a system that liberal women religious viewed as sexist.

The New Nuns also faced resistance to their organizations from conservative sisters. In a 1970 missive by the "Mature American Women Religious" to editor of the periodical *Sisters Today*, Father Daniel Durken, the writer excoriated the movement to organize sisters as "totalitarian" and believed that this organization would create "much feminine" language nuns. The letter writer pointedly observed, "You imply that we Sisters constitute a monolithic structure

[67] Elizabeth Carroll R.S.M., "Women and Ministry," in *Woman: New Dimensions* edited by Walter Burkhardt, S.J. (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 91.
[68] "Women in the Church and Society," *NAWR Trends 1974 Convention Report: Toward Building a Just Society*, August 14-18, folder 2, box 9, ACP, UNDA.

seeking political power and speaking with one voice."[69] There were dozens of orders in the United States all with different emphases and political expressions.[70] Durken forwarded the message to Ethne Kennedy. She responded to the anonymous letter writer that the structure was not monolithic, but "is open to every sister who wishes to address the whole church." She defended the formation of this religious organization by stating that its members were following Vatican Council II, "which gave impetus to the formation of Sisters Councils and for other structures for communication and decision-making." Kennedy believed that her organization was "striving to reshape the Church of the Seventies to render God's love more visible to today's world."[71] Nonetheless, this exchange reveals a significant schism. Over half of the religious orders strictly embraced conservative notions, believing that their roles were to be passive and contemplative. They did not want the New Nuns to tell them what to do, preferring to maintain the traditional male hierarchy of the Catholicism.

The New Nuns also faced resistance from conservative priests. For example, Joseph Gallen, a Jesuit priest, wrote an article about the relationship between grace and the feminine nature. He pointed to women as being of "an emotional nature" and "impressionable, unstable and variable."[72] Gallen framed this criticism within a discussion of the different types of spirituality that men and women experience. "Christian spirituality does not annihilate our natural tendencies but orientates them properly [to God]." He continued, "It follows that grace does not destroy the feminine nature, that the more fully developed the feminine nature the more

[69] Anonymous letter to Fr. Daniel Durken and forwarded to Ethne Kennedy, August 3, 1970, folder 2, box 1, ARW, UNDA.
[70] "Listing of Women's Religious Communities," The Diocese of Rockville Centre, https://www.drvc.org/religiouscommunities, accessed on February 1, 2019.
[71] Letter from Ethne Kennedy to Daniel Durken, August 8, 1970, folder 2, box 1, ARW, UNDA.
[72] Joseph F. Gallen, S.J., "Femininity and Spirituality," *Review for Religious*, Vol. 20, (1961): 247.

effective grace will ordinarily be."[73] Gallen manipulated his praise of women. This appeal to the genius of women ultimately boiled down to what nuns viewed as a charade that sought to reinforce the patriarchy of the Catholic Church. Members of the hierarchy maintained that bishops should not trust women in leadership positions because of their emotional nature.

Liberal sisters implored bishops around the world to reexamine the rules that barred women from becoming ordained ministers in Catholicism. They gained traction with a few bishops and created a commission to promote expanded roles for women within Catholicism. In 1971, a few bishops from Belgium, Brazil, Canada, the Dominican Republic, among many others endorsed revisiting this issue. John Gran, Bishop of Oslo, even proclaimed that that if it is theologically correct to ordain women, "then I believe that the Church must allow the ordination of women in those regions that desire it. At least then regions would avoid the shortage of priests."[74] The encouragement of these bishops emboldened sisters who wanted to revisit the rules regarding ordination. Such statements of support, however isolated, fed into the nuns' beliefs that they could expand their authority within Catholicism and create more opportunities for Catholic women, especially those who felt called to a celibate life.

Becoming a Modern Nun

Modern sisters also focused on how to become more active members of society. They examined everything from their clothing to their domiciles and considered how to become more approachable to everyone. First, they examined their habit, and many decided that they needed to part with this tradition. The habit arguably was as iconic for identifying nuns as the clerical collar for recognizing priests. Liberal sisters wanted to escape the confines of their uniform. To

[73] Ibid., 240.
[74] "Woman in the Church," Nov. 19-21, 1971, 2, folder 7, box 1, ARW, UNDA.

them, this outfit represented the stuffy and starched conservatism of Catholicism. At civil rights marches in the 1950s and 1960s, organizers had sought nuns as participants, in part, because the habit made them stand out in a crowd. Police officers did not club nuns and the mere appearance of a sister inspired many of those present. In the words of Atlantan reporter Ralph McGill, "The presence of the Roman Catholic nuns inspired the committed and shamed the timorous."[75] Yet this situation spoke to the very issue that they sought to address. The habit represented a woman that did not mirror the actual person. To Sister Jeanne Reidy, the habit reflected "a Church group withdrawn from modern living and preserved in a bygone hierarchical social structure which places a religious 'state' above and away from lay people." This symbol, in her opinion, did not welcome non-Catholics to the Church, "tending not to unite but to separate."[76] In a new apostolate where sisters served in poor, urban neighborhoods, they depended upon being recognized as individuals who sought to provide aid to those most in need. Moreover, the restrictive clothing, they feared, mirrored a perception of them as locked out of the Church hierarchy. Sisters did not want the public to view them as interchangeable, but as unique individuals. New Nuns were opinionated, strong-willed, intelligent, and flawed individuals. They wanted to be viewed as such, not just as another nun.

This search for individuality, however, fed one of the contradictions of organizing at this time. In an interview with the Catholic Press Association, Kennedy articulated the desire for greater individuality among the sisters. "We have agonized in the process of transforming functionally-ordered societies (congregations of nurses, teachers, social workers, etc.) into

[75] Paul Murray, "54 Miles to Freedom: Catholics Were Prominent in 1965 Selma March," *National Catholic Reporter,* March 7, 2015. https://www.ncronline.org/news/justice/54-miles-freedom-catholics-were-prominent-1965-selma-march.
[76] Jeanne Reidy, "Nuns in Ordinary Clothes," *The New Nuns,* ed. Mary Charles Borromeo (New York: The New American Library, 1967), 48.

communities of women witnessing Christian love as celibates." In her opinion, to express the full potential of sisters, they needed to "develop personal gifts and attractions as modes of serving the church and men, rather than educate them to fit our job descriptions." She and her supervisory committee came to this conclusion due to the "pain of sisters who have been crushed over the years by authoritarian structures."[77] Many nuns wanted to organize into a national collective of religious women, yet they also wanted to be known by their individuality, while permitting the breakdown of religious unity on a more local level.

In addition to the NAWR, other groups of sisters pushing for radical change emerged in the wake of Catholic modernization. During the 1960s, liberal sisters had looked beyond the convent walls to address the contemporary problems that plagued their society. Sisters had participated in protests and marches, such as the 1965 March to Selma, and they believed that their duty to society demanded that they interact with the poor and needy in society. Out of the civil rights struggles emerged an additional Catholic rights organization. The National Coalition of American Nuns (NCAN), organized by Sister Margaret Traxler, formed as an offshoot of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice (NCCIJ). The NCCIJ focused on promoting civil rights in cities across the United States during the 1960s. In doing so, it challenged a dark part of Church history. The global Catholic Church, which once participated in the slave trade, maintained racist policies well into the twentieth century. For example, African American men could not become priests in certain dioceses, and black women could not enter most religious orders.

In both the preconciliar and postconciliar period, some sisters had turned to civil rights organizations as a way to develop a positive reputation among non-Catholics in American cities.

[77] Ethne Kennedy, "New Image for Sisters of the Seventies," circa 1969, 4, folder 1, box 9, ACP, UNDA.

Sisters termed the racial apostolate, as also the urban apostolate or the social apostolate, and local chapters formed in cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and New York City. Liberal teaching sisters viewed racism "as a rupture within the 'mystical body of Christ' and as a form of social pathology that could be remedied through specific action."[78] Their training as educators prepared them to leave the wealthy suburban schools and to address the scourge of racism in the cities. Thus, sisters became convinced of their ability to effect change by promoting themselves in these areas of need. Sister Mary Dennis, a member of the NCAN executive committee, viewed the NCCIJ as a means for nuns to create their own platform and "to develop an image of concern and action in the broader arena of social problems and human rights." However, the NCCIJ ineffectively provided women religious with the voice that they needed to fully proclaim their vision for improving the Church, leading to the NCAN.[79]

NCAN wanted to address more than social justice rights. The NCAN's leadership viewed its movement "as 'protestants' within the Church urging new sensitivity to the Spirit, yet always and ever bound in love to the Community of His Presence." NCAN members were moreover dissatisfied with the "encrustations of the Christianity of our times."[80] In another letter, Sister Mary Sparks bitterly wrote the bishops attending a synod, "the National Coalition of American Nuns has spoken out in support of the right of women religious ultimately to determine their own lives, their dress, their apostolic activities without paternalistic or authoritarian interference from

[78] Amy Koehlinger, ""Race Relations Needs the Nun:" Sources of Continuity and Change in the Racial Apostolate of the 1960s," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 23, no. 4 (2005): 47. See also, Martin A. Zielinski, "Working for Interracial Justice: The Catholic Interracial Council of New York, 1934-1964," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 7, no. 2/3 (1988): 233-62.
[79] Memorandum from Sister Mary Dennis to Members of the NCAN Executive Committee, folder 1, box 1, NCAN Committee Records (hereafter NCAN), Marquette University Library (hereafter MUL). Not only did NCAN use NCIIJ as a means to collaborate, but the leadership also used its stationery and letterhead for years to come.
[80] Ibid.

men religious or the hierarchy."[81] NCAN used strong language by comparing itself to the Protestants who had caused a major schism within the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century. NCAN did not fear operating outside of the hierarchical structure to accomplish its goals of gender equality.[82] However, Sparks appeared to use this language as a chance to express how NCAN could save the Church and religious orders from obsolescence.

NCAN and NAWR had their disagreements, each believing the other had copied each other's idea. In 1970, NCAN and NAWR clashed over the superfluous nature of having two organizations that sought to accomplish the same goals. For example, Sister Margaret Traxler took a clipping from the Chicago-based Catholic newspaper *The New World* entitled "NAWR Committee Here," and articulated how NAWR's goals in 1970 bore many similarities to NCAN's agenda in 1970. These goals as outlined by NAWR were to keep leadership accountable, to compile a hospitality directory, and to investigate the ordination of women.[83] Both had existed for a few years at this point, and unsurprisingly, vied to become the main leadership council for women religious. Despite NCAN's origins with the NCCIJ, the two groups primarily based their operations in the Midwest and shared similar goals for having a female diaconate.

The Environmental and Social Justice Goals of Liberal Religious

Networks of women religious sought to create peace in the world through their ministry and works. The New Nuns and radical sisters that challenged their status in Catholicism viewed

[81] Sister Mary Sparks, "To the Executive Committee of NCAN-Now proposed edition of the statement to the Bishops Attending the Synod," 2, folder 1, box 1, NCAN, MUL.
[82] Judith Eby, "'A Little Squabble among Nuns'? The Sister Formation Crisis and the Patterns of Authority and Obedience among American Women Religious, 1954-1971." Ph.D. dissertation, St. Louis University, 2000. Eby describes that women religious operated without the hierarchy's blessing to accomplish their goals.
[83] "NAWR Committee Here," *The New World*, June 5, 1970, 7, folder 1, box 1, NCAN, MUL.

their role in the world as protecting underrepresented groups. Various religious orders communicated these concerns and promoted them through their chapters. Most of them reflected on ways that they could apply the modern issues of their day to their peacebuilding missions. In one instance, the School Sisters of St. Francis published a newsletter entitled *Communique* about the respect for life. This article stated, "Man's environment and his relationships are the arena in which he works for peace. His care for his world and his brothers and sisters must extend beyond the narrow boundaries of his own life to embrace the earth and its present and future dwellers."[84] These sisters participated in NAWR and contributed to an ideological system crafted around this idea of peace and environmentalism. They witnessed the connections between man and environment. These sisters believed that they were endowed in their very marrow with a calling to serve God by molding a more egalitarian American Catholicism. By promoting environmentalism, they sought to promote "the elimination of injustice, [and] the elimination of all that hinders LIFE."[85] Modernity appeared to be a panacea for the problems of this time. However, what was a panacea for some of the sisters proved to be a nostrum for others.

Some organizations of sisters developed an environmental message because of their fears about technology based in the Cold War arms race. Many women religious had earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in a variety of fields. They were an educated group of women and many of them studied ecology. Sister Marie Augusta Neal, a prominent member of NAWR, presented at the national conference on the issue of modernization's impact on the world. In her report on the state of environmental degradation, she pointed to the contradictions between policies. "While technology has brought about many material advantages," she argued,

[84] "Rationale – Social Issues and Commitments," *Communique 11,* September 4, 1970, 2, folder 1, box 9, ACP, UNDA.
[85] Ibid.

"it has also brought about the threat of environmental pollution and mass destruction." Furthermore, "While science promises long life and health for all, it also promotes destruction through biological warfare and over-population."[86] This striking claim indicates that NAWR acknowledged overpopulation as an issue that they needed to address with their organization.[87] Many of these women religious engaged with the ecological principles at this time and noted how pollution and inhumane labor practices risked destroying the world.

These networks of nuns sought out a cause that could uplift their ideology. The searched for a cause that combined their interest in civil rights and environmentalism. They witnessed through the testimonies of many workers who reported on hazardous working conditions on farms, which also threatened the land and consumers. For many nuns, this struggle to support farmworkers symbolized their stance against capitalism and highlighted the dangers of a capitalistic and masculinist economic and religious structure. This strong feminist undercurrent that coursed among women religious articulated a tension that would form between the primarily male and conservative labor force in the UFW and the sisters.

Conclusion

Sisters pushed to have a greater role in society and found their identities during the zeitgeist of the age in which they lived. In sixteenth century France, sisters were motivated by the anti-Catholicism that permeated their European society. They found purpose in serving children at poorer schools and seeking to spread God's message by their service. By the 1950s, however, the lack of change in the United States did not inspire much confidence in sisters.

[86] Ethne S. Kennedy, "Reports on the Founding of NAWR" April 17-19, 1970, 37, folder 1, box 9, ACP, UNDA.
[87] Paul Ehrlich's *Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968) served as a warning on how overpopulation could lead to the destruction of humanity.

Modernism appeared as an answer to the problems of the conservative Church. American Catholicism, in the eyes of radical sisters, fostered a flawed system because of its gendered inequality. Ethne Kennedy made a strong claim about the rights of women religious in promoting change in their faith. "Women don't just function: we live what we do, create what is not there, encourage growth whatever the odds against life. So I appeal to you, the press of the church, to cut through these stereotypes that keep us apart, to challenge us to be who we are and to accept what we have to say in return."[88] They saw that their identities as women helped balance out the masculinity of Catholicism. In this way all peoples could be brought into the holy Roman Catholic Church.

Progressive sisters believed that the Second Vatican Council created the opportunity to disrupt the Catholic hierarchy and establish a new egalitarian hierarchy in its stead. The new standards of the postconciliar Church during the 1960s provided American nuns an opportunity to organize and feminize the Church's message, and they were poised to take it. New organizations of sisters embraced modern ideas and used their intellectual skills to support modern ideas in the future. However, they would need a cause to rally around and turned toward the social justice struggle of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers' movement. Women religious and migrant farmworkers shared a few similarities. Both faced a Catholic hierarchy that wanted to limit their representation. Both needed to promote their message and overcome internal factionalism to issue a clear message to make a difference. Religious women could help issue the message of farm workers to religious networks of supporters. Farmworkers provided the social justice and environmental causes that nuns could harness to become radical activists. Drawn together by mutual needs and interests, Cesar Chavez and the National Assembly of

[88] Ethne Kennedy, "New Image," 10.

Women Religious made strange bedfellows indeed. Chapter two will explore the relationship between sisters and the UFW and other environmental issues that pushed sisters to embrace environmentalism in the 1970s.

In Denver 1971, Sister Ethne Kennedy concluded her address by challenging the sisters in attendance with a series of questions. "Do we have the courage to risk security by doing battle with the powers that be, to leave our secure positions, but jobs and living conditions, to pitch our tents in efforts which are new and unproven but vitally needed if the spirit of Christ is going to permeate this world of ours?"[89] In many ways, sisters responded to current and past events to govern which way their orders will grow and develop. By following modernism, they positioned themselves to operate in a Church that fundamentally disagreed with the methods and goals that they had established. The hierarchy would either need to accept them or force them to fall back in line with the rest of the women religious.

[89] Thomas Mary Walsh, "Report to Central Office," October 7, 1970, 3, folder 7, box 1, ARW, UNDA.

Chapter 2: Sisters Standing with Farmworkers

In 1973, Cesar Chavez sent a letter to the National Assembly of Women Religious (NAWR), calling for its help in the United Farm Workers movement.[1] Chavez implored sisters to join him by saying, "Sisters belong in our struggle for Justice." He continued, "We invite you to share our lives…to be poor… yet full of life…to be mobile…yet deeply rooted in the spirit of solidarity. To be suffering… yet hope-filled with us."[2] Chavez spoke eloquently to the NAWR sisters who deeply believed in social justice for migrant farm workers. NAWR, like the UFW, organized members who felt abused by their employers. NAWR brought together sisters who struggled for representation and respect in the American Catholic Church. They believed that women should have the right to serve in the Church as ordained ministers. Just as the UFW struggled for representation in labor disputes, the sisters wanted a platform where they could voice their concerns to bishops and the laity. Finding a solidarity with underrepresented farmworkers led women religious to promote the UFW within their Church networks. This process of advocating for representation also contributed to NAWR's adoption of new environmentalist ideas. Sisters combined the UFW's human rights issues with the energy crisis and the threat of nuclear warfare to craft a Catholic environmentalist ideology.

Cesar Chavez emerged out of agricultural activism as an unlikely leader of the labor movement. Born in 1927 to farmers, his family raised him in an agricultural background. During the Great Depression, his family lost its farm, and they moved to California's Central Valley looking for work. He had a middle school education and primarily worked in manual labor.

[1] I have intentionally removed accents from Cesar Chavez's name as this was his preference. He removed the accents because he wanted to Americanize his name.
[2] Cesar Chavez, "Ministry to the Farmworkers and Migrants," November, 1973, folder 16, box 2, UFW Ohio Boycott Office Records (hereafter UFWO), Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University (hereafter WPR).

Chavez left California for two years in 1948 while serving in the Navy, but moved back to the state to work in Delano afterwards. Chavez's travels highlighted to him the gross inequalities between the landowners and the agricultural workers. In San Jose, Chavez's family lived in a neighborhood infamously known as *sal si puede* (In English, get out if you can), which underscored how the community felt endangered by their living conditions and employment. The Bracero program was the primary problem for unions seeking regulations. Braceros were essentially strikebreakers. Whenever a union wanted to discuss an issue with management, landowners always had the advantage because they had a workforce on hand that could not go on strike for fear of being deported. Beginning in the 1960s, Chavez organized Latino farmworkers to advocate for even the most basic rights for workers, by first attacking the Bracero program and eventually pushing Congress to terminate this deal with Mexico. This victory contributed to larger ones, and while under the aegis of the AFL-CIO, Chicano and Filipino-American farmworkers united into the UFW and achieved many victories. This primarily happened because Chavez had a gift for bringing in supporters from a variety of groups and achieved a massive national framework of support.[3]

Chavez differed from other labor leaders because of his distaste for liberalism. He was influenced by his faith and adopted more conservative views on many social issues, such as gender roles and feminism. He demonstrated his faith at various times throughout his career and made Catholicism a symbol of the movement. During the Delano Grape Strike in the mid-1960s, Chavez went on a thirty-day religious fast to promote nonviolence among the workers. Similarly,

[3] I list a more extensive bibliography in the introduction, but here are a few select works are Matt Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), Ferriss, *The Fight in the Fields* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997), Castillo and Garcia, *César Chávez* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), Levy, *Cesar Chavez:* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975), Matthiessen, *Sal Si Puedes:* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1969).

the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe became a fixture at most of their rallies to protest change. Chavez mentioned on occasion that he did not want outsiders to assume that he had liberal sentiments. "When you say all black people are lazy, all Mexicans are drunkards, or all Filipinos are irresponsible," Chavez argued, "it's the same thing when you say all labor leaders are all liberals."[4] Despite Chavez's right-leaning views, he took pride in the ways that the UFW accepted everyone's support. Chavez expressed, "Some of these things that happen are beautiful, such divergent groups that come together, volunteers and strikers. There is a young striker who is bi-lingual. We have the young striker who is not bi-lingual and the Filipino who only speaks English. They have their cultural identity." He also noted, "It's amazing they all work together. That's the miracle of all of it."[5] The union received support from people of all ages, ethnicities, and creeds. He believed that the cooperation between all these different people illustrated to the workers that peaceful protest was the most effective way to win the boycott because they won a wide array of protesters to their cause.

The UFW, with the help of a national support structure, attained many victories despite facing resistance from landowners during the 1960s and 1970s. The National Farm Workers Association fought to conclude the Bracero Program in 1964, and they set a legal minimum wage for workers during the same time. This led to the Delano Grape Strike in 1965, which was a struggle against the largescale table grape grower Giumarra Brothers. The strike lasted for five years until John Giumarra agreed to the UFW's terms. The UFW won sanitary working conditions and higher wages for its members. The UFW next aimed for safer working conditions by limiting the use of pesticides in the field or requiring a break between spraying and having

[4] Tape 30 Cesar Chavez continued, 1969 July 1-3, 21, folder 135, box 1, Jacques E. Levy Research Collection on Cesar Chavez (hereafter JEL), Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (hereafter BL).
[5] Ibid., 50.

workers return to the fields. However, they met resistance from landowners who undermined the UFW through faulty elections. Consequently, the UFW fought for closed elections so members of the Teamsters, an opposing union, would not be able to intimidate workers from voting or sway elections in the favor of the landowners. Landowners that owned vineyards or lettuce fields wanted to keep this competition with the UFW by allowing the Teamsters to compete as well. As a result, the UFW reached out to its allies to support them in a new strike against grapes and head lettuce.

In 1970, the UFW began a strike in California's Salinas Valley, near Coachella, and called for a boycott against all non-UFW head lettuce and wineries to force landowners to the negotiating table. Chavez's example at Delano in the mid-1960s had already garnered the support of Americans across the nation by his example. He appealed to many by using his religious identity to promote peace. This style of pacifism appealed to religious orders that emphasized the corporal works of mercy – such as the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and the School Sisters of Notre Dame. The Catholic Worker Movement, a radical Catholic peace organization, also were attracted to Chavez's commitment to pacifism. Dorothy Day, the editor of *The Catholic Worker* and head of the movement, became a major ally of Chavez during throughout the 1960s and until the 1970s. This ministry proved essential in establishing support in the pro-labor Midwest.[6] To endorse the grape and head lettuce boycotts during the 1970s, many religious organizations turned to consumer leagues and people living in the industrial hubs of the United States. Because of the UFW's emphasis on religious protest, sisters and other Catholic organizations also placed this movement within the terms of social justice. The UFW

[6] However, as Amy Koehlinger explores in her masterful *The New Nuns* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), the 1960s was a decade that saw the rise of a group known as the "new nuns" who embraced the racial apostolate, which was a ministry that focused on promoting racial equality in the United States.

protest gave them a chance to perform works of mercy and to make a difference as well. Nuns became more informed of the movement by traveling to California to see the protest, or from learning about it from people who were out there. This flow of knowledge influenced them to use their roles as teachers and administrators to change the minds of their patients and students about this issue. Thus, on the ground, nuns assisted in the UFW strike through their vocations. This also impacted them to contemplate how they could become more environmentally responsible in the ways that they ran their religious orders.

Chavez and the Christian Protest

The United Farm Workers movement began in earnest during the early 1960s with the goal of ending the Bracero program. Many of the statistics from the Agricultural Organizing Committee reflected their concern that the presence of braceros permitted landowners to decrease wages, increase output, and place laborers in potentially harmful conditions. In 1961, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL-CIO) released essays about the health risks caused by Mexican migrant laborers. An article entitled "Salad Anyone?" described field workers as "drawn from the most disease-ridden regimes of a disease-ridden country. Enteric disorders are endemic throughout rural Mexico." The document stated that "Mexican Nationals have only the vaguest notions about the transmission of diseases."[7] The AFL-CIO contended that the lack of sanitary conditions in the fields only mattered to consumers because braceros carried diseases within them from Mexico. The list included "diseases which are transmitted through fecal material: ancylostomiasis, ascariasis, amebiasis, shigellosis" among many others. Somehow, the article suggested, American field

[7] AFL-CIO, "Salad, Anyone?" 5, folder 6, box 1, Agricultural Workers History Collection (hereafter AWH), WPR.

workers did not carry these diseases even though they also had to defecate in the fields with Mexican Nationals. For Americans, and in the case of this article for female pickers, the lack of restroom facilities became a safety hazard for workers and consumers.[8]

The paucity of labor regulation contributed to the rise of accidents on California farms. A 1962 report by the California Department of Industrial Relations provided statistics of the increasing rates of injury in agricultural occupations. In 1950, an astounding 13,877 debilitating injuries took place, or equal to 58 disabling injuries per thousand workers. By 1962, this number had increased to 16,104 for that year at a rate of 65.2 injuries per thousand.[9] This report also went into graphic detail describing the ways that conditions on farms maimed or killed laborers in workplace accidents. In one account, "A tractor driver was burned to death when the improperly sealed gas cap was shaken off on a rough road. The victim was drenched with gasoline which was ignited by a spark from the tractor."[10] Many other accidents included the improper handling of heavy machinery, electrocutions from downed power lines, or falls from high distances.

This report did not address the struggles that women faced, however, personal testimonies explained in agonizing detail the problems that women faced in the fields. According to a study conducted by the UFW, female agricultural workers' rate of miscarriage was seven times the national average.[11] This rate of miscarriage occurred from pesticide exposure and working long hours in the heat. Small concessions also would have improved women's sense of identity. For example, having access to a portable restroom was critical for women's health and

[8] Ibid., 8.
[9] Kevin O'Gara, "Work Injuries in California Agriculture, 1962," 4, folder 12, box 4, Ronald B. Taylor Papers (hereafter RBT), WPR.
[10] Ibid.
[11] United Farm Workers, Summer 1989 Fundraising Letter, 3, folder 36, box 14, Michigan Farmworker Ministry Coalition Collection (hereafter MFMC), WPR.

dignity. A UFW organizer named Jessica Govea remembered working in the fields before there were portable restrooms. If she needed to relieve herself, she could not have privacy. Govea would often work a full day without urinating which contributed to her contracting urinary tract infections and having a permanent "physical problem."[12] In the Delano strike, the UFW gained restrooms for both men and women. One of the reasons why the Coachella strike began was because landowners took the portable restrooms out of the fields. These issues of health and sanitation were exacerbated by improper pesticide spraying.

One of the most dangerous potential killers on a farm was pesticides. Biologist Irma West wrote many articles about the impacts of pesticides on agricultural workers' bodies. In 1962, West explained that agricultural workers' occupational disease rate was "over 50% higher than industry in second place." She attributed this percentage to new hazards on the farm, the difficulties of controlling hazards, and the use of chemicals. Additionally, she blamed migrant agricultural workers because of the "language barriers, substandard education, marginal health, and poor hygiene," and claimed that a better knowledge of hygiene would solve most of the workplace hazards that farm laborers encountered in the fields.[13] Ultimately, she placed blame both on the employer and the worker. The employer for neglecting to institute safer conditions and the worker for failing to understand the dangers of pesticides. The examples she outlined, however, clearly demonstrate the dangerous workplace conditions in which these laborers worked.

Most of West's examples of occupational health problems resulted from exposure to lethal amounts of pesticides. In one case, a young worker mixed parathion into his sprayer and

[12] "Women in the Farm Workers Movement: An Interview with Jessica Govea, Organizer for the United Farm Workers of America," 1972-82, 2, folder 36, box 14, MFMC, WPR.
[13] Irma West, "Occupational Disease of Farm Workers," *Archives of Environmental Health*, 9, (1964), 92, folder 21, box 2, Reverend Victor P. Salandini Papers (hereafter VPS), WPR.

drops of the chemical fell on his gloves. When he put his gloves back on, he inadvertently spread the chemical across his hands and thighs. He vomited due to this exposure, aspirated on his vomit, and died shortly afterwards. According to the study, a lethal dose of phosphate ester pesticides was "32 drops dermally."[14] It was unclear in the study how much of this chemical he had touched. Crop dusters also became exposed to dangerous amounts of these chemicals. In one instance, a pilot rolled his aircraft, and the hopper carrying phosphate ester TEPP broke open, covering the pilot in this pesticide. According to the report, "He walked a distance of 50 feet to a field worker, stated he felt fine and asked for a drink of water. After drinking the water, he began to vomit and almost immediately became unconscious." The pilot died from exposure to TEPP and "the ambulance driver, the pathologist, and the mortician became ill from handing the body."[15] Another pilot inadvertently exposed his child to parathion after he cleaned off his boots with a paper towel. His eighteen-month-old child grabbed the paper towels out of the trash and immediately began to demonstrate symptoms of parathion poisoning. The child survived, but these instances articulated the severe dangers of pesticide poisoning that could both spread so easily and impact so many different people in the process.[16] As a result, the UFW worked to ensure that people throughout North America comprehended the dangers of pesticide exposure. One way that they believed they could secure more rights was by increasing mechanization.

The UFW began a series of campaigns to assist in improving the lives of every worker. For example, Chavez promoted mechanization, although workers' rights advocates typically viewed machinery as harming worker and consumer rights. A leaflet entitled "Farm Workers & Mechanization," states "mechanization should benefit everyone…not just the growers."

[14] Ibid., 93.
[15] Ibid., 95.
[16] Ibid.

Mechanization could improve the lives of workers who labored in hellacious conditions. In the fields, Chavez described the inhumane practice of stoop labor. He recalled, "People talk of automation to scare us, but there are some jobs that should be automated." Stoop labor, in his opinion, was awful work. Historians and anthropologists have noted that landowners racialized stoop labor to humiliate laborers. Additionally, this type of work forced a worker to contort her body to thin out leaves so a head of lettuce would grow. This process often led to severe backpain and permanent nerve damage from staying in a position for a prolonged period of time.[17]

Consumers and producers disagreed with Chavez's assertion. Politicians defended limiting mechanization because in their opinion it limited workers' opportunities. Furthermore, mechanization, in concert with genetic modification, created a product that was unappealing for the consumer. The leaflet quotes a State Senator Walter Stiern of Kern County, who said "we now have the tomatoes that 'taste like rubber,' as well as strawberries that taste like potatoes, and a general decline in the quality of our food."[18] Mechanization and genetic modification stood in stark contrast to the ideas that many people had of what farm laborers were supposed to be. Many activists fought to prevent mechanization because they wanted to preserve the romantic notions of workers in the field, while also preserving their fruits and vegetables from being damaged.[19] These issues prevailed throughout the 1970s, and the UFW turned to Christian organizers for support.

---

[17] In Seth Holmes masterful ethnography *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), he articulates that landowners segregated stoop labor to Triqui laborers from Oaxaca because they were shorter and already closer to the ground. In Holmes' words, "Ethnicity serves as a camouflage for a social Darwinist perception of indigeneity versus civilization" (84).
[18] United Farm Workers, "Farm Workers & Mechanization," folder 14, box 26, ARW, UNDA.
[19] This idea mirrors other misconceptions from this period about people of color. See Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

Chavez and the UFW appealed to religious groups for assistance in their cause, beginning with the Delano strike in the 1960s. When the union first organized, Chavez and the Latino workers did not find an ally in Catholic Church but with the Protestant Migrant Ministry organization. The farmworkers union soon became a contest to save souls and bodies. Many Agricultural workers criticized a majority of the Catholic hierarchy for not being fully supportive of the UFW's protests during the 1960s and 1970s. Bishops found the issue too political, and particularly in California, many of the wealthy landowners were Catholic. By siding with the farmworkers, priests and bishops would have lost the financial support of some of the wealthiest families in California. While the Catholic Church failed to provide strong support for farmworkers, there were other Christians who were willing to assist them.

The Migrant Ministry filled this vacuum left by the Catholic Church. Beginning in the 1940s, this Protestant organization went into the fields and helped farmers in a variety of ways. The Migrant Ministry sent statisticians to collect information that the UFW would use for leaflets and circulars. Members of this organization held food drives and picketed with the workers during strikes and farm protests. By the 1960s, they offered Chavez the support that he needed to have a full-time staff working on the Delano grape strike and remained a close ally through the Coachella head lettuce strike in the 1970s. This was the first time that Chavez began to work closely with this Protestant ministry, which created anxiety among many of the Catholic Latino and Filipino workers. Chavez recalled, "In those days still very strong, this discrimination between the [the Catholic and Protestant] groups." Chavez admitted that he liked the Migrant Ministry better than the Catholic Church because back in the early 1960s pastors dedicated their entire ministries to promoting the UFW movement. Meanwhile, Chavez stated, "I wanted a real

say so in my [Catholic] church and in those days I couldn't."[20] A substantial fear emerged among Californian bishops that many of its Latino followers would begin following other Christian denominations that addressed the farmworkers' rights. The Migrant Ministry assisted farmworkers by working to compile statistics regarding braceros.

In 1963, the Migrant Ministry sent surveys to farmworkers for the purpose of highlighting the impact of braceros on their quality of work. For example, questions asked about were a farmworker's wages, what his plans were, and if mechanization had impacted his job. Parts of this survey addressed farmworkers' opinions on braceros. The questions included, "Have you worked in the same field with braceroes (sic)? Do braceroes work too fast? Have you ever been fired while working with braceroes?" None of the questions broached the issue of wages or workplace safety. The respondents, consequently, felt either ambivalently or negatively toward braceros. One person felt that braceros "are all right" and work "about normal." Another stated, "As long as they treat me all right, I do the same to them." A few acknowledged that they had previously worked as braceros who later gained citizenship and immigrated to the United States. Survey respondents who had not worked in the same fields as braceros, nevertheless, claimed that they "work too fast" and that "They take the work from the American workers."[21] Although the survey did not indicate ill will among workers and braceros, the UFW used the information to articulate the dangers of this program.

By 1964, the Migrant Ministry added a page to the questionnaire about religious affiliation. This page asked if the respondent subscribed to a religion, if they attended any services, and if they had heard about the Migrant Ministry. Many of the respondents

[20] Tape 28, Cesar Chavez Continued, 1969 June 27-28, 16-17, folder 134, box 1, JEL, BL.
[21] "Case Studies of Farm Workers, 1963," folder 8, box 1, National Farm Worker Ministry Records (hereafter NFWM), WPR.

demonstrated a willingness to join another church or at least felt indifferent toward religion.[22] This questionnaire demonstrates the ways that the Migrant Ministry began to compile information so its members could proselytize to primarily Catholic workers and convert them to Protestantism. It is unclear if they were successful, but other Protestant organizations used this tactics in other regions of the United States to convert migrant workers.[23] Consequently, the Catholic Church grew uneasy, fearing the loss of many Catholic families to Protestantism. The incentive of organizing around religion became a powerful tool for bonding UFW members toward achieving their goals.

Religion persisted as a strong force for uniting UFW members and supporters, even in intimidation tactics. Chavez recalled, "We are really rough on Mexican scabs in terms of pressure, hounding and educating them we set the example. A lot of the scabs leave. We convert a lot. Those we aren't converting are immobilized." To "convert" scabs, Chavez would gather "500 [UFW sympathizers] and go have a pray-in in front of their home or sing-in or we put two or three pickets – a scab lives here." Chavez used his pacifist, religious organization to intimidate Mexican scab labor. He highlighted his ardent nationalism by intimidating specifically Mexican migrant scabs. In contrast, Chavez informed his biographer Jacques Levy that they would sometimes intimidate African American scabs but would never interfere with Filipino scabs.[24] The use of religious ideas continued to create enemies within the Catholic hierarchy.

Cultural disagreements between the Church and the UFW exacerbated tensions. The UFW leadership, for example, received pushback from bishops and priests for using the image of

[22] Out of a small sample size, eleven percent of farm workers said that they were Catholic but were not active. The small percentage who were Protestant were much more likely to state that they were active in their church. See in "Case Studies of Farm Workers, 1964," National Farm Worker Ministry Records, Box 1, Folder 8, WPR.
[23] See chapter four for more details.
[24] Tape 1, Cesar Chavez First Interview, 1969 Feb 4, folder 132, box 1, JEL, BL.

Our Lady of Guadalupe in their marches. However, Chavez and others believed that "Our Lady belonged to the Mexicans and not to the church (sic)."[25] Moreover, in the opinion of many farm laborers, the bishops failed to fight for their rights. Despite these disagreements with priests and bishops, many Mexican American workers' remained Catholic because, historically, they had not relied on priests or bishops for their faith. Dating back to the nineteenth century, there had been a significant priest shortage in the Southwest. In 1866, Archbishop Jean Baptiste Lamy described the paucity of clergy. He wrote, "We have 110,000 Mexicans and 15,000 Catholic Indians. Colorado has 10,000 Catholics in a settlement of 40,000 souls. Arizona has 8,000 Catholics. The present number of our Priests in missions is 41, five in charge of Colorado, three in Arizona, the rest in New Mexico."[26] Ethnic Mexican Catholics in that area might go to religious services only a few times a year when the traveling priest came to their town. As a result, farmworkers did not depend on priests or bishops for belonging to Catholicism but had several cultural traditions that tied them to their belief, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Chavez's indignation against the Catholic hierarchy created further distinctions between a Catholic nationalism that Chicano workers adopted and the official stances of the Church leadership. Mexican American Catholics did not necessarily have priests who indoctrinated them on a daily or weekly basis regarding the faith, but Catholicism became ingrained into Mexican American identities such as in the Lady of Guadalupe and other rituals. This idea of what Catholicism was based on the cultural practices of Chicano workers came into conflict with the pro-landholder stance that southwestern bishops took during the agricultural boycotts. In 1968, Chavez delivered a speech in Sacramento to a conference of UFW members, in which he stated

---

[25] Ibid., 31.
[26] Louis H. Warner, *Archbishop Lamy: An Epoch Maker* (Santa Fe, 1936), Chap. 14. Source found on the University of Houston's Digital History website, accessed February 3, 2020. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=585.

that he felt ashamed by the Catholic Church's apathy toward the farmworkers' suffering. However, Chavez admitted that the farm workers "were very suspicious" of the Migrant Ministry because "we were Catholics and they were Protestants." He continued that UFW's idea of the Migrant Ministry shifted because the leadership defined its mission as being "called to serve, to be at the mercy of the poor, and not to try to use them." This realization forced him "to raise the question why OUR Church was not doing the same?"[27] Chavez hoped to use this speech as a wakeup call for the bishops to respond to the needs of Latino and Filipino Catholic workers. Chavez understood the deep importance of religion to the UFW movement and wanted to harness the Catholicism of his youth to support his cause. Although Chavez accepted help from all who would give it, he believed that the true nationalization of the movement would require the enlistment of the Catholic Church.

Although the Bishops responded slowly to Chavez's pleas for support, religious women acted quickly on his call for help. The networks of sisters quickly adopted Chavez's plea for help. Sisters had helped migrant workers even before the Delano grape strike. During the 1940s and 1950s, nuns and Christians developed programs that provided food and safer working conditions for migrant families that came to their state for a particular harvest. By the time Chavez called for help, many liberal nuns had already participated in the civil rights movement and were ready to go picketing again. Others stayed within their local communities to help spread the message of boycotts against non-UFW produce during the 1970s. They mobilized efforts to aid the migrant families who suffered under inhumane conditions in the fields.

Nuns used their authority as administrators and teachers to combat social inequality in the Midwest. One of the strongest cores of progressive thought developed in Chicago and spread to

[27] Cesar Chavez, "The Mexican-American and the Church," 2, folder 2, box 3, Agricultural Workers History Collection (hereafter AWHC), WPR.

other urban Catholic communities around the Great Lakes. Nuns had a strong and progressive hold of this region. Many sisters were active in helping Catholics integrate into society by providing their children with an education. Beginning with the onset of the Cold War, this changed as the American Catholic Church became more conservative as a way to assimilate into American culture. For almost all of American history, white Americans viewed Catholic immigrants as a separate race.[28] They had odd customs and rituals, such as Italians holding a *festa* or a large procession with a statue of the Virgin Mary in a litter to be carried throughout the streets. These acts both appeared to Protestants as worship of Mary, which Protestant Americans saw as a sign of blasphemy, but it also demonstrated the thousands of immigrants in cities who could sway elections through the political machine.[29] To save the United States from the Pope and corruption, Progressives, at the turn of the century, sought to assimilate Catholic immigrants into the United States.[30]

The process of assimilation became even easier as first-generation Catholic immigrants raised the second generation. By the 1928, Governor Al Smith, a Catholic, served as the presidential candidate for the Democratic Party. During World War II, the vast majority of American Catholics supported the war effort and shamed conscientious objector Catholics for rejecting the draft. In the post-war period, almost every Catholic stood as a staunch opponent against Communism. The famous television priest Fulton Sheen utilized the airwaves to

[28] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).
[29] Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950,* Second Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).
[30] Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

demonize the Soviet Union and all forms of Communism as a threat to religious freedom and American ideals.[31]

Over the course of a few generations, Catholics slowly became whiter and less distinct from other Americans. Finally, by the 1950s economic boom, neighborhood committees, realtors, and banks did not redline Catholics from moving out to the suburbs, but welcomed them into this new world of the suburbs that stretched out across the United States. This newly attained whiteness created opportunities for Catholics to move out en masse to the suburbs.[32] With a new redistribution of the Catholic population, there was also now a need for new churches and new schools. Nuns and priests who had worked in diverse neighborhoods in Chicago now left Hyde Park and Woodlawn for Park Forest and Naperville. They felt that they had lost a key aspect of their identity. Out of this process of suburbanization, liberal nuns felt disappointed by bishops' and lay Catholics' seeming indifference regarding the civil rights crises surrounding them. The New Nuns emerged during this moment and adopted feminism, environmentalism, and other forms of activism to reform and modernize the Church and society at large.[33]

New Nuns in NAWR engaged with the public to influence Catholic Church teaching. To accomplish this task, they needed to fulfill the Second Vatican Council's call for everyone to participate in the life of the global Catholic Church. In 1971, NAWR president Ethne Kennedy distinguished her organization from the Conference of Major Religious Superiors of Women by

---

[31] Irvin D. S. Winsboro, and Michael Epple, "Religion, Culture, and the Cold War: Bishop Fulton J. Sheen and America's Anti-Communist Crusade of the 1950s," *The Historian* 71, no. 2 (2009): 209-33.
[32] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), Adam Rome, *Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Spread and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[33] See Koehlinger, *The New Nuns* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). Koehlinger focuses on the civil rights demonstrations for ending Jim Crow segregation in the South.

stating her organization "would do more to 'facilitate the emergence of sisters' in leadership roles and in social problems."[34] Sisters had the ability to do more for transforming the church because of their positions in hospitals, orphanages, and schools, but they felt muted by the Catholic hierarchy in their attempt to engage with the public because they left the cities for suburbs. In the cities there were still non-white Catholics who remained.

Mexican immigrants have a long history of resisting white colonization efforts. The history of the United States has several instances of attempts to convert indigenous people to an a European model of religion, beginning with Christopher Columbus. Manifest Destiny in itself was an attempt to convert ethnic Mexicans away from Catholicism and to Protestantism or a whiter form of Catholicism. In response, Catholic Mexicans held public religious festivals and turned to their form of Catholicism to resist these attempts of imperialism. These communities resisted the onslaught of American Christianity to the point that theologian Timothy Matovina states, "Undoubtedly fear and anger at their subjugation intensified religious fervor among many devotees."35 Many Spanish speaking people resisted white American culture under the idea of La Raza, or the race. Based out of California and Texas, this movement originated after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 when the United States annexed territory from Mexico. La Raza, as historian David Gutiérrez states, "marked the birth of an oppositional strategy that acknowledged the common oppression Mexican Americans suffered in American society while offering an alternative, positive label that countered the stigmatized status many Americans sought to impose on Mexicans."[36] Consequently, white Catholicism appeared as a threatening

[34] John Dart, "2 Nuns' Groups Urge Change, Social Concern: Bigger Roles Sought by Women Religious; Spanish-Speaking Organization Sets Goals," *Los Angeles Times*, December 4, 1971.
[35] Timothy Matovina, *Latino Catholicism: Transformation in America's Largest Church* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 23
[36] David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 36.

force, but by the time of urbanization, ethnic Mexicans needed to operate within a white Catholicism framework.

Ethnic Mexicans had found a home in Chicago since the 1910s. Since 1917, George Cardinal Mundelein had dedicated Chicago Catholic churches to creating a missionary movement for Mexican nationals who were seeking asylum from the Mexican Revolution or were migrant laborers in the beet fields. As the state became an industrial power, Illinois needed workers and had one of the largest populations of ethnic Mexicans in the United States. Mundelein and his parishes began to serve Mexicans in Chicago's Near West Side at St. Francis of Assisi, and they worked to create resources for them. Mexican immigrants seemed to be the next ethnic group to enter the U.S. melting pot and adopt American culture. Bishops, priests, and sisters all believed that by going to Catholic schools and participating in American society that ethnic Mexican residents would soon become like other European Catholic groups that had built their enclaves in Chicago. They eventually became white over time by adopting English and many other American customs.[37]

Mexican Americans maintained their culture and in Illinois became one of the major racial groups. Before 1970, Chicago had been a city primarily comprised of only two racial groups: blacks and whites. As the city grew, Latino and Asian communities became two additional prominent racial groups in the city. Ethnic Mexicans arrived in Chicago looking for work and for many of them they did not have a strong connection to religion. Mexican immigrants have stated, "work itself absorbs us so much that we don't have time even for

[37] David Baldillo, *Latinos and the New Immigrant Church* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 121-123. See also, Eileen M. McMahon, *What Parish Are You from?: A Chicago Irish Community and Race Relations* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995) and Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

church, or to remember God." One other person stated, "Work is my religion."[38] Other Mexican Americans believed that religion was for women and that men were meant to work. Still other opinions demonstrated that the United States provided a large crossroads for people to decide who they wanted to become. Many ethnic Mexicans came from small towns where everyone went to the same church, talked to the same people, and did not have opportunities to explore other perspectives.

New Nuns, who were forced to suburbanize, wanted to participate in this complex form of Catholicism that was unique to their interpretation of religion. NAWR and NCAN had their own visions of what Catholicism meant and in many ways imposed this vision upon them. They viewed most issues from their own perspectives and sought to have a stronger attachment to this community that had a long history of resisting traditional Catholic structures. In many ways, the UFW's national boycotts provided women religious with a broader movement that allowed them to engage with social justice, while not needing to contend with the multitude of religious perspectives that ethnic Mexican communities engaged with. The UFW was an American movement and for New Nuns that focused on reforming the American Catholic Church without considering how their movement could assist ethnic Mexican enclaves within their own cities. Sisters across the nation were viewing issues on a macro level when attempting to solve injustices.

Assemblies of sisters other than NAWR formed at this time to voice their political views and began to express concern for environmentalism as well. For example, in 1970 the School Sisters of St. Francis had a general meeting where they sought to strengthen their identity. At the general assembly, the convening members wrote "The experience of community on the local

[38] Ibid., 126.

level is integrally related to financial sharing," the constitution reads, "Therefore, each sister is accountable to the local community for all monies and goods and gifts she receives."[39] Furthermore, they wanted to address "the reality of the military-industrial complex, the reality of the environmental crisis, and the reality of the hunger, poverty and alienation that faces people." On the topic of environmentalism, this religious order defined the movement as a "respect for life" issue. They believed that humanity cannot improve if, "[Man] does not cooperate with and make peace with his living space. Nature and man, man and man, are involved in a joint venture."[40] In this example, The sisters articulated pro-life causes by emphasizing the significance of environmental degradation as it related to human suffering. The School Sisters confirmed their belief in the interconnectedness of everything and that a healthy planet would also support life.

NAWR strove to become the national organization that would spearhead the major changes for creating a modern religious movement that promoted peace and engaged with new intellectual ideas. NAWR members believed that women religious needed to avoid factionalism within its ranks to achieve greater autonomy and responsibility in Catholicism. For example, NAWR sent peace ballots to its members to ensure that all sisters reached a consensus on their goals. In 1975, the Peace Ballot included six categories: "Steps to reverse the arms race, support for universal human rights, provision for basic human needs, measures to protect the global environment, alternative approaches to international institutions and law, re-organization of the US government for a more effective peace-making and peace-keeping role."[41] Liberal sisters agreed with social scientists on the need to curb the problem of overpopulation. NAWR endorsed

[39] School Sisters of St. Francis in Milwaukee, WI, *Communique -11*, 9, folder 12, box 9, ACP, UNDA. Emphasis in original.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Marquita Finley, "The National Committee for the Peace Ballot," 1976, 1, folder 17, box 3, ARW, UNDA.

U.N. policies "to help stabilize the world population at no more than six billion people (now at approximately 4 billion)."[42] This message reflected ideas that the biologist Paul R. Ehrlich discussed in *Population Bomb*. In his monograph, published in 1968, he was concerned that overpopulation would destroy society and demanded that governments take away incentives for families to have children.[43] In the same year that Ehrlich released *Population Bomb*, Pope Paul VI issued an encyclical titled *Humanae Vitae* that contended that artificial birth control destroyed families. These two works highlight the vast spectrum between Church teaching and modern ideas of overpopulation. This commitment to more modernist theories cast doubt in the minds of moderate to conservative Catholic priests and lay people who questioned the sisters for adopting views that contradicted Catholic doctrine.

New Nuns believed that Americans needed to become less materialistic and more spiritual to address the civil rights issue of injustice in the fields. During the 1970 Coachella head lettuce and grape boycott, NAWR encouraged Americans to purchase fewer goods and buy produce that was in season. These measures would all help to mitigate the ethical dilemma regarding landowners' horrendous treatment of Latino workers. In 1973, the United States entered an energy crisis as a result of OPEC levying an oil embargo against the United States. The sisters of NAWR used this as an additional incentive that by supporting the boycott. By using less, one was not only helping out farmworkers but finding savings on the cost of oil. Many Americans did not adhere to these more environmentally focused ideas, however, because they required average citizens to sacrifice comfort and convenience. Post-World War II America

[42] Ibid., 2
[43] Paul R. Ehrlich, *Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968).

built its identity on the idea of abundance.[44] Despite the stance of most Americans, liberal sisters believed that they could use their roles in schools and hospitals to fight for farmworkers' rights. Furthermore, by emphasizing the transfer of pesticides from field to table, sisters and UFW activists suggested the dangers of consuming non-union produce.

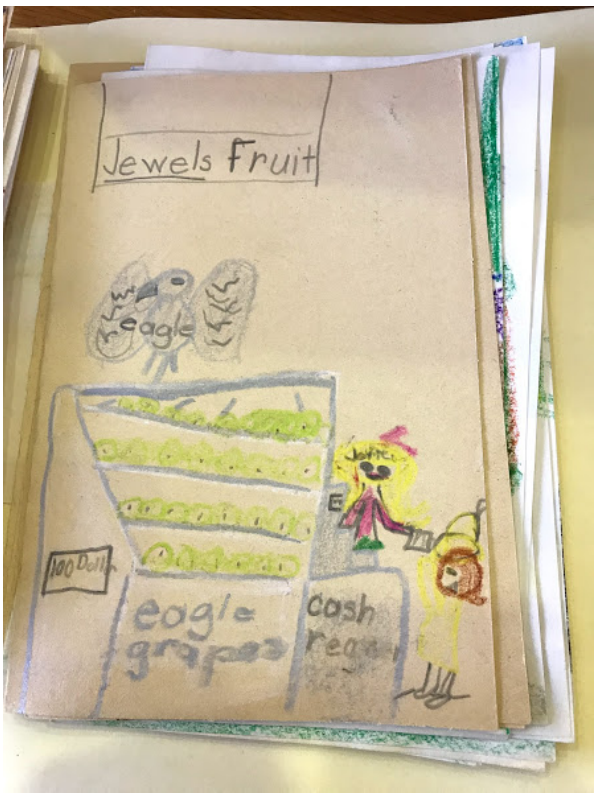

Figure 2.1: Card to Harry Beckner from Students at St. Ethelreda's Elementary School, circa 1970. Courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Archive.

Sisters Push for Respect and Peace

Women religious used their ministries as teachers and hospital administrators to support the Coachella boycott by educating children about this cause and preventing hospitals from

[44] For more on this see, Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), John P. Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America in War and in Peace, 1941-1960* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), Daniel Horowitz, *The Morality of Spending: Attitudes toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1940* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1992), Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010).

purchasing foods from non-union sources. They focused on this role in an edition of *Probe*, the NAWR newsletter. Sisters reflected on their responsibilities in creating classrooms that cared about the community at large. Sister Janet Bamberger went so far as to suggest that school sisters "have the power to liberate or oppress an entire school community."[45] They recommended granting children an opportunity to go out and serve in the community.

In this same edition of *Probe*, NAWR published one lay administrator's reflection on her role in her school. She and explained that she found in all of the courses she took on human relations a "basic Christian philosophy: recognizing the value of the individual, being aware of and sensitive to personal situations…[and] encouraging self-esteem through legitimate achievement and growth."[46] This rumination demonstrated the intentional approaches that women religious and laywomen working for this organization took to find meaning in their work. The nuns focused on the authority that they had in their administrative roles and the influence that they carried without having the authority in the community that priests and bishops held. Regardless, they mobilized their efforts to aid social justice issues such as supporting the UFW boycott.

Many teachers used their role as educators for helping to spread knowledge of the grape boycott to elementary-aged children. Teaching sisters supported the boycott because they wanted to protect their students, while also supporting the UFW boycott. At a leadership meeting in 1974, NAWR's Education Task Force met to establish its pedagogical goals. They settled on two issues: "1. To raise the consciousness of those involved in Christian education to the need for a just society, and 2. To develop plans for action to implement just structures and processes in all

[45] Janet Bamberger, SCN and Bobbie Kidwell, "Administration for Justice in Education," *Probe: The American Sister* (October, 1974), 4, folder 1, box 9, ACP, UNDA.
[46] Mary Louise Schniedwind, "Leadership in Administration," *Probe: The American Sister* (October, 1974), 4, folder 1, box 9, ACP, UNDA.

educational endeavors which are Christian."[47] For example in 1970, at Saint Ethelreda's elementary school in Chicago, Sister Angela Just had her primary school children write cards to Harry Beckner, the manager of Jewel Foods grocery stores. The children thanked him for keeping them safe by not poisoning them with insecticides. Most of the cards were designed with grapes, crosses, and clerks assisting customers. Students echoed the message that their teacher had taught them in class. "I am happy that you desided to sell the graps that have only the eagle labble because the people won't get sick from eating the rong kind of graps," according to a student named Susan. A separate student mentioned that he felt happy because 'people will not buy the greps taet have in seckes in it."[48]

This method demonstrated how they spread a message of peace to children and how they would take this lesson home with them and share it with their parents. Sister Just used her authority as an educator to inform her students about the problems with insecticide use in California and offered him support for agreeing to purchase only union-supported grapes and wine.

UFW Recognizing the Sisters

NAWR and other nuns gained recognition from the UFW for their commitment to the boycott. The UFW informed the sisters in an open letter that their roles in the boycott were "to TEACH the consumer-public about the unjust plight of those who work to feed us…to ORGANIZE and MOBILIZE community support of the UFW boycott activities to HELP in various offices, clinics, and UFW services. To WITNESS to the Gospel-roots of this non-violent

[47] "NAWR Trends," February, 1974, folder 5, box 42, NFWM, WPR. In schools, many of the women religious also became transfixed on the problem of the oil embargo and potential nuclear warfare.
[48] Cards to Harry Beckner from St. Ethelreda Elementary School Children, circa 1970, folder 12, box 11, UFW Illinois Boycott: Chicago Office Records (hereafter UFWI), WPR.

struggle of the poor for justice and dignity – for a better life for their children."[49] This language about children underscores the importance of UFW's emphasis on the family. NAWR responded with vigor to the call from Chavez. At the 1975 annual meeting, NAWR created an office solely for the purpose of promoting the UFW boycott. In one letter, a Sister Mary Jane wrote to Sister Catherine Pinkerton, the head of NAWR at the time, telling her, "I firmly believe that as UFW goes – so does any other self-determination for farm workers…. Right now, it's a life and death crisis – UFW vs. Teamsters – Growers – and Government."[50] Sister involvement stretched beyond the convent to bring this social justice cause to the attention of the public.

In one instance, NAWR sent a representative to the UFW convention in Fresno. It selected Sister K. C. Young to represent them because she had gone to jail for being a picketer at a UFW strike. Young stated that the convention provided "a healing power to her – just to be with those suffering Christians in the UFW Community of Believers."[51] Priests, politicians, pastors, and union organizers were present. This collection of union supporters concretized change for farmworkers involved in this movement, and left-wing sisters received recognition from the UFW for their efforts. This did not diminish the work that the national movement put in to assist farmworkers, but merely to point out how local movements gained momentum on the ground. The UFW unions recognized the nuns and gave them an authority and respect that they previously had not held the convent. Chavez wrote letters of thanks to the nuns for their sacrifice and what they offered to the UFW boycotts. In a letter to a Sister Francis Borgia, Chavez thanked the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) for "The prayerful concern and active support" of nuns that aided them. He also noted that "two out of every three of those

[49] Anne Russell, "Dear Sister," 1975, 1, folder 21, box 27, LCW, UNDA.
[50] Letter from Sister Mary Jane Vogler to Sister Catherine Pinkerton, folder 22, box 19, ARW, UNDA.
[51] "L.A. NAWR SENDS REPRESENTATIVE TO UFW CONVENTION," *LA NAWR Newsletter*, October 1973, 1, folder 22, box 19, UNDA.

working in social action today in the Church are women religious."[52] This positive message, specifically directed to women religious, convinced sisters to continue their work for the UFW and to follow the political messages of Chavez and his leadership more closely.

These examples of recognition from the UFW leadership inspired women religious to maintain their focus on this movement. NAWR appointed sister Pat Drydyk, a nun from Chicago, to direct a project which became known as "the Sisters and Farm Workers Together." In this program she, along with a team of women religious, helped by "contacting community provincials, alerting sisters to the needs of farm workers, holding workshops, and helping sisters to develop local strategies." During the three years prior to her appointment she not only worked with farm laborers but "taught in elementary and secondary schools, created educational media (including a filmstrip on the farmworkers) at the Franciscan Communications Center in Los Angeles, and raised consciousness among religious communities through the Justice and Peace Center in Milwaukee."[53] Drydyk remained a dedicated leader to the farmworkers and union organizers allowed his to become a local leader of the UFW movement. This was a role that she previously would not have held within her order.

A few liberal sisters combined the UFW movement with the women's liberation movement during this time period. In an address to her fellow women religious, Sister Letitia Brennan gave a speech entitled, "Psychological Factors which Militate against Women Realizing Their Potential." This address defined the stresses on women religious that created obstacles in their lives. Brennan first examined the gender disparities in society and focused on the discrimination of women in churches. "Consider how few dioceses have a female Vicar(ess) of Religious, Superintendent of Schools, Director of Education, member of the Board of Trustees of

[52] Letter from Cesar Chavez to Sister Francis Borgia, Jan. 21, 1974, folder 22, box 27, LCW, UNDA.
[53] "Cesar's Call – Answered," 1974, 1, folder 8, box 14, ARW, UNDA.

the Diocese. And how few women are involved in seminary education." Brennan attributed this problem to the way parents and communities socialized children into masculine and feminine roles in life. She believed that typical gender roles were fine, however, "our potential as full human beings goes beyond these traditional concepts of masculine and feminine."[54] Brennan demanded that the Church and society both liberalize with regards to the roles of women in society. She contended that a person's gender should not exclude someone from serving in society.

Brennan admired "women liberationists" for their impact on society and believed that this group had much to offer sisters for understanding how to pursue gender equality. In her opinion, all sisters need to disprove the stereotype of "the good woman [or] the good nun." She ended her speech by comparing sisters to the UFW boycotters: "Cesar Chavez said yesterday that when the farm workers had made up their minds, nothing could stop them. We like them will have to make up our minds, experience the painful as well as glad consequences of that decision before we will have the required."[55] This speech explicated the manifold concerns facing the identities of women religious in the United States. Sisters organized into unions such as NAWR to engage with modern ideas for ways, in their opinion, to save the United States and American Catholicism. Additionally, Brennan pointed to the gender inequalities and used psychological factors that explain how society socialized men to expect more opportunities than women. Finally, her last message regarding Chavez expounds another level of how his protest movement taught the sisters. They both learned about the significance of environmental issues, and about

[54] Letitia Brennan, "Psychological Factors Which Militate Against Women Realizing Their Potential (A very brief consideration)," 3, folder 8, box 14, ARW, UNDA.
[55] Ibid.

persevering for their civil rights. Other events happened during the 1970s that pushed Catholics to consider their role in the environmental movement.

Environmental Issues beyond the UFW Boycott

While the UFW Boycott served as the entry point into environmental causes for nuns, other issues also highlighted the importance of this form of activism. Nuns and priests reflected on environmentalism by focusing on the health of the planet. In an edition of *Probe*, Sister Mary Ellen Holohan, of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM), explained how sisters needed to change their pedagogical methods. She described environments as "anything we influence or anything by which we are influenced." Holohan continues by stating that teachers should begin "Environmentalizing our educational approach" by creating curriculum that encourages students to "perceive the wholeness, that is, the interdependent completeness of the varied environments of which they are a part." This understanding of ecology interconnectedness of the environment and how humans are impacted by pollution.

Holohan identified three components of the environment: "the abiotic (non-living), biotic (living) and cultural facets of our lives." With these aspects, teachers must "interrelate these pieces so that we can appreciate their wholeness." Holohan recommended using her lessons to teach students about "finitude of our resources… Hopefully, by acknowledging and respecting the part each entity plays in the wellness of the whole, we can see the need to develop a deeper understanding of what makes our universe maintain a delicate balance."[56] These moments articulated the ways that sisters adapted their beliefs to encompass modern beliefs regarding the environment. Sisters would not only receive news of the farmworkers movement and learn about

[56] Mary Ellen Holohan, "A New Environmental Ethic," *Probe: The American Sister Today*, January 1974, 3-4, folder 2, box 9, ACP, UNDA.

the energy crisis, but they pushed to bring those under their sphere of influence into their fold. Thus, their ideas could mold, or at least inform, students, patients, and others of the need to develop an environmental ethic.

This extended to the point that priests and nuns integrated environmentalism into the religiosity of their lives. Members of the Catholic religious life believed that environmentalism simplified one's life. In the process, they could promote a modernist approach to bring Catholics into new ideologies. For example, although allowing women to enter the priesthood and environmentalism do not share many similarities, more liberal priests and sisters united on these issues. At the core of their interpretation of Catholic doctrine was a concern for equity and justice, for the Earth and the different peoples who inhabited it. They pushed for gradual changes and began with pursuing migrant labor rights, then environmentalism because of the oil embargo, and hoped to finally draw everyone into the fold with the Equal Rights Amendment and total equality for women to become ordained members of Catholicism. Within the context of the 1970s, the material conditions and limitations of the oil embargo opened spaces for conservative or moderate Catholics to contemplate living simply and thus to become more like environmentalists. In a way, liberal priests and sisters intended to draw conservative Catholics into their mindset due to the problems of America at this time, especially of Catholics living in the Rustbelt.

The energy crisis of the 1970s created a space for those in the religious life to encourage fellow lay Catholics to pursue a simple life. The energy crisis began as a result of the Oil Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) punishing the United States for supporting Israel. To dole out vengeance, they enacted an oil embargo that contributed to the rise of stagflation and the creation of the misery index. Stagflation is a combination of a stagnant economy and inflation.

Everything became more expensive because it cost more to ship consumer and commercial goods around North America.[57] Catholic religious figures contended that this time of misery created an opportunity to live with fewer possessions. In 1975, Marianist brothers held a conference entitled "Considerations for a Simple Responsible Lifestyle," where participants promoted a solution to the oil embargo: by living more simply one would have more time for prayer and social justice. .At this conference, Brother Phil Melcher contended, "A simple and responsible lifestyle makes use of resources (material and financial), energy, and time in a way which: 1) frees us to follow Jesus more closely and to promote His Kingdom, 2) minimizes our consumption of these resources for our own use in order to maximize their availability to others, and 3) serves as a positive witness to gospel social values."[58] Catholic sisters and nuns similarly held these ideals, and the brothers exemplified these values and articulated the spiritualism of living with less.

The brothers suggested that by living more simply there was more time for social justice. Environmentalism fit into the other goals of Catholics at this time particularly in the sisters' pursuit for an increase in women's rights and the UFW Movement. In an allegory that explains the trust that Christians must place in God rather than in their own wealth, the brothers told a story of Fleet and Crete. Both had the task of going on a long journey to a mountain. The way contained many perils and did not have a set path. Crete decided that he should take everything that he could possibly need to ensure that he completed the journey. However, he traveled

[57] For more details, see Meg Jacobs, *Panic at the Pump: The Energy Crisis and the Transformation of American Politics in the 1970s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2017) and Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2012). Both of these works examine the misery index and the desperation surrounding a lack of oil in the United States. Historians point to this moment as the death knell of the civil rights activism that continued throughout the 1960s.
[58] Phil Melcher, "Introduction," *Considerations for a Simple & Responsible Lifestyle* (St. Louis: Marianist National Committee on Poverty and Justice, 1975), 1, folder 14, box 14, ACP, UNDA.

slowly, caused trouble more for people by running into them, and trampled nature in the process. He became like concrete. Fleet however chose to take nothing with him and trust that God would provide him with everything he needed. He became like a deer and could adjust to any problem that he faced. He did not bother anyone and respected nature by not crushing anything with the weight of his possessions, thus becoming fleet.[59] This allegory sheds a light on the freedom that comes from having a lack of possessions and why Catholics suggested that this would be the best path for Americans struggling with the recession that endured during the 1970s.

Additionally, fewer possessions led to more opportunities to follow the ways to growing in spirituality and following the calls for more work in the social justice movements that existed during the 1970s. In the encyclical *Evangelica Testificatio* by Pope Paul VI, he argued, "At a time when there is an increased danger for many of being enticed by the alluring security of possessions, knowledge and power, the call of God places you at the pinnacle of the Christian conscience."[60] Phil Melcher, a Marianist brother, interpreted this encyclical as a call for proportionality. "Our degree of witness and credibility in the area of social justice," he states, "will be in direct proportion to our own just and simple living."[61] Thus, there emerged a strong correlation for members of the religious life to live responsibly and to utilize their vocations as religious to pursue an environmentalist lifestyle.

Upon reflecting on the 1970s and projecting the mission of an ecological American Catholic church into the future, the Association of Chicago Priests (ACP) emphasized that

---

[59] Ibid., 2.
[60] Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, June 29, 1971, https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19710629_evangelica-testificatio.html
[61] Melcher, *Considerations for a Simple & Responsible Lifestyle*, 4. The Marianist brothers handed out questionnaires to members of their religious order and asked questions about what they ate and drank. They encouraged everyone to drink less alcohol due to the amount of cereal grains that go into producing alcohol, and to eat less meat or become a vegetarian because of the inefficiencies of the cattle industry. In an interesting aside, the author mentions that milk and meat can cause health problems and thus should be limited in how much is consumed.

Catholicism is a historical religion. They believed that "the world must not be seen as static but as history, as the coming to be of the promises of God," and furthermore articulated "we have a responsible role to play in this redemptive mystery."[62] This organization became tied into the women's struggle and the ACP promoted the causes of NAWR and the LCWR. The Chicago priests' views thus meshed and reinforced the opinions which many of the sisters promoted. In this way, Chicago priests emphasized that every decision Catholics make could aid or deter their way to salvation. They focused on energy because they could change their lifestyle habits with the goal of conserving resources for future generations. The priests argued, "Our lifestyle of excessive waste and incredible energy consumption can only be maintained by an unjust distribution of the earth's resources." They also used the example of fossil fuels to highlight this point. "Fossil fuel reserves are the result of 3 billion years of stored solar energy. At the present rate, they will be burnt up in less than 300 years." In response to this startling statistic, the ACP demanded that every Catholic needed to respond to this call for conversion.[63]

The ACP's choice of words reified the notion that the spiritual and material worlds coalesced around ensuring a viable planet for future generations. The ACP not only intended to spread the Gospel by preaching it and living it through an ecological lifestyle. In other words, the priests contended, "We must realize that Jesus did not come to save souls; rather he came to usher in a new age that would transform the very structures of human life."[64] This new age would focus more on the collective rather than on the individual and would offer more responsible uses of natural resources. This new theology emerged out of the energy crisis to offer a new way to

[62] The Association of Chicago Priests, "The Energy Crisis, Justice, and Spirituality," October 1979, 1, folder 14, box 14, ACP, UNDA.
[63] "The Energy Crisis," ACP, 6.
[64] "Christian Lifestyle" Insert to "The Energy Crisis," ACP, 1.

live. In a sense, Midwestern Catholics offered a new vision for the world that both criticized capitalism and provided a new path for the future of society. This was a radical conception of religious motivations at the time regarding energy.

This system of waste and excess fostered systems of gross inequality that created dictatorial regimes in Latin America. Sisters' engagement with migrant workers and the UFW exposed them to international concerns about environmental stewardship in Latin American nations.[65] Sisters had worked with migrant laborers even before the UFW strikes created a platform of change, and now contemplated why workers would immigrate from Latin America to search for opportunities in the United States.[66] Problems with civil war and the rise of anticommunist leaders fostered a violent political climate. For example, NAWR focused on the plight of Chile during the 1970s. Despite holding a popular election that installed the socialist president Salvador Allende, Chile fell to the dictator Augusto Pinochet, whom the United States supported. Pinochet promoted economic growth and strengthened Chilean ties with the United States by brutally murdering any Communist sympathizers. Pinochet hired economists from the University of Chicago, referred to as the "Chicago Boys," to install a neoliberal state. This form of government stimulated the nation's economy and aided middle- and upper-class Chileans, while deforesting the nation and weakening labor unions. Pinochet rose to become a fascist authoritarian who ordered the execution and disappearance of more than 3,200 communists or

[65] For example, Sister Dorothy Stang worked with migrant laborers during the 1950s, and this experience exposed her to the need to assist Latino workers throughout the rest of the world. She joined a missionary cause that sent her to Brazil, where assassins killed her for defending workers' rights to land in the Amazon. For more on Stang's life see Roseanne Murphy, *Martyr of the Amazon: The Life of Sister Dorothy Stang* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007) and Binka Le Breton, *The Greatest Gift: The Courageous Life and Death of Sister Dorothy Stang* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

[66] I describe this topic in greater detail in chapter four.

alleged-communist sympathizers.[67] Liberation Theology, a provocative form of Catholicism, emerged out of South America. Left-wing priests and sisters in these countries used religion to emancipate poor communities from the draconian measures of fascist dictators in their nation.

American sisters engaged with Liberation Theology and introduced *Probe* subscribers to it. The Easter edition of *Probe* focused on "Probing Economic Oppression." "As we rejoice in the sunshine of Resurrection '74 and of a new springtime," the editor began her address, "we recall that Jesus died to make us free, that the gifts of nature and grace are independent of the individual to the economy." She immediately transitioned from the spiritual to social justice concerns relating to land tenure and who controls the economy. Furthermore, *Probe* emphasized "that our stewardship of the earth is a grave responsibility to be exercised in the context of the universal brotherhood of man."[68] In this issue, the sisters highlighted concerns in Latin America, particularly on the U.S. government's role in undermining Salvador Allende's government in Chile by controlling replacement parts. The author asseverated, "Whole sections of textile factories lay idle because American looms needed repair parts available only in the U.S." This created an "invisible blockade" against the Socialist government of Allende and led to questions of the federal government.[69] The concerns for farmworkers, in the context of Chilean violence, prompted sisters to examine the methods that American corporations manipulated their trade partners in Latin American countries.

---

[67] Steve Stern has written many incredible works on the issues of Chilean memory concerning Pinochet's murderous reign. See *Reckoning with Pinochet* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), *Battling for Hearts and Minds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), and *Remembering Pinochet's Chile* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). Liberation theology began as a movement during the 1970s as an attempt to have Catholics defend protesters who fought against totalitarian states that had favorable trade relationships with the United States. See Peter Smith, *Talons of the Eagle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[68] "Probing Economic Oppression," *Probe* (April, 1974), 1, folder 1, box 9, ACP, UNDA.

[69] Ibid., 2. See also, Peter Winn, *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

The UFW's struggle compelled sisters to acknowledge the violence that happened abroad, particularly in other parts of South America. Liberal sisters connected the troubles with UFW farmworkers to larger global emergencies such as environmental degradation and civil wars as originating from American capitalism. NAWR and other liberal sisters couched their anticapitalistic beliefs in religious language by emphasizing their pursuit of land stewardship and universal brotherhood. Left-leaning sisters integrated modernist ideas in the hopes that they could help the Church and the world become more peaceful by promoting liberalism.

Effects on NAWR

Women religious were attracted to the UFW cause because it provided them with an outlet to make a difference. Sisters in the Los Angeles area requested nuns from the rest of the United States to participate in FAST (Farm Workers and Sisters Together in the L.A. area.) Similar organizations to FAST formed in the Midwest. Note the language that activist nun Anne Russell explained, "If you want to keep up with the latest and/or get involved in helping (emphasis in original) the farm workers in some way…." Russell averred, "We have only one proven source of energy for now…YOU."[70] She uses active words of the importance and necessity of sisters to participate in this movement. The UFW and NAWR made sisters feel wanted in a time when they endured an ideological crisis of if the American dioceses truly cared about their place in the Church.

However, the pamphlet manipulated sisters into taking a political stance against undocumented migrants crossing the border. The second page of this flyer queried, "A new Bracero program???" and demanded that the sisters write to Congress concerning meetings with

[70] Anne Russell, "Serious about Social Action: F.A.S.T.," folder 8, box 14, ARW, UNDA.

Mexico's President Luis Echeverría. In 1974, Echeverría had a labor problem in Mexico due to the consolidation of land ownership caused by the Green Revolution. The Green Revolution, designed by the Rockefeller Institute and engineered by Norman Borlaug, replaced traditional cereals with hybrid maize and wheat to increase yields. In theory, this modern form of planting would combat the global food shortage. Hybrid crops created a glut of cereals, dependency on American companies for their seeds, and depreciation of these crops, which forced many family farms in Mexico to foreclose. As one historian has stated, "Seeds, like many other aspects of the natural world – land, water, and animals – had made the leap from a public good to a sheer commodity."[71] Thousands of Mexican families foreclosed on their farms and sought opportunities on mechanized farms or in cities that did not yet have the infrastructure or opportunities necessary to support them. As a result, the sisters accepted the latent nationalism within the UFW because of their desire for more authority within the Catholic Church. They wanted Congress to bar entry at the border because they feared that the gains that the UFW hoped to make would be for naught if Mexican laborers worked in the fields.

Liberal sisters were at times contradictory. They joined with the UFW and focused on the national organization but gave little consideration to the immigrant experience of Mexican Americans, with whom they wanted to help. NAWR sought to become involved in the regional offices and the UFW's national office because of the exposure that it would offer their own movement. They wanted to become figures themselves within this movement to gain support for achieving equality in the American Catholic Church. NAWR and other left-leaning sisters promoted justice but constantly turned to conservative sources, such as the Church and the UFW, to promote their cause. Their primary goals and ideas lacked a clear vision for how they could

[71] Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History* Second Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 274-275.

transform Catholicism or the primarily male-dominated UFW into respecting the rights of liberal women religious. Liberal sisters held a political stance that fundamentally contrasted the Catholic hierarchy. Most Catholics preferred a conservative Church and pushed back against their stances.

2.2 Jon Lewis, "Picketing," WA Photos 466, Box 4, Folder 31, Portfolios, Picketing VI, 1966, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

Resistance to Sisters

While liberal sisters pushed to embrace farmworkers and environmentalism, these modern ideas caused conservative Catholics to bristle at their new beliefs. Liberal sisters received backlash from conservative nuns who opposed the biases of NAWR and other left-wing sisters applied to the situation. In a letter from Sister Miriam Thomas, SNJM, to NAWR she excoriated the organization's approach to the boycott. "The resolution soliciting support for the

boycott of non-UFWOC lettuce," Thomas wrote, "is biased, is an appeal to the emotion and gives glaring evidence of lack of objectivity as well as incomplete research."[72] The danger with modernism emerges from its lack of grounding in years of research and understanding. Conservative, traditional values provided a safety net for American Catholic values, despite the changes that many intellectuals had interpreted out of the Second Vatican Council.

The organized efforts of sisters to promote the UFW movement in the Midwest did not go unchallenged by laypeople either. In one letter to the editor, an angry Cincinnatian wrote about the fact that priests and sisters gave too much attention to California when Ohio faced, "problems such as drug abuse, the respectability of welfare, [and] family dissolutions."[73] This form of NIMBYism (or Not in My Backyard) illustrated one of the common excuses for deterring activism that would assist laborers suffering under unregulated circumstances. Ultimately, these concerns highlighted responses to why Midwesterners did not want to aid the farmworkers. The language is not overtly racist but indicates that they had other concerns than farmworkers' rights.

Furthermore, many Catholics questioned if nuns should participate in activism. They debated if women religious spent too much time with "temporal issues," including social justice projects and ecological stability and not enough time "being concerned about the salvation of souls."[74] Similarly, the UFW received criticism for using religion to promote their cause. To these accusations, a supporter named Gerard Sherry replied that these issues "raise the moral and spiritual questions of conscience, of personal and corporate responsibility, and of general concern for the well-being of others." He concluded his message with, "The truth sometimes is

[72] Letter from Sister Miriam Thomas to N.A.W.R. Referendum, April 8, 1971, folder 1, box 1, ARW, UNDA.
[73] J. Rodman Hall, "It's Hypocritical for Clergymen to Rally Youth In Remote Causes," *The Enquirer*, December 19, 1970.
[74] "Sisters and World Issues," *Clarion Herald*, August 21, 1975, 4, folder 35, box 19, ARW, UNDA.

difficult to accept, especially from those we stereotype as having only the function to pray and obey. There is nothing unspiritual about also demanding a say."[75] Moments such as these highlight the tensions over how a sister should function in society. Did she exist only to pray, or had she become a political actor, who had agency and demanded a say in society? Catholics questioned the role of religion in politics. During UFW marches, protesters held signs demanding to keep the Mass sacred and in the Church (*Figure 2.2*).[76] Liberal sisters and left-leaning lay Catholics clearly expected sisters to participate in the social Gospel of the Church, while conservative Catholics demanded sisters to keep praying in the cloister. Thus, this debate continued to exacerbate the relationships between Catholics on either side of the political aisle, in a time before *Roe* v. *Wade* divided Catholics over issues such as abortion.

One of the questions to consider is why did liberal sisters believe that Catholicism would change? This is a question that chapter three explores by delving into the origins of the Catholic Worker movement. This vocal organization pushed for farmworkers' rights and for a more active version of Catholicism that sought to address the problems in their lives. By creating Houses of Hospitality and promoting communitarianism they attempted to create a version of Catholicism that sought to assist the poor. Other organizations emerged at this time and defined alternative ways to be Catholic in the United States. Sisters had other visible signs of Catholics fighting for change by pushing for peace through radical means. These two organizations worked adjacently

[75] Gerard Sherry, letter to the editor of the *Clarion Herald*, August 25, 1975, folder 35, box 19, ARW, UNDA.
[76] Jon Lewis, "Picketing," WA Photos 466, Box 4, Folder 31, Portfolios, Picketing VI, 1966, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

to support the UFW and represented visible signs of the possibility of a new Catholic Church that would push for social justice and women's rights in this organization.

Conclusion

In the 1973 meeting with NAWR sisters, Chavez concluded his speech with this statement: "We need you and you need us. Together in faith, we can and will change the evil structures by which the poor are oppressed. Be sisters with us…a reminder that God will be faithful to His promises and that we will overcome. Sisters have always stood by us and worked with us. Now, more than ever, we must show the world that non-violent, united action will bring the time of Justice and Peace for all people."[77] Contemporary events marshaled in these changes for sisters. Encounters with farmworkers, news of the energy crisis, and pacifist campaigns during the Cold War all contributed to the belief that their needed to emerge an effort to transform the United States into a peace-seeking and progressive world. Women and farmworkers, two groups who felt disparaged by most organizations in society, challenged the social norms that sought to keep them voiceless.

The next chapter steps away from the story of women religious to explore the environmental roots of the Catholic Worker movement. The Catholic Worker movement, led by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, originated out of the Great Depression and exemplified the social ministry of Catholicism. This organization emphasized a back-to-the-land approach to relief efforts. This organization led by a strong woman articulated an alternative route to pursuing social justice from a Catholic perspective. The Catholic Worker encouraged civil disobedience and valorized the arrest of its followers. The New Nun movement also joined in

[77] Cesar Chavez, "Ministry to the Farmworkers and Migrants," November, 1973, folder 16, box 2, UFWO, WPR.

with the Catholic Worker movement and articulated that other Catholics willingly engaged the conservatism of Catholicism to promote peace. During the 1970s, sisters and farmworkers issued a religious call for change that prompted a conservative backlash. Yet in the face of this backlash, they discovered new ideas about themselves and prompted the public with ideas for changing the world. Overall, liberal women religious pursued social and environmental justice as a part of their ministry. They had a message that they wished to share and found an outlet through the contemporary problems of the time.

Chapter 3: The Catholic Worker Movement and the Origins of Green Catholicism

On a frigid December day in Washington D.C. in 1932, the editor and columnist Dorothy Day met her future partner in the Catholic Worker Movement, Peter Maurin, at the Communist-led Hunger March – a protest for greater access to food. In her autobiographic account of the Catholic Worker's origins, Day, a convert from atheism to Catholicism, justified the necessity for a Catholic-led movement because of the Church's absence during the Great Depression. At the Hunger March, she and Maurin observed, "There were delegates from the League of Professional Groups…various women's organizations, pacifist groups, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, [and] Quakers." However, "there were no Catholic groups protesting."[1] Day criticized Catholic lay people and the Church for their lack of participation in social justice movements.[2] Many Catholics refused to participate in demonstrations that originated under communist leadership. Day's frustration with the "well-fed Christians" inspired her to craft a new identity out of two seemingly incompatible identities – the Communist and Catholic.

This chapter changes course from the first two chapters by examining a separate trend in American Catholicism during the mid-twentieth century. Catholic women such as Dorothy Day and Eileen Egan operated within Catholicism as laypeople who proposed pacifist ideals for transforming the Church in the United States. They held many of the opinions as liberal sisters and worked toward combating social injustices. The Catholic Worker also demonstrated the importance of reconnecting with the land on a spiritual level. To volunteers and people working on the land, this opportunity demonstrated to them what agriculture could be. Workers could have a dignified life working the land, rather than entering into a capitalist landscape, centered on landowners' exploitation of labor.

[1] Dorothy Day, *House of Hospitality* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1939), xii.
[2] Ibid., xiii.

Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1898, Dorothy Day grew up in a secular home. Raised nominally Episcopalian, Day oscillated from interest to apathy in Christianity. Her family moved throughout the country, and when they settled in the Midwest, she began to explore socialism and social activism. She attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1914 and left two years later for New York City to write for Socialist newspapers such as *The Liberator* and *The Call*. She lived in Greenwich Village, was in the Socialist scene, dated many men, had an abortion, and believed that she was sterile after her procedure. While she was not a practicing Christian for most of her early life, Day believed that religious people could mobilize to change for society. In 1926, Dorothy Day became pregnant and gave birth to a daughter. Day began to explore Catholicism because a nun named Sister Aloysia helped Day through this transitional moment into motherhood. This experience with Aloysia convinced Day that Catholicism could be shaped to solve the societal problems of the Great Depression. Day, beginning with the start of the Great Depression, wanted to mobilize her newfound Catholicism into her passion for activism. The problem stemmed from the fact that she did not have the largescale vision for what this organization would look like.[3]

A French ex-patriate named Peter Maurin helped Dorothy Day understand her vision through his own ideas. Maurin was born Aristode Pierre Maurin in 1877 to a poor rural family in the Languedoc region of France. He was raised Catholic and considered becoming a brother with the LaSalle order. He decided not to follow this path, and in 1909, left France for Canada to become a homesteader. After a few years, he left his homestead and became at laborer, who took

[3] For more on Day's early life see, Jim Forest, *All is Grace: A Biography of Dorothy Day* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011) and Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of Dorothy Day* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952).

up jobs ranging from working in coal mines and steel mills to digging ditches.[4] Maurin believed that journalists needed to create propaganda and those who wanted to reach the masses should enter "voluntary poverty and [practice the Catholic corporal and spiritual] works of mercy."[5] Maurin would find an ally in Dorothy Day.

When Dorothy Day met Peter Maurin at the protest in Washington D.C., she found someone who shared her vision of change. He had a grand dream for the future of the Catholic Church. He believed that the Church would benefit from lay Catholics dedicating their time to solve homelessness and poverty. Not only did he intend to create shelters and social services for workers, but Maurin believed that labor itself should be dignified. In the process, he wanted to create farms where people could escape the city and imagine what life was like in a precapitalistic world. Here, people would work together to grow the food that they needed to survive without worrying about modern comforts or class division. After being rejuvenated from leaving the city, CWM members would return to cities to help in Catholic settlement houses that they called Houses of Hospitality. His vision for farms and homeless shelters meshed with Day's organizational skills and her passion for activism. The pair founded the Catholic Worker movement (CWM) and published a paper titled, *Catholic Worker*. Day and Maurin wanted to reimagine Catholicism as a religion that uplifted workers and aided those who needed it. The Church, they believed, could replace socialism and communism. Through the CWM, Day and Maurin created national movement where cities housed different chapters of this organization.

[4] Jim Forest, "Biography of Peter Maurin: Co-Founder of the Catholic Worker Movement," Accessed February 7, 2020, https://www.catholicworker.org/petermaurin/pm-biography.html.
[5] Day, *House,* xix. The Catholic works of mercy are tangible signs by which people can receive grace. The corporal works of mercy are feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead, all noted in Matthew 25. The spiritual works of mercy include instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, and comfort the afflicted, which they felt the paper would be able to serve.

Day and Maurin believed that a Catholic newspaper would aid in creating a more perfect world because their writings would inform people on how they could help each other. They wrote pieces about Houses of Hospitality. Maurin envisioned the Houses as places that gave "the rich the opportunity to serve the poor" and brought "the Bishops to the people and the people to the Bishops."[6] There was not a direct correlation to the settlement house movement of the Progressive Era, but they bear striking similarities. Both movements sought to give people a chance to work with the impoverished and to break down social hierarchies by having rich and poor come together in one place to volunteer their time or receive assistance. Day and Maurin held radical ideas regarding the Catholic hierarchy and how they could create a more egalitarian Church. Specifically, the Church hierarchy appeared distant to lay Catholics. Bishops oversaw their diocese and reported to the pope. They did not interact with average lay people daily. If bishops and cardinals served at Houses of Hospitality, then the Church hierarchy could demonstrate its commitment to the poor and create a more egalitarian understanding of religion. The CWM challenged all Catholics to do even more to solve the economic inequities of the 1930s.

Another aspect of the CWM originated in farm work. To further elevate each person's dignity, they believed that everyone needed a reprieve from the city where each person could become closer to nature. Maurin proposed a "green revolution" throughout his career as an activist. Maurin's green revolution was comprised of decentralization, Catholic radicalism, and communal living as the fulfillment of human social organizations.[7] He based many of his beliefs

[6] Ibid., xxiii. At this time during the Great Depression, many of the Houses of Hospitality became the only option for many families. If they turned to the state for assistance, in many instances the state would take the older children and send them to an orphanage. Day noted that the Works Progress Administration created more services for struggling families. In New York, they built men's and women's shelters (Day, *House of Hospitality*, 22-23).
[7] J.R. Goddard, "The Green Revolution and the Search for a New Order," *The Village Voice*, June 1, 1960.

on the work of the British historian Hilaire Belloc. Belloc was a Catholic writer who examined the past to criticize modernism and secularism. He viewed Protestantism as one of the first examples of modernism. In Belloc's opinion, the Protestant Reformation had disturbed the "medieval order" of a cooperative social structure and replaced it with a capitalism and individualism legitimated through Calvinism.

The philosophical trends of the Progressive Era also supported Maurin's fears of Americanism and Protestantism. American philosophy at this time swayed more toward the individualism and subjectivism of Pragmatism and Modernism. For example, the Metaphysical Club, started by Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., William James, and Charles Sanders Peirce, developed pragmatism, a philosophical tradition based in empiricism, scientific testing, and essentially, understanding through witnessing results.[8] Pragmatism, therefore, attacked both notions of spirituality and the importance of an expert telling you results. This was an assault against the authority of the establishment in favor of others testing results. Similarly, rugged individualism in the United States, threatened the hierarchical nature of Catholicism. At Protestantism's heart was the idea that each individual person could come to know God *sola scriptura*, or only through scripture. There was no need for an intermediary to insert himself in one's religious life. This was the great democratization of religion that Protestantism presented and that the United States emphasized.

This democratization, according to critics such as Maurin, contributed to the spread of anti-intellectualism and an overreliance on modernism.[9] American Catholics viewed these

[8] Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002).
[9] See Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893).

philosophies as suspicious because of their clear attacks against dogma.[10] Americanism in many ways stood in contrast to the Church. The United States was going to be independent of hierarchies and that individualism would make the American character distinct from the ancient Europeans institutions, including monarchism and the papacy. Despite these claims, Maurin criticized Americanism and promoted Belloc's idea of the green revolution as a reaction to the American individualistic philosophy. The Great Depression was an example of the failure of Americanism and modernism and a need to revert back to traditional understandings of social structures.

Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin became Catholic activists during the 1930s and paved the way for the Catholic Left to form in the 1960s. The founders of the Catholic Left built the movement out of the chaotic turmoil of the Great Depression as they appropriated notions of social activism used by Communists for the benefit of Catholic social teaching.[11] Day and Maurin's example created momentum for the next generation of Catholic Leftists, including Gordon Zahn, Eileen Egan, and James Drake. The way the Catholic Left anticipated this turn toward social activism extended into experimentation with anarchist society based in communal

[10] Thomas E. Woods, *The Church Confronts Modernity: Catholic Intellectuals and the Progressive Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 50.

[11] For many Christians during this time period, Communism was a radical philosophy that challenged a conservative Christian worldview and seemed threatening due to the political climate in the Soviet Union. However, as noted above, the Hunger March reached out to many organizations that did not identify with Communism, but believed in their message of serving the hungry. John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992). Diggins's interpretation is valuable because he examines the role of Michael Harrington to the Old Left. The author of *The Other America* and a lapsed Catholic, Harrington began his work as a member of the Catholic Left and learned under the example of Dorothy Day. Diggins however fails to examine Day's contributions to testing the durability of the Left. See also Alonzo Hamby, *Liberalism and Its Challengers: From F.D.R. to Bush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). Hamby provides excellent coverage of the role of religion particularly the transformation of Martin Luther King Jr.'s theology from Walter Rauschenbusch to Reinhold Niebuhr. However, the Catholic moment fails to be recognized for its contribution at this moment. Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

living.[12] Day and Maurin believed that collective work in the fields dignified all workers. Seeing a connection between the physical environment and spiritual failings, they hoped that their work would improve sanitation and relieve cities from overcrowding. Thus, this early activist movement added an essential ecological component to American Catholicism. This chapter explores how the Catholic Worker movement's "green revolution" established a path for future Catholic activists on environmental social justice issues.

The Catholic Worker's Green Revolution

The Catholic Worker movement originated in 1933 from the hard work and efforts of poor urbanites, who communicated a vision for a green society through *The Catholic Worker*. This newspaper and social movement of the same name originated to offer an alternative to communism. The movement's founders, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, did not come from privileged backgrounds. During the early 1930s, Day shared a tenement on Avenue A and Twelfth Street in an Italian neighborhood with her brother and sister-in-law.[13] Day was an author and journalist by trade, and in her early years had been a radical living in Greenwich Village, and supported the Socialist Party through her early years. She was always drawn to people and stated

[12] Robert Orsi, "U.S. Catholics between Memory and Modernity," in Kathleen Sprows-Cummings and R. Scott Appleby eds. *Catholics in the American Decade* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 15. Orsi identifies the Plymouth Compact and the founding Puritan documents as an explanation for why the United States began as an anti-Catholic state. The reason Catholicism is viewed by outsiders as an anti-modern movement emerges from the Catholic pride in its ancient roots and traditions. Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin promoted the anti-modernist viewpoint because they believed that the cold materialism of both capitalism and communism viewed humans as only as commodities or valued only for their labor and consumption. Orsi and other scholars have similarly studied the alien nature of popular religion in urban centers. Orsi describes how other Catholics "criticized Italian religiosity for being exotic and pagan." Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street* (Yale University Press, 1985), xiv. The Catholic leadership recoiled at many of the American modernist philosophies, such as Pragmatism. See Woods, *The Church Confronts Modernity* (Columbia University Press, 2004). Many Catholics wanted to fit in with the rest of society and follow a similar trajectory to Polish or Italian Catholics who could both follow the official religious teachings, while still enjoying the modern comforts of American citizenship.

[13] Dorothy Day, "East Twelfth Street," *Commonweal*, November 30, 1932, 128. Day comments that the tenement was "comfortable…with steam heat, hot water and plenty of sunlight."

in her autobiography, "We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."[14] Although she adored city life, she held a deep appreciation for the nature that she tended. In her autobiography, Day remarks on the beauty of her garden even in her tenement. She notes on summer days, the petunias, the fig tree and the wild cucumber vine growing along the building. She meditated on her garden and remarked "it is one of the compensations of poverty to have such a garden."[15]

Maurin first had the idea for the Catholic Worker Movement, but Day had the understanding for how to create its infrastructure. She began by requesting donations for Houses of Hospitality, and eventually she wanted to open CWM farms for people to experience the green revolution. For Day, operating Catholic Worker farms would help city dwellers find green spaces and get to enjoy working with others to grow a garden. How would the CWM earn enough money during the Great Depression to fund these farms? Would they be practical places to take care of those in need? Despite these concerns, Day found a way to establish farms as an essential part of her vision for the Catholic Worker's future. In a memoir of the Catholic Worker movement, Day wrote that she wanted visitors and reformers to view the farming communes "not as a cooperative, not a settlement house, [and] not as a mission." Rather, she "referred to the [Catholic Worker] as a 'revolutionary headquarters.'"[16] The Catholic Worker movement integrated an agrarian ethic as a mode of coming not only into closer communion with God and dignifying workers by laboring together in the fields.

---

[14] Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 286. See Kate Hennessy, *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty* (New York: Scribner, 2017), Francis J. Sicius, *The Word Made Flesh: The Chicago Catholic Worker and the Emergence of Lay Activism in the Church* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990).
[15] Day, *House of Hospitality*, 4-5.
[16] Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), viii.

Even before they owned a farm, Dorothy Day felt compelled to leave New York City from time to time. Her daughter, Tamar Teresa Batterham, reaffirmed Day's desire to gain access to green spaces outside of the city.[17] On one occasion, Teresa Batterham told her mother that did not want to die because she wanted to stay where "there is plenty of fresh air" rather than being buried in a grave.[18] In this instance, Dorothy Day compared the stuffiness of the grave to the cramped tenement where they lived, and the overall crowdedness of New York City. On another occasion in June 1934, she left so her daughter could convalesce away from New York City. During this time, Day marveled at the beauty of the beach and the meadows where they vacationed. She wrote, "We dine on clams and eels and baked sand shark, and on dock weed…we till the soil to plant flowers, and gather shells, mount seaweed, wade and row and endure sunburn and offer up constant thanksgiving for the beauties all around us."[19] From this time spent with her daughter, Day noted the spiritually rejuvenating elements of nature.

Despite the periodic need for escape, Day also loved urban living as well. She found beauty in the natural settings of cities. When Maurin mentioned green spaces, she imagined "stubborn plants pushing their way toward the sun in vacant city lots." She imagined nature through an urban lens. Day found wild greens growing in the city that she could use in meals for herself and visitors at the Houses of Hospitality. "Heaven," in her words "is portrayed as a heavenly Jerusalem." [20] Heaven, in other words, is a city. Despite her love of the city, she needed to take periodic breaks from New York.

---

[17] Day named her daughter before she converted to Catholicism. She was born Tamar Teresa after a Jewish friend. Following her conversion Catholicism, Day called her daughter Teresa.
[18] Day, "East Twelfth Street," 128-9.
[19] Day, *House*, 56. Before her conversion in the early-1930s, Dorothy Day had spent some time as the writer for the gardening column for *The Staten Island Advance*. Forest, *All is Grace*, 70.
[20] Day, *Loaves and Fishes,* 42.

In the early summer of 1935, Day, her volunteers, and clients at the House of Hospitality retreated to a farm on Staten Island. They knew it was the perfect time, because according to Day, "the privet hedges are just beginning to blossom."[21] A few of them hauled topsoil for the vegetable gardens. Others built a rock garden to add to the aesthetic appeal of the space. One of the visitors, a man who went by Edelson, went there for the sake of "comradeship [and] Christian Communism."[22] The Staten Island commune stood in stark contrast to the city because of its lush green avenues. When appraising the neighborhood where she lived, Day lamented, "In town there is no back yard, there are no green things to refresh the eye." Additionally, earlier in that year, Day and her daughter Teresa moved from their tenement apartment into a new lodging. "We have moved away from our petunia garden," she wrote in her diary, "with its asparagus plants, and fig tree and privet hedges." Day demonstrated her knowledge of horticulture when she took note of "an ailanthus tree, 'tree of heaven,'" across the street from their new dwelling. This ailanthus ultimately "arouses hunger and thirst in us for the country."[23] Her thirst for the countryside led to Day's vision for all workers to benefit from the environment.

While Day produced literature on labor rights and operated communal farms, she viewed Communism as an opposing force in the workers' struggle. First, she disagreed with the communist strategy of defeating capitalism on many fronts. In an interview, Day admitted that communists held onto values that Christians could appreciate because "they share what they have with each other and a comrade who bears his card is always given shelter in a strange place."[24] While they agreed on the social ills within society, they disagreed, however, on the solutions. Day fixated on the idea that they would not concede to the idea of a spiritual

[21] Day, *House,* 95.
[22] Day, "Day after Day – June 1935," *The Catholic Worker*, June 1935, 5.
[23] Ibid.
[24] "Reds Flirting with Farmers Is Charged," *Marquette Tribune*, May 16, 1935.

dimension. Her biggest complaint was that workers inherently would seek a dignified existence, and protest for just reasons. However, the Socialist and Communist Parties formed an "aristocracy of labor, so that it is an irksome fact that bricklayers and printers receive more than farmers or editors in the necessary goods of this world."[25] She grouped the American Federation of Labor with this group, stating that workers "based their appeal on enlightened self-interest, a phrase reeking with selfishness."[26] As a result, Day did not believe that the Communist Party sought to help workers but would ultimately make them selfish, rather than creating a sustainable form of labor. These parties sought to attract the same types of people that the Catholic Worker movement wanted to reach – farmers and the lower classes – and this led to competing views of how to adjust to the needs of the people.

As this vision continued to grow, Day reasoned that Catholic Worker farms would be more cost effective than trying to support multiple houses of hospitality. On New Year's Eve in 1935, Day wrote of her dreams of opening a farming commune. She thought about how much money they could save and wrote in her diary, "It will be good when we are all on the farming commune and the expense is concentrated in one place."[27] Just a year later in 1936, Dorothy Day acquired the necessary funds to purchase a farm for $1,250 just a few hours away in Easton, Pennsylvania. Day described the farm as "on top of a mountain where level fields stretched out for twenty-eight acres and overlooked a magnificent scene on all sides. There are peach trees, some apple and cherry trees, raspberry bushes, half an acre of asparagus." Day described this

---

[25] Day, *House*, 147.

[26] Ibid., 146. David J. O'Brien notes that the Socialist party began to attack the Catholics because of the priests' homilies. The main reason that the Catholic Church fought against socialism was because socialism "led to an ethical relativism, [which articulated that] many forms of traditional morality, and by implication traditional religion, had been rendered outmoded by the inexorable force of historical laws." David J. O'Brien, In *Public Catholicism* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 139.

[27] Robert Ellsberg ed., *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008), 13.

farm as a veritable Garden of Eden that would rejuvenate the impoverished and broken-down bodies of the poor. The farm, nevertheless, required some work to make it inhabitable. "The outbuildings are falling apart," according to Day. Additionally, "The road to the place will always need mending."[28] However, this cozy farm fulfilled the dream of a green space that the Catholic Worker founders had always wanted.

The true mission of this space as far as Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin were concerned was to promote agricultural labor as a remedy for unemployment. The farm in Easton offered many New Yorkers the chance to work on the land. According to Day, "If all the land owned by the Church, for instance, and by the different orders, that is not being used at the present time, were turned over to the unemployed and their families…then the real wealth of the Church would be increased tremendously."[29] Day created a strong distinction between the city and the country. She promoted an agrarian dream of collectivization attained through Catholic personalism that proposed that people should not be used as commodities by employers but instead be respected by their managers. In Day's opinion, there was always work that needed to be done on the farm, while at the same time there were laborers in the city who spent their days at "the breadline," and others who "sit all day at the municipal lodging houses."[30] Ever since Day moved to New York City in 1916, she detested the urban squalor. She wrote for the New York *Call*, a Socialist newspaper, and in her memoirs, she recalled the depths of poverty that existed in that city. She observed, "The sight of homeless and workless men lounging on street corners or sleeping in doorways in broad sunlight appalled me." Even more harrowing for Day were the smells that emitted from the tenements. She described these malodorous dwellings because she

[28] Day, *House,* 137.
[29] Dorothy Day, "Farming Commune," *The Catholic Worker*, October 1938, 8.
[30] Ibid. This form of personalism has been identified as Thomistic, due to Thomas Aquinas' writings on the issue. John Paul II also formalized this belief in his 1960 book *Love and Responsibility*.

would "never cease to be indignant over the conditions which give rise to them…It is not the smell of life, but the smell of the grave."[31] She believed that an agrarian livelihood would sponge away the fetid stench of the city.

Maurin aided Day in understanding the importance of a back-to-the land approach for Catholics. In one of his essays entitled "Regard for the Soil," Maurin argued, "It is in fact impossible for any culture to be sound and healthy without a proper respect and proper regard for the soil, no matter how many urban dwellers think that their food comes from groceries and delicatessens."[32] In this short essay, Maurin demonstrated the fear that capitalism had clouded the minds of consumers. Urban dwellers and those detached from the land could not sustain American culture because of the fears that they would lead to ruin. He further explained this point by using the words of Church architect Ralph Adams Cram in an essay entitled "Up to Catholics." Cram articulated that Catholics need to return to the land "Because they realize more clearly than any others the shortcomings of the old capitalist industrial system." He contended that Catholics witnessed these shortcomings because they were "of one mind in matters of the spirit – that is to say, of religion."[33] Maurin viewed Catholic agrarian anarchical model as a method to combat the industrialization and capitalism that had taken over the United States.

Day centered her agrarian vision on removing laborers from the cities and sending them to work on farming communes. She believed that the agrarian society could transform the environment and dignify impoverished people spiritually, physically by valuing their labor and removing the stench from them. In an interview with the *Cleveland Press*, Day stated, "we hate being called social workers…the word is an abomination. Social workers attempt to adapt the

[31] Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 51.
[32] Peter Maurin, *Catholic Radicalism: Phrased Essays for the Green Revolution* (New York: Catholic Worker Books, 1949), 79.
[33] Ibid., 79.

person to the condition. We are trying to change the environment – make it a fit place to live."[34] Day took a strong stance on the nature of the Catholic Worker's efforts. The Catholic Worker did not intend to offer temporary solutions through social work but intended to transform society by addressing the environment.[35] This was a remarkable stance by a Catholic because of the essentially metro-centric nature of U.S. Catholicism.[36] However, Day transcended the typical American who fled the urban center for the suburbs because she served as an agent that brought others to the farming commune. She worked to bring people from the city out to the countryside.[37]

The Catholic Worker also had a plan for how it would prevent rugged individualism from pervading the movement's message. The communitarian model supported "the three C's: cult, culture, and cultivation." Cult encouraged all to participate in a common prayer. Culture which Maurin described as "intellectual discussion…It makes the labor lighter and breaks down that rugged individualist spirit which comes when people work alone." Cultivation meant growing only for subsistence so everyone could enjoy more time with the rest of the community.[38] These communitarian ideals reflect many of the utopian ideals that many nineteenth-century reformers

---

[34] Helen Allyn, "Dorothy Day Would Change the Environment Instead of Man," *Cleveland Press,* June 13, 1939, 9.
[35] Agrarianism has existed as a part of the American dream and ideal since at least Jeffersonian agrarianism. Karl Zimring's *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015) provides a strong outline of the dichotomy between the city and the rural.
[36] Based on demographic data from 2015, the five most Catholic states are all in the Northeast (Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York), and in data from the Pew Research Center, "Fully one-third of people in the New York City metropolitan area identify as Catholic." Ana Swanson, "Chart: The United States of Catholics and Protestants," *Washington Post*, March 4, 2015, and Michael Lipka, "A Closer Look at Catholic America," *Pew Research Center*, September 14, 2015. These statistics reflect the immigrant nature of the Catholic Church and how many immigrants found their compatriots or family members in cities and found work in industrial centers. However, there were many Catholics who formed rural life organizations and their efforts have been explained by Hamlin and McGreevy in "The Greening of America, Catholic Style, 1930-1950."
[37] In this sense, Day reflected a similar progressivism typical of social workers at Hull House. Sylvia Hood Washington, *Packing Them in* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005).
[38] Maurin, *Catholic Radical,* 194.

embraced to perfect the United States.[39] In a way, the economic panics and social upheaval of the mid-nineteenth century were matched in the 1930s by the Great Depression and global economic turmoil. As a result, Maurin's philosophies reflect an older model that proved to be unsustainable nearly a century before the Catholic Worker movement started. The reason why the Catholic Worker had any staying power was because of Day's pragmatism and willingness to transform her beliefs and opinions over the next couple of decades.

Day spread her message of peace and helped establish other houses of hospitality and Catholic Worker farms throughout the United States. The ideas of Catholic Worker farms provided her with a clear vision for what agricultural labor could be. For example, once while sowing onions and weeding other plants, she thought of the three million "women and children in the beet fields and onion fields in the middle and far west and I thought how even the six-year-olds were pressed into the grueling service until they were deadened and worn and a deep smouldering (*sic*) resentment grew and grew within them." Her sympathy for ethnic Mexican laborers also contained a pacifist message because if nothing changed, these workers' conditions were "shaping them for revolution or for the flight from the soil to the cities."[40] As a pacifist with a deep belief in personalist philosophy, she recognized that the factory farm systems would not be conducive to either pacifism or the dignity of workers. She believed that workers would either revolt or become "deadened" by the labor and forced to enter the cities to pursue new opportunities. Factories and industrial farms both disgusted her. She described Ford's River Rouge plant as "a terrifying experience."[41] On a trip to Spokane, with the intent of spreading the

[39] Take for instance, Oberlin Colony, Brook Farm, Oneida Community, and the Amana Colonies. Many of these utopian experiments emerged to settle the West and to prove that they could transform society through their communitarian lifestyle.

[40] Day, *House*, 152.
[41] Day, *The Duty of Delight*, 65.

idea of communal farming, she rode on a bus through in the Columbia River Basin and noted in her diary the "waste lands, and vast wheat country which made me realize more than ever the industrial, factory system of farming."[42] By 1940, the *Catholic Worker* detailed its vision as working toward both "a new heaven and a new spiritual [earth]." This ideology combined their beliefs in providing for both the spiritual and material needs of workers with "the spiritual having primacy over the material." [43]

The *Catholic Worker* published other articles essays that further codified this aim. In a 1942 article titled "Herbs of the Field," the decentralist philosopher Graham Carey explored different categories for how capitalism skewed the human relationship to plants. "The plants of the botanist are things to be known about," Carey averred, "[while] the plants of the commercial farmer are things to be profited from." Once plants became "pigeonholed [by] modern man," into categories such as weed, crop, or flower, then nature lost its wholeness. He feared that disrupting the unity of the "organic whole" would lead to the end of all of life. Graham elaborated that "God placed man in a garden that he might be happy. He did not put him in a botanical laboratory plus a grain factory plus a flowery dream spot. He put him in a garden where he could be instructed by knowledge, served by goodness and refreshed by beauty all in the same operation."[44] Clearly, developing theories of ecology and ecosystems inspired Carey's writings as he viewed it all through the religious lens of the idea that humans were created to live in a garden. This idea and approach best articulated the way that the CWM embraced relationship between humans and the earth. They believed that there needed to exist a holistic understanding

[42] Ibid., 56. Day's work emphasizes the concerns that Wendell Berry holds toward industrial farming.
[43] Dorothy Day, "Aims and Purposes," *The Catholic Worker*, in *A Penny a Copy*, edited by Thomas C. Cornell, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 44.
[44] Graham Carey, "Herbs of the Field," in *A Penny a Copy*, edited by Thomas Cornell (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 55-57.

between both sides. Isolating nature and humanity's constituent parts would be untenable for the survival of the planet and humanity. Day and the CWM contended that society should value laborers not only for their work, but for their humanity and spirituality as well.

While antimodernist in their beliefs, Day and Maurin approved of New Deal tactics because they employed laborers and tried to recover farmlands. However, what most inspired Day and Maurin was the New Deal's personalist approach to recovery. Essentially, the New Deal offered artists, playwrights, and poets the opportunity to find work with the federal government. In particular, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) established Federal Project Number One. This project permitted the federal government to hire artists who could paint murals, compose songs, or write plays, just to name a few. Maurin approved of this subsidization because it allowed artists to receive compensation for creating art, unlike the capitalist marketplace. He viewed modern society as too utilitarian and incapable of appreciating the humanities. "Industrialism," Maurin seethed, had "released the artist from the necessity of making anything useful. Industrialism has also released the workman from making anything amusing."[45] The capitalist system prevented a person "his true daily bread: the development of an interior life in the heart of communitarian life."[46] WPA, consequently, was an effective model for how to create the means to living the antimodernist life that the Catholic Worker movement promoted. However, Maurin noted that the WPA projects tended to support what the federal government wanted to represent, rather than taking into strict consideration the cultural value and artwork of the peoples living there. While traveling around the country in 1939, Maurin

[45] Maurin, *Catholic Radicalism*, 78.
[46] John Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left, 1930-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 82. Found in Dorothy Day with Francis J. Sicius, *Peter Maurin: Apostle to the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 69. The New Catholic Left as discussed by Hellman primarily relates to the personalist movement that emerged in western Europe. While this was a prominent movement in Europe, there needs to be more discussion on identifying the origins of the Catholic Left in the anti-Catholic United States.

remarked on the WPA projects in Alamosa, Colorado. In a letter to Day, he wrote, "We saw a W.P.A. Project/ where 20 men and women/ cord, spin and weave so-called Indian rugs/ The woman in charge/ says that all the designs/ for so-called Navajo rugs/ came from Spain."[47] Maurin poked some fun at the WPA for their cultural ignorance of Navajo culture. However, he and many others believed that Franklin Roosevelt's administration promoted policies that were tacitly Catholic.

During the Great Depression, most Catholic Americans felt deeply committed to President Roosevelt because his policies reflected a few of the ideas from Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (Reconstruction of the Social Order). Released in 1931, this encyclical was a follow-up to the social reforms promoted by Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor). Pius XI pronounced, "the right ordering of economic life cannot be left to a free competition of forces. For from this source, as from a poisoned spring, have originated and spread all the errors of individualist economic teaching."[48] This encyclical bolstered *Rerum Novarum's* stance against socialism by promoting a form of controlled capitalism in which owners and laborers worked together. Pius XI followed these sentiments with a repudiation of labor disputes. He wrote, "Strikes and lock-outs are forbidden; if the parties cannot settle their dispute, public authority intervenes."[49] The historian John McGreevy notes that Roosevelt quoted *Quadragesimo Anno* because it reverberated with what Roosevelt's Brain Trust tried to accomplish through its New Deal policies. In many ways, the New Deal complicates the antimodernism of the Catholic Worker movement. This bureaucracy should have appeared to be repugnant to Day and Maurin, but they believed that it furthered the personalist agenda of the

[47] Letter to Dorothy Day from Peter Maurin, November 27, 1939, folder 1, box 1, Dorothy Day-Catholic Worker Collection (hereafter DDCW), MUL.
[48] Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, encyclical letter, May 15, 1931, para. 88.
[49] Ibid., para. 94. See also, John McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004).

Catholic Worker. The WPA programs gave Americans a chance to showcase their skills and abilities, rather than forcing them into exploitative labor relationships. The CWM valued the New Deal policies, but still took umbrage with the Catholic leadership.

The Catholic Worker movement galvanized its radical identity by embracing destitution and poverty. They gained many followers, and many enemies at the same time. Day was not afraid to criticize the hierarchy in the U.S. Catholic Church. For example, in her diary in 1935, she argued with a priest who claimed that Day focused too heavily on the "material" by emphasizing social work. To this she responded, "You can't preach the Gospel to men with empty stomachs." In 1938, she lambasted the Archbishop of New York for serving her "delicate wines" and "delicious foods." She criticized the "princes of the church" and wished that they were "living voluntarily down in a place" like the houses of hospitality.[50] Day seldom feared receiving retribution from the public and maintained a strict conviction to promoting the welfare of humanity. By 1940, the Catholic Worker's message inspired other Catholics to pool their resources and open in total thirty autonomously operated houses of hospitality and eleven farms across the nation.[51] The movement and the newspaper spread widely throughout the United States. In 1940, Day still promoted an anticapitalistic and pacifistic opinion. She still received positive attention for her antiwar stance, and in her lectures, she encouraged her readers to avoid listening or reading about the war in Europe.[52] However, Day's reputation and the notion of creating an antimodern green society came under fire during the 1940s with the onset of the Second World War and the attack on Pearl Harbor.

[50] Day, *The Duty of Delight*, 14; 33.
[51] Ibid., 64.
[52] Ibid., 65. She wrote, "Turn off your radio. Put away your daily newspaper. Read one review of events a week."

Peace in War

By 1941, the CWM faced dissent from Catholics who believed that Dorothy Day had radicalized her movement to become anti-American in its pacifism. Fellow Catholic pacifist, Gordon Zahn, described the backlash that Day received for refusing to support the war effort after Pearl Harbor. Orders of the *Catholic Worker* plummeted precipitously. Furthermore, Zahn recounted that the frustrations with the Catholic Worker came to a head when one of the Houses of Hospitality made "a formal break with the parent movement."[53] Many people questioned the pacifistic communitarianism of Day and Maurin because of their stance against World War II, but The *Catholic Worker* maintained its position. The CWM supported a camp for Catholic conscientious objectors (COs) to join. During World War II, the United States allowed COs to defer their military service if they agreed to join the Civilian Public Service (CPS).

Zahn agreed to join the CPS and was stationed at Camp Simon, which opened in Stoddard, New Hampshire. At CPS sites, COs would complete tasks comparable to what workers with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) completed. Camp Simon formerly served as a CCC site, and COs cleaned up debris from a hurricane that passed through. Zahn, who worked in the camp, appreciated the nature. He commented on the foliage and enjoyed the company he received from his fellow campers. He took his situation and tried to mold it to his worldview of peace.[54] Zahn promoted communal living as an important step toward creating a peaceful future. It could be challenging to develop a close network in the CPS system due to frequent closures and reassignments. Hal Winchester, another conscientious objector, traveled to a few of the

[53] Gordon Zahn, *Another Part of the War* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), ix.
[54] Zahn's experience reflects some of the experiences that Japanese Americans endured in internment camps. Forced from their homes, they still altered the landscape to reflect their culture and beliefs. See Connie Chiang, *Nature Behind Barbed Wire: An Environmental History of the Japanese American Incarceration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Civilian Public Service camps. Winchester recalls receiving reassignments from the "two Quaker camps in Massachusetts, Petersham and Royalston, to the Catholic Worker camp at Stoddard in October 1941."[55] This experience contributed to his conversion from the Friends Church to Catholicism. However, this system demonstrated how public support and funding both were severely limited.

The New Hampshire CPS camp should have reflected many of the goals that Day had for her Catholic Worker farms. These were collaborative working spaces, where men could fulfill their religious beliefs, while also serving their country and remaining employed. However, this hope for the Camp Simon did not come to fruition. Zahn, who was sent to the camp in 1942 felt a "sense of isolation and alienation," not only from Catholics but also from the CPS program. The Catholic conscientious objectors held views on nonviolence that many Catholics did not share at this time. U.S. Catholics still sought to assimilate into American culture and did not want to isolate themselves from national causes. Pacifist Catholics not only felt isolated from their Church, but the historically Protestant peace churches (i.e. Brethren, Mennonites, and Quakers) viewed the Catholic COs as outsiders as well. Many of the conscientious objectors felt spiritually isolated during their CPS duties.[56]

Following the war, Gordon Zahn continued to rail against the injustices of this system. In a letter to the left-leaning Chicago Bishop Bernard Sheil, the left-leaning auxiliary bishop from Chicago, Zahn explained his trouble promoting pacifism at CPS camps. At CPS camps, "here [a

[55] Letter from Hal Winchester to Dorothy Day, February 7, 1974, folder 1, box 23, DDCW, MUL.
[56] Zahn, *Another Part*, x. It is important to note that it was exceedingly rare for a Catholic to seek out and receive CO status from the military. Many Catholics enlisted once they were drafted and did not feel any moral opposition to the war effort. In another study, Jeffrey Kovac's *Refusing War, Affirming Peace: A History of Civilian Public Service Camp #21* explains that Camp Simon was an anomaly. "Catholics comprised only about one percent of the CPS population (149 out of twelve thousand)" Kovac writes, "and the sponsoring agency, the Association of Catholic Conscientious Objectors (ACCO), operated only three of the approximately 150 sites: Camp Simon and two small hospital projects (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2009), 18.

CO] comes up against the injustices of the program. He now finds he must work without pay; his dependents receive no allotments comparable to those granted to men in the other services…Further, instead of 'work of national importance' he and the great majority of his fellows are assigned to what even Mr. Mabee calls 'the wast (*sic*) of their skills.'"[57] Essentially, Zahn demonstrated that the federal government punished pacifists by forcing them to perform mundane tasks without receiving pay. From his perspective, they essentially became prisoners of war.

In a follow-up letter, Zahn couched his concern in terms that demonstrated how the CPS system removed the First Amendment rights of Americans. He wrote, "From the onset the Catholic men have rejected the philosophy behind the CPS program, the distorted 'perfectionism' of an involuntary second mile." Zahn articulated in this letter that the federal government punished a pacifist by obliging him to perform work that assisted the war effort. In his opinion, the government should not have pressed him into service if he was morally opposed to the conflict in its entirety. Zahn continued, "Instead, it has become more and more evident to them that CPS has become a dangerous formula whereby other minorities can be punished for their beliefs, be they ideological or political in nature, by involuntary servitude without pay disguised as a democratically-given opportunity to do alternate service."[58] The CPS camps from this perspective still infringed upon pacifists' First Amendment rights. The CWM ensured that they supported conscientious objectors and ensured that there was a Catholic center to oppose fighting in the Second World War.

[57] Letter from Gordon Zahn to Bishop Bernard Sheil, October 29, 1945, folder 4284, box 3, Gordon Zahn papers (hereafter ZHN), UNDA.
[58] Ibid.

These camps demonstrated that pacifists and conscientious objectors needed moral support from their community. In one instance, Zahn averred that many Catholic parishes denied COs any recognition for their service to the war effort. In one example, he describes the ten-mile hike that he and his fellow Catholic COs would take to get to a church in Contoocook, New Hampshire on Sunday mornings, where the congregation "received us with a chill completely unrelated to the inhospitable winds that raged outside."[59] One part of this explanation rests on the fact that Catholics had a "just war doctrine" included within their official teachings.[60] Many American Catholics also sought acceptance within the broader American community by participating in the mobilization of the war efforts. This returns to the question of modernity and how the Catholic Worker peace movement reinforced antimodernism because of their resistance to state-supported conflicts. The Catholic Worker organization hoped for a future without capitalism, communism, or the state.[61]

The Spirituality of Atomic Bombs

With the American use of atomic weapons to end World War II and the subsequent nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union, people in general increasingly reconceptualized their relationship to the planet. Many realized that invisible atoms had the potential to alter a person's life through disease or utter devastation through the atomic bomb. These scientific discoveries contributed to the creation of atomic weapons and the public fear of

[59] Zahn, *Another Part*, 26.
[60] According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the "Just War Doctrine" originated with Augustine of Hippo and became codified by the work of Thomas Aquinas. However, it was not until the 1960s that the Catholic Church revisited what a just war was with Paul VI's 1965 encyclical *Gaudium et Spes*.
[61] For this essay, I am referring to Jürgen Habermas's theory of modernization. In *Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. Two*, translated by Thomas A. McCarthy, Habermas wrote, "The concept of modernization refers to a bundle of processes that are cumulative and mutually reinforcing: to the formation of capital and the mobilization of resources; to the development of the forces of production and the increase in the productivity of labor; to the establishment of centralized political power and the formation of national identities." (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 2.

a nuclear holocaust.[62] Historians, activists, and ecologists have noted the role that the bomb had on consumption habits. Many people were concerned that nuclear particles entered their food and could cause them internal harm. Similarly, many concerned citizens began to conceptualize of chemicals in a new way. New developments in ecological studies suggested that if radioactive waves could cause cancer perhaps pesticides could similarly impact a person's body. This movement contributed to the rise of the organic food movement and a broader public consideration of food production.[63]

Dorothy Day also extended fears of the atomic bomb into the metaphysical realm. The bombing of Hiroshima occurred on the Feast of the Transfiguration, a holy day for Catholics. In the September 1945 issue of the *Catholic Worker*, Day began her crusade against the atomic bomb. She recounted how U.S. newspapers hoped that the atomic bomb had vaporized Japanese civilians. To this she responded, "Perhaps we will breathe their dust into our nostrils, feel them in the fog of New York on our faces."[64] With the dropping of the atomic bomb, Day recognized a new force that drew some of her energies away from the farming communes to fight for peace

---

[62] Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985). Even before the fear of nuclear warfare, there was evidence of the dangers of radioactive materials. See Claudia Clark, *Radium Girls: Women and Industrial Health Reform, 1910-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Jacob Darwin Hamblin, *Arming Mother Nature: The Birth of Catastrophic Environmentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). Hamblin demonstrates the efforts that took place to devastate rival nations. In some circumstances, the military invested in spreading wheat rust and other ecological weapons. By the 1970s, there was a global protest the use of radioactive materials. See Andrew S. Tompkins, *Better Active than Radioactive!: Anti-Nuclear Protest in 1970s France and West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[63] The role of consumption in the atomic age changed the values that people had regarding food. See Thomas Jundt, *Greening the Red, White, and Blue: The Bomb, Big Business, and Consumer Resistance in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), Kendra Smith-Howard, *Pure and Modern Milk: An Environmental History since 1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), Linda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), Susanna Rankin Bohme, *Toxic Injustice: A Transnational History of Exposure and Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), Nancy Langston, *Toxic Bodies: Hormone Disruptors and the Legacy of DES* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

[64] Day, *The Duty of Delight*, 105.

against the bomb. She sought to create a new peace on earth through her protests of atomic weapons. Additionally, on May 15, 1949, Peter Maurin passed away at the age of 72. Day was devastated by the loss of her friend who had stoked her interest in a radical form of Catholicism. Now that he was gone, she would help organize the next generation of Catholic pacifists to protest the possibility of a nuclear war. Ultimately, the advent of the Cold War and the fear of nuclear weapons spurred American Catholics to reconsider the Catholic Left. Fear of the atomic bomb, of nature, and of the government became the standard narrative for many Americans' lives. While the CWM had been a pacifist pariah during the Second World War, it became a more impactful during the Cold War.

Day wrote about the atoms and atomic energy from a metaphysical perspective. One of the clearest examples of her views on the spirituality of the atomic bomb was explicated in the biography *Therese*. The eponymous biography told the story of the life of the nineteenth-century Carmelite nun and Catholic saint, Therese Martin of Lisieux.[65] Day's contribution to Martin's life was primarily synthetic. Therese Martin, affectionately known by her admirers as the "Little Flower," was renowned by her order and by those with whom she contacted for her intense spirituality. She prayed and meditated on all aspects of her life, from the mundane spills of dishwater to the intense agony she felt as gangrene spread through her intestines due to tuberculosis. She succumbed to her disease and died in 1897 at the age of twenty-four. As she approached the end of her life, she famously said, "I will spend my heaven doing good on earth. I will let fall a shower of roses."[66] Martin's life and examples helped convince Day to convert to

[65] Well over thirty biographies had been written on St. Therese of Lisieux by the time of publication of *Therese*.
[66] Dorothy Day, *Therese: A Life of Therese of Lisieux* (Springfield, IL: Templegate Publishers, 1960) 172-173. In the miracles that were attributed to her cause for canonization, people have had with Therese Martin they typically noted the sight or scent of roses.

Catholicism, but as she reflected on her life in the context of contemporary issues, she believed that this saint's message held new meaning within the 1960s.

Day believed that within the context of the Cold War and increased nuclear testing that the Little Flower's life articulated a spiritual counterweight to the seemingly imminent nuclear holocaust. For one, Martin's renown spread by word of mouth from workers and common people, which stood in stark contrast to the political climate of the 1960s which the focused rested on the actions of two international superpowers. Day reflected on the working masses as "waves of the sea, of forests, of fields of wheat, all moved by the spirit which blows where it listeth." Day articulated that Martin's ordinary goodness made her a strong example for the average person. She was not a spiritual healer or especially remarkable, but Martin set a template for how every individual could have an impact, especially at a time when many Americans felt hopeless at the thought of nuclear warfare. Day's second justification for writing about Martin was how her spiritual flowers could offset the radioactive material floating in the air. "At a time when there are such grave fears because of the radioactive particles that are sprinkled over the world by the hydrogen bomb tests," Day wrote, "this saint, of this day, is releasing a force, a spiritual force, upon the world to counteract that fear and that disaster."[67] Once again, Dorothy Day returned to a concern of how the metaphysical realm impacted the physical world.

In a later reflection on Therese Martin, Day returned to the ordinariness of her life and reflected on the "natural happiness" that Martin experienced. Day wrote about farm women, who looked after Martin when she was a child. Throughout her early years, she found joy in the natural world. As an adolescent, Martin would "stand in the attic window and commune with the stars and enjoy exquisite happiness."[68] Day reflected on how her supernatural joy emanated from

[67] Ibid., 175.
[68] Dorothy Day, "Stenographer's Notebook with Notes on Therese Martin," folder 1, box 3, DDCW, MUL.

her mundane interactions with the world around her. As a result, she articulated a belief in the spirituality found in the material environment and through simple actions. Day and the CWM were prepared to join political ideologies that promoted their same pacifistic ideals.

In 1957, the Catholic Worker's relationship to the Left changed. Day attended the American Forum for Socialist Education. At this meeting, the socialist leadership created an opportunity for religious leftists to enter in full union with the Socialist Party. The *New York Times* reported, "The American Forum's sponsors hope to generate a national discussion among Socialist-minded groups that could conceivably result in a new united front, breaking down past barriers to common action."[69] While Day did not fully support the Socialist Party, her presence at this event rippled throughout other Catholic social circles as they considered what this meant for the future of the CWM. Dorothy Day felt freer to describe herself as a Christian Communist and embraced this title. The CWM became more disillusioned with the United States because of its endorsement of the atomic bomb. Day was ready to go to prison to discourage Americans and Catholics from supporting the use of nuclear weapons. Her presence at a gathering of the Socialist Party was a moment where she recognized that she could pursue an even more radical path toward peace.

In the 1960s, the U.S. Catholic hierarchy embraced nationalism in its turn toward modernity. During Vatican II, the sociologist Dorothy Dohen wrote a monograph about the impact of nationalism on the U.S. Catholic Church. She defined nationalism as "the ideology which permits the nation to be the impersonal and final arbiter of human affairs."[70] She identified that the U.S. Catholic hierarchy during the late-nineteenth century promoted itself as "American

[69] Harry Schwartz, "New Leftist Unit Set Up; Reds in It," *The New York Times*, May 13, 1957.

[70] Dorothy Dohen, *Nationalism and American Catholicism* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), 6.

of Americans" to demonstrate the intertwining of American and Catholic symbols.[71] Being Catholic did not force one to be anti-American. The two could be one and the same. During the 1960s, Francis Cardinal Spellman wrote with a strong nationalistic tone that the Catholic Church needed to "help preserve America and preserve her precious liberties from the enemies of God and freedom."[72] In 1965, when questioned by a reporter on his stance on U.S. involvement in Vietnam, Cardinal Spellman replied, "I fully support everything it does…My country, may it always be right. Right or wrong, my country."[73] Spellman's position articulated the political wedge that cleaved Catholics into two camps: they could either be pacifists and believe in the catholic idea of the Church, or adopt a jingoistic view of American Catholicism.

The CWM opposed the Catholic hierarchy's nationalistic stance and encouraged the anarchist behavior that eventually placed many of CWM members in prison. The movement also began to focus on supporting Cubans. During the early 1960s, Day wrote on Cuba in *The Catholic Worker* to clarify the movement's stance on Castro. In one of her first articles on the matter she tacitly agreed with the Cuban Revolution and communism. She agreed because she viewed the former government as incapable of helping the people. Furthermore, she contended that the Cuban Catholic Church was hypocritical. When asked to stay and teach, Cuban priests and nuns refused to educate students on communism. Day wrote, "And Castro in his turn taunted, them with the fact that all they thought of was money and property. We are a spectacle to the world, we Catholics, fighting each other like this, flinging taunts back and forth. (After all Castro is a Catholic.)"[74] The *Catholic Worker* became gave a voice for workers' rights and

[71] Ibid., 116.
[72] Ibid., 126.
[73] Ibid., 1.

[74] Dorothy Day, "About Cuba," *The Catholic Worker*, July-August, 1961.

disputes throughout the western hemisphere. This publication distributed articles on workers' rights, land tenure, and pacifism as the formula for establishing a utopia. In Castro's Cuba, Catholic clergy fled from the country because priests and sisters lost their property to the state.[75] The CWM, however, found ways to justify Castro's Cuba because of the Church's longstanding abuse of power in the country. This support of Castro and socialism made the CWM an even more controversial organization in Catholic circles.

Day gained more allies as the Catholic Left continued to grow, because many Catholics agreed with her radical views. In 1964, Dorothy Day received the honorable distinction award from the National Catholic Social Action Conference. This created a dialogue among many Catholics as priests and laypeople identified with or rejected Day's politics. In an editorial, the Jesuit-columnist John Coogan demonized Day's beliefs. He criticized her stance that "The laborer is systematically robbed of that wealth which he produces," by stating "Apparently the thousands of autos parked about our factories are not worker-owned." He ultimately feared that her form of antimodern communitarian vision of society would devolve the United States into "benevolent anarchism."[76] Coogan's conservatism articulated the growing trend among U.S. Catholics to Americanize by defending property ownership and capitalism demanded a strong defense and many bishops in the U.S. Catholic Church took this stance.

Many Catholics responded with outrage to Coogan's attack on Day. In a later edition of *Our Sunday Visitor*, some defended Day for her practice of "corporal works of mercy." Another

---

[75] Castro's Cuba placed a heavy emphasis on reducing religious freedoms. The Catholic Church in Cuba resisted communism because it sought to place a higher reliance on the state rather than the religious establishment. After the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Catholic priests left the country as Cuba became more hostile to them. Historian Joseph Holbrook argues that "traditional Catholicism prior to the Second Vatican Council functioned as a religious ideology on the behalf of elites for the maintenance of the status quo." Joseph Holbrook, "The Catholic Church in Cuba, 1959-62: The Clash of Ideologies," *International Journal of Cuban Studies* 2, 2010): 264. Many activists viewed the Catholic Church as needing a reformation to embrace more of the social concerns within the religious structure. See also Eamonn McGuinness, "Castro's Leap of Faith," *The World Today*, 54 (1998): 16-17.

[76] John E. Coogan, S.J., "Views on Current Events: Right or Wrong," *Our Sunday Visitor*, November 22, 1964.

queried, "Can anyone seriously accuse Dorothy Day of materialism in any shape or form?"[77] One letter criticized Coogan's "blindness to the world" and accused the Catholic Church at this time for failing to consider the needs of other people.[78] Others argued that there were many kinds of communism, and that if one believed, like Coogan, in only one form of communism, this automatically disqualified any of their opinions. Other priests reinterpreted Day's words and actions by stating that she had utopian aspirations and "the Catholic Worker…is nearer to Brook Farm and Fruitlands than it ever was to Moscow. So too, Miss Day's antipathy for payment of taxes that could be used for military purposes puts her squarely in the company of Henry David Thoreau and Bronson Alcott."[79] This reaction to Coogan's article reflected the type of discontent that the Church would deal with throughout the 1960s and 1970s as its members demanded that the Church emphasize social justice and promoting peace.

The Peace Movement and Incarceration

[77] "What Our Readers Think," *Our Sunday Visitor*, December 27, 1964.
[78] Gerard E. Sherry, "In Defense of Dorothy Day," *Georgia Bulletin*, November 26, 1964. A few Catholic historians have weighed in on the impact that the 1960s had on Catholic communities. As immigrants Americanized, they no longer needed the Church as an intermediary to help them navigate the unfamiliarity of the United States. David O'Brien argues, "After two centuries of organized existence in the United States, the American church has not evolved a coherent understanding of its public role and responsibilities. Immigrant styles gave way in the caldron of the 1960s, theology and spirituality moved in an evangelical direction, and church leaders, attracted by evangelical and prophetic appeals, struggled to make the republican style their own." David O'Brein, *Public Catholicism* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 7.
[79] Gerard LaMountain, O.R.S.A., "Open Letter in Defense of Dorothy Day," folder 5, box 2, DDCW, MUL. Brookfarm and Fruitlands were utopian societies that transcendentalists established during the mid-nineteenth century. People living on these communes sought to share everything that they grew and owned with others. See Charles Crowe, *George Ripley: Transcendentalist and Utopian Socialist* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967), Barbara L. Packer, *The Transcendentalists* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), Anne C. Rose, *Transcendentalism as a Social Movement, 1830-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

During the 1960s, incarceration became a popularized form of protest. Day participated in Cold War pacifism by refusing to take shelter during civilian defense drills.[80] The pacifist Jim Wilson went to jail for burning his draft card in 1968. Wilson corresponded with Day about his prison experience, describing the "brainwashing" that occurred while serving their sentences. Wilson was convinced that the prisons sought to convince him that the Vietnam War was just. In his correspondence with Dorothy Day, he relayed to her how much he enjoyed working on the farm at the prison. Wilson wrote, "Work on the farm is beautiful. I'm amazed at my own love for this physical labor. Learning quite abit (*sic*) about farming and farm equipment."[81] Wilson adopted the rhetoric of the Catholic Worker and shared his idea about prison labor with Day on this issue. The days of a more passive CWM, that aided the poor through green initiatives, was fading quickly in favor of political protest.

In the same year, Daniel Berrigan, the famous Jesuit pacifist, went to prison for holding a draft board hostage and then burning draft cards.[82] He used his time incarcerated to explore the flaws of the prison system. Berrigan sued Danbury prison for forcing him to produce military goods. In an affidavit to the judge, Berrigan sardonically described the Danbury prison as a place where "innovation is a working principle and the best interests of prisoners are seriously considered. Here, work is meaningful and education rich and varied." The education he earned from Danbury was that a "phenomenon called 'Prison Industries'" operated out of the prison and used skilled and semi-skilled laborers to produce military goods. Berrigan stated that Prison

---

[80] "Dorothy Day: Catholic 'Communist' Is Visitor In Diocese," *Central California Register*, April 14, 1961, 6.
[81] Letter from Jim Wilson to Dorothy Day, January 21, 1968, folder 1, box 23, DDCW, MUL.
[82] See Shawn Francis Peters, *The Catonsville Nine: A Story of Faith and Resistance in the Vietnam Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). This dissertation will not go into detail concerning the Berrigans because they have been one of the most frequently cited examples of the New Catholic Left. In short, Daniel Berrigan, along with eight others including his brother Philip, became the center of a cause *célèbre* known as the Catonsville Nine. It was a striking moment in New Left history because Catholic clergy and nuns were stereotypically identified as a conservative church because of their participation in movements like the National Legion of Decency. Three years later, Philip Berrigan led a conspiracy to kidnap Henry Kissinger and bomb government property.

Industries made a profit around five million dollars and workers made "less than fifty cents per hour." He sought to use every moment as a means of upsetting the established consumerist order. In his affidavit, Berrigan stated, "a vast majority never think to ask who owns the apples (United Fruit?) who harvests the apples (migrants?) whether the apples are sprayed with DDT."[83] Berrigan fought against capitalism that contributed to mass-consumerism and systems that called for a return to the earth movement. The Berrigans and many of the other Catholic radicals viewed incarceration as an effective way to promote their viewpoints. Daniel Berrigan adored the celebrity status that he gained for his civil disobedience.

The new radical method of dissent provided Catholics with methods to engage the New Left that had been impossible with the sectarianism of the Old Left. The Old Left centered on creating a united workers party that would one day revolve around the Soviet Union. The Communist Party USA was one of the American arms of this movement and fought for both civil rights and women's rights. During the 1950s, the process of de-Stalinization highlighted the flaws of believing that leftist movements needed to be based in a political ideology. Josef Stalin's atrocities came to light and caused an epiphany for leftists. In the stead of the Old Left, the New Left attempted to amend these flaws by allowing anyone to participate in leftist activities during the 1960s and from that point forward. People of all races, creeds, and ethnicities joined the New Left efforts to promote and define civil rights in the United States and abroad. The New Left now allowed people like Catholic priests and nuns, who had often been stalwarts of conservatism, to do something as radical as destroy draft records to oppose the Vietnam War. The examples of the CWM and the Catonsville Nine, who represented stereotypically conservative institutions shocked many Americans by this shift in political

[83] Daniel Berrigan, "Civil Action," No. 14, 112 (1970), 4, folder 6, box 36, Catholic Peace Fellowship Records (hereafter cited as CPF), UNDA.

ideology.[84] These new methods, however, concerned many followers who wanted to remain pacifists.

Many of the CWM followers considered when incarceration and public acts of civil disobedience were the most efficacious way to gain followers. Gordon Zahn questioned if this was the most beneficial way for promoting peace. "Assuming that their desire to get full press and TV coverage means that this is intended to be more than just a personal witness, I think it is fair to question whether it is effective as a symbolic communication. I think it is not." Zahn continued, "The only people who will be impressed are those already in their corner … Others … are more likely to be 'turned off' than won over." He reached an ideological crisis because the CWM approached protest as a way to gain celebrity, while the Church also refused condemn the Vietnam War.

Gordon Zahn would have preferred the Catholic Church to take a pacifist stance, but the Catholic leadership did not. Zahn viewed the American Catholicism as stubbornly refusing to support conscientious objects who were drafted to fight in Vietnam. Those who struggled to create a more socially conscious church committed crimes that sent them to prison. He ultimately had a crisis of faith over the Church during this decade. He questioned if "the formal structure of the Church is really a block to the fulfillment of the Christian vocation," and if the Berrigans and their supporters "are the Church in America today."[85] This dilemma highlighted how many liberal Catholics felt about the Church. Could a Catholic be both a pacifist and agree with Church teaching that condoned the Vietnam War? Zahn demonstrated his willingness to embrace the New Left modernity of the 1960s and fall away from the papal authority of the

[84] See Gosse, *Rethinking The New Left* (Palgrave, 2005), Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer…: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
[85] Letter from Gordon Zahn to Dorothy Day, October 1, 1968, folder 6, box 23, DDCW, MUL.

Catholic Church. The Catholic Left began to create a new aspect of Catholicism that still sought to remain in line with Vatican while challenging the Church's stances on pacifism and war.

Dorothy Day's stance toward pacifism and environmentalist Catholic practices changed how journalists and others viewed her. By the 1960s, editorialists claimed that Day was a "Christian Communist."[86] Earlier in her life, she sought to distance herself from this identity because of the struggles that she faced as a communist. She now embraced this radical new term as she further adopted anticapitalism and antimodernism. The Church hierarchy took a stance against war and for peace during the Second Vatican Council, and yet they began to face problems with American Catholics challenging the hierarchy by joining leftist Catholic sects. Still, there many were others who felt compelled to stay within the Catholic Church and to denounce these more extreme elements of the New Catholic Left.

The CWM's radical use of incarceration as a method of protest contributed to an isolated section of the Catholic lay community who wanted to assist with the peace movements without having to risk going to prison or breaking onto military bases. Pax Christi, an organization founded in Brussels, Belgium in 1945, organized in the United States. The Catholic pacifist Thomas Cornell joined with Eileen Egan to organize a branch of Pax Christi in the United States. The U.S. branch of Pax Christi sought to find the center between the Church's right-wing nationalists and its left-wing pacifists. In a 1974 letter to the leadership of this council, Cornell's opined, "We need a Pax Xti, USA that can move more to the center of both Church and community life, an organization that can gain respect and credibility, based quite frankly upon the good will that already exists, due to the efforts, no matter how far out of…the Catholic Worker." He continued by stating that Pax Christi needed to "build and to continue to penetrate

[86] "Dorothy Day: Catholic 'Communist' Is Visitor In Diocese," 6.

Catholic structures," to make a significant difference, and this could not be accomplished "by inveterate anarchists."[87]

The success and popularity of the CWM spurred competition from other organizations that sought to endorse a moderate form of pacifism. Pax Christi's example elucidated that even pacifism began to splinter into different organizations and attempted to solve the spiritual crises that Catholics, such as Gordon Zahn, faced. They wanted to voice their discontent with war but

Figure 3.1 Cesar Chavez, Coretta Scott King, and Dorothy Day (left-right) attending an ecumenical service at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City in 1973. Catholic News Service Photo, courtesy Marquette University Archives.

did not want to denounce the Church at the same time. There was now an organization that sought to make protest easier for these figures. Pax Christi succeeded in crafting a new means of protesting, however, it did not have a prominent figurehead like Dorothy Day, who symbolized peaceful protest by any means. Day's presence was something that the UFW and Cesar Chavez wanted to have on their side to promote their cause.

[87] Letter from Thomas Cornell to Bishop Carroll T. Dozier, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Eileen Egan, and Gordon Zahn, September 24, 1974, 2, folder 11, box 1, Pax Christi Papers (hereafter CPAX), UNDA. This reaction to the New Left was shared by many of the blue-collar Americans. James T. Patterson notes that after students took over a building at Columbia University that this "energized working-class Americans who raged at the protests of the privileged." James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 686.

The Catholic Worker and the United Farm Worker

Dorothy Day's stance against capitalism and modernism led the CWM to become close ideological supporters of the UFW. Day wrote columns criticizing industrial agriculture as early as the 1930s. She firmly believed that farmworkers needed more protection from exploitative employers. *The Catholic Worker* ran columns daily elaborating on the successes of the UFW. In 1961, Dorothy Day traveled to El Centro, California to cover the struggles of the Agricultural Farmworkers Organizing Committee in its fight for fair wages. In the *Catholic Worker*, Day bitingly indicted the Church for its failures in addressing suffering. She wrote, "I saw the hierarchy silent in the face of the slavery and exploitation of the bracero and the agricultural worker."[88] Day was appalled by the actions of the Catholic Church at that time. Priests who spoke in favor of the farmworkers were denounced by the church spokesmen who claimed "that some communists masquerading as priests had appeared at the union meeting." The El Centro Catholic parish hung a notice on its door, reading "Anyone asking for jobs or help, go to the police department."[89] She found the Church to be hypocritical in its response to peaceful protest as priests here would rather incarcerate workers than help them fight for fairer wages. From this point forward, Day covered the farmworkers' struggle in the American Southwest and promoted their cause.

By the 1970s, Day became a central figure in spreading the word of the UFW movement. Readership for the *Catholic Worker* hovered around 70,000, but readership could have been more with people reading shared copies of the periodical. Chavez, Day, and Coretta Scott King came together for an ecumenical service in New York City to promote the UFW cause (Figure

[88] Dorothy Day, "California," *The Catholic Worker*, July-August 1961, 3.
[89] Ibid., 4.

3.1). Chavez and Day were both lay activists who excited a generation of Catholics who imagined that Catholicism could take a stronger stance against injustices such as the Vietnam War and violent strikebreakers.[90] In 1973, Dorothy Day reinvigorated Catholic support for the UFW movement when she, at 76, was arrested for unlawful assembly during the Gallo grape boycott in Fresno County (Figure 3.2). While in prison, she told journalists that her jail was a "paradise compared to others" where she had served sentences.[91] Her example inspired many other activists to reflect on her commitment to the movement. For example, Day and Joan Baez had a close friendship. Baez had invited the CWM founder to her Institute for the Study of Non-violence conference in the days before the Fresno picket began. While in prison, Baez would come to the fence of the prison yard and sing for Dorothy Day and the other imprisoned UFW protesters. In Day's chronicle of her stay at the Fresno County Jail, she wrote "August 8. Today Joan Baez…sang to us and the other prisoners in the yard. There was a most poignant prison song. Her voice, her complete control of it, is remarkable. It tore at your heart."[92] Day became ingrained in the UFW movement and her staunch defense of Catholicism did not push other members of the Left away from her. The CWM was, in the eyes of many Americans, what the Catholic Church could have been. It convinced U.S. Catholics that they could be both a faithful member of the Church and a supporter of leftist protests against injustice.

Conclusion

[90] Anne Klejment, "Dorothy Day and César Chávez: American Catholic Lives in Nonviolence," *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 29 (Summer 2011): 67-90.
[91] "Dorothy Day Finds Jail a 'Paradise,'" *Worcester Telegram*, August 11, 1973.
[92] Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage – September 1973," *The Catholic Worker,* September 1973, 1.

By 1974, the political climate within the Catholic Church reflected general American support of moderation and that protests would damage the Church's reputation. At this time, many American Catholics sought a return to normalcy, and Dorothy Day and the New Catholic Left pushed even harder to protest injustices in the United States. By 1975, the main Catholic peace organizations began to flounder as they strayed from protesting war and nuclear weapons. The earlier days of the Catholic Worker movement that focused on the utopian dissipated, replaced with more extreme visions of political dissent.

Chapter four continues this story by examining how the efforts of Catholic Workers and liberal sisters impacted traditional lay families in the United States. These forms of radical Catholicism spread to influence families in small ways to promote social and environmental justice. Lay Catholic women in the United States organized to support migrant workers. Their efforts occurred adjacent to the efforts of the Catholic Worker and liberal nuns. Out of the work of lay Catholics emanated a more conservative form of activism that still promoted migrant workers' rights. Overall, Catholic women provided the impetus for encouraging the growth of environmental religion in the American Church.

The Catholic Worker movement trod a path between major political movements throughout the twentieth century. Beginning with a vision for a green anarchical society, reaching its heights with protests nuclear weapons, and splintering over the Vietnam War, the Catholic Worker movement struggled to gain more followers because of its extreme stances in a conservative religion. The one constant in the Catholic Worker's vision was its support of the worker. The CW focused on both improving the conditions for farm laborers and providing access to green spaces for city dwellers. The atomic bomb mobilized the Catholic peace movements to fight for a new way of understanding their relationship to religion and the

environment. While the Second Vatican Council proved to be an important aspect for mobilizing the Church, there were activists pushing for progressive ecological changes in American Catholicism well before this. Day and Maurin pushed the Catholic Left in the 1930s toward a "green revolution" in the Church, where every worker had value, the filth of the cities was washed away, and communalism usurped capitalism. This early activism laid a path for more radical political activism in years to come.

Figure 3.2 Dorothy Day preparing to be arrested, 1973. Courtesy of the Bob Fitch Photography Archive at Stanford University.

Chapter 4: Lived Religion among Golden Rule Catholics

In a 1956 gathering of the Wisconsin Council of Catholic Women (WCCW), Mrs. Raymond T. Stark emphasized the value of the organization. "In unison there is great power for good especially on a State level. If we stand alone and protest or accede, it's like a voice in the wilderness – but the voices of 50,000 women carry tremendous weight and is a potential force in the life of today."[1] Catholic women created the WCCW in 1915 to "secure mutual counsel on religious, civic, educational, cultural, philanthropic and social welfare activities."[2] The WCCW, led and primarily composed of Catholic laywomen, signaled a transformation in what women expected to accomplish within society and the Church. Women began to leverage the authority they held within the family and the Church, especially their purchasing power and involvement in social justice organizations, to increase their power within the Church more broadly. In Wisconsin and other states across the Midwest, most of these networks of women formed out of religious groups. They pursued legislation that protected human life, and as a byproduct, protected the environment. Groups such as the WCCW fought against artificial additives in their food and thus became aware of the politics of the growers who sprayed their fields with chemicals. This movement of socially and politically active Catholic women preceded the UFW strikes and prepared them to quickly embrace the movement in the 1960s. This chapter contends that religious organizations helped create a framework for more politically moderate and conservative women to participate in social justice boycotts during the 1950s but later changed, becoming more palatable for young Catholics during the 1970s by making protest easier for them.

[1] "Report of the 19th president of the WCCW, May 9, 1956," 1, folder 2, box 3, Wisconsin Council of Catholic Women (hereafter WCCW), Wisconsin Historical Society (hereafter WHS).
[2] "Highlights of the W.C.C.W.," 16, folder 1, box 1, WCCW, WHS.

This chapter uses bulletins, correspondence, ephemera, and posters to explore how Catholics joined and remained a part of the UFW movement. By approaching this chapter from this evidence, I explore an idea that sociologists have called "lived religion" to explore how average Catholics took religious ideas and applied them to their everyday lives. Other scholars call this idea material Christianity because it attaches spiritual significance to daily actions.[3] One can be pious on Sundays and someone else may not be an active churchgoer, yet they can both believe that they are religious and express their faith in personal ways. Furthermore, this chapter contends that religious expression changed over time. Social justice or environmental activism provided lapsed Catholics with the sense that their good actions mattered more than papal authority. Midwesterners engaged daily with UFW material at churches, factories, grocery stores, and schools. A wide range of religious women employed these new ideas of Christianity to keep the UFW cause in the public eye.

This exploration of midwestern Catholicism elucidates a distinction between Catholic and Protestant experiences with the land. Religious environmental histories typically focus on how affluent or influential Protestants arrived at a new understanding of nature.[4] Catholic immigrants who moved to the Midwest during the late nineteenth century conceived of their environment not as a place of peace but one of exploitation.[5] When Irish and Southern Europeans immigrated to the United States, they often remembered nature as a space of serfdom and misery, and they had

---

[3] Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, edited by David D. Hall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), Robert Fuller, *The Body of Faith: A Biological History of Religion in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), Manuel A. Vasquez, *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[4] See Stoll, *Inherit the Holy Mountain*, Dunlap, *Faith in Nature*, and Donald Worster, *A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), just to name a few.

[5] Richard White, "'Are You an Environmentalist, or Do You Work for a Living?': Work and Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996) :171-185.

traveled to the United States to find perhaps agricultural work.[6] Similarly, Mexican American Catholic laborers worked the land as well, as this dissertation has explored in past chapters. As a result, labor and land was a crucial relationship for Catholics.[7] This relationship became one of the primary ways that Catholics sought to protect the environment. By protecting workers, they also saved the landscape for future use.

A part of lived religion is examining the whole experience of a person. This methodology explores how people have been influenced by religion, even if they were not active in their religion. As a result, this chapter explores how the UFW movement influenced entire families. For the purpose of this chapter, United Auto Worker (UAW) president, Walter Reuther, was influenced by the environmental movement and ensured that he promoted the cause to the UAW. Union workers in automobile plants and manufacturers understood the importance of regulatory legislation. Overall, the Midwest served as an effective site for a boycott because unionized workers wanted to extend this privilege to agricultural workers, who toiled with limited protection.

Many of the UFW activists used the typical methods of canvassing, posting broadsides, mailing leaflets, and boycotting at grocery stores. This movement gained traction, however, within a wide variety of religious and occupational organizations. Priests, pastors, and rabbis printed news of the protests in their bulletins. Walter Reuther held mandatory presentations for the United Auto Workers (UAW) about the dangers of pollution. Even children learned about the

---

[6] Christopher Hamlin, "Turning Over the Right Rocks: Finding Legacies of Catholic Environmentalism," in *Fragile World: Ecology and the Church* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018), 16.

[7] Historians of Catholic environmental history have examined the National Catholic Rural Life Conference. This conference. This organization sought to protect and support Catholics who owned land in the United States by supporting them. They worried that Protestant rugged individualism would become too attractive and draw Catholics away from the communal spirit of their religion. David S. Bovee, *The Church and the Land: The National Catholic Rural Life Conference and American Society, 1923-2007* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010) and Hamlin, "The Greening of America, Catholic Style, 1930-1950."

pesticides and articulated their knowledge through crafts and reports in schools. This was a movement that encouraged its adherents to transform typically apolitical settings into spaces of social justice agitation.

The Catholic Midwest: Precursors to Environmentalism

The December 1954 edition of *The WCCW Informant*, published by the Wisconsin Council of Catholic Women (WCCW), confronted the issues of morality on the minds of the religious community.[8] One article told the long history of Catholic women in Wisconsin. Another wrote in support of Native American missions in the state. Nestled in the pages of the organization's routine debates rested something more surprising for 1950s culture—a scathing condemnation of food dyes and pesticides by Regina O'Connell. O'Connell protested the use of "coal-tar dyes" in cosmetics and food. She also excoriated farmers for their "carelessness" in spraying "the new wonder bug-killers on fruits and vegetables."[9] This issue was not only covering environmental degradation, but also concerned with migrant workers' rights. The next article in the *Informant*, "Dignity for 'Strangers within Our Gates,'" emphasized a social justice issue in Wisconsin. The author, Angela Esser, elucidated the moral imperative among Catholic women to improve the working conditions of migrant laborers the fields. Esser stated, "Where you have migrant camps in the community you have a Human Rights project on your doorstep."[10] How did the WCCW, a middle-class organization affiliated with the conservative

[8] This part of the chapter is adapted from "'Strangers Within Our Gates': Religious Women and the Struggle for Migrant Laborers' Rights, 1950-1959," *Environmental Justice*, 12 (October 2019): 205-211.
[9] J.F. O'Connell, "Legislature's Summer Studies; Food Labeling Concerns You," *The WCCW Informant*, December 1954, 6.
[10] W.F. (Angela) Esser, "Dignity for 'Strangers Within Our Gates' Goal of Human Rights Committee," *The WCCW Informant*, December 1954, 7.

Catholic Church, develop such a strong connection between the natural world and the plight of migrant laborers? One part of the answer stems from Catholicism's history in the region.

The midwestern Catholic Church was significantly more liberal than dioceses in other regions of the United States. A majority of midwestern Catholics traced their roots back to Germany, where priests and bishops fought for liberal reforms to Catholicism for hundreds of years. During the early nineteenth century, German bishops endorsed liturgical changes to encourage more active participation among the laity in a period known as *Aufklärung* or Enlightenment. Theologians wanted priests to preach scripture in the vernacular and shunned Catholics for praying the rosary instead of engaging with the mass.[11] Germans, perhaps in response to the legacy of the Protestant Reformation, believed Catholics needed to have meaningful rituals and theology rooted in lay participation. Midwestern Catholics accepted many of these opinions about the Mass from German immigrants, which made them one of the most liberal regions of American Catholicism in the 1950s.

Other American regions were far more conservative based, in part, on the traditions that their priests brought with them. For example, in Southern California dioceses, the bishops had a direct link to Irish priests, who remained austere in their theological approach. The Los Angeles diocese could not prepare enough young men to take the cloth, and therefore had a partnership with the Maynooth seminary. Priests from Maynooth went to Los Angeles and did not embrace the changes of Vatican II. Certain parishes in Southern California still only spoke Latin at masses until the 1970s.[12] Congregants in the Midwest understood Catholicism as a participatory religion, and the bishops in these dioceses encouraged Christians to take their religion out of churches and

[11] Leonard Swidler, "Liberal Catholicism - A Lesson from the Past," *CrossCurrents* 21, no. 1 (1971): 26
[12] Colleen McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II: A History of Catholic Reform in America* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 122.

into other parts of their lives. Women felt drawn to religion-based organizations where they could organize and effectively promote change.

Many of the WCCW's members were interested in combating legislation that deregulated food safety standards. This was part of a longer process in which Americans became more ignorant of their food. Beginning in the 1920s, advertisers and food processing companies made it more confusing to understand where food came from and how it was prepared for public consumption.[13] Homemakers in the Midwest began to question how their food was made and the WCCW was not happy with the findings in their state. In a 1952 report on food legislation, the WCCW protested bills that attempted to "place Wisconsin standards below the Federal level of food regulation." Furthermore, they opposed the types of ingredients that corporations added to their consumer goods. WCCW contributor Regina O'Connell lamented the fact that growers had applied "704 chemicals" to produce even though "only 428 are known to be safe." The council found a correlation between "the growing number of mental diseases" and "the many new chemicals used in our foods."[14]

The WCCW pushed for food manufacturers to use only organic ingredients in their products. In the early 1950s, mothers noticed that bakers replaced "fluid milk, butter, eggs, essential oils, and organic materials," for emulsifiers in their cakes.[15] Fear of inorganic materials contributed to a larger concern over the use of pesticides, especially DDT. As O'Connell wrote in the *Informant*, "Some of the new chemicals reach our food indirectly through the use of

---

[13] Ann Vileisis, *Kitchen Literacy: How We Lost Knowledge of Where Food Comes from and Why We Need to Get It Back* (Washington: Island, 2008).
[14] Regina S. O'Connell, "1952-1953 Legislative Report," folder 1, box 2, WCCW, WHS.
[15] Ibid. This transition began in earnest during the early twentieth century with the advent of domestic science. In Smith-Howard, *Pure and Modern Milk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) and Helen Zoe Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

insecticides and fungicides. The use of DDT, for example, has been widespread in dusting crops." O'Connell continued, "It was not realized until recently that DDT will store itself in the body fat and can, eventually, have a cumulative and serious effect on the liver."[16] Long before Rachel Carson made DDT famous in *Silent Spring*, these Catholic women had misgivings about the use of the chemical on foods.[17] The WCCW accepted the dangers of chemicals and sought to protect both workers and consumers from the dangers of pesticides.

In scenic Door County in northeastern Wisconsin, cherry orchards always needed pickers, and there were usually white workers looking for a job. With the postwar economic boom, landowners needed new workers to fill the void of white pickers. In 1948, Chicano migrant laborers filled this. Between 10,000 and 14,000 migrant laborers arrived in Wisconsin and were ready to work in the orchards.[18] Many Wisconsinites became concerned by the flood of outsiders filling their towns and the initial reaction from many in the community was segregation. A few restaurant owners hung signs reading "For Whites Only – Negroes and Mexicans Not Admitted." Migrant laborers lived in segregated camps that were rife with illnesses ranging from tuberculosis to sexually transmitted diseases.[19] Despite the rampant prejudice against the pickers and their poor living conditions, the state needed these workers to bolster the economy.

The Wisconsin Governor's Commission of Human Rights (WGCHR) sought to establish social programs that assisted migrant laborers. The state government created the WGCHR to exert its "energies to the elimination of all discriminatory practices." During the state's

[16] O'Connell, 1952-1953 Legislative Report.
[17] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962).
[18] Scott Gordon, "A Mid-Century Turning Point for Migrant Farmworkers in Wisconsin," *WisContext*, October 15, 2018.
[19] Louisa R. Shotwell, "How One Town Licked the Migrant Problem," *Christian Herald,* March 5, 1952, 1.

centennial in 1948, the government created this organization because "Wisconsin is a proud state. Out of differences has sprung strength…Of varying religious, national and racial backgrounds, these people have made their contributions, each in his own way. In turn, each one deserves appreciation from the others and the right to live a full life of citizenship."[20] The state's progressive history, beginning with Robert La Follette and the focus on the expert at the University of Wisconsin established a history of Wisconsinites fighting for protective legislation.[21] State officials believed that they could incorporate civic and religious groups to promote this agenda. By 1950, Rebecca Barton, the director of the WGCHR, reflected these sentiments and utilized the networks of church women to establish social services for migrant workers and especially for the mothers and children of these families.

The WCCW and the Wisconsin Council of Christian Women, a primarily Protestant organization, worked with the WGCHR to solve the crises facing migrant laborers. Barton held a committee meeting about creating migrant programs that would ensure that laborers "return from year to year and be satisfied." At this meeting, a Mrs. Hull opined that she wanted to make "migrants happy in their community," and a Miss Bangham wanted "to help Texas Mexicans become better Americans."[22] In an editorial regarding migrant labor, A. L. Beier, a public servant in the division of public information for Wisconsin, articulated, "If we use these migrants for profit from their labor, there is an obligation to treat them well…Their health, welfare and conduct, then become matters of common concern, as well as the special concern of their

[20] Bruno V. Bitker, "The Purpose of the Governor's Commission on Human Rights," folder 2, box 1, Wisconsin. Governor's Commission on Human Rights Papers (hereafter WGCHR), WHS.
[21] J. David Hoeveler, *John Bascom and the Origins of the Wisconsin Idea* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), Marc Simon Rodriguez, "A Movement Made of "Young Mexican Americans Seeking Change": Critical Citizenship, Migration, and the Chicano Movement in Texas and Wisconsin, 1960-1975," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 34 (2003): 274-99, and Nancy C. Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette: The Righteous Reformer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
[22] Ruth Braun, "Monthly Report of County Extension Worker – Wisconsin," 3, folder 3, box 37, WGCHR, WHS.

employers."[23] By framing migrant laborers as an essential aspect of Sturgeon Bay's economy, some Door County residents battled segregation, updated camps, and offered medical care for these families. The human rights commission wanted to ensure that migrant workers kept Wisconsin on their circuit of the Midwest because they brought money and reliable labor.

The Council of Church Women sought to provide for the needs of migrant families. For example, it operated a rummage sale each year so that migrant families had access to newer clothes. The proceeds from these sales helped to update housing and communal kitchens. Church women from different denominations educated children and provided them a chance to make crafts, receive religious instruction, and learn English. On the weekends, they organized dances and outdoor recreation at the ballpark.[24] Furthermore, the home mission council of Wisconsin brought in film projectors so that families could enjoy leisure time. These programs sought to Americanize migrant laborers and assimilate them into society.

The WGCHR also wanted migrant laborers to maintain parts of their cultural identity. Barton encouraged grocers in the area to stock foods that ethnic Mexican families used for their recipes. This had multiple impacts. Grocers that carried staples such as tomatoes, eggs, beans, and spices saw a significant increase in profits during the summer months. One storeowner decided to reopen her shop after the workday was done and "stayed open until one o' clock, doing a three hundred dollar business with the Nationals."[25] Consequently, migrant laborers provided a boon for the economy, not just by picking cherries but by spending money at local businesses. Catholic women held a cooking demonstration where they learned about Mexican

[23] A. L. Beier, "Migrant Workers Pose Problem, Especially in Door County," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 17, 1952.
[24] "Oconto County Narrative," August 22, 1951, 1, folder 1, box 38, WGCHR, WHS.
[25] Ruth H. Braun, "Homemaking for our Migrant Families," July 1, 1957 – September 21, 1957, 23, folder 6, box 36, WGCHR, WHS.

cuisine from migrant women, who had a chance to highlight their prowess as chefs. This event was a huge success as it built up "the inner feeling of being needed and wanted" in the community.[26]

Regarding sanitation, the WGCHR proposed legislation for cleaning up migrant workers' lodging. In 1951, the state legislature and the Board of Health passed Bill 597S that required growers needed to establish "health and housing standards for these camps and even require penalties for non-conformity."[27] In Waupun, Wisconsin, a Mrs. Harmon Hull reported that the impact of this bill lessened "the necessity for local emphasis on measures to improve housing, sanitation and living conditions" due to aid granted by the state.[28] Barton and her team wanted the state to pass a series of bills using both state and federal funds to increase the quality of life for migrant laborers. The state government also sought to create an unbiased organization. Christian denominations began to clash over the reasons for their charitable causes.

Beginning in the latter half of the 1950s, the WGCHR pushed to secularize the human rights commissions due to a dispute brewing between Catholics and Protestants. In a report by the WCCW's Human Rights Committee, they issued a warning about the influence of Protestants. "We must be vigilant," the memorandum read, "As you know, there are camps in Wisconsin where the Baptist Mission has taken over completely and a report from Minnesota shows that there are two to one non-Catholic against Catholic workers in their camps."[29] Catholics felt inclined to assist Mexican american laborers and resisted Protestant efforts to

---

[26] Ibid., 29.
[27] Rebecca Barton to Walter Kohler, February 5, 1951, 1, folder 2, box 7, WGCHR, WHS. This bill was strengthened by the legislature in the following years. By 1961, a camp needed to be inspected if there were six or more workers located there.
[28] Mrs. Harmon Hull, "Report for Executive Board Meeting of Governor's Commission on Human Rights, January 25, 1952," 1, folder 2, box 7, WGCHR, WHS.
[29] Wisconsin Council of Catholic Women, "Winter Board Meeting, February 28, 1957," folder 2, box 2, WCCW, WHS.

evangelize the population. The WCCW felt ownership of the migrant laborers' cause for healthcare and housing because most of them were Catholic and became haughty toward the WGCHR and other Christian groups. Barton frequently wrote to the WCCW because her colleague Ruth Braun felt shunned by them. "Protestants resented the fact that Catholics claimed primacy over migrant ministries and attempted to block their evangelization projects. Although Braun was a Catholic, she still did not want the Catholics to outshine the work that the state was doing. Ruth wrote to Rebecca Barton that it made her "so mad, when priests and Catholics seem to think that they are the only ones who can, must or should have anything to do with these families."[30] In another letter, Braun wrote, "The Catholics have been so used to handling the migrant situation for so long that they resent anyone else's even being interested."[31] While Protestants certainly cared about the plight of workers, they too used the state-sponsored program as a way to push conversion. Rebecca Barton acknowledged that Protestant ministers had sent evangelical "mission workers to staff the schools," and that they attempted to teach children English with materials that were "more anti-Catholic than pro-Christ."[32]

As Catholics became increasingly hostile to Protestants' attempts at proselytization, the state reduced its contact with Christian denominations and increasingly secularized human rights projects. Nevertheless, during the 1950s, Wisconsin Christian women's organizations accomplished something extraordinary. They made crucial linkages between harmful chemical food additives and the labor conditions of migrant laborers. The WCCW and the WGCHR worked together to ensure that migrant families had access to healthy nutrition, safe housing, and education for their children. In the end, the issue that divided many of these Wisconsinites was

[30] Letter from Ruth Braun to Rebecca Barton, April 25, folder 4, box 37, WGCHR, WHS.
[31] Letter from Ruth Braun to Rebecca Barton, Sunday, folder 4, box 37, WGCHR, WHS.
[32] Letter from Rebecca Barton to Richard W. Gilsdorf, July 15, 1959, folder 2, box 38, WGCHR, WHS.

religious tension. While religion brought women together to pool resources and volunteer to run programs for the less fortunate, quibbles concerning proselytization created controversy and ultimately weakened their ability to promote social and environmental justice. Regardless of the struggles that Catholics and Protestants had, local communities worked with the state to improve conditions for migrant workers. This was of course helped by the economic boost from migrant workers' dollars. In the words of Sturgeon Bay mayor Stanley Greene, "You can't escape the fact that there are factors that motivate people besides Christian charity. People who object to the color of an extended hand don't mind half so much when it holds a greenback."[33] Through the WCCW, Wisconsin women united around religion to institute social justice programs that they believed would usher in a better livelihood for migrant workers.

The efforts of Catholic women highlighted how they joined together to assist in a human rights project, albeit with a problematic motivation. The white Catholic women of the WCCW was focused on their own vision of Catholicism that they failed to acknowledge the Mexican American customs. While they provided them with food, their efforts frequently sought to Americanize them or give them an alternative to their ethnic Mexican identity. The white women who led the WCCW and WCGHR fought over who had the right to control the Mexican American experience in the Midwest. Ultimately, this problematic history was another aspect of migrant resistance to white American schemes.

It Sounds Sissified: Contrasting Christian Organizations

In contrast to the work that women accomplished within the Church, men struggled to unite despite an overwhelming amount of support that they received from their parishes.[34] While

[33] Shotwell, 4.
[34] The historian Robert Fuller contends that this trend extends out of a woman's sexuality and that a religion that upholds men leads religious women "to engage in submissive patterns of religion such as the 'surrendering'

women effectively united around Christianity, men did not bond as easily. For example, John L. Czarnezki, a leader of the Milwaukee Young Christian Worker (YCW) organization, apprised the Chicago office regarding struggles with gaining new male members to their local branch. In his missive, Czarnezki states, "The title 'Young Christian Workers' scares men away; without a direct contact with YCW, it sounds sissified; it sounds 'holy, holy.'"[35] The very nature of religion made an organization appear to be feminine. Despite the apathy of men toward religion, churches consistently strove to create male-oriented Catholic groups to encourage more participation. In many instances, bishops encouraged lay participation and the creation of what became known as the lay apostolate. The laity in the late-1940s and into the 1950s already emerged as an important group for the Church to mobilize in the hopes that they could mitigate a few of the personnel problems that American dioceses faced. Identities and politics changed following the 1950s as the Church attempted to modernize in the hopes of increasing church membership and weekly mass attendance. They sought to accomplish this feat by starting up religious organizations that focused on how to bring Catholicism in the workplace.

The work of social justice in the 1950s was a distinctly feminine endeavor, as many Catholic men remained apathetic about religion. As the church struggled to maintain the membership of families, it also strove to make the faith relevant to a younger audience. Efforts to create active groups of young men by churches in the Midwest did so by appealing to modernism but were far less successful than similar female organizations. To make religion applicable to the lives of young people, Catholic dioceses adopted the YCW movement. Started in 1912 by Joseph

components of devotional religion." Fuller's attention to biology and sexual attraction creates an interesting materialist dilemma as to how religion influences heterosexuality and heteronormativity. Robert Fuller, *The Body of Faith: A Biological History of Religion in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 141.

[35] Letter from John Czarnezki to Jack McCartney and Mary Lu Langan, October 15, 1958, folder 4, box 1, Cardijn Center Records (hereafter CCR), University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Special Collections (hereafter UWM).

Cardijn, a Belgian priest, the Young Christian Worker movement spread to the United States during the 1950s and located its American headquarters in Chicago.[36]

Cardijn initially founded this organization because he became distraught when while in seminary many of his friends stopped associating with him because he chose to become a priest. Cardijn decided that he needed to change how people felt about Catholicism and formed the YCW.[37] This organization sought to make religion applicable to every part of a young person's life and provided a roadmap on how to receive an education, find work, and talk about living a Christian lifestyle with other likeminded adults. In this organization's newsletter, it described how Christ's apostles, "taught the people of the Church that it was their duty to sanctify their environment. And so the layfolk were all apostles."[38] The YCW movement focused on enlarging the role of every Catholic in taking a larger responsibility in the missionary work of their religion. The very name sounded leftist, however, by focusing on how to organize around work. Catholicism became more politicized as Catholic workers met at this group to push for labor regulations

The Milwaukee branch held its meetings at the Cardijn Bookstore, and here they met weekly to discuss work, marriage, rights, and politics.[39] James Groppi, the Milwaukee civil rights activist and priest, led this organization and pushed for a more liberal Catholicism that sought to reconcile leftist communist ideals with Catholic ones.[40] Ultimately, the YCW sought to make religion more appealing to men. The YCW was a subgroup of Catholic, a group which wanted to

[36] "Challenge and Response," *Unity* Vol. 1, 2, (Feb. 1962), 1, folder 3, box 3, Young Christian Worker Collection (hereafter YCW), UWM.
[37] "Why a Cardijn Center," 1953, folder 13, box 3, CCR, UWM.
[38] "Men with a Message," *Cardijn Center Newsletter*, February 1955, folder 7, box 3, CCR, UWM.
[39] Bookstores were critical for meeting and organizing groups that shared common interests. See Finn Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
[40] Groppi is renowned for working to establish desegregated busing and housing laws. He later became a lapsed Catholic due to the conservatism of the religion.

"make contacts within a group of people which offers us a common basis for our approach. A man who shares the same job, the same talent, the same interests or experience with his fellowman has a key to his heart."[41] Catholic Action centered its organization on the tenets of "organization, study, and action," and it was designed to bring change in every aspect of a Catholic's life.[42] The YCW emerged as an offshoot of this movement and wanted to demonstrate that unionizing and regulating business fell in line with Catholic teaching.

The YCW held talks that explored the history of labor conditions and found that the guild system from 1100-1400 "was the only time the right ideas prevailed" because this economic system encouraged people to come together. Free competition, however, created an era of "economic dictatorship" that was characterized by greed.[43] This organization recognized that all workers should have safe and just working conditions. Furthermore, they believed that concentrated wealth created unjust labor conditions for all people. This movement combined the leftist ideologies of labor regulation with the conservatism of Catholicism to articulate alternative paths for defending workers' rights without needing to turn to communism. In the Midwest, a history of unions pushing for regulation in manufacturing and industrial jobs paved the path for these same workers to join in a group that recognized the importance of them providing for their families.

[41] "Catholic Action and Parish Life," *Cardijn Center Newsletter*, June 1954, folder 6, box 3, CCR, UWM.
[42] Stephen Anderl, *The Technique of the Catholic Action Cell* (La Crosse, WI: St. Rose Convent, 1946), 16.
[43] Reynold Hillenbrand, "Social Doctrines of the Church," folder 9, box 3, YCW, UWM.

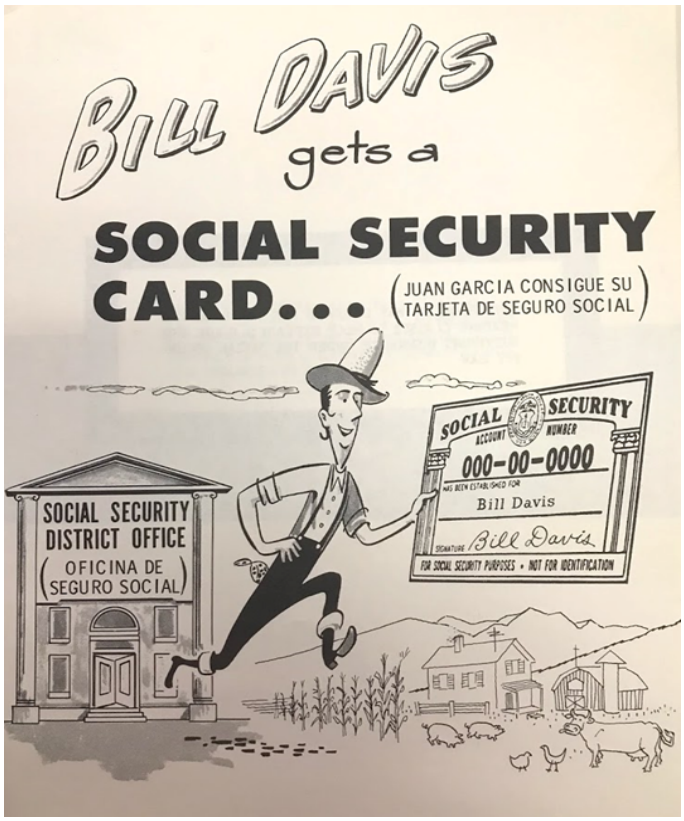

Figure 4.1: Courtesy of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, MSS 99 Box 3, Folder 18, Migrant Worker's Files - 1960-1963

This youth movement eventually pursued racial justice and equality. YCW created "Youth for Racial Equality," which allowed Father Groppi to influence Catholics to pursue liberal ideas such as racial equality. This example of Church organizing introduced young white Catholic to consider liberal and modern ways of improving society. This movement's influence included concerns for migrant laborers. The YCW spread information regarding the importance of social security for migrant workers. In a bilingual pamphlet, YCW shared the importance of getting a social security card in "Bill Davis gets a Social Security Card (Juan Garcia consigue su tarjeta de Seguro Social)." The story explains the importance of having a social security card if Bill Davis becomes incapacitated and needs worker's compensation, or if he dies while working

his family can receive compensation.[44] This story helps explain how Catholic organizations worked to ensure that migrant agricultural laborers understood their rights as American citizens.

The YCW labored to spread news about the lives of migrant laborers with other Americans. In one pamphlet, the organization cited John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (Christianity and Social Progress) to focus on the need to help migrant workers because their "problem is so deplorable because they are God's forgotten people amid the high standard of living possessed by most Americans. They produce the very food and fiber indicating our standard of living and yet they do not share in it to any extent." John XXIII also defended those who fought for migrant workers' rights. He stated, "We are not looking for an easy life for the workers who pick our crops. Those interested in the migrants have often been accused of this."[45] In the Midwest, states pushed for greater recognition of migrant laborers' rights and fought to ensure that they had safe working conditions. Catholics looked at recently published encyclicals to see the moral component to this social justice issue. Midwesterners clung to this issue even though many of them started to leave religion entirely.

Catholic lay organizations found ways to unite over migrant justice issues. While few white men participated in this movement, women overwhelmingly united in the equitable treatment of laborers. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1960s, lay Catholic membership in Catholic Action, WCCW, and YCW dropped precipitously. Catholics, if they still practiced, primarily only went to church and did not participate in religious organizations. This happened

[44] "Bill Davis Gets a Social Security Card (Juan Garcia Consigue Su Tarjeta de Seguro Social)," folder 18, box 3, YCW, UWM.
[45] "Christianity and Social Progress: Some Thoughts," *Newsletter* Vol. II, No. IV Aug-Nov. 1962, folder 18, box 3, YCW, UWM.

for a variety of reasons, but overall modern ideas came into conflict with the stances of the Church, and in response, Catholics left the Church.

American Catholicism Becomes Beige

The 1950s movement of women helping farm workers was highly localized, but the modernism of Vatican II led to a widespread acceptance of the social justice and environmental cause among liberal Catholics. The Church anticipated that the laity wanted to participate in the life of their local parishes and the laity responded by supporting the UFW protests. Vatican II instituted changes within Catholicism which softened the definition of sin and led to a division in the American church over the role of women within the hierarchy and the family. While a portion of Catholics remained steadfast in their rejection of premarital sex, birth control, and abortion, another faction rose which embraced a more relaxed vision of the faith. Liberal Catholics took the changes of the council and focused less on spiritual matters and transitioned into promoting social justice as a fundamental work of their religion.

The Catholic hierarchy attempted to modernize to remain relevant in a developing world. John XXIII presided over the Second Vatican Council and held grand ideas of encouraging equality in Catholicism to achieve *aggiornamento* or modernism. The Council promoted gender equality and sought to encourage more participation in the Church. Catholic congregations could now go to Mass and hear the scriptures and homilies in the vernacular. Laypeople could distribute the consecrated hosts and read the scriptures to the congregation, both responsibilities that the Church had previously reserved for only priests. Laymen could become ordained deacons, and this created an ordained ministry for married men. Previously, the diaconate existed as a transitional step for seminarians to become fully ordained priests. Once the bishop had

ordained a seminarian as a deacon then he could no longer marry and have children. If married men could now enter this previously celibate vocation, many liberal Catholics supposed that then Vatican II would allow for priests to marry or for women to enter the deaconate.

Once the dust settled around Vatican II, some Catholics felt satisfied by the limited changes, while others lambasted the Church for changing too much. Liberal Catholics believed that after John XXIII died, the cardinals compromised his vision for crafting a truly modern church. As one theologian put it, "there needs to be a John XXIV to lead a Vatican III" to fully liberalize and modernize the Church against the more conservative factions.[46] Vatican II's promulgations cleaved Catholic communities in half. For liberal Catholics expecting tremendous transformations, this Council appeared to make a few changes for reshaping the role of the laity and women in the Church. Americans would have a stronger say regarding the bishopric's decision as the pope replaced the emphasis of the hierarchy to promote lay participation. Conservatives abhorred this idea and believed that Protestants had infiltrated the papacy with these new decrees. In one instance, church goers at a parish in Greenwich Village believed that the Protestants had won when the music coordinator played Anglican hymns and hung blue and orange felt banners, to which the congregation responded, "The dark blue and orange colors are those of William of Orange whose banner is still flaunted by Paisleyite Protestants as they parade past Catholic cathedrals and play their insulting songs exulting over the slaughter of 100,000 Irish Catholics at the battle of the Boyne in 1690."[47] This Council failed to satisfy either side of the debate, and in many instances caused confusion regarding Church teaching, in particular with regards to sin and sexuality.

---

[46] Küng, *The Catholic Church*, 187. See also, Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004).
[47] Shelley, *Greenwich Village Catholics*, 192.

Two major changes that emerged from Vatican II focused on sin and sexuality. These new rulings created more leeway for Catholics to adopt a more moral relativist opinion on their faith. The Church had long held a variety of rules, and if a member of the faith broke this rule then he had committed a mortal sin. In Catholicism, there are two types of sins: venial and mortal. Venial sins are less serious, and Catholics believe that God forgives them if they pray for forgiveness or receive communion. Mortal sins mean that a Catholic has seriously offended God, needs to go to confession, should not receive communion, and has jeopardized his or her salvation.[48] The definition of sin changed substantially during Vatican II. Previously, a Catholic would have committed a mortal sin through benign actions such as eating meat on Fridays or mowing a lawn on Sundays. This council changed the rules to appear less draconian, and in response, Catholics began questioning all the rules of the Church.[49] Theologians have pointed to this time in Catholic history as the time that the Church became beige. Catholicism lost its rituals that distinguished this religion from Protestantism. It replaced traditional music in favor of modern Protestant hymns and bishops commissioned artists to whitewash cathedrals to make them more sterile. In the post-conciliar time, conservative Catholics criticized their bishops for neutralizing the beauty of the Church in favor of modernism.

This question on sexuality created even more discord between the Church hierarchy and the laity. Most people point to *Roe v. Wade* as the point when Evangelicals aligned more closely with Catholics in their political beliefs. Conservative Catholics, who followed the Vatican's teaching, led the way in creating an anti-abortion platform. In 1968, three years after the Supreme Court had ruled on the right to sexual privacy in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, Paul VI

[48] For more, see the Catechism, Part Three, Section One, Chapter One, Article Eight. http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c1a8.htm.
[49] Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Revolution: New Wine, Old Wineskins, and the Second Vatican Council* (Berkeley; University of California Press, 2004), 50.

inserted himself into the birth control debate with an encyclical entitled *Humanae Vitae* (On Human Life). This document explored debates on human sexuality and the morality of birth control. Paul VI rejected birth control as an immoral practice and the Church reaffirmed its anti-abortion stance. Conservative Catholics now had official doctrine that would become the cornerstone for the pro-life movement that began during the 1970s.[50]

There was a wide the spectrum of Catholic belief during the postconciliar period. Roman Catholics represented (and still do) the largest denomination of Christianity in the United States. Despite this large proportion of the population, only two percent of them tithed during the 1960s and that number has diminished up to the present.[51] Furthermore, only forty-two percent of parishioners attended Mass weekly.[52] Parochial schools struggled to have enough funds to operate their schools, and Catholic schools raised tuition to the point that only affluent families could afford a parochial education. A minority of lay Catholics had already disagreed on the pope's infallibility and proclamations. In this instance, moderate to left-wing Catholics took moral authority into their own hands and disagreed with the pope, while the conservative factions continued to promote a strong pro-life stance on this issue.

Theologians have contended that most American Catholics love the community aspects of their churches, but they do not necessarily love the hierarchical institution.[53] Lay people enjoyed that the Church created ceremonies for every important event in a person's life and created as the theologian Andrew Greeley puts it, "a congeries of metaphors that explain what

---

[50] Jennifer Holland, *Tiny You: A Western History of the Anti-Abortion Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020).
[51] Smith, *Young Catholic America*, 16. According to the authors, Catholics have tithed even less, now only contributing one percent of their salary to the Church.
[52] "U.S. Data over Time," CARA, https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/, visited October 28, 2019. This statistic has continued to plummet to the point that by 2005 only 25 percent of Catholics claimed to attend Mass every week.
[53] John W. O'Malley, "The Scandal: A Historian's Perspective," *America: The Jesuit Review*, May 27, 2002.

human life means."[54] Although many Catholics stopped attending church, they still turn to the symbols of hope that are in the bible and made manifest in a person's life. Therefore, most Catholics paid little attention to what the Vatican said and focused more on their local communities. Catholics cared about good acts and their neighbors but paid less attention to what the bishops and hierarchy said about the rules and laws of the Church.

While Catholics disagreed with the pope and the Church hierarchy, many still claimed to be Catholic. They remained Catholic in a cultural sense and still felt compelled to participate in social justice movements of the time. One historian has called this trend among Christians, the era of "Golden Rule Christians," because most Christians believed that their role in society was to make the world a better place and to help those less fortunate individuals.[55] This mentality became particularly useful for the UFW movement. As post-Vatican II Catholics became more selective with the moral stances that they wanted to follow, social justice campaigns like the UFW strikes harnessed the support of lapsed and liberal Catholics alike.

Peace Movements for Change

While American Catholics re-evaluated their relationship to religion in the wake of Vatican II, many liberal Catholics embraced peace activists who promoted modernist religiosity. Liberal sisters and Catholic peace activists had been working on social justice campaigns for decades but faced criticism from Americans who derided their condemnation of the U.S. government during the Cold War. Beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s as cold war tensions began to thaw, U.S. laypeople became more open to critiquing the U.S. government and

[54] Greeley, *The Catholic Revolution*, 102.
[55] Ammerman, "Golden Rule Christianity," 197.

the exploitation of migrant laborers. During the grape and head lettuce strikes, peace activists and liberal nuns achieved a new level of respect because they created a form of Christianity that the public could support.

Many Catholics were attracted to the cause largely because of Cesar Chavez's leadership. The 1960s and 1970s produced many eloquent and powerful speakers who rattled cages to awaken Americans to promote change. His dogged determinism was infectious, and this inspired those blue collar workers who had been tired by the excessive activism of the late 1960s. Farmworkers reflected the concerns of average Americans: they wanted safe housing, educational opportunities for their families, and protection from the toxic byproducts of their workplaces. Chavez and the UFW represented a moderate activism that broke from the mold of other contemporary movements.[56]

The Catholic Worker reporters were on the frontlines pushing for a new approach to peace for agricultural laborers. "From 1934 on," Dorothy Day wrote, "we have been concerned with the destitution among farm workers, and we are particularly interested in Chavez because of his emphasis on nonviolence."[57] The CWM in New York apprised itself of events in California via two correspondents who sent materials relating to the strike. Cesar Chavez occasionally visited New York to maintain his working relationship with Dorothy Day. The Catholic peace organization, Pax Christi, approached the trading agent Don Joseph, of New York's Victor Joseph & Son, to plead with him to not purchase Giumarra grapes. The UFW boycotted Giumarra for failing to provide portable toilets in the fields for farmworkers. To evade this

[56] For example, the student-led occupation of administration buildings at Columbia University and the occupation of Alcatraz by the Indians of All Tribes, Inc. See Paul Cronin, *A Time to Stir: Columbia '68* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), and Troy Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

[57] Dorothy Day, "Strike Leader Comes East," *The Catholic Worker,* May 1967, 1, 9

boycott, Giumarra packagers pasted the labels of other grape growers over crates of his table grapes. In this correspondence to Joseph, Eileen Egan probed Giumarra's actions. She wrote, "We find it hard to believe that workers in the United States are denied the right to collective bargaining through a union of their own choosing." Additionally, she pointed to the fact that the Bill of Rights protected the "rights of man and the dignity of the human person." They urged the vineyards to come to terms with the growers because "we consider the grape workers as our brothers, and we also consider you and all the owners and administrators of the Guimarra (sic) Vineyard Corporation as our brothers."[58] Giumarra and Christian Brothers farms both came to terms with the UFW and agreed to their wishes. The Catholic Worker and Pax Christi movements continued to spread concerns over injustices to the landowners at this time.

Pax Christi and the Catholic Worker supported Chavez and his followers for over a decade. Their movement, which had previously seemed relatively localized and fringe, became a more widespread affair in the summer of 1973, when sheriffs arrested Dorothy Day and at least 60 nuns for picketed farms that did not negotiate with UFW.[59] Her example and the example of other religious individuals combined to create the perfect conditions for inspiring other Catholics to also protest the grapes and head lettuce. Her support stayed in the memory of the movement and years later, Day received letters thanking her for her presence at the 1973 march. Sister Laetitia Bordes told her that Day's presence would remind the rest of the nation that "blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice."[60] Sister Bordes's use of this beatitude highlights the idea of Golden Rule Christianity. This form of Catholicism that radical protesters promoted appeared as the type of religion that many modern lay Catholics could support. Day's example

[58] Letter from Eileen Egan to Don Joseph, March 2, 1968, folder 3, box 1, Eileen Egan Papers (hereafter CEEG), UNDA.
[59] "Dorothy Day Finds Jail a 'Paradise,'" August 11, 1973.
[60] Letter from Laetitia Bordes to Dorothy Day, February 11, 1975, folder 2, box 2, DDCW, MUL.

forecasted what religious expression would look like. As the laity developed their understanding of religion, religious devotion became more personal and less traditional. Women now fought for change and provided tangible ways for other Catholics to support the boycott effort. If Midwestern Catholics did not know about the grape boycott, then they would from a variety of sources. Catholics inundated followers with news and information about the UFW protest from the pulpit, grocery aisle, and classroom.

Figure 4.2: Courtesy of the Walter Reuther Archives, folder 25, box 1, UFWI, WPR.

Lived Religion among Midwesterners

In the United States, the organization of Catholic laypeople for social justice purposes was not a wholly unique concept. Over the course of the twentieth century, Catholics joined groups such as the Catholic Students' Mission Crusade, the Catholic Worker, Pax Christi, and the Young Christian Workers. These groups focused on making Christ applicable to all aspects

of their lives and to focus on proselytizing to Americans. The social justice movement within the church expanded beyond just religion to bring in workers and families from every background. This was well demonstrated during the UFW strikes in the Midwest, where nuns organized with housewives to maintain solidarity in the strike. This movement demonstrates the variety of ways that different aspects of one's life could become entangled in a social justice cause just in their everyday life.

Parish priests and pastors endorsed this project and incorporated many different passages into their bulletins. For the mass-going Catholics, bishops throughout the United States encouraged their priests to speak on the necessity of supporting the UFW boycott. For example, the auxiliary bishop of Denver, George Evans, contended that social justice activism and antiwar protests fulfilled the modernist motivation of the Second Vatican Council. In Colorado, St. Jude's Social Justice Commission stuffed inserts between the pages of the bulletin that read "BOYCOTT LETTUCE support Farm Workers by buying Almaden wine & not Gallo."[61] Other bulletins as seen here placed the black eagle of the Huelga movement on their covers. This clearly demonstrated the commitment and dedication that parishes had in making it known that the UFW boycott was a moral concern that churchgoing Christians needed to support. If

[61] McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II*, 187.

Christians believed in the dignity of human life, then they needed to defend the UFW boycotts and support change in the world.

Figure 4.3: Courtesy of the Beinecke Collections, Jacques E. Levy Research Collection on Cesar Chavez, WA MSS S-2406, Box 21, folder 448.

Despite the efforts by religious leaders to influence the growth of UFW, it is similarly important to examine other areas of life where lapsed Catholics would have learned about this movement. This issue is important to delve into because the lived experience of religion means that Christians express and experience their religious lives outside of the sanctuary and in their communities. The UFW took different strategies to encourage change among people all throughout the United States. The UFW targeted mothers with many of their flyers that appealed to their roles as nurturers. One advertisement warned, "A recent survey conducted by an independent testing laboratory on grapes already in the stores showed that California grapes

contain 130 times the amount of pesticide judged safe for human consumption." This advertisement explicitly targeted women by emphasizing that "DDT has even shown up in studies conducted on mother's milk. And these pesticides cannot be washed off at the kitchen sink." Furthermore, the flyer describes that the pesticide parathion "was originally developed in Germany for use as a World War II nerve gas."[62] Other journalists reported on the dangers of elevated levels of pesticides on non-union lettuce. One report suggested that should someone eat non-union lettuce on a diet, "the fatty tissues breakdown" from weight loss, the toxins on this plant would then enter a person's bloodstream and could potentially cause death.[63] This argument for the consumer elucidates the relationship between occupational safety and consumer protections. The UFW provided alternatives to salads with its own UFW lettuce cookbook. UFW supporters contended that union contracts that limited the types of pesticides and encouraged the use of diluted pesticides protected both worker and consumer. Landholders want high yields by dousing their crops with potent chemicals, but this would not benefit anyone else who could die from consuming of this crop.

The UFW also tried to make their cause applicable to children. School teachers at both Catholic and public schools developed curriculum that articulated the importance of supporting this movement. For example, Sister Angela Just encouraged her elementary-aged students to send letters to the general manager of Jewel groceries in Chicago.[64] In 1975, at Cuyahoga High School, students wrote essays on the UFW film and lecture that they attended at their school. After the lecture, one student named Paul Logan thought, "It is kind of hard to avoid head lettuce

[62] "Danger! Deadly!" Flyer, April 22, 1970, folder 21, box 2, VPS, WPR.
[63] Peter Slee, "Most Lettuce on Sale Here May Be Poisonous: Unionist," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, March 18, 1971.
[64] Harry Beckner, the general manager, initially did not support the boycott, but eventually supported the farmworkers strike.

although grapes and wine are much easier because you don't have it as much." At times, the message missed the point.[65] The UFW, furthermore, had its followers produce coloring books for children to understand what this movement was about. Each of these accounts demonstrate that information about the boycott inundated families and forced them to consider making a change for the good of both workers and consumers.

Part of the idea of lived religion comes from examining the entirety of a person's life including their labor. For many wives in the Midwest, their spouses worked in automotive factories and were members of the AFL-CIO union. Unsurprisingly, this union was a major supporter of the UFW boycott, but it was also a major player in the creation of early environmental programs. During the late-1960s, the AFL-CIO and the United Auto Workers (UAW) promoted Earth Day activities. Walter Reuther worked with a few of the other executives to propose the creation of an agency that his colleague Nat Weinberg termed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) a year before Richard Nixon approved the creation of this agency. The problems with pollution in Lake Erie and the Detroit River escalated to the point that the UAW fought for a $1 billion spending program to remove all pollution from bodies of water. Weinberg envisioned the EPA as an agency that would grant licenses to permit the activities of a factory. "Licenses would be issued only if the plans for the plant provided assurance that all wastes created by the processes involved would be disposed of in a manner that would protect the environment."[66] Weinberg's motivations underscore the way that the federal government could enforce policies to control pollution and help promote a healthier future. The

[65] Paul Logan, "Evaluation," folder 12, box 11, UFWO, WPR.
[66] Letter from Nat Weinberg to Walter P. Reuther, March 12, 1970, folder 8, box 586, UAW President's Office (hereafter UAW), WPR.

UAW's attention did not only stem from protecting the industrial sector but also from emphasizing the importance of protecting recreation areas for the health of families.

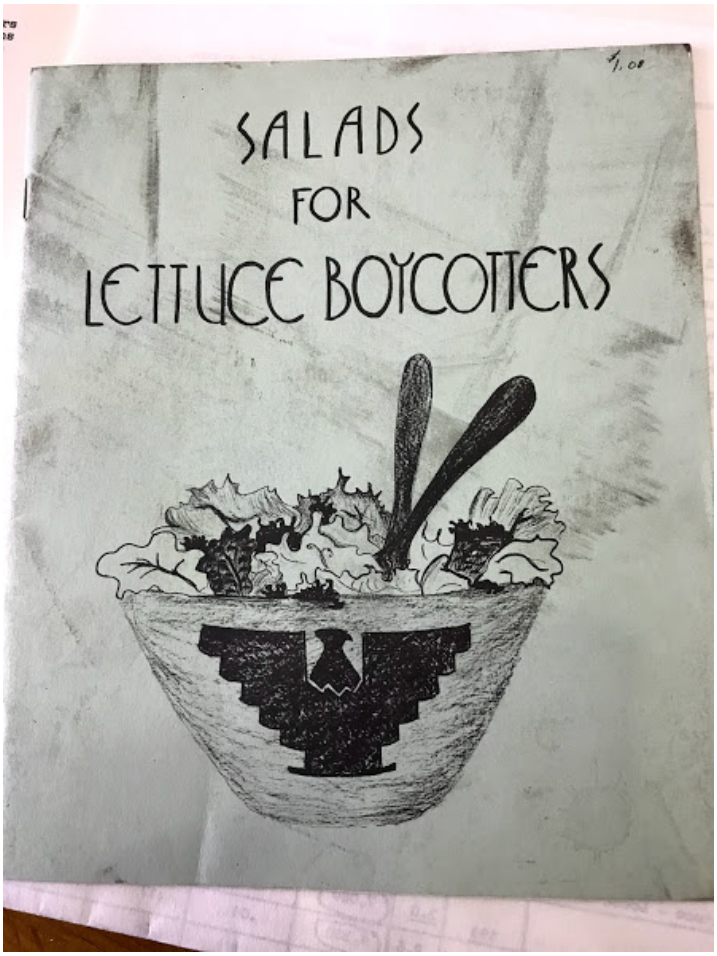

Figure 4.4: Courtesy of the Walter Reuther Collections, UFWI, Box 14, Folder 9.

During the 1960s, the UAW began its campaign to promote conservation and recreation for workers and their families. The UAW maintained an active campaign against the deleterious impact of pollution. UAW's President Walter Reuther wrote to Lyndon Johnson several times on the matter and highlighted the essential nature of Johnson's speech entitled "Protecting our Natural Heritage." Reuther promised that "the one million, six hundred thousand UAW members and their families," would join in Johnson's commitment "to improve the quality of the living

environment."[67] The UAW's involvement in the creation of healthier living conditions and working spaces would have blended with the messages that their spouses brought home with them from their grocery stores or churches and their children brought home from school.

The AFL-CIO took on the responsibility of promoting the importance of a new conservation. Director of the National Park Service George B. Hartzog averred, "No longer can we glibly portray conservation as a kind of moral struggle between an admirable little band of nature lovers doing unequal battle with the brutal forces of commercial development."[68] Union workers sided with the UFW as part of their campaign to address environmental degradation in their part of the world. The UAW's example elucidates the ways that unions connected worker safety with sanitary industrial practices with protecting the consumer and the environment. Ultimately, Midwestern union workers defended the UFW movement because of their lived experiences and the information that their managers shared with them. To understand the impact of religion it is also important to examine the other ways that Christians at this time would have subtly incorporated moral causes into their lives. Golden Rule Christians wanted to fulfill the idea that they were good people by making easy choices and following their employers' goals.

Conclusion

During the mid-twentieth century, Christian women unified over issues regarding chemicals in processed foods and the inhumane treatment of migrant families. The WCCW participated in migrant aid efforts after they reframed their understanding of ethnic Mexican

[67] Letter from Walter Reuther to Lyndon Johnson, February 2, 1967, folder 3, box 369, UAW, WPR.
[68] "Remarks of George B. Hartzog, Jr., Director of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, at the Meeting of the Executive Council, AFL-CIO, in Miami Beach, Florida, February 26, 1965," folder 13, box 585, UAW, WPR.

workers from people living on the fringes of society to productive members and fellow Christians. Through the efforts of religious women, Wisconsin communities rallied together to provide migrant families with nutritious meals, adequate housing, and educational programs.

Women claimed authority when it came to issues of environmental justice in the 1950s. While their power may not have been overt, women influenced politics as consumers, in choosing what they purchased for their homes and through grassroots organizations where they established extensive political networks.[69] Organizations such as the WCCW became cognizant aware that food manufacturers added artificial ingredients to their groceries and growers sprayed their fields with chemicals. In turn, they used their expertise and joined with the Wisconsin Governor's Commission on Human Rights (WGCHR) to protect migrant laborers from pesticides and to promote healthier nutrition.

Throughout the 1960s, the grape boycott and religion remained an ever-visible presence in the lives of average American Catholics. From church pulpits to union meetings, the struggle over migrant laborers' rights remained in the forefront of many conversations. Midwesterners overwhelmingly affirmed this message because they had worked for decades in support of migrant laborers' rights. The UFW protest reached Americans because of the coalescence of various movements. It reached workplaces, schools, grocery stores, and churches. The UFW boycotts had an effective network that made sure it was present in all aspects of a person's life.

Americans turned to this movement because it became their new way of practicing religion. Christian women's organizations had supported migrant laborers since at least the 1950s, and by the late 1960s with many Catholics disregarding the authority of the hierarchy for

[69] The literature on women's postwar political activism has been covered in its relationship to the rise of the Right. See Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), Michelle Nickerson, "Desperate Housewives: Women and Conservatism in Postwar Los Angeles," *California History,* 86, (2009): 4-21, and Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic* (Vintage Books, 2003).

a more personalized religion based in good deeds, the UFW boycott was an attractive cause. Christians did not need to go to church to feel that they were good people; they merely needed to avoid grapes and head lettuce. Furthermore, the Catholic Worker and Pax Christi, two organizations that moderate Christians had ostracized for being un-American during the mid-twentieth century, became almost prophetic leaders. They had worked since the 1930s to help migrant laborers by living radical lives based in communitarian living and protesting industrial agriculture as one of the sins of capitalism. By the 1970s, they offered an inspirational understanding of what Catholicism could look like. This religion could be based in helping the poor, promoting peace, and returning to the land. The peace movements and networks of nuns also highlighted the fact that women lived out these religious ideals. Women pushed for living radical lives in public. These movements still remained fairly fringe, but they gained in popularity as an alternative to the conservative, male magisterium of Catholicism.

On another level, this chapter focuses the idea of lived religion and how it manifested itself in the activities of individuals. I argue that for people to mobilize lived religion there needed to exist other conditions to make it easy to embrace this lifestyle. The UFW required union support at work, reminders at grocery stores, warnings of the dangers of eating non-union lettuce, all fused to the religious sentiment. Religion makes sense to people and becomes applicable within the lived experience of historical actors. Biblical messages only have vitality when religious figures mobilize them within the context of a certain period and make it easy for people to make good choices for those suffering under the abuse of exploitative capitalism. The history of the Old Left established a vision of labor organizing that attracted many Catholics to it, because they believed in the power of unions for promoting a positive change. Within the

Midwest, especially, ideas of liberal Catholic religion coalesced with labor reform to create a more progressive regional vision of Catholicism that encompassed the UFW's goals.

Chapter 5: Laicizing Catholic Institutions and the Persistent Environmental Spirit

In 1980, the National Assembly of Women Religious (NAWR) sent a survey to its members asking about the organization's future. NAWR had been struggling to remain relevant and had even changed its name to the National Assembly of Religious Women (NARW) in the previous year to integrate lay women. The survey results proved as lukewarm as recent participation. Many respondents recommended the group disband. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz responded to the survey, wondering, "Is it time for NAWR to prophetically show us that an organization can stop being because its purpose has been served?"[1] Others wrote that the NARW did not need to exist when other organizations, such as the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, accomplished more than NARW. The decline of this organization is symptomatic of a larger process happening within the American Catholic Church during the late 1970s and into the 1980s. Catholicism became more conservative in the backlash against Vatican II, an effect that hurt left-leaning religious organizations, as laypeople replaced consecrated religious members in schools and hospitals during the early 1980s.

Many in the conservative laity opposed the radical nuns who had exhibited progressive ideas and drawn attention through their demonstrations. In a conservative backlash that began in the 1950s and continues into the present, the pontiff and bishopric emphasized the role of lay people in the church. In short, the American Church replaced troublesome nuns and priests with the laity. The Church hierarchy did this for a variety of reasons: laypeople have little authority and seldom challenge the priests' decisions, many are willing to help, and an increase in the number of college-educated laywomen meant that they could fulfill most of the nuns' responsibilities in a school, church office, or hospital administration. This was the Thermidorian

[1] Task Force on Sexism in the Church, "Survey Responses as of May 28, 1980," folder 30, box 3, ARW, UNDA.

reaction against the sisters who had participated in the radical peace demonstrations of the 1960s and 1970s.

Moreover, by 1975, the National Assembly of Women Religious, the National Coalition of American Nuns, Pax Christi U.S.A., and the Catholic Worker began to experience turmoil in their organizations. Sisters became disillusioned by the failures of the Church to adapt to the needs of women. Dorothy Day became frailer and passed away in 1980 leaving the *Catholic Worker* without its venerable leader. Sisters also faced a falling out with the UFW after landowners and agricultural workers agreed to the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975. Chavez and his followers adopted a conservative social policy that opposed birth control and immigrant rights. As liberal sisters became increasingly feminist, these policies separated them from Chavez, whom they viewed as chauvinistic.

While sisters and liberal Catholics disavowed the Vatican for its conservatism, Catholicism became more secular as well. The Great Society programs provided Catholic schools and hospitals with federal funding, if they agreed to abide with federal regulations. Now partnered with secular organizations, Catholic hospitals faced questions about whether they should perform surgeries or prescribe drugs that contradicted Catholic teaching. This meant that Catholic organizations now partnered with secular organizations and did not rely as much on the work of nuns, because of the declining number of sisters in religious orders. As Catholic schools also secularized, conservative Catholics left the school system in droves. A rapid increase in homeschooling among Catholics worked to undermine the nuns' leadership in parochial schools as well.

This chapter utilizes memoir and interviews of former nuns to delve into why women religious left the convent in the wake of Vatican II. Some women sought more liberation and

freedom of expression. Others wanted a more conservative Church. Ultimately, the post-conciliar era in American Catholicism created a seemingly new Church. Sisters throughout the world had hoped that this new Church would finally become a liberal space for female representation. Instead, bishops and priests began to look in other places for women who could similarly fulfill the role of a nun and liberal sisters left their orders.

The UFW Fallout

Cesar Chavez exemplified the American dream by fighting for the rights of workers. He mobilized Chicano workers to form a strong protest movement and brought together unions, religious groups, and many others to defend agricultural workers' rights. By 1970, more than seventy percent of Catholics favored the grape boycott. In 1973, The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops supported Chavez by issuing a proclamation that read, "Legislation must assure the farm workers the right to elections by secret ballot of a union of their own choice. We therefore accept as a pastoral necessity that we be actively concerned in the solution of an evil that has gone on far too long." A year later, Chavez had his first audience with Pope Paul VI, who told Chavez that he "put the Gospel into practice."[2]

Following the passage of the California Labor Relations Act (CALRA) in 1975 that guaranteed farmworkers the right to private elections and to negotiate with landowners, Chavez and the UFW entered a more controversial phase of their history. This ostensibly prevented the Teamsters union from ever bullying UFW members during negotiations. Following the passage of this law, however, Chavez and his followers took a sharp conservative. Chavez, and the UFW

[2] Claire E. Wolfteich, *American Catholics through the Twentieth Century: Spirituality, Lay Experience, and Public Life* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2001), 72.

by proxy, defended the fascist regime of dictator Ferdinand Marcos when he visited the Philippines. In 1977, the Anti-Martial Law Coalition contacted UFW supporters to criticize Chavez, stating that the Filipino people's "efforts to secure such fundamental rights as union organizing and the right to strike have been unquestionably harmed by Mr. Chavez's support of martial law labor practices."[3] Chavez acknowledged that he met with Marcos in private but stated that he only praised him because the Filipino dictator agreed to consider private elections. The situation in the Philippines became a public relations disaster as different news outlets speculated on Chavez's true intentions.[4] Liberal sisters, who supported the UFW, questioned why he would even affiliate with such an individual.

Additionally, Chavez became increasingly less popular in progressive circles for opposing birth control. In doing so, Chavez followed the official teaching of the Catholic Church, but it nevertheless offended many moderate and liberal Catholics. Chavez repeatedly took a stance against oral contraception. He met with the Newman Club in New Mexico and at that meeting debated with a doctor from Planned Parenthood. He visited with the leftist Catholic organization, Pax Romana, and the audience openly dissented at his statements. Chavez was convinced that birth control was physically harmful, especially if women used it on a consistent basis. What most frustrated him about the liberal use of birth control was the way that the media and advertisements discussed the use of contraceptives. In his words, there was always a "connection with the pill and the poor. And see, what they're telling me is they want to, that they've found no solution to end poverty but to end poverty is to end people."[5] Chavez believed that contraception and labor organizing were connected in that they both showed how capitalists

[3] Letter from Rene Cruz and Walden Bello to Kathleen Keating, November 5, 1977, folder 26, box 14, ARW, UNDA.
[4] Letter from Cesar Chavez to Sr. Kathleen Keating, October 31, 1977, folder 26, box 14, ARW, UNDA.
[5] Tape 28, 210-211, folder 134, box 1, JEL, BL.

created circumstances for poverty. Overall, he believed that birth control was eugenics and that capitalism sought to oppress workers through the pill. Chavez viewed himself as a defender of a exploited Americans. While Chavez supported the notion of preserving impoverished Americans' rights, he maintained an antagonistic relationship toward undocumented agricultural laborers.

The UFW had peacefully protested the use of Braceros and anything that weakened the union. In 1974, the UFW shifted tactics. UFW members and Chavez believed the federal government had severely underfunded the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) to ensure that landowners could easily acquire cheap illegal labor. In response, the UFW established what they called Wet Line. The Wet Line – which was organized at the UFW's retreat center and main headquarters in La Paz, California – embraced violence to accomplish what INS had failed to do.[6] UFW members tracked down undocumented migrant laborers and reported their locations to INS, creating a list of over 5,000 individuals. When the INS did little to remove these individuals, the Wet Line became more militant. Members of the Wet Line wore "UFW Border Patrol" arm bands and attacked migrant laborers by tracking them down in, as historian Frank Bardacke reports, "cars, dune buggies, trucks, vans, and even an airplane." This group then forced Mexican nationals back over the border, and in many instances bludgeoned and berated undocumented migrant laborers.[7]

The actions of the Wet Line prompted many questions about the purpose of the UFW. Chavez and his team won regulated workplaces and increased wages for all workers, but in the

[6] La Paz was essentially a retreat center for UFW organizers who needed to respite from the struggles of labor organizing. For more, see, "Historical Back Stories on Cesar Chavez and La Paz," https://ufw.org/Historical-Back-Stories-on-Cesar-Chavez-and-La-Paz/, accessed on November 20, 2019.
[7] See Frank Bardacke, "The UFW and the Undocumented," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 83, (Spring 2013), 166. Bardacke has covered this issue in greater detail in *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (New York: Verso, 2011).

eyes of many supporters had now devolved into jingoism and reprehensible displays of nationalist rhetoric. Sisters, who fell under Chavez's spell without considering the subtext of his message, became disillusioned with UFW. The UFW's Wet Line provided fodder for ultra conservative publications in the decades to come.[8] The violence and support of Marcos mirrored a change in Chavez as his paranoia led him to isolated many of his volunteers. Chris Hartmire and others close to Chavez needed to deny questions from supporters that the UFW leader was creating a cult of personality.[9] He began to distrust non-Chicano peoples and ultimately failed to adapt to changing politics and to the diverse support that he received from around the country. The UFW did not necessarily need the sisters anymore, because the Catholic hierarchy adopted farmworkers' rights as an issue that it could address.

The Catholic Church coopted the farmworkers' struggle to save migrant workers from Protestantism. Many Catholic bishops, particularly on the West Coast and in the Midwest, engaged with the UFW struggle and promoted the boycott from 1973 until 1975. The bishops did not interfere with the women religious on this issue, allowing nuns free rein to protest on their own terms. After the passage of CALRA in 1975, bishops returned to authoritarian policies in relation to the social activism of sisters. The liberal nuns who had worked closely with the UFW therefore felt betrayed by Chavez's turn toward conservatism and the church's retreat from female empowerment.

Sisters and Sexism in Catholicism

Many sisters struggled to define their place in modern society. As liberal nuns embraced the modern ideas of environmentalism and social justice, they became critical of the sexism they

[8] See Steve Sailer, "Cesar Chavez, Minuteman," *The American Conservative*, February 27, 2006, https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/cesar-chavez-minuteman/. Accessed November 22, 2019.
[9] Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory*, 229.

identified as central to the infrastructure of Catholicism. They believed that women having a more vital role in Catholicism would improve and save both the Church and society. Sister Dorothy Vidulich, a member of Pax Christi, U.S.A., argued that there was an inherent connection between environmental and feminist activism. Women, she contended could use "the values that have been labeled 'feminine' – love, compassion, copperation (sic), patience" to "attack the language of the missilers at ICBM sites who speak of the 'nuclear womb' and the 'concrete egg' – word which refer to a woman's body to describe weapons of destruction."[10] Despite her hope that women could carve out a place in the social justice mission of the church, Vidulich also expressed frustration that the Church hierarchy refused to support peace movements. Her frustration toward priests and Catholicism and her general concern for how women would fight for progressivism in the future revealed a broader concern among sisters about their place in the future of the church.

NAWR and NCAN both sought to establish equality between the sexes which they believed would allow men and women to collaborate on environmental policy. Women religious assemblies struggled, however, to define how they were different from other religious organizations that fought for environmental protection for women's rights, and against sexism within the Church. One of the organizations, NCAN, tried to distinguish itself by supporting abortion rights by affiliating with Catholics for a Free Choice, a pro-abortion organization.[11] While liberal sisters remained within Catholicism, few of them went as far as to completely promote policies that stridently opposed the values and laws of the Catholic Church. Only a few

[10] Sr. Dorothy Vidulich, "Sexism in the Church: Obstacle to the Peace Movement," 10, folder 21, box 2, PAX, UNDA.

[11] The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops vehemently denounced the activities of this organization and did not believe that they accurately represented the views of the Catholic Church. For more information, see "A Diversity of Opinions Regarding Abortion Exists among Committed Catholics," in *The New York Times,* October 7, 1984.

of the most liberal groups of religious women went as far as NCAN in supporting groups that defied the Church's moral teaching, many religious women struggled to find a definitive social cause in the 1980s. Some sisters left the church entirely, while others worked with little success for structural changes within the church.

The changes that began to take place in the 1950s left liberal nuns dissatisfied with the lack of change that occurred by the 1970s. The Glenmary Sisters provide a profound and early example of this disconnect. With a mission of serving the poor, the Glenmary Sisters hoped to offer a more exciting vocation for younger women religious. Glenmary Sisters did not teach or heal, but instead went out into Appalachia and the South to serve as missionaries to Protestants. They would no longer be cordoned off by brick walls and veils away from the people. Instead they would be out among some of the poorest people in the United States, serving their material needs.

The Glenmary Sisters viewed the Second Vatican Council as an opportunity to modernize their approach to religious life but faced a mass exodus of its members when these changes were not liberal enough. Before Vatican II, women had few opportunities to see the world, which made Glenmary attractive to mission-driven women. By the 1960s with the rise of second-wave feminism, women had more opportunities to serve with organizations such as the Peace Corps and international missionary groups.[12] With the opportunity to pursue mission work outside of the order, the Glenmary Sisters experienced a mass exodus. By 1967, seventy sisters left the Glenmary religious order and many of them founded the Federation of Communities in Service (FOCIS), a non-profit that seeks to help the communities where they were working.[13] These former sisters left to accomplish what they believed was their vocation in life: to be with and

[12] Gass, *UnCONVENTional Women,* 3.
[13] Lewis, *Mountain Sisters*, 90.

serve the poor. The perceived failures of Vatican II were not the only concern that prompted their exodus. Women had chosen the Glenmary order because they viewed its members as strong and capable women. The Glenmary Sisters got their hands dirty, worked on tractors, and went out to be with the poorest people. Once they actually joined this order, however, several sisters felt that the order had sold them a false bill of sales. The order's rigidity and emphasis on obedience limited activities outside of the convent.

The Glenmary situation was not the only instance of a religious order losing a majority of its members. In 1968, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Los Angeles (IHM) lost more than 200 members because Cardinal James Francis McIntyre banned the sisters from teaching in diocesan schools.[14] According to Sister Margaret Rose Welch, IHM, they viewed their work as their calling. In an interview in 1993, Welch averred, "Basically, the mission is to empower the people there to have control over their lives, and education is empowering."[15] IHM sisters taught night classes and began to break the rules of the order. Lights out was at ten o'clock, sisters would flip the switch off, and then flip it back on to grade papers and continue working. Cardinal McIntyre believed that the nuns had taken too many liberties in their order and that they focused more on their roles as teachers than as sisters. By banning nuns from teaching, many of them broke off in a schism from IHM and formed their own lay organization. Sister Helen Kelley recalled this time as a "'struggle for self-determination' and 'an action of conscience.'"[16] With such departures, women religious demonstrated autonomy in numbers that American Catholicism had not witnessed previously. In turn, the Catholic hierarchy lost an inexpensive labor pool that had long provided teachers, nurses, and administrators.

---

[14] Ibid., xx.
[15] Richard Lee Colvin, "Idealistic Lay Group Is Legacy of Nuns' Split with Church in 1970," *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1993.
[16] Ibid.

These women, however, did not abandon their Catholic roots entirely. For example, in 1970, ex-nuns created the Sisters for Christian Community (SFCC) that invented a new way for religious women to live in community. Founder Lillanna Kopp provided ex-nuns, or in her words, "dynamic spiritual women who, in conscience, left traditional Sisterhoods that had become bureaucratized, and which had incorporated into Religious Life all of the dysfunctional elements of bureaucracy," with a new opportunity to still live in a community of likeminded individuals.[17] Kopp modernized the vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity. In its place, SFCC members committed to "listening, loving, and serving." The SFCC also embraced what they called a "ministry of presence" in which they would reformat the "oppressive structures" of the Church.[18] These women interpreted Vatican II as a chance to democratize the convent by creating a less bureaucratized and more spiritual space in which women lived together but worked in the wider community. More than 1,000 women joined SFCC, and while it is a small fraction of women religious, its creation demonstrates the variety of options that women religious created outside of the church hierarchy.[19]

On a larger scale, sisters struggled to distinguish the purpose of the networks they created in the late 1960s. NAWR, NCAN, and LCWR all appeared to fulfill similar roles. Initially, one of the major distinguishing factors between NAWR and NCAN was their stance on environmental issues. Initially, NCAN appeared to take a weaker stance on the UFW movement and did not invest their energies toward environmental concerns. The NCAN executive committee argued that they would only tacitly support the strike. The NCAN instead focused on

[17] Lillanna Kopp, "Foreword," in *UnCONVENTional Women: 73 Ex-Nuns Tell Their Stories* by Marie Therese Gass (Clackamas: Sieben Hill, 2001), xviii.
[18] Ibid.
[19] "SFCC: Our Story," *Sisters for Christian Community*, https://www.sfccinternational.org/brief-history, accessed December 8, 2019.

stopping the closure of inner-city parochial schools.[20] Most of NCAN's measures sought to increase civil liberties for African Americans. Since NCAN emerged out of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice (NCCIJ), this trend was unsurprising. NAWR took an opposing path and placed more of its emphasis on the UFW strike. As a result, these two organizations adopted different approaches to the environmental movement during this formative moment for religious women. NCAN fought against the degradation of urban centers but approached this problem as a social justice issue rather than as an environmental one.

In 1975, NCAN changed its stance on ecology. As the United States and the Soviet Union threatened to use nuclear arms, NCAN issued an immediate stance against atomic weapons. At their convention in 1975, they became particularly concerned with the topic "Ecology and Energy." This discussion covered issues including "law of the seas and oceans, energy alternatives, population, food, health technologies, i.e. test tube babies, environment, land and land use, solar legislation, solar rights." Participants, such as Sister Margaret Traxler, questioned the relational ties between these ecological forces, asking, "What are the relationships between such keys as food and solar legislation; population and health technologies?" This conference then intended to examine the "relationships between arms and ecology," and wanted to know "what are the nuclear implications of the present Mid-East war?"[21] International issues and the development of the neutron bomb pushed NCAN to consider the broader implications of nuclear warfare which led them to inform other nuns about the impact of the bomb on their planet. NCAN became the face of liberalism and environmental protection among religious women, while other more moderate groups raised issues that engendered less emotion or interest.

[20] Memo from Sr. Margaret Ellen Traxler to Board members of the National Coalition of American Nuns, December 7, 1970, folder 1, box 1, NCAN, MUL.
[21] Sr. Margaret Traxler, "Six Cluster Areas for Issues to be Discussed," folder 1, box 1, NCAN, MUL.

NAWR supported grandiose ideals that could never fully come to life. At the first assembly, NAWR addressed a set of goals that they hoped to accomplish. Each goal centered on organizing women religious and giving them direction to become more autonomous within the Church. For example, one objective was "to work for greater participation of women religious in the decision-making process and implementation of decisions on local and national Church levels." Another was "To provide channels through which women religious may speak with one voice."[22] NAWR demonstrably fought for the rights of women religious to become more present at Sunday masses. The rhetoric changed sharply among NAWR in resolutions that they began issuing to the bishops.[23] In an open letter, the sisters "URGE THE PROMPT RESTORATION OF THE DIACONATE FOR WOMEN IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH" They argued that the Catholic Church had not fulfilled its 1974 theme of evangelization. "So long as women are excluded from the diaconate," as the sisters contended, "the 'laborers in the vineyard' remain far fewer than they could be." Furthermore, they pointed to evidence that demonstrated that women served as deacons during the ancient tradition of the church.[24]

At the same time, moderate and conservative sisters became wary of NCAN and NAWR over their stance on abortion. NAWR stood opposed to it, but this organization's connection to feminism and gender equality gave pause to other convents. *Roe v. Wade* changed the landscape and the ways that women religious responded to concerns about feminism. Previously, abortion had been a moot point that did not require the attention of sisters. During the 1970s, nuns needed

---

[22] "Third Annual Convention of Women Religious," folder 1, box 9, ACP, UNDA.
[23] Although this study examines less than three decades of the American Catholic church, problems with equality had been thoroughly documented. The Catholic church was overwhelmingly opposed to granting women the right to vote. In the nineteenth century, bishops and cardinals warned that granting suffrage to women would lead to the destruction of the family and a liberalization of Catholicism. See James J. Kenneally, "A Question of Equality," *American Catholic Women: A Historical Exploration*, ed. Karen Kennelly, (New York: Collier MacMillan, 1989).
[24] National Assembly of Women Religious, "Resolution of Restoration of Diaconate for Women," November 17, 1974, folder 31, box 1, LCW, UNDA. (Emphasis in the original).

to become equipped with a rhetoric on their stance. Many sisters fled from the NAWR's ranks because it did not take a strong stance on this issue. In one example, the Cleveland Senate of Religious Women ended its alliance with NAWR, and it outlined six reasons why they no longer wished to serve on the council. Two reasons that they discontinued their relationship with NAWR stemmed from "the use of liberal jargon and universalism in statements which does not reflect depth of thought or the pragmatism of the American reality; [and] the tendency to come off as anti-life. What is the priority to support one sister or many unborn persons?" Although Kathleen Keating affirmed NAWR's commitment to the pro-life movement, writing, "I truly believe that NAWR is committed to the whole gamut of pro-life issues from anti-abortion to anti-capital punishment. Our resolution, in support of equal access of women to the law, hardly indicates the support of one sister over the lives of the unborn."[25] The Cleveland Senate of Religious Women did not believe that NAWR fully embraced the pro-life movement because of its connection to feminism.

NAWR also received backlash from laywomen who disagreed with the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Liberal nuns promoted the ERA as an essential step for all women to have the state protect and uphold women's rights. Anne Culhane, a conservative Catholic laywoman, questioned the intellect and understanding of the women religious who promoted the passage of this amendment. She accused the women of NAWR as having "suffered identity crises," because they did not understand the common woman. She argued that most women would not benefit from the ERA. She stated, "The main supporters [of the ERA] are business and professional women, activists of various sorts (including the anti-life groups: N.O.W., Zero Population

[25] Letter from Sister Kathleen Cooney to Sister Kathleen Keating, January 30, 1978, folder 43, box 10, ARW, UNDA.

Growth, the United Methodist Church) and a few 'religious' groups." Culhane concluded by arguing that society cannot change gender roles because "You can't fool Mother Nature."[26]

NAWR's moderate stance on women's rights issues did not command much confidence from sisters on the left or the right. How could an organization embody the concerns and feelings of sisters throughout the world? How could this organization serve both those who had chosen contemplative orders and those who actively served the community? NAWR ultimately wanted to appeal to both the left and the right, while remaining in line with the Vatican, which was an untenable position for it to be in.

One of the only issues upon which NAWR members could agree was the issue of the female diaconate and the issue of religious dress. By 1979, the disputes between the Catholic hierarchy and women religious reached an apex. The Leadership Conference of Women Religious, an organization that had previously been more conservative than its sister unions, confronted John Paul II about the female deaconate. In 1979, John Paul II traveled to the United States to meet with various groups, one being women religious. At an address in Washington D. C., John Paul II told sisters to refocus their lives around the Church and to remain obedient to the Church. "Jesus must always be first in your lives. His person must be at the center of your activities—the activities of every day. No other person and no activity can take precedence over him." At the end of his address, he stated, "As daughters of the Church—a title cherished by so many of your great saints—you are called to a generous and loving adherence to the authentic Magisterium of the Church."[27] The pontiff reminded the nuns to remain obedient to the Church, and a symbol of obedience was to remain in the habit.

---

[26] Letter from Anne Culhane to Sr. Mary Rehmann, April 10, 1974, folder 56, box 11, ARW, UNDA.
[27] John Paul II, "Address of His Holiness John Paul II To Women Religious," *Apostolic Journey to the United States*, October 7, 1979.

John Paul II's address was met with resistance. In 1979, Sr. Theresa Kane of the Sisters of Mercy (RSM) gave up the habit in favor of a suit with a cross lapel pin and urged the pontiff "to be open to and to respond to the voices coming from the women of this country who are desirous of serving in and through the church as fully participating members."[28] In response to the sisters, Pope John Paul II agreed to take their concerns into consideration, but ultimately did not pursue the creation of the female diaconate and continued to urge sisters to wear traditional habits. Liberal sisters funneled their frustration with the hierarchy into a dismissal of the habit, a visible sign of their commitment to the Church. Women religious challenged the habit and wanted to receive the right to discern of what elements each order's dress would consist. As sociologist Susan O. Michelman describes, "The perception was that habits communicated a social identity that inhibited personal identity expressions."[29] This problem with the habit created a dilemma for most American sisters: the habit served as a visible symbol that permitted Catholic and non-Catholic alike to identify a sister, yet it also represented to liberal sisters as a symbol of repression. The habit appeared to sisters as a sign that this woman could not work in the world but needed to remain in the cloister.

The number of American sisters continues to decline because of this struggle between liberal nuns and conservative bishops. U.S. bishops offset the loss of nuns by inviting Asian and African women religious to the United States. Of the 44,000 sisters currently in the United States, 4,000 of them are international sisters who have come to bring youth and vitality to aging orders.[30] These sisters almost universally accept wearing the habit and bring with them a strong

[28] Russell Chandler, "Nun Confronts Pope, Calls for Women Priests: But Pontiff Reiterates Opposition; Challenge was Unprecedented," *Los Angeles Times,* October 8, 1979.
[29] Susan O. Michelman, "Changing Old Habits: dress of Women Religious and Its Relationship to Personal and Social Identity," in *Sociological Inquiry* 3 (1997), 350.
[30] Sr. Kevin Karimi, Michael J. DeFelice, Thomas P. Gaunt, and Mary L. Gautier, "Special Report on International Women Religious in the United States," Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Fall 2019, 1.

spiritualism rooted in their traditional beliefs. These sisters receive an education and in turn help invigorate religious orders to adopt more conservative values. The Church articulates in these instances the belief that only orthodoxy can save religious life. The liberal sisters of NAWR and NCAN are not in the future of the hierarchy despite these sisters having invested their lives to cultivate a stronger presence in communities by taking up social justice and environmental causes.

Sister Sexuality

In interviews, sisters and ex-nuns both reflect on when they felt called to take up the cloth. Typically, the call from God came when a sister was only a girl. Sister Mary Joshua stated, "Ever since I was in the second grade, even the first grade, I knew that I wanted to be a sister."[31] While many sisters felt called and willingly accepted this direct call to the religious life, others resisted. Mary Rodgers Barrett, recalled, "He had called me, and what was I going to do? I couldn't say no to God."[32] This apprehension appears across many different autobiographies and memoirs. Yet many sisters responded to the call and during their late teenage years and into adulthood began to understand, during the sexual revolution, how the convent could help them learn more about their sexual identity.

Growing up in the early twentieth century, young Catholic women did not have the vocabulary to discuss their sexuality, and some, who became nuns, would learn later in life that they were lesbians. As one sister described this issue, she felt "abysmally ignorant" of her own sexuality. One former nun worked with a writer to interview both current and former women

[31] Harris, *The Sisters*, 38. Other memoirs detail this vocational choice as arriving in one's youth. See Patricia O'Donnell-Gibson, *The Red Skirt: Memoirs of an Ex Nun* (Watervliet, MI: StuartRose Publishing, 2011).
[32] Mary Rodgers Barrett, *Called: The Making & Unmaking of a Nun* (Simsbury, CT: Antrim House, 2016), 3.

religious about their burgeoning sexuality and lesbianism. The former nun, Rosemary Curb, stated "Only now do we recognize that our devotion to our girlfriends and the nuns along with our discomfort on dates with boys was not, as we suspected at the time, an unmistakable sign of religious vocation, but a premonition of our late-blooming Lesbianism."[33] Many women felt drawn to a vocation that emboldened women and, in the convent, they developed a new sense of who they were. Leaving their homes prompted sisters to explore their sexuality.

This exploration represented an incredibly difficult transition for many women. A majority still held heterosexual attractions that they rejected in favor of a celibate life. But for nuns who discovered that they were lesbians, this was difficult for religious orders to accept. A convent's hierarchy would expel nuns who demonstrated any homosexual attractions to other nuns. In Catholicism, the current teaching is that homosexuality is not in itself a sin but according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered."[34] Throughout history, however, Catholic leaders viewed homosexuality as a sin with it being a crime in Catholic dominated countries. The Catholic Church did not have a formal doctrine on its treatment of lesbian and gay people until 1975 when an organization within the Vatican called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a statement on sexuality. A little over a decade later Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger elaborated on its point, which ultimately stated that homosexuality was not a choice and therefore not a sin, however, homosexual acts

[33] Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan, *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence*, edited by Curb and Manahan (Tallahassee: The Naiad Press, 1985), xxiv. There have been other works that examine the converse of sister sexuality which is gay priests. See James G. Wolf, *Gay Priests* (New York: Harper Collins, 1989).
[34] Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part 3, Section 2, Chapter 2, Article 6, Paragraph 2357.

were sinful.[35] Lesbian acts were extremely tabooed, and many ex-nuns voluntarily left the religious life when they realized that the Church viewed their sexuality as disordered.

Lesbian nuns and ex-nuns realized that they could express themselves more fully once they accepted their sexuality. Some sisters stayed in their religious orders. For example, Sister Hana Zarinah claimed to be a "Zen Catholic, Lesbian, feminist nun."[36] Former nuns connected their sexual awakening to ecological spirituality. One ex-nun proclaimed, "The universe as Female was suddenly more friendly, and I, a more integral part of Her eternal cycling." For her, the convent was a part of her journey that led her to a sexual awakening. She happily wrote, "And so I have managed to find a life that is right and good for me. I live joyfully with my lover of seven years; working, writing, gardening, loving the Earth and her creatures."[37] For many liberal sisters, their time in the Church provided a means for them to acknowledged their lesbian identity and to embrace environmental spiritualism.[38] This process for many sisters could be difficult as well.

Jeanne Cordova experienced a tumultuous transformation in her identity beginning with her decision to join the religious life. She initially joined a convent so she could remove herself from the world and become a contemplative bride of Christ. On her decision to join the convent, she recalled, "They promised me monastic robes, glorious Latin liturgy, the protection of the three sacred vows, the peace of saints in a quiet cell, the sisterhood of a holy family." She wanted the contemplative life but joined right as Vatican II went into effect. "The fathers of the

---

[35] Joseph Ratzinger, "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons," October 1, 1986, Franjo Seper, *Persona Humana: Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, December 29, 1975.
[36] Hana Zarinah, "The Gift of Sexuality in the Spirit of Celibacy," *Lesbian Nuns*, 142.
[37] Mary Brady, "Finding My Way," *Lesbian Nuns*, 203.
[38] Bron Taylor argues that the changing identities of former sisters reflects how individuals leave traditional religion in favor of a spiritual relationship to the environment. Bron Taylor,*Dark Green Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church were sitting in the Vatican Council destroying, in the name of CHANGE, my dreams." This change angered her as she listed a litany of the changes, "Delete Latin ritual. Dump the habit. Damn holy obedience. Send nuns and priests out into the REAL world."[39] In the tumultuous post-conciliar era, Cordova felt betrayed by the Catholic Church for modernizing her vocation. She wanted to become a contemplative sister but felt forced by her fellow sisters and priests to go out of the convent and participate in the social justice issues. Cordova entered a deep depression but began to recognize her latent lesbian feelings toward other sisters.

Cordova did not feel welcomed in Catholicism but found her true calling once she became an ex-nun. When she left the religious life, she became an advocate for lesbian rights by becoming the president of the Los Angeles chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis. As a pioneer for lesbian rights, she fought to gain recognition for lesbian visibility in both the feminist movement and the general public.[40] In a way, if a person could stand up to God and family, then she could stand up to anyone. Cordova's experience and the experiences of the minority of women religious who discovered that they were lesbians demonstrated that there was a wide range of ways that nuns and ex-nuns responded to their sexuality.[41]

---

[39] Jeanne Cordova, "My Immaculate Heart," in *Lesbian Nuns*, ed. Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan, 3.
[40] Cordova was a prominent writer and activist in Southern California who died in 2016. For more on her work, see http://www.jeannecordova.com/, "Jeanne Cordova Remembered: 'Butch Chicana Lesbian Feminist Outlaw,'" *Advocate*, January 12, 2016 https://www.advocate.com/women/2016/1/12/jeanne-cordova-remembered-butch-chicana-lesbian-feminist-outlaw, "Jeanne Córdova dies at 67; activist and author chronicled lesbian feminist movement of 1970s," *Los Angeles Times*, January 15, 2016, https://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/la-me-jeanne-cordova-20160115-story.html.
[41] Marcia M. Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2006).

The Paradox of Catholic Lay Conservatism

By the time Vatican II instituted its changes, conservatives feared that the Church became too Protestant, while moderates and liberals anticipated their increased role in the life of the faith.[42] In terms of becoming too liberal, theologian James Hitchcock derided parishes for their modernist vision of promoting church attendance through "bingo games, Cub Scouts, beer-and-pretzel Holy Name societies, building-fund drives, talk about 'parish plants,' Sunday Mass rushed through irreverently to alleviate the parking problem, sports idioms used in sermons, and so on."[43] Conservative and liberal theologians debated the rise of lay participation: was this an act of anti-clericalism or was this merely a chance for lay people to have more responsibility and less power? James O'Gara, editor of *Commonweal*, stated, "The worst possible outcome would be to conceive of the laity as a potentially strong pressure group," and stated in a later piece that anti-clericalism is "a deadly virus which can be fatal to Catholic life. It involves a denial of the special role of the ordained priest and the central role of the hierarchy."[44] Others, such as Michael Novak, defended the laity by stating that its members did not intend to institute radical changes. Rather, he anticipated, the laity would work within the bounds of the Church and refuse to challenge the priests and bishops in power. The Church moved slowly and expected its adherents to obey the precepts of Catholicism, but for many Catholics any change was dangerous to the faith. [45]

---

[42] Ever since the 1940s, bishops had encouraged the rise of the lay apostolate, an idea that the laity needed to take their faith everywhere they went, including work and out in public.
[43] James Hitchcock, *The Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 15-16. Interestingly, Hitchcock states that Catholics could alleviate the failings of modern church life was by going to Trappist and Benedictine monasteries "which was like true liturgy in being…agrarian."
[44] James O'Gara, "Age of the Laity?" *Commonweal*, February 24, 1961, 546, and "The American Layman," *Commonweal*, December 20, 1963, 364.
[45] See Michael Novak, *The Open Church*, *Vatican II, Act II* (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

In response to sisters laicizing and leaving Catholicism, bishops replaced them with laypeople. The loss of religious members in hospitals and schools created concerns among Catholics that these institutions became increasingly secular. Hospitals needed to change significantly because of events that happened at the same time as Vatican II. In 1965, Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs afforded new federal funds to hospitals, including privately operated ones. Sister-run hospitals needed assistance from laity because now they needed to navigate the convoluted nature of federal supervision "not only in the provision of health care but also in financial oversight of institutions receiving federal funds."[46] The new regulations and partnerships that formed between hospital systems necessitated the move to incorporating highly educated businesspeople, who knew how to navigate the byzantine red tape of Medicare and Medicaid in addition to the partnerships that formed between Catholic and secular hospitals.

The new hospital marketplace that developed in the late 1960s prompted many sisters to view their ministry as inevitably coming to an end. Sociologists Mary Kelly and Maureen Anthony interviewed sisters regarding the loss of positions at hospitals. All of the sisters were anonymous, and the interviewers were surprised by the nuns' "resignation that was amazingly detached from feelings of resentment or anger."[47] One interviewee noted that she needed to become a businessperson as hospital administration entered the marketplace with all of its myriad obligations. She recalled, "I went to more cocktail parties and more fancy meetings than God himself goes to" because of business obligations.[48] The loss of sisters as nurses and administrators also removed some Catholic elements from hospitals. Before, when sisters and

[46] Keith M. Swetz, Mary E. Crowley, and T. Dean Maines, "What Makes a Catholic Hospital 'Catholic' in an Age of Religious-Secular Collaboration? The Case of the Saint Mary's Hospital and the Mayo Clinic," *HEC Forum,* 25, 2, (2013), 98.
[47] Kelly, "The Last Generation of Sister Administrators," 42.
[48] Ibid., 42-3.

priests ran hospitals, they used health care as part of their calling to serve those in need and to represent the Catholic Church as well. The United States underwent a standardization period where all hospitals needed to achieve a certain level of modernization. Many patients no longer were concerned with finding a hospital's religious affiliation; they simply wanted one that was up-to-date.[49] Many religious orders still partnered with secular organizations to operate hospitals, and sisters were still present. However, these hospitals were no longer defined exclusively as being run by the Sisters of Mercy, rather, they were now controlled by a secular organization that sought to meet federal regulations and earn a profit. This changing of the guard between sisters and laypeople that took place in the 1960s provided a bellwether for future changes. During the 1970s many Catholics began to align more with the Republican Party for variety of reasons.

Catholic lay voters turned out to polling places to vote for Republican candidates. Presidential hopeful Howard Dean later called "one of the four pillars" of the Democratic Party, now became a far more divided group.[50] The UFW movement and mandatory busing disaffected many northern and western Catholics who found these movements unnecessary and even harmful to their livelihoods. Historian Kenneth J. Heineman explains that Catholics and Protestants moved to the right for different reasons. Southern Protestants primarily wanted to avoid racial integration while "Many Catholics moved to the Right when the federal courts sanctioned abortion."[51] By the 1970s, traditional Catholics felt dismayed at the changes that Vatican II was supposed to introduce to the world. Rather, the United States and most of the rest of the world appeared to become increasingly liberal and losing its Catholic traditions.

---

[49] McCauley, *Who Shall Take Care of Our Sick?*, 87.
[50] The other four pillars were the Roosevelt intellectuals, labor unions, and African Americans. See John McGreevy, "Catholics, Democrats, and the GOP in Contemporary America," *American Quarterly,* 59, 3, (Sep., 2007): 670.
[51] Kenneth Heineman, *God is a Conservative: Religion, Politics, and Morality in Contemporary America* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 10.

For former Democrats, the Left became increasingly distant from aligning with many white Catholics' social or economic views. As a result, these Catholics fled to the right and joined with evangelical Christians on conservative issues. Issues centered on ideas of supporting traditional families permeated political discourse and these issues would solidify the Right for Reagan's victory.[52] This new alignment with the Republican Party signaled a change that Catholic families did not want their children to be educated with liberal ideas from leftist nuns. Instead, educated laywomen primarily became teachers at Catholic schools and replaced the teaching sister in areas that saw a shortage of nuns.[53] This new role of Catholic laywomen becoming teachers and Church administrators soon voiced their opinions on the state of the Church. Bishops, who believed that they had been victorious in replacing sisters with an obedient lay population, soon realized that the laity would also voice their concern for even more of a say in the practices of the Catholic Church.

Beginning in the 1970s, lay Catholics took up the mantle of responsibility for voicing concerns regarding the flaws of the Church hierarchy.[54] In the immediate post-conciliar period, scholars derided the Catholic experts who pontificated on the concerns that the laity would demand greater representation within the life of the Church. When John Paul II came to the United States, Donna Hanson, who was chairperson of the U.S. Bishops' National Advisory Council stated, "I expect to be treated as a mature, educated, and responsible adult." Hanson contended that the bishops' failure to respect her opinion "is to deny my dignity as a person and

---

[52] J. Brooks Flippen, "Carter, Catholics, and the Politics of Family," *American Catholic Studies* 123, no. 3 (2012): 27-51.

[53] For more on the shortage of priests, see Patricia M. Y. Chang, "Introduction: The Crisis Is about Control: Consequences of Priestly Decline in the US Catholic Church," *Sociology of Religion*, 59 (1998): 1-5.

[54] For more see, Patrick Carey, "Lay Catholic Leadership in the United States," *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 9 (1990): 223-47, James P. McCartin, "The Waning of the "Catholic Other" and Catholicism in American Life after 1965," *Revue française d'études américaines*, 95 (2003): 7-29.

the rights granted to me both by church and society."[55] The fact that a layperson could issue this concern to the Pope demonstrated the idea that American Catholicism is founded in democratic values.

The Catholic hierarchy's hope that it could cow Catholic lay people into obedience failed in the United States. Americans' identity centered on the belief in democracy, and many post-conciliar discussions in the United States brought up the uneasy question of women's representation. One study revealed the thorny contradictions. Sociologist Patricia M.Y. Chang reported, "two thirds of the surveyed parishioners prefer more democracy at the parish level, 83 percent think they should have a say in selecting their priests, and 66 percent want more say regarding church policies on divorce and remarriage."[56] Married women replaced nuns in their administrative roles and created a "Protestantized" Catholicism that allowed married men and women to perform most of the responsibilities of their churches. Lay organizations now had a say on parish council's and the direction of local churches and believed that they deserved to have a greater say in the rise of the Church.

Paradoxically, conservative Catholics raised many concerns about the religiosity of Catholic institutions after laypeople replaced liberal nuns. For conservative Catholics, nothing distinguished Catholicism from other Christian denominations, and in fact, many conservative Catholics began to avoid parochial schools in favor of homeschooling.[57] To them, modern culture influenced the implementation of Vatican II ideals. Other scholars have acknowledged that American Catholicism lost many of its religious rituals. For example, ethnic enclaves in cities

---

[55] Carey, "Lay Catholic Leadership," 243.
[56] Chang. "Introduction," *The Crisis Is about Control*, 3.
[57] There are a variety of websites that expound the merits of homeschooling children. Everything from rebuilding Catholic culture to ten percent of new priests coming from homeschools. See Ryan N.S. Topping, "Homeschooling as a Means to Rebuilding Catholic Culture," *The Cardinal Newman Society*, June 26, 2018, and Michael Warner Davis, "Why 1 in 10 new priests in the US come from homeschooling families," *Catholic Herald*, June 16, 2018.

once held special feasts for a particular saint or holy day. In the 1930s, Eucharistic Rallies, events where a priest would hold a blessed wafer and believers followed him, were massive events in cities with a significant Catholic populations, and up to 60,000 people would join as a community.[58] By the mid-1950s, these localized rituals began to disappear. A few historians would note the gradual process of an immigrant church conforming to the melting pot.[59] In the end, the only feast day that many white American Catholics widely acknowledge was St. Patrick's Day.

Bishops sought to replace nuns with lay people in administration, hospitals, and schools. The trends among churches created the expectation that lay Catholics would fulfill more of the duties at a parish, but this also created the presumption among the laity that they would have a greater say in the policies of the Church. This expansion of the power of laypeople extended into not only theological debates and social justice struggles, but also Catholic schools and other institutions. Consequently, the rise of the laity created a concern that Catholicism had lost its identity and became like other Christian denominations.

The Catholic Worker after Dorothy Day

In 1980, the Catholic Worker Movement sought to support pacifistic Catholicism, however, it suffered another crucial blow with the death of Dorothy Day. And like Day before her passing, the CWM had grown old, struggling to gain new followers who would willingly live

[58] Timothy Kelly, "Suburbanization and the Decline of Catholic Public Ritual in Pittsburgh," *Journal of Social History*, 2 (Winter, 1994): 311. See also, Robert Orsi, "The Religious Boundaries of an Inbetween People: Street Feste and the Problem of the Dark-Skinned Other in Italian Harlem, 1920-1990," *American Quarterly*, 44 (1992): 313-47.
[59] See Smith, *Young Catholic America* (Oxford University Press, 2014), McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II* (Basic Books, 2011), David G. Bromley, *Vatican II and U.S. Catholicism* (Greenwich, CT.: JAI Press, 1991), Michael P. Hornsby-Smith, *The Changing Parish: A Study of Parishes, Priests, and Parishioners after Vatican II* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

a radical life.[60] In 1977, the Milwaukee branch of the CWM invited members who had experienced the impact of the Catholic Worker to Dorothy Day's eightieth birthday celebration. Many of them came of age in the 1930s and remembered the Houses of Hospitality in New York City and Cleveland. Dorothy Gauchat, a writer, remembered first learning about the Catholic Worker movement during the Great Depression when on one side of the street newspaper sellers offered *The Catholic Worker* and on the other side of the street newspaper sellers offered Father Charles Coughlin's paper. *The Catholic Worker* opposed Coughlin's antisemitism and promoted unity between Catholics and Jews instead.[61] These stories symbolized both the durability and the age of the CWM. The members reflected on the radical ideas that the CW engendered.

Several participants agreed that the CWM's radical pacifism during and after World War II respected all people rather than just one group. These ideas inspired many individuals to participate in Houses of Hospitality or worker farms to live communally. Furthermore, the radical nature of the CWM drew people into it. Most members wore prison time as a badge of honor for how dedicated they were to peace. Day still found herself in jail a multitude of times with the last being in Fresno during the farmworkers' strike. Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton defended both Pax Christi and the Catholic Worker against claims that it was a Communist-affiliated organization. Despite all her work, Day's radicalism began to show its age by the late 1970s as fewer Catholics were interested in fighting for these types of causes.

Day started her work in 1933 and continued to represent the social mission of Catholicism. Despite her efforts, the movement grew older and fewer Catholics believed in the

---

[60] "In Earthen Vessels Wealth Untold: A Commemorative Mass Celebrating Dorothy Day's 80th Birthday," November 8, 1977, folder 7, box 4, CCR, UWM.

[61] "Roundtable Discussion of the Catholic Worker Movement," November 9, 1977, Moderator: Marc Ellis, Panelists Dorothy Gauchat, David Host, Nina Polcyn Moore, Peggy Scherer, Stanley Vishnewski, Florence Weinfurter, and Marge Hughes, folder 7, box 4, CCR, UWM.

mission that she posed. The laity grew more conservative and powerful. They did not want the Catholic Worker to be involved in either a Catholic charity or organization. The CWM in many ways came to represent the outsider Catholics that did not assimilate to the changing age. Dorothy Day died in 1980 at the age of 83. Eulogies flooded newspapers in both Catholic and secular publications to remember her contributions. Garry Wills of *Sojourners* wrote, "Dorothy Day scared the orthodox by taking their doctrines seriously and the radicals by taking religion seriously."[62] She obstinately fell into a category all on her own. Her example, however, convinced many Catholics to become sisters, priests, and others who chose to live a radical life. Without her example, there was not a strong leader who could draw people into the CWM. Catholicism became more conservative and, in the opinion of many, more Protestant in nature. Laypeople could now do everything; why sacrifice one's comfort for religion?

Conclusion:

Although women religious left the Church by the thousands during the 1970s, a majority remained within their religious vocation. For sisters such as Pat Drydyk and Kathleen Keating, the religious life afforded them the chance to serve within ethnic Mexican communities and fight for equity within the workplace. Other sisters who had started off in NAWR or NCAN continued to push for justice within their religious orders as well. In many of their statements, they mention the fact that they work to promote a closeness with nature and with supporting justice issues.

Sisters may not have worked as closely with UFW's headquarters in California by the 1980s, but they remained faithful to the Mexican American laborers in their communities. Drydyk did not let Chavez's politics sway her commitment to her mission. She worked tirelessly

[62] Garry Wills, "The Dragooned Saint: Dorothy Day's Life of Faith and Service," *Sojourners*, September 1982, 36.

to defend midwestern farmworkers' rights and served as president of the Chicago-based National Farm Workers Ministry until her death. She established the Michigan Farm Workers Ministry Coalition and continued to serve underprivileged Mexican American centers.[63] Although the UFW did not have clean hands in its record of harassment and violence it had historically offered women a platform for activism and provided a launch pad to implement their own local organizations for Chicano communities.

Although many sisters disavowed their relationship to the UFW movement they found new organizations into which they could direct their energies. Sisters looked south of the border and saw millions of Latino workers who suffered under exploitative agricultural practices. The Maryknoll sisters, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, and many others sent representatives to assist in the struggle for agriculturalists' rights. In the 1980s, sisters in South America participated in the Liberation Theology movement and in a few cases became martyrs for the cause. Sister Dorothy Stang was a notable example of a sister who died while pursuing justice for workers in the Amazon. Stang began her ministry by working with migrant workers and looked to South America to see how she could continue to help. Her presence created a furor among the landholders who hired assassins that ultimately killed her. Stang's example demonstrated that while Cesar Chavez's cause lost its identity, there was still work that one could do to help out people in other parts of the world.

Many religious orders that still exist promote a closeness with the environment and inculcate the social justice missions that they have pursued since the 1960s. For example, the Sisters of the Presentation – out of Dubuque, Iowa – state that their mission is "to live our

[63] Kenan Heise, "Sister Patricia Drydyk; Worked with Migrant and Farm Workers," *Chicago Tribune*, September 21, 1995.

charism of radical hospitality in kinship with Earth and all people."[64] This order actively promotes this vision by participating in EARTH CARE, a Santa Fe-based organization that works to teach youths how to live more sustainably. In St. Louis, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet promoted a message of stewardship and concern for creation. They believed that "everything is interconnected and that creation is a sacred trust given to the whole earth community. Along with our associates and partners, we recognize that all aspects of justice and survival with all creation – nature, humanity and organizations – intertwine."[65] They reaffirmed many of the beliefs that sisters adopted during the 1970s. They strove to become better stewards of the planet by recognizing the relationship between all aspects of life: from workers in the fields, to consumers, and to the planet itself.

Other religious communities continued to teach students about the importance of resource conservation. The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM) commit their efforts to teaching students about the importance of conservation and in their words "stand with all who seek to sustain Earth and look to the future of the planet."[66] In 2015, Sister Anna Keim SNJM has earned the nickname the "Water Nun" because of her effort to teach her students about the importance of drinking water from fountains and avoiding the use of single-use plastic bottles.[67] Several other convents had a special devotion to growing their own food so they could meditate on the fact that they need to rely on God through nature to have what they need to survive.[68] All

---

[64] Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dubuque, Iowa. "Our Mission." https://www.dubuquepresentations.org/aboutus_mission.cfm, accessed December 10, 2019.
[65] Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, "Our Concerns: Everything is Connected: Care for Creation," https://www.csjsl.org/about-us/our-beliefs, accessed December 12, 2019.
[66] Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, "Choosing Sustainability: Abundant Life for All," https://www.snjmusontario.org/what-we-do/justice/sustainability/, accessed December 12, 2019.
[67] Steve Scauzillo, "Nun at Alhambra Catholic school teaches water conservation, bashes bottled water," *Pasadena Star News*, June 21, 2015.
[68] For more, see Sarah McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

of these religious orders were active in NAWR and other networks of nuns. Even though their experiment failed to develop a single body of women religious to represent their call to action, sisters all throughout the United States maintained the vision that they developed during the 1970s to create a sustainable world that seeks to promote justice.

This dissertation has explored the ways that women sought to change a male dominated religious organization. In 1994, NAWR officially dissolved, but its legacy remains for what it tried to accomplish. While this organization failed to change the overall structure of the American Catholic Church, sisters within this group and others still found ways to define their own autonomy. Sisters had a multitude of options available to them. They could leave their faith, stay within it, change the structure of their convent, or find a spirituality that fully embraced who they were. In the face of disappointments from the UFW's conservatism to the glacial changes of the Catholic Church, sisters and ex-nuns found changed and found fulfillment within their orders and communities.

Many women left the religious life because they were disappointed by the impact of the Second Vatican Council. Catholicism became too liberal or too conservative and did not assist in their personal growth. Several of them remained spiritual, however. According to Rosemary Curb, "Twelve of us now practice Wicca (witchcraft) as feminist spirituality. We are discovering pagan feminism through astrology, goddess imagery, tarot, dreamwork, I Ching, herbal healing, meditation, massage and body work."[69] In these cases, perhaps women religious not only felt drawn to the religious life because they wanted to help in the community but because of their desire for spirituality.

[69] Curb, *Lesbian Nuns*, xxx.

For the rest of the U.S. Catholics, the shift to greater lay participation crafted a far more Protestant-appearing Church regarding lay participation in the daily administration. In many ways, this chapter demonstrates the loss of identity that Catholicism experienced as it tried to interpret the changes of Vatican II. By losing nuns, the American Church emerged as a less distinctive religion without its customs and rules. Perhaps, this was a post-conciliar consequence of church life as bishops and priests unrolled the reforms of Vatican II. Despite the change or lack of change that occurred in the Church, debates concerning women's roles in Catholicism never fully left the conversation among the Catholic hierarchy.

While the issues of the female diaconate and environmentalism appeared to dissipate by the end of the 1970s, Church leaders recently revived these issues. In 2019, the Amazonian Synod met to address the priest shortage in parts of the world. In the Amazon, thousands of Catholics seldom see a priest, and the bishops of this region have raised questions as to how the Church will survive without priests. In response, Pope Francis considered allowing South American bishops to appoint married leaders of the community to become priests, thus demolishing one of the most distinctive customs of Roman Catholicism. The Church has once again broached the topic of allowing women religious to become deaconesses. Ever since 2016, the Church has worked with an umbrella organization of women religious called the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) that has pushed for the Church to reconsider its stance on the female diaconate.[70]

At the Synod, Pope Francis considered permitting women religious to become members of the diaconate following statements from indigenous delegates who spoke on the need to incorporate women into Catholic rituals. He held an audience with Anitalia Pijachi, an

[70] Joshua J. McElwee, "UISG leaders ask Pope Francis about role of women in the church," *Global Sisters Report*, May 12, 2016.

indigenous woman of the Ocaina Huitoto nation in Colombia, emphasized the importance of allowing a woman to oversee certain blessings. She equated the Church with the "maloka," a communal building meant for special occasions. Pijachi stated that the maloka "is the woman, the womb that brings her children together, the place of abundance." Currently, nuns are important because there are far more of them in South America who could attend to the people than there are priests. In times of an emergency, sisters were asked to anoint those who are dying, but many refused and instead put the dying person on the phone with a priest. Pijachi's testimony focused on the spiritual and pragmatic issues that come from denying women a role as deaconesses.[71] Francis still maintained the position that women cannot enter the diaconate and married men cannot become priests. However, the Catholic hierarchy considered and will address the role of women in the Church.

Environmentalism became a major component of this meeting as well. Francis and the bishops heard from South American indigenous delegates who discussed the troubles that indigenous people face as a result of the legacies of colonialism in the Amazon. Catholics who attend mass and receive the sacraments appear to many indigenous peoples to be hypocrites for their lack of sensitivity to the environment. Politicians who permit clear cutting forests will go to church on Sunday and allow logging companies to destroy fragile ecosystems during the rest of the week. This problematic trend has prompted Pope Francis to draft what he calls an "ecological sin." The attendees of the synod explicated an ecological sin as being "a sin against future generations and manifests itself in acts and habits of pollution and destruction of the environmental harmony, transgressions against the principles of interdependence and the

[71] Barbara Fraser, "Indigenous Woman Brings Message from her Elders to Pope as Church Elder," *Catholic News Service*, October 15, 2019.

breaking of solidarity networks among creatures and against the virtue of justice."[72] This variety of actions elucidates that the struggles experienced during the 1970s did not fully go away.

[72] Joshua J. McElwee and Brian Roewe, "Amazon synod calls for married priests, pope to reopen women deacons commission," *National Catholic Reporter*, October 26, 2019.

Epilogue:

The modern Catholic Church has opposed most liberal issues. Bishops and popes have condemned gay marriage, abortions, and divorce. Critics decry the limited roles for women within the hierarchy as sexist and unequal. The Church's checkered past with protecting priests who abused children has further decreased the hierarchy's credibility in the eyes of the public. In terms of labor relations, the Church has sought to develop a more liberal approach to supporting the growth and development of union membership.

The Church also has a mixed record when it comes to labor issues. Pope Leo XIII first made an official statement on the importance of protecting laborers. In 1891, he pronounced *Rerum Novarum*, which denounced both capitalism and socialism. He noted that wealth remained in the hands of a few people, who exploited masses of people in conditions that resembled slavery. He also vilified socialism, because he thought that it took away a person's ability to improve one's own condition. Instead, he advocated the state protecting everyone's right to own property, but rejected the state becoming an omnipresent force in the family.[1] He focused on ensuring each person's right to work. This had a strong impact throughout the world as Catholic workers realized that the Church supported their struggle.

During the 1970s under Pope John Paul II, the Catholic Church failed to support unions. The Vatican's reticence to promote the tenets of Liberation Theology which emerged from Central America damaged its reputation for supporting workers among liberals. John Paul II's cold warrior stance made him leery of revolutionaries who sought to replace despotic governments with popularly elected socialist ones. Pope Benedict XVI succeeded John Paul II and became known for his conservatism and theological brilliance. He developed a concept of

[1] Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 1891.

the "human ecology," which he explained as "humanity, if it truly desires peace, must be increasingly conscious of the links between natural ecology, or respect for nature, and human ecology. Experience shows that disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence, and vice versa."[2] His ideas of ecology demonstrated a progressive view that reflected left-wing opinions at the time. His strict traditionalism overshadowed many of these environmentally conscious views that he promoted. Pope Benedict XVI began this conversation of Catholicism's environmental stewardship that Pope Francis made as one of his major platforms.

Pope Francis immediately became associated publicly with environmentalism and labor activism. In *Laudato Si*, (On Care for Our Common Home), he acknowledged the need to protect the planet and the worker. He pronounces, "Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work."[3] In a separate letter, he avers, "I am far from proposing an irresponsible populism, but the economy can no longer turn to remedies that are a new poison, such as attempting to increase profits by reducing the work force and thereby adding to the ranks of the excluded."[4] Pope Francis believes that one of the greatest evils in society is a lack of opportunity for young people. He has railed against mechanization and hopes that workers will have more opportunities in their native homelands.

Pope Francis's statements on labor have been newsworthy. For example, in 2017, in a meeting with the Confederation of Trade Unions in Italy, Francis called unions "prophetic" because they gave "a voice to those who have none." Additionally, he denounced the market economy and advocated for a "social market economy" to balance the needs of corporations with

[2] Pope Benedict XVI, *The Human Person, The Heart of Peace*, 8.
[3] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si' (On Care for Our Common Home),* 127-28.
[4] Pope Francis, *Evangelli Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, 204.

the needs of society.[5] At this same audience, he boldly pronounced, "There is no good society without a good union, and there is no good union that isn't reborn every day in the peripheries, that doesn't transform the rejected stones of the economy into corner stones."[6] This drew the attention of presses around the world that were fascinated to see a traditionally conservative office promote anti-market policies. In 2015, Francis traveled to Latin America where he continued to criticize capitalism for creating vast wealth disparities, and he apologized for the Church's role in creating these inequalities. The Society of Jesus, the religious order of which Pope Francis is a member, were the largest slaveholders in Brazil. By acknowledging this, Pope Francis is working to heal the wounds caused by the Church and to offer support to popularly elected Latin American governments. The response won him the favor of leftist presidents, including the former Bolivian president Evo Morales, who proclaimed, "For the first. I feel like I have a pope: Pope Francis."[7] Pope Francis has made his papacy one of activism for improving human rights.

Clearly, the Church's past few pontiffs understand the importance of social justice. Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI both illustrated clear corollaries between human ecology and labor rights. They have addressed the conditions that afflicted farmworkers for most of human history. Most of what Pope Francis has preached seems to contradict the American labor policies and deregulations that have occurred during the twenty-first century. In various reports, Pope Francis has criticized President Donald Trump's administration for anti-life and anti-Christian policies, particularly regarding restricting immigration. To this, Trump has called the pontiff, "a

[5] Tara Isabella Burton, "Why Pope Francis just called labor unions 'prophets,'" *Vox*, June 29, 2017.
[6] Quote from Junno Arocho Esteves, "Pope Francis: Labor Unions Are Essential to Society," *America: The Jesuit Review*, June 28, 2017.
[7] Jim Yardley and William Neuman, "In Bolivia, Francis Apologizes for Church's 'Grave Sins,'" *The New York Times*, July 9, 2015.

'pawn' of the Mexican government."[8] The fighting has persisted throughout Trump's presidency and has created some tension in the American Catholic Church.

Americans Catholics have divided opinions regarding Pope Francis. Since the American Catholic Church has become more conservative over time, the pontiff's vocal denunciations of the free market have caused some to question Francis's legitimacy. In his 2020 Easter letter to social movement leaders, Pope Francis recommended the implementation of a universal basic wage and believes that all countries should work to adopt this model.[9] On other topics, Pope Francis, while not willing to permit gay marriage, has been an advocate for LGBT people. He additionally has been accommodating to Protestants and Muslims in an effort to spread ecumenism and open discourse between peoples of various faiths and ethnicities.[10] In many ways, the American Catholic Church is known for homogenizing most Catholics in the U.S. melting pot. With Pope Francis, however, he has incited some Catholics as being too liberal, while other Catholics are encouraged by his dedication to social justice issues. For traditionalist laypeople, he is a threat to their political views.

All of these stances have prompted ultra-conservative Catholics to demonize Francis as an anti-pope and to acknowledge Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI as the reigning pontiff. For example, one article questions the validity of Francis's election, after Cardinal Raymond Burke demonstrated concern that there was a coordinated effort to select Francis.[11] Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò added fuel to the flame of dissent by penning a missive indicting high-ranking Catholics, including Pope Francis, of covering up the sexual abuse allegation surrounding

[8] Tina Nguyen, "Pope Francis Calls Out Trump, Accuses Him of 'Pro-life' Hypocrisy," *Vanity Fair*, September 11, 2017.
[9] Nathan Schneider, "The Pope Just Proposed a Universal Basic Income. Is the United States Ready for It?" *America*, April 12, 2020.
[10] Philip Pullella, "Conservatives Want Catholic Bishops to Denonce Pope as Heretic," *Reuters*, May 1, 2019.
[11] John-Henry Westen, "Cardinal Burke Responds to Questions about the Validity of Pope Francis' election," *LifeSiteNews*, August 23, 2019.

Archbishop Emeritus of Washington, D.C., Theodore McCarrick.[12] Viganò also raised concern over Pope Francis removing "Vicar of Christ" from the 2020 Pontifical Yearbook. In Viganò's opinion, Francis is no longer the protector of the Church but now views himself as the "master of the Church, free to demolish it from within without having to answer to anyone."[13] Overall, there is increasing division brewing in Catholicism concerning the papacy and the men running it.

The discord among Catholics has led moderate and liberal lay Catholics to considering if the whole organization needs to be revitalized. Many are satisfied with Pope Francis's pro-union, pro-LGBT, and pro-environmentalist policies, but they want to see more changes as well, namely more women being in charge. Catholic writers point out that the Church is practically run by women, as they hold eighty-five percent of Catholic careers.[14] In a sense, Catholic women, if as Catholic blogger Jamie Manson suggests, could "initiate the friendliest of hostile takeovers" of the Vatican and force the Church to invite women into the male ranks of the Church hierarchy.[15] Women could potentially follow in the footsteps of many other labor movements and go on strike against the Catholic Church. Catholic women, as this dissertation has shown, have many different motivations and opinions on the Church. Some want change, while others are happy to be able to serve. Pope John Paul II sought to put an end once and for all to the idea of female ordination, but this debate continually rises to the fore as Catholic women seek an increased role in the Catholic Church.

---

[12] Carlo Maria Viganò, "Testimony by His Excellency Carlo Maria Viganò, Titular Archibishop of Ulpiana, Apostolic Nuncio," August 22, 2018.
[13] Maike Hickson, "Abp Viganò: Has Pope Francis Now 'Disavowed' Being Vicar of Christ?" *LifeSiteNews*, April 4, 2020.
[14] Cynthia Stewart, "The Distaff Church: Women's Roles," *The Catholic Church: A Brief Popular History* (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2008), 322.
[15] Jamie Manson, "Women Need to Be the Church's New Anti-Pope," *National Catholic Reporter*, January 21, 2020.

In an apocryphal story from the thirteenth century, a woman disguised herself as a man and eventually rose through the hierarchy to become Pope Joan.[16] Through her skill, she navigated the patriarchy and successfully led the Church. Historians have disproven this tale as merely a satire of the papacy during the Middle Ages when there were many antipopes. There is evidence that until the 1700s, many Catholics did not question the idea of a female pope. Currently, there are many who would welcome a Pope Joan, but others would disregard her as the antipope. Overall, the Catholic Church continues to debate over issues of labor and gender to decide what the future of Catholicism will be.

[16] Alain Boureau, *The Myth of Pope Joan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

American Antiquarian Society

American Heritage Center

Archives of the University of Notre Dame
- Association of Chicago Priests Records
- Catholic Peace Fellowship Records
- Eileen Egan Papers
- Gordon Zahn Papers
- Leadership Conference of Women Religious of the United States Records
- The National Assembly of Religious Women Records
- Pax Christi Papers

Marquette University Special Collections and University Archives
- Dorothy Day-Catholic Worker Collection
- NCAN Committee Records

Stanford University Libraries Department of Special Collections & University Archives
- Victor Saladini Papers
- Bob Fitch Photography Archive

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Archives
- Young Christian Worker Milwaukee Federation Records
- Cardijn Center Records

Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University
- Agricultural Workers History Collection
- Michigan Farm Worker Ministry Coalition Collection
- National Farm Worker Ministry Collection (U.S.)
- Reverend Victor P. Saladini Papers
- Ronald B. Taylor Papers
- UAW President's Office
- UFW Illinois Boycott: Chicago Office Records, 1962-1982
- UFW Ohio Boycott Office Records

Wisconsin Historical Society
- Wisconsin Governor's Commission of Human Rights Papers
- Wisconsin Council of Catholic Women Collection

Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
- Jacques E. Levy Research Collection

Books, Essays, and Papal Encyclicals

Anderl, Stephen. *The Technique of the Catholic Action Cell*. La Crosse, WI: St. Rose Convent, 1946.

Benedict XVI. *The Human Person, The Heart of Peace*, Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2007.

Brady, Mary. "Finding My Way." *Lesbian Nuns*, *Breaking Silence*, edited by Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan, 197-203. Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1985.

Carey, Graham. "Herbs of the Field." In *A Penny a Copy*, edited by Thomas Cornell. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968.

Carroll, Elizabeth. "Women and Ministry," in *Woman: New Dimensions* edited by Walter Burghardt. New York: Paulist Press, 1977.

Cordova, Jeanne. "My Immaculate Heart." In *Lesbian Nuns, Breaking Silence*, edited by Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan, 3-15. Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1985.

Day, Dorothy. *House of Hospitality*. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1939.

---. *Loaves and Fishes*. New York: Harper & Row, 1963.

---. *The Long Loneliness: Th Autobiography of Dorothy Day*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952.

--- *Therese: A Life of Therese of Lisieux*. Springfield, IL: Templegate Publishers, 1960.

Dohen, Dorothy. *Nationalism and American Catholicism*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965.

Donnelly, Gertrude. *The Sister Apostle*. Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1964.

Ellsberg, Robert editor. *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008.

John Paul II. "Address of His Holiness John Paul II To Women Religious." *Apostolic Journey to the United States*, October 7, 1979.

Lane, Joe. *Our Little Nuns: A Book of Cartoons Created Exclusively for Extension Magazine*. Chicago: The Catholic Church Extension Society, 1954.

Leo XIII. *Rerum Novarum*, encyclical letter, May 15, 1891.

Maurin, Peter. *Catholic Radicalism: Phrased Essays for the Green Revolution*. New York: Catholic Worker Books, 1949.

Neal, Marie Augusta. "Freedom of Expression in the Church." In *The New Nuns* edited by Mary Charles Borromeo Muckenhirn, 83-98. New York: The New Library Press, 1967.

Novak, Michael "The New Nuns." In *The New Nuns* edited by Mary Charles Borromeo Muckenhirn, 13-30. New York: The New American Library, 1967.

Nunneries in France: Comprising a Series of Letters between a Nun, a Novice, and Their Friends; in Which Are Unfolded the True Character and Corrupt Practices of Roman Priests. New York: Wright, Goodhue, 1845.

Paul VI. *Evangelica Testificatio*, encyclical letter, June 29, 1971.

--- *Gaudium et Spes*, encyclical letter, December 7, 1965.

Pius XI. *Quadragesimo Anno*, encyclical letter, May 15, 1931.

Pope Francis. *Evangelli Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, apostolic exhortation, November 24, 2013.
--- *Laudato Si' (On Care for Our Common Home)*, encyclical letter, May 24, 2015.

Ratzinger, Joseph. "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons," pastoral letter, October 1, 1986.

Seper, Franjo. *Persona Humana*, December 29, 1975.

Sisters of St. Joseph. *Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph*. New York: O'Shea, 1884.

--- *Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet Constitution and Complementary Document*. St. Louis: Sisters of St. Joseph, 1997. https://csjcarondelet.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CSJ_Carondelet_Constitution-English.pdf.

Viganò, Carlo Maria. "Testimony by His Excellency Carlo Maria Viganò, Titular Archibishop of Ulpiana, Apostolic Nuncio." August 22, 2018.

Zahn, Gordon. *Another Part of the War*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Advocate
The American Conservative
America: The Jesuit Review
The Cardinal Newman Society
Catholic News Service
The Catholic Worker

Central California Register
Chicago Tribune
Christian Farmer
Christian Herald
Cleveland Press
Commonweal
Detroit Free Press
The Enquirer
Georgia Bulletin
Global Sisters Report
Kitchener-Waterloo Record
LifeSiteNews
Los Angeles Times
Marquette Tribune
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
National Catholic Reporter
The New York Times
Our Sunday Visitor
Pasadena Star News
Reuters
Review for Religious
Sojourners
Vanity Fair
The Village Voice
Vox
Washington Post
The WCCW Informant
Worcester Telegram

Secondary Sources:

Albanese, Catherine L. *Nature Religion in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Allitt, Patrick. "American Catholics and the Environment, 1960-1995." *The Catholic Historical Review* 84 (1998): 263-280.

Ammerman, Nancy T. "Golden Rule Christianity: Lived Religion in the American Mainstream" in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* edited by David D. Hall, 196-216. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Anonymous. *The Life of Blessed Julie Billiart: Foundress of the Institute of Sisters of Notre Dame*. London: Sands and Company, 1909.

Baldillo, David. *Latinos and the New Immigrant Church.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Bardacke, Frank. *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers*. New York: Verso, 2011.

--- "The UFW and the Undocumented." *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 83, (Spring 2013): 162-169.

Barger, W. K., Ernesto M. Reza, and Baldemar Velásquez. *The Farm Labor Movement in the Midwest: Social Change and Adaptation among Migrant Farmworkers*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

Bohme, Susanna Rankin. *Toxic Injustice: A Transnational History of Exposure and Struggle*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

Boureau, Alain. *The Myth of Pope Joan.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Bovee, David S. *The Church and the Land: The National Catholic Rural Life Conference and American Society, 1923-2007*. Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010.

Boyer, Paul. *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.

Boylan, Anne. *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2002.

Bromley, David G. *Vatican II and U.S. Catholicism*. Greenwich, CT.: JAI Press, 1991.

Brosnan, Kathleen A. "Public Presence, Public Silence: Nuns, Bishops, and the Gendered Space of Early Chicago." *The Catholic Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (2004): 473-96.

Brown, Kate. *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Buchkoski, John. "'Strangers Within Our Gates': Religious Women and the Struggle for Migrant Laborers' Rights, 1950-1959." *Environmental Justice*, 12 (October 2019): 205-211.

Butler, Anne M. *Across God's Frontiers: Catholic Sisters in the American West, 1850-1920*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Byarugaba, George William. "Inter-Religious Discourse on Climate Change: Roman Catholic and African Traditional Perspectives." *The Ecumenical Review*, 69 (October 2017): 327-335.

Campbell-Jones, Suzanne. *In Habit: A Study of Working Nuns*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Carey, Patrick. "Lay Catholic Leadership in the United States." *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 9 (1990): 223-247.

Carper, John C. and Thomas C. Hunt. *The Dissenting Tradition in American Education*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962.

Cavanaugh, William T. editor. *Fragile World: Ecology and the Church*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018.

Center for Applied Research for the Apostolate. "CARA Religious Life Research." Georgetown University, https://cara.georgetown.edu/services/religious-institutes/.

--- "Frequently Requested Church Statistics." https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/.

--- "Global Catholicism: Trends & Forecasts," June 4, 2015. https://cara.georgetown.edu/staff/webpages/Global%20Catholicism%20Release.pdf

Chang, Patricia M. Y. "Introduction: The Crisis Is about Control: Consequences of Priestly Decline in the US Catholic Church." *Sociology of Religion*, 59 (1998): 1-5.

Chiang, Connie. *Nature Behind Barbed Wire: An Environmental History of the Japanese American Incarceration*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Clark, Claudia. *Radium Girls: Women and Industrial Health Reform, 1910-1935*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Coburn, Carol. *Lives: How Nuns Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836-1920*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1999.

Cohen, Deborah. *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Cohen, Lizabeth. *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*. New York: Vintage Books, 2003.

Coogan, Jane. *The Price of Our Heritage: History of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Dubuque, IA: Mount Carmel Press, 1975.

Cowie, Jefferson. *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*. New York: The New Press, 2012.

Cronin, Paul. *A Time to Stir: Columbia '68*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.

Crowe, Charles. *George Ripley: Transcendentalist and Utopian Socialist.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967.

Curb, Rosemary Keefe. "What is a Lesbian Nun?" *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence* edited by Curb and Nancy Manahan, xix-xxxiv. Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1985.

Danylewycz, Marta. *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920*. Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Davis, Michael Warner. "Why 1 in 10 new priests in the US come from homeschooling families." *Catholic Herald*, June 16, 2018.

Day, Dorothy and Francis J. Sicius. *Peter Maurin: Apostle to the World*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004.

Dieker, Alberta. *A Tree Rooted in Faith: A History of Queen of Angels Monastery*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2007.

Diggins, John P. *The Promise of Pragmatism: Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

--- *The Proud Decades: America in War and in Peace, 1941-1960*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1988.

--- *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1992.

Dolan, Jay. *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: Galilee Trade Press, 1987.

Dougherty, Dolorita Marie, Helen Angela Hurley, Emily Joseph Daly, and St. Claire Coyne, *Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet*. St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1966.

Dunlap, Thomas R. *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.

Ebaugh, Helen Rose Fuchs. *Out of the Cloister: A Study of Organizational Dilemmas*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977.

Eby, Judith. "'A Little Squabble among Nuns'? The Sister Formation Crisis and the Patterns of Authority and Obedience among American Women Religious, 1954-1971." Ph.D. dissertation, St. Louis University, 2000.

Ehrlich, Paul. *Population Bomb*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1968.

Enke, Finn. *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Evans, Elizabeth Eisenstadt. “Steps and Stages of the Formation Process of Women Religious.” *Global Sisters Report*. Accessed on January 29, 2020. https://www.globalsistersreport.org/resources/steps-and-stages-formation-process-women-religious-38381.

Ferraro, Barbara, Patricia Hussey, and Jane O'Reilly. *No Turning Back: Two Nuns' Battle with the Vatican Over Women's Right to Choose*. New York: Poseidon Press, 1990.

Ferriss, Susan and Ricardo Sandoval. *The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers Movement*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997.

Feuerherd, Peter. *The Radical Gospel of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019.

Fialka, John J. *Sisters: Catholic Nuns and the Making of America*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003.

Flippen, J. Brooks. "Carter, Catholics, and the Politics of Family." *American Catholic Studies,* 123 (2012): 27-51.

Forest, Jim. *All is Grace: A Biography of Dorothy Day*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011.

--- “Biography of Peter Maurin: Co-Founder of the Catholic Worker Movement.” https://www.catholicworker.org/petermaurin/pm-biography.html

Fuller, Robert. *The Body of Faith: A Biological History of Religion in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Gallo, Marcia M. *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement.* New York: Carroll & Graf, 2006.

Gamm, Gerald. *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Garcia, Matt. *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

Gass, Marie Thérèse. *Unconventional Women: 73 Ex-Nuns Tell Their Story*. Clackamas: Sieben Hill Publishing, 2001.

Gatta, John. *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion, and Environment in America from the Puritans to the Present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Gerhardinger, Theresia von Jesu. *The North American Foundations: Letters of Mother M. Theresa Gerhardinger*. School Sisters of Notre Dame, 1977.

Ghannam, Jeffrey S. "Sister Theresa Grekowicz Obituary." *Detroit Free Press,* December 8, 1989.

Goddard, J. R. "The Green Revolution and the Search for a New Order." *The Village Voice*, June 1, 1960.

Gordon, Scott. "A Mid-Century Turning Point for Migrant Farmworkers in Wisconsin." *WisContext*, October 15, 2018. https://www.wiscontext.org/mid-century-turning-point-migrant-farmworkers-wisconsin.

Gosse, Van. *Rethinking the New Left*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Greeley, Andrew. *The Catholic Revolution: New Wine, Old Wineskins, and the Second Vatican Council*. Berkeley; University of California Press, 2004.

Greenwood, Julia and Mary L. Gautier. "The Life and Ministry of Religious Sisters in Latin America," Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Fall 2018, https://cara.georgetown.edu/SistersinLatinAmericaFall2018.pdf.

Griswold del Castillo, Richard, and Richard A. Garcia. *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.

Gutiérrez, David. *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the Politics of Ethnicity.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Habermas, Jürgen. *Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. Two*. Translated by Thomas A. McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1987.

Hamblin, Jacob Darwin. *Arming Mother Nature: The Birth of Catastrophic Environmentalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Hamby, Alonzo. *Liberalism and Its Challengers: From F.D.R. to Bush*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Hamlin, Christopher. "Turning Over the Right Rocks: Finding Legacies of Catholic Environmentalism." In *Fragile World: Ecology and the Church*. Edited by William T. Cavanaugh. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018.

Hamlin, Christopher and John T. McGreevy. "The Greening of America, Catholic Style, 1930-1950." *Environmental History* 11 (2006): 464-499.

Harris, Sara. *The Sisters: The Changing World of the American Nun*. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1970.

Hays, Samuel P. *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Heineman, Kenneth. *God is a Conservative: Religion, Politics, and Morality in Contemporary America*. New York: New York University Press, 1998.

Heise, Kenan. "Sister Patricia Drydyk; Worked with Migrant and Farm Workers." *Chicago Tribune*, September 21, 1995.

Hellman, John. *Emmanuel Mournier and the New Catholic Left, 1930-1950*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981.

Hennessy, Kate. *Dorothy Day: The World Will Be Saved by Beauty*. New York: Scribner, 2017.

Henold, Mary. *Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2008.

"Historical Back Stories on Cesar Chavez and La Paz." https://ufw.org/Historical-Back-Stories-on-Cesar-Chavez-and-La-Paz/.

Hitchcock, James. *The Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1971.

Hofmann, Paul. *The Vatican's Women: Female Influence at the Holy See*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002.

Hofstadter, Richard. *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.

Holbrook, Joseph. "The Catholic Church in Cuba, 1959-62: The Clash of Ideologies." *International Journal of Cuban Studies*, 2 (2010): 264-275.

Holland, Jennifer. *Tiny You: A Western History of the Anti-Abortion Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020.

Holmes, Seth. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

Hornsby-Smith, Michael P. *The Changing Parish: A Study of Parishes, Priests, and Parishioners after Vatican II*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Horowitz, Daniel. *The Morality of Spending: Attitudes toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1940*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1992.

Hoeveler, J. David. *John Bascom and the Origins of the Wisconsin Idea*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016.

Hurley, Andrew. *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1995.

Institute on Religious Life in the Modern World. *Vows but No Walls: An Analysis of Religious Life*. St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1967.

Isserman, Maurice. *If I Had a Hammer…: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Jackson, Kenneth T. *Crabgrass Frontier*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Jacobs, Meg. *Panic at the Pump: The Energy Crisis and the Transformation of American Politics in the 1970s*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2017.

Jacobson, Matthew Frye. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

"Jeanne Córdova dies at 67; activist and author chronicled lesbian feminist movement of 1970s." *Los Angeles Times*, January 15, 2016.

"Jeanne Cordova Remembered: 'Butch Chicana Lesbian Feminist Outlaw.'" *Advocate*, January 12, 2016.

Johnson, Troy. *The American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008.

Jundt, Thomas. *Greening the Red, White, and Blue: The Bomb, Big Business, and Consumer Resistance in Postwar America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Karimi, Kevin, Michael J. DeFelice, Thomas P. Gaunt, and Mary L. Gautier. "Special Report on International Women Religious in the United States." Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, (Fall 2019): 1-8.

Kelly, Mary and Maureen Anthony. "The Last Generation of Sister Administrators: Insights about the Transition of Catholic Hospital Leadership." *American Catholic Studies* 125, (2014): 33-51.

Kelly, Timothy. "Suburbanization and the Decline of Catholic Public Ritual in Pittsburgh." *Journal of Social History*, 2 (Winter, 1994): 311-330.

Kenneally, James J. "A Question of Equality." In *American Catholic Women: A Historical Exploration*, edited by Karen Kennelly, 89-112. New York: Collier MacMillan, 1989.

Klejment, Anne. "Dorothy Day and César Chávez: American Catholic Lives in Nonviolence." *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 29 (Summer 2011): 67-90.

Koehlinger, Amy. *The New Nuns: Racial Justice and Religious Reform in the 1960s*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

--- ""Race Relations Needs the Nun:" Sources of Continuity and Change in the Racial Apostolate of the 1960s," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 23, no. 4 (2005): 39-59.

Kopp, Lillanna. "Foreward." In *UnConventional Women: 73 Ex-Nuns Tell Their Stories* edited by Marie Therese Gass, xv-xx. Clackamas: Sieben Hill, 2001.

Kovac, Jeffrey. *Refusing War, Affirming Peace: A History of Civilian Public Service Camp #21*. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2009.

Krech, Shepard. *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1999.

Küng, Hans. *The Catholic Church: A Short History*, translated by John Bowden. New York: The Modern Library, 2001.

Langston, Nancy. *Toxic Bodies: Hormone Disruptors and the Legacy of DES*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

Leadership Conference of Women Religious. "LCWR History." lcwr.org/about/history.

Lears, T. J. Jackson. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981.

Le Breton, Binka. *The Greatest Gift: The Courageous Life and Death of Sister Dorothy Stang*. New York: Doubleday, 2007.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1948.

Levy, Jacques. *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975.

Lewis, Helen and Monica Appleby. *Mountain Sisters: From Convent to Community in Appalachia*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2015.

Lipka, Michael. "A Closer Look at Catholic America." *Pew Research Center*, September 14, 2015.

"Listing of Women's Religious Communities," The Diocese of Rockville Centre, https://www.drvc.org/religiouscommunities.

Mantler, Gordon K. *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown Coalition & the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

Massa, Mark. *The American Catholic Revolution: How the Sixties Changed the Church Forever*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Matovina, Timothy. *Latino Catholicism: Transformation in America's Largest Church.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Matthiessen, Peter. *Sal Si Puedes: Cesar Chavez and the New American Revolution*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1969.

McCartin, James P. "The Waning of the "Catholic Other" and Catholicism in American Life after 1965." *Revue française d'études américaines*, 95 (2003): 7-29.

McCauley, Bernadette. "Nuns' Stories: Writing the History of Women Religious in the United States." *American Catholic Studies* 125 (Winter 2014): 51-68.

---*Who Shall Take Care of Our Sick?: Roman Catholic Sisters and the Development of Catholic Hospitals in New York City*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

McDannell, Colleen. *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

--- *The Spirit of Vatican II: A History of Catholic Reform in America*. New York: Basic Books, 2011.

McGerr, Michael. *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement, 1870-1920*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

McGirr, Lisa. *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

McGlone, Mary. *Anything of Which a Woman is Capable: A History of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the United States, Volume 1*. St. Louis: U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, 2017.

McGreevy, John. *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2004.

--- "Catholics, Democrats, and the GOP in Contemporary America." *American Quarterly,* 59 (Sep. 2007): 669-681.

McGuinness, Eamonn. "Castro's Leap of Faith." *The World Today*, 54 (1998): 16-17.

McGuinness, Margaret M. *Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

McGuire, Meredith B. *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

McMahon, Eileen M. *What Parish Are You from?: A Chicago Irish Community and Race Relations.* Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995.

McNamara, Jo Ann Kay. *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Medina, Lara. *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina Religious-Political Activism in the U.S. Catholic Church*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004.

Menand, Louis. *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.

Michelman, Susan O. "Changing Old Habits: dress of Women Religious and Its Relationship to Personal and Social Identity." *Sociological Inquiry* 3 (1997): 350-363.

Miller, Perry. *The Transcendentalists: An Anthology*. New York: Harvard University Press, 1950.

---"An Errand into the Wilderness." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 10 (1953): 3-32.

Monette, Maurice L. *Kindred Spirits: The Bonding of Religious and Laity*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1987.

Muckenhirn, Mary Charles Borromeo, ed. *The Changing Sister*. Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1965.

--- *The New Nuns*. New York: The New American Library, 1967.

Murphy, Roseanne. *Martyr of the Amazon: The Life of Sister Dorothy Stang*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007.

Murray, Paul. "54 Miles to Freedom: Catholics Were Prominent in 1965 Selma March." *National Catholic Reporter,* March 7, 2015.

Nash, Linda. *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006

Ngai, Mae. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Ngundo, Bibiana M. and Jonathon Wiggins. "Women Religious in Africa." Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, https://cara.georgetown.edu/AfricanSisters2017.pdf.

Nickerson, Michelle. "Desperate Housewives: Women and Conservatism in Postwar Los Angeles." *California History*, 86 (2009): 4-21.

Novak, Michael. *The Open Church: Vatican II, Act II*. New York: Macmillan, 1964.

Nugent, Helen Louise. *Sister Louise: Josephine Van der Schrieck, 1813-1886, American Foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1931.

O'Brien, David J. *Public Catholicism: Bicentennial History of the Catholic Church in America*. New York: Macmillan, 1989.

O'Donnell-Gibson, Patricia. *The Red Skirt: Memoirs of an Ex Nun*. Watervliet, MI: StuartRose Publishing, 2011.

O'Malley, John W. "The Scandal: A Historian's Perspective." *America: The Jesuit Review*, May 27, 2002.

Orosco, José-Antonio. *Cesar Chavez and the Common Sense of Nonviolence*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008.

Orsi, Robert. *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950,* Second Edition. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

--- "The Religious Boundaries of an Inbetween People: Street Feste and the Problem of the Dark-Skinned Other in Italian Harlem, 1920-1990." *American Quarterly*, 44 (1992): 313-47.

--- "U.S. Catholics between Memory and Modernity." *Catholics in the American Decade*, edited by Kathleen Sprows-Cummings and R. Scott Appleby. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012.

Packer, Barbara L. *The Transcendentalists.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007.

Patterson, James T. *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Pawel, Miriam. *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014.

Peters, Shawn Francis. *The Catonsville Nine: A Story of Faith and Resistance in the Vietnam Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Peterson, Susan Carol and Courtney Ann Vaughn-Roberson. *Women with Vision: The Presentation Sisters of South Dakota, 1880-1985*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Phillips-Fein, Kim. *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010

Prouty, Marco G. *César Chávez, the Catholic Bishops, and the Farmworkers' Struggle for Social Justice*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2006.

Reidy, Jeanne. "Nuns in Ordinary Clothes." *The New Nuns,* edited by Mary Charles Borromeo. New York: The New American Library, 1967.

Rodgers Barrett, Mary. *Called: The Making & Unmaking of a Nun*. Simsbury, CT: Antrim House, 2016.

Rodriguez, Marc Simon. "A Movement Made of "Young Mexican Americans Seeking Change": Critical Citizenship, Migration, and the Chicano Movement in Texas and Wisconsin, 1960-1975." *Western Historical Quarterly*, 34 (2003): 274-99.

Rome, Adam. *Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Spread and the Rise of American Environmentalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Rose, Anne C. *Transcendentalism as a Social Movement, 1830-1850.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

Rush, Ormond. *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles*. New York: Paulist Press, 2004.

Sailer, Steve. "Cesar Chavez, Minuteman." *The American Conservative*, February 27, 2006.

Sanders, James W. *The Education of an Urban Minority: Catholics in Chicago, 1833-1965*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Savage, Mary Lucida. "The Congregation of Saint Joseph of Carondelet: A Brief Account of Its Origin and Its Work in the United States," Ph.D. diss. Catholic University of America, 1923.

Schenk, Christine. "Sr. Catherine Pinkerton, Network lobbyist and justice-seeker, remembered." *Global Sisters Report*, January 11, 2018.

Schrepfer, Susan. *Nature's Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005.

Sears, John F. *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.

Shelley, Thomas J. *Greenwich Village Catholics: St. Joseph's Church and the Evolution of an Urban Faith Community, 1829-2002*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

Sicius, Francis J. *The Word Made Flesh: The Chicago Catholic Worker and the Emergence of Lay Activism in the Church*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1990.

Sisters for Christian Community. "SFCC: Our Story." https://www.sfccinternational.org/brief-history.

Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. "Choosing Sustainability: Abundant Life for All." https://www.snjmusontario.org/what-we-do/justice/sustainability/.

Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dubuque, Iowa. "Our Mission." https://www.dubuquepresentations.org/aboutus_mission.cfm.

Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. "Our Concerns: Everything is Connected: Care for Creation." https://www.csjsl.org/about-us/our-beliefs.

Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. *Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997.

Smith, Christian, Kyle Longest, Jonathan Hill, and Kari Christoffersen. *Young Catholic America: Emerging Adults In, Out of, and Gone from the Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Smith, Peter. *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Smith-Howard, Kendra. *Pure and Modern Milk: An Environmental History since 1900*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Steinberg, Ted. *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History* Second Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Stern, Steve. *Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973-1988*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

--- *Reckoning with Pinochet: The Memory Question in Democratic Chile, 1989-2006*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

--- *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Stewart, Cynthia. "The Distaff Church: Women's Roles." *The Catholic Church: A Brief Popular History*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2008.

Stoll, Mark. *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

---*Protestantism, Capitalism, and Nature in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Sugrue, Thomas. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Swanson, Ana. "Chart: The United States of Catholics and Protestants." *Washington Post*, March 4, 2015.

Swetz, Keith M., Mary E. Crowley, and T. Dean Maines, "What Makes a Catholic Hospital 'Catholic' in an Age of Religious-Secular Collaboration? The Case of the Saint Mary's Hospital and the Mayo Clinic." *HEC Forum,* 25 (2013): 95-107.

Swidler, Leonard. "Liberal Catholicism – A Lesson from the Past." *CrossCurrents* 21 (1971): 25-37.

Tate, Judith. *Sisters for the World*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1966.

Taylor, Bron. *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

Taylor, Sarah McFarland. *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Thompson, Margaret Susan. "Context – Part Three," in *Building Sisterhood* edited by Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, 227-231. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997.

Titley, Brian. *Into Silence and Servitude: How American Girls Became Nuns, 1945-1965*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017.

Tompkins, Andrew S. *Better Active than Radioactive!: Anti-Nuclear Protest in 1970s France and West Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Topping, Ryan N.S. "Homeschooling as a Means to Rebuilding Catholic Culture." *The Cardinal Newman Society*, June 26, 2018.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. 1893.

Unger, Nancy C. *Fighting Bob La Follette: The Righteous Reformer*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Diaconate." http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/diaconate/index.cfm.

Vacher, Marguerite. *Nuns without Cloister: Sisters of St. Joseph in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2010.

Vasquez, Manuel A. *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Veit, Helen Zoe. *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

Vileisis, Ann. *Kitchen Literacy: How We Lost Knowledge of Where Food Comes from and Why We Need to Get It Back*. Washington: Island, 2008.

Walch, Timothy. *Parish School: American Catholic Parochial Education from Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996.

Wall, Barbra. *American Catholic Hospitals: A Century of Changing Markets and Missions*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011.

Warner, Louis H. *Archbishop Lamy: An Epoch Maker*. Santa Fe: New Mexican Publishing Corporation, 1936.

Washington, Sylvia Hood. *Packing Them in*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005.

Weaver, Mary Jo. *New Catholic Women: A Contemporary Challenge to Traditional Religious Authority*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985.

White, Richard. "'Are You an Environmentalist, or Do You Work for a Living?': Work and Nature." In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, edited by William Cronon, 171-185. New York: W. W. Norton, 1996 :171-185.

White Jr., Lynn. "The Historic Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207.

Whitney, Catherine. *The Calling: A Year in the Life of the Order of Nuns*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1999.

Wijngaards, John. *Women Deacons in the Early Church: Historical Texts and Contemporary Debates*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2006.

Winn, Peter. *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Winsboro, Irvin D. S. and Michael Epple. "Religion, Culture, and the Cold War: Bishop Fulton J. Sheen and America's Anti-Communist Crusade of the 1950s." *The Historian* 71, no. 2 (2009): 209-33.

Wittberg, Patricia. *The Rise and Fall of Catholic Religious Orders: A Social Movement Perspective*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Wolfteich, Claire E. *American Catholics through the Twentieth Century: Spirituality, Lay Experience, and Public Life*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2001.

Woods, Thomas E. *The Church Confronts Modernity: Catholic Intellectuals and the Progressive Era*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Worster, Donald. *A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Zielinski, Martin A. "Working for Interracial Justice: The Catholic Interracial Council of New York, 1934-1964." *U.S. Catholic Historian* 7, (1988): 233-62.

Zimring, Karl. *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.