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**SEVEN WOMEN: SEVEN PIONEERS
THE STORIES OF SEVEN WOMEN
AND THEIR INFLUENTIAL ROLES
IN THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC AND ANGLICAN CHURCHES
IN THE
PROVINCE OF QUEBEC AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH
CENTURY**

The Reverend Patricia Peacock

A Thesis

in

The Department of Religion

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

July, 2002



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ABSTRACT

SEVEN WOMEN: SEVEN PIONEERS:

A study of the lives and works of seven women in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches in the Province of Quebec in the latter third of the Twentieth Century

**Reverend Patricia Peacock, M.A.
Concordia University, 2001**

This work is the study of the lives and works of seven women, considered pioneers in their fields, in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches in the Province of Quebec in the latter third of the twentieth century. Four of the subjects are francophone; three are anglophone. Three of the francophone women are feminist theologians, two of whom are nuns. The fourth has recently left the Roman Catholic Church to join the Anglican Church. The three anglophone women are Anglican priests, among the first to be ordained in Canada. The seven women are studied from the point of view of being pioneers, within the question of the ordination of women and the role of women in the church in Quebec. This thesis will examine how their experiences have paved the way for others to follow.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank Sheila McDonough and Michael Oppenheim for encouraging me to enter the Doctoral Programme at Concordia University, and then many years later, encouraging me and helping me to see the project through to the end. I thank Sheila for introducing me to feminist theology, and through that avenue discovering my chosen area of study for my doctoral thesis. Through Sheila and Michael I met other members of the Department of Religion at Concordia University, a Department I was not surprised to learn had international fame, and these people also became my teachers and mentors. I would particularly like to thank, Fred Bird, Norma Joseph and Leslie Orr, all of whom gave me encouragement, support and guidance. I have been grateful for the administrative help of the Department staff, they are always just an e-mail or a telephone call away. I am particularly thankful for the encouragement of Tina Montandon. At the time of writing we have still not met, but over the phone and through e-mail we have become friends. When time was closing in on me, it was Tina who e-mailed me and wrote: "Get on with it, Girl!" I understand she is also known as Sunshine Suzy. That does not surprise me. Thank you, Tina!

I am also grateful to the Department of Religion for allowing me to do some Independent Study at the University of Sherbrooke, and I am grateful to the University of Sherbrooke for making it possible. It was at this point that I began to meet another group of extraordinary people and academics. On a regular basis I sat in a tiny office opposite Marie Gratton, and began to learn about Quebec francophone feminist theologians. I became enthralled with the topic and my thesis proposal began to take shape. Marie Gratton - de tout coeur je t'aime comme une soeur, Merci infiniment! Through Marie I met other exceptional women, who also became friends: women who were passionate about social justice and equality. Because these women were interested in the ordination

of women and women in the Church I was invited on many occasions to be a guest speaker at conferences dealing with justice and equality. Again, this became an avenue for meeting women and men passionate about issues dealing with the church and with justice. I would like to thank, also *de tout coeur*, Yvonne Bergeron, Marie-Andrée Roy and Monique Dumais for their generosity of time, openness of spirit and encouragement.

It was at this point, half way through writing my Doctoral Thesis, that I began to think my anglophone sisters should also have a place in this work. I am grateful for the openness and willingness of Ruth Matthews, Lettie James and Heather Thomson to be part of this project, to share their stories with me. Theirs were stories I felt strongly should be told. Thank you! A special thanks must go to Joanne Brousseau for sharing her story.

I would like to thank Nicole Brass and Maryse Forest for telling me their stories and their feelings about the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec. Although the interviews were not used, their stories helped to build up my knowledge about the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec and the role of women in the Church. I would also like to thank The Reverend Canon Robert Jervis Read, and the late Venerable Alan Fairbairn, for their willingness to discuss openly with me their opposition to the ordination of women in the Anglican Church.

I am grateful to Lawrie Sakamoto and Guy Dallaire for helping me with the technology - a constant challenge. Without them I would still be struggling with an old Apple classic and an even older printer that refused to work.

I would like to thank my two sons, Tobin Peacock and Thomas Peacock, for their interest and support in this project over the years; and I would like to thank my husband, the Venerable Robert Bryan, for his support and encouragement.

My greatest thanks is reserved for my mother. In this work it will be seen that most often the strongest influence in the subjects' lives is the mother. For eleven years my mother has encouraged me to continue this project. She has been unstinting in her offer of time and help. At the slightest notice she was always willing to get into her car, drive to the Eastern Townships and give editorial assistance in order to see this work through to the end. Thank you Mum!

and so:

This work is dedicated with Love to JOY SHANNON

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**“But I write - like a Sermon-Preacher -
which we Women are not - it is Decreed - fitted to be.”**

Letter written by Christabel LaMotte

in

Possession - A Romance

by A.S. Byatte

London, England: Vintage. 1990. page 166

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

PREFACE

In 1987, Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill translated and published a work that was entitled **L'Histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles**, (1987. Quebec: Sogides Ltd.) written by four historians: Micheline Dumont, Michèle Jean, Marie Lavigne and Jennifer Stoddart, who referred to themselves as 'The Clio Collective'. The translated work is entitled **Quebec Women A History**. (Toronto, Ontario: *The Women's Press*) The purpose of writing the book was to fill a gap, to unlock the silence about women in the history of Quebec. They explain:

Reconstructing four centuries of history is somewhat like making a quilt: the pattern that emerges depends on the material you have and the way you decide to assemble the pieces. We decided to stitch the quilt of this history outside the framework of strictly male spheres of activity - the fur trade, war, ministerial responsibility, construction of the railways - usually dealt with in history books. This history takes an entirely different approach. What was the significance of changes in the ways of being born, growing up, giving birth and working? These questions became the focus of our attention, not changes in governments. We were also looking for significant events that involved all women, and not only those who were first to penetrate male bastions. That is why, in many cases, we chose to base our history on experiences common to all women.

We will discuss subjugation and liberation, equality (or rather, inequality) and differences: restrictions and accomplishments. In attempting to reconstruct the collective past of women, we asked the same question again and again: Why was it like that? (Preface)

Clio, the Muse of History, comes from the Greek word *kleos* meaning 'triumphant'. This book is about the triumphs and accomplishments, the frustrations and impotence of women in the past four centuries. The book deals with all aspects of women's lives, and their emergence in all aspects of life. It discusses at length "the all-pervasive nature of religion" in Quebec up until The Quiet Revolution, life in the convent, contraception and the Church, and yet at no point in the book do the authors raise the question of the ordination of women or the emergence of a brand new group of academics: Quebec feminist theologians. In dealing with the period 1969-1979, the authors write:

This latest chapter in the history of women in Quebec is unique. By the end of the Sixties political parties, governments, churches, unions and businesses were obliged to take women into account. During the Seventies, women began to break through the barriers between private and public life and the lives of women and men. Women were no longer willing to remain in limbo, caught between social expectations and the new roles they had chosen. (p. 354)

Two new roles chosen by women were those of priest and feminist theologian. This single mention relevant to the church, is the only space given to the ecclesiastical aspect of Quebec life. Further, in examining the role of feminists in the universities, the authors cite feminist economists, feminist psychologists, feminist political scientists, feminist linguists, writers and film makers, (pp.364/5) and yet there is no mention of feminist theologians, in spite of the fact that they were to be found in all the major Quebec universities, and in spite of the fact that the earliest ones faced considerable opposition from their male colleagues. Women priests and feminist theologians are no more, but no

less important than any other group of women in Quebec; it is just notable that they do not figure at all in a history of women in the province.

The significance of my thesis is that it fills a gap left even by authors writing about women in Quebec and their history. This discourse deals with the life and work of seven women who have devoted their lives to goals that were previously considered impossible for women, goals that were enshrined in freedom, independence, solidarity, justice and equality.

METHODOLOGY

My research for this Thesis involved reading on the subjects of the ordination of women; feminism and feminist theology, (this included reading about those who are against feminism and particularly feminist theology); the Anglican Church in the Province of Quebec; the Roman Catholic Church in the Province of Quebec, and the history of women in the Province of Quebec. As well as reading, my research on numerous occasions was experiential. For example, every year the priests, ministers and pastors of the different Christian denominations in the Sherbrooke area are invited to the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Sherbrooke for the Chrism Mass (chrism - consecrated oil) during Holy Week leading up to Easter. At this service the Archbishop of the Diocese of Sherbrooke consecrates the oil which is then distributed to the Roman Catholic priests for use at healing services and the sacrament of the last rites. On one occasion, in the late 1980s, I accepted the invitation. As it happened, I was the only woman priest in a procession of over two hundred male priests. To some this was notable, and as a result of interest in the role of women priests and ministers in other Christian churches I was invited to participate in a number of workshops, conferences and Roman Catholic celebrations. One event would always lead to another, and through these events I met many people, with many different points of view, and I had the opportunity to discuss with them their thoughts on many issues. I was thus able to build on my knowledge of the Roman Catholic Church and the role of women in that Church. With very few exceptions I found the people, women and men, open and positive to the idea of women priests in the Roman Catholic Church, and I met several women who felt they had a calling to the priesthood.

The reader will note that there are considerable differences in the length and genre of the chapters dealing with the principal subjects of my Thesis. This is due to the different personalities and life styles of the seven women. Marie Gratton, Monique Dumais and Yvonne Bergeron are feminist theologians and by the nature of their work, therefore academics. They have all written extensively and have had considerable material written about them. Consequently, in dealing with these three women I had substantial written material at my disposal. I was able to study and analyse their main areas of interest. Monique Dumais and Yvonne Bergeron's written work also included biographical material and so I could place their work in the context of their lives. Monique Dumais is probably the most prolific of the three as far as the written word is concerned, and I put together the first draft of her chapter from written material alone. We then corresponded by post to ensure that my facts were accurate. This took place during the Summer of 1996. Since then we have e-mailed each other or met in person so that I could keep up with her work. I was particularly interested in how and why she became a feminist theologian, her education and professional development, who influenced her, and what she considered the most important issues.

These questions were also my main topics of interest with Marie Gratton and Yvonne Bergeron. I interviewed both women at length. For two years I studied with Marie Gratton at the University of Sherbrooke. Over this time I got to know the woman and her work. After I put together the first draft of her chapter, we corresponded by post and e-mail on clarifying details. Through Marie Gratton I met Yvonne Bergeron and developed an interest in her work as a feminist theologian. I interviewed her in May, 2000. I had already read much of her work and asked questions that placed the work in the context of

her life. After writing the first draft of her chapter, we communicated by telephone and in person to ensure the accuracy of my work.

Lettie James, Ruth Matthews, and Heather Thomson are Anglican priests and their lives have been devoted to pastoral, liturgical and sacramental work. The media was interested in them at the time of their ordinations, and newspaper articles were written about them. Although they all preach on a regular basis, Ruth Matthews and Heather Thomson have not kept their sermons; and Lettie James has only kept some of hers. These women are not writers as such. Lettie James had the largest amount of written material of the three to offer me; Heather Thomson had some material, although not much; and Ruth Matthews had virtually none. The substance for the chapters on these three women was based on interviews which I conducted during the Spring and Summer of 1998. In each case I was interested in their sense of vocation to the priesthood, when it started, how it developed and how it fit in with their family background and education. As far as the stories about their ordinations were concerned I asked them what obstacles they had to overcome as the pioneers in this field. I was also interested in their view of the role of women in the church and their thoughts on the future of the Anglican Church. The resulting chapters are primarily oral history; and these were stories that had not previously been told. The issues that concern Lettie James, Ruth Matthews and Heather Thomson are similar to those that concern Marie Gratton, Monique Dumais and Yvonne Bergeron; it is their approach to the issues that is different.

Joanne Brousseau fits into the second category of women. She is preparing for the Anglican priesthood; she is a student, but not a writer at this stage of her career. Her chapter is based on interviews, and the first sermon she delivered in the Anglican Church.

During the summer of 1999, in an attempt to find a common thread running throughout the seven chapters, I sent a questionnaire to the women. Finally I used a small portion of the material. Rather than finding a common thread, I found even more disparity between the two groups of women. I had asked questions about their dreams and aspirations as young women; about their role models, their prayer life and methods of preparing sermons, and their view of women in the Bible. I decided that it was my questionnaire and not the women who failed to establish a common ground. The only questions I was able to incorporate into my Thesis were:

- 1) As a pioneer in the Church, have you seen any/many changes in the role of women in the Church?**
- 2) What special gifts do women bring to the church?**
- 3) What is your vision of the future of the Church?**

This Thesis is a bilingual work; it contains material about francophone and anglophone women. Quotes or citations by or about the women are written in their own language.

THE LITERATURE

I attest to the fact that the Thesis is original. It is about the contribution made to Quebec society by seven Quebec women. All the subjects confirmed that their stories have never been told. Lettie James, Ruth Matthews, and Heather Thomson have been the subjects of newspaper and magazine articles written on the occasions of their ordinations. Lettie James has been included in a study of women and religion, and will provide material for a history of the Diocese of Montreal, which is in the process of being written by Dr. Meb Reisner. Ruth Matthews and Heather Thomson are mentioned in **Strangers and Pilgrims, The History of the Diocese of Quebec 1793-1993**, by the same author, her first publication of this nature. Marie Gratton and Monique Dumais were subjects of a paper presented in 1994 by Carolyn Sharp entitled *The Emergence of Francophone Feminist Theology*. I contacted the author, and she assured me that she had no intention of writing further on these two theologians. Yvonne Bergeron has only been the subject of magazine articles. Joanne Brousseau is a newcomer to the scene.

Several searches of doctoral theses were made to ensure that nothing detracted from the originality of my work. The only relevant thesis was written by Christine Jamieson, B. Th., M.A., L.Th., Saint Paul University, Ottawa; Ph.D. (Ethics) Saint Paul University/University of Ottawa. Her dissertation was entitled *The Significance of the Body in Ethical Discourse: Julia Kristeva's Contribution to Moral Theology*. Her work is concerned with the significance of embodiment for moral theology and enters into dialogue with Christian ethicists struggling with issues relating to embodiment. Christine Jamieson discusses in a general manner the ordination of women and the Roman Catholic

Church's exclusion of women from ordination, and the ramifications of sexual differentiation as it pertains to ethical discourse. This work did not seem to threaten my area of study.

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC
THE QUESTION OF THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

At the Clergy Conference of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec, held in Sherbrooke in September, 1993, The Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, Michael Peers, stated: "The ordination of women is not an issue in Canada, it is an historical fact." (Personal communication, M. Peers, September, 1993) The first woman to be ordained priest in the Anglican worldwide communion was the Reverend Doctor Florence Li Tim-Oi, who was ordained in the Anglican Church of Shaoqing, in the Chinese province of Guangdong, on January 25, 1944 (The Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul), by Bishop Ronald Hall. After the ordination Florence Li Tim-Oi returned to Macau where she had been working as a deaconess. The ordination went against canon law, and repercussions were felt in 1946. In her memoirs, **Raindrops of my Life** (1996) Florence Li Tim-Oi wrote:

In the summer of 1945, peace was declared throughout the world. The fireworks set off to celebrate the tidings shook Macau. Soon, in 1946, I received a letter from Bishop Hall's secretary, the Rev. George She (also a lawyer), asking me to come to Hong Kong for a meeting. At the meeting, I was quickly told that Bishop Hall had broken church canon law to ordain me as a priest, and hence had been denounced and criticized by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Either Bishop Hall must resign as bishop or I must give up the title of priest.

When first told of this problem, I was quite perturbed. I gave serious thought as to whether I should step down or stay on. Through a moment of deep meditation in which I prayed for God's guidance, and the constant working of the Holy Spirit, I suddenly saw the light. I realized that I should see my personal

prestige as worthless for I was merely a small servant of the Lord. As the psalmist put it, "I am worm".
(Psa.22.6)

I voluntarily and whole-heartedly supported Bishop Hall in upholding his holy office as bishop. He was a man of spirituality. Not only was he influential in the Chinese Church, but his international contributions were also large. I was willing to give up my title of priest, but I knew that having been ordained, I had to follow the order throughout my life. (Tim-Oi, p. 22)

Florence Li Tim-Oi gave up her licence as a priest, but not her orders as a priest. She continued to serve as a deaconess in the Chinese Church.

At the posthumous service (The Rev. Dr. Florence Li Tim-Oi died in her sleep on February 26, 1992. She was eighty-five (*ibid.* pp. 2 & 86)) celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the Ordination of Florence Li Tim-Oi at Saint Martin-in-the-Fields, London, on January 25, 1994, Archbishop Donald Coggan quoted the Abbé of Tourville saying: "In every age, God has scattered forerunners in the world. They are those who are far ahead of their time and whose personal action is based on an inward knowledge of that which is to come" These forerunners "feel themselves to be strangers in a foreign land". He went on to say: "R.O. knew what it was to be lonely". (R.O. was Bishop Ronald Hall). (*ibid.* p. 101)

That sermon was delivered shortly before the first women were ordained in England. The Archbishop closed by saying:

I want to see this congregation turned into a body of people who will pray daily for the women who are to be ordained - women who will reflect the passion for truth of R.O., women who will reflect the passion of Li Tim-Oi for service and building up the Body of Christ. But above all, women who will bring to the Church of God such an infusion of holiness that some of the darkness we men have brought to the church may be healed by their radiance; some of the cockiness we men have brought to the church may be healed by their humility; some of the wounds we men have inflicted on the church may be healed by their gentleness.

We shall welcome them with warmth.

We shall pray for them with diligence.

God bless them. (*ibid.* p. 102)

At a similar service held on the same day at St. Matthew's and St. John's in Toronto, Archbishop Ted Scott said in his sermon:

I do not think that Florence was ever aware of the tremendous influence she had, both on individual persons and on the church. She influenced me very deeply and I know that she also influenced many leaders of the World Council of Churches. She had a great influence upon the thinking of the church. She modelled faithfulness, and when she was given the authority to do so, she modelled priesthood at its best. Her example led many people struggling with the issue, among them Archbishop Runcie, to move to a more positive stance vis à vis the ordination of women. (*ibid.* p. 94)

The next ordination of women in the Anglican Church also took place in Hong Kong, in 1971. In Reverend Florence Li Tim-Oi's book there is a photograph of her with four other women priests taken on the "Tenth anniversary of the ordination of women with

five clergy from the Diocese of Hong Kong and Macau, 1981". The five women are "the Rev. Mary Au, the Rev. Joyce Bennett, the Rev. Florence Li, the Rev. Jane Huang, and the Rev. Wing Shue Sek." These women were also forerunners, or pioneers, in the story of the ordination of women in the Anglican communion, although these ordinations were not recognized by the worldwide Anglican communion.

The following group of "forerunners" were eleven women who were ordained priests by "Renegade Bishops" in the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. on July 29, 1974 in Philadelphia. The women were known as the "Philadelphia Eleven". In an article entitled *Female Episcopal Priests Started here 25 years Ago*, by David O'Reilly in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 28, 1999, celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the ordinations, the author wrote:

There had been threats of arson, assault, even firebombs, anything to thwart this imminent act of "blasphemy."

Buckets of water lined the aisles of the Episcopal Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia as a precaution. Security guards mingled with the 2,000 worshippers. Uniformed police watched for trouble a block away. (p. A1)

The ordination was called "a defiant act that rocked the worldwide Anglican community and pushed open the door to women's ordination." David O'Reilly wrote: "the Philadelphia ceremony was the turning point for a historic shift in the ordination policy, said William Franklin, Dean of the Berkeley School of Theology at Yale Divinity School and a professor of church history." According to William Franklin, for the 2.4 million

member Episcopal Church USA “there has been nothing more important in 20th-century church history.” (p. A1)

The ordinations were not recognized at the time. As O’Reilly explains: “A month later, the Episcopal House of Bishops gathered in emergency session at Chicago’s O’Hare Airport and declared the ordinations invalid and “without canonical merit.” Presiding Bishop John M. Allin, of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America, instructed all diocesan bishops to “restrict any deacons receiving such ordination from exercising priestly functions.”(p. A2)

O’Reilly explained what happened subsequently:

In 1975, the 1.5 million member Anglican Church of Canada authorized priestly ordination for women, and in 1976, the Episcopal Church USA, meeting in general convention, followed suit.

The 1976 convention also recognized the “irregular” ordinations of the Philadelphia Eleven and of five women ordained in a 1975 ceremony in Washington.

The Church of England began ordaining women as priests in 1992 but still bars female bishops. (p. A3)

In an article entitled *Consecration of Bishop Stirs Episcopal Dissent* by Richard Walker written in *Christianity Today*, March 17, 1989, the author stated:

The U.S. Episcopal Church on February 11 consecrated Barbara C. Harris as its first woman bishop in a ceremony in Boston marked by both joyous celebration and dire warnings.

For the 8,500 worshippers in Hynes Auditorium and tens of thousands of sympathizers not present, the admission of a female to the denomination's highest order of ministry symbolized the culmination of a movement that began in 1974 with the illicit ordination of eleven women as priests at a Philadelphia parish. In 1976, the national church opened all orders of the Episcopal clergy to women.

But the election of Harris as suffragan (assisting) bishop of Massachusetts had wider implications. With her consecration by Episcopal primate Edmond Browning and 54 other bishops, the Anglican communion - a family of 70 million Christians in 28 national churches that grew out of the Church of England - became what church leaders have called an "impaired" communion.

A church divided. (p. 41)

In her book, **When Women Were Priests**, Karen Jo Torjesen discusses the consecration of Barbara Harris:

The contemporary ordination of women also touches on the volatile issue of sexuality. When Barbara Harris was ordained as the first female bishop of the Episcopal church in 1989, *Time* magazine commented on her red nail polish. Red nail polish, of course, has little to do with a woman's qualification for the office of bishop, but the reporter was unconsciously stating that the ordination of a woman as bishop brought female sexuality and divinity into uncomfortable proximity. The Vatican's 1976 *Declaration of the Question of Admitting Women to the Priesthood* justifies its exclusion of women from the priesthood on the grounds that the female body does not resemble the male body of Christ. It is therefore impossible for a woman to perform the sacramental functions of a priest. Here again sexuality enters the picture. A woman, unlike a man, is perceived to be inseparable from her sexual nature, and as a priest she would bring sexuality into the realm of the sacred. (Torjesen, p. 3)

Karen Jo Torjesen discusses some of the other issues raised when considering the ordination of women priests:

The controversy over women's ordination in the last half of the twentieth century has occasioned interesting questions having to do with women's roles, female character, sexuality, and the gender of God. The formal processes by which contemporary women have been accepted as religious leaders have been fraught with social and religious controversy; the voting has been close and the debates bitter. Intense conflicts over women's roles, femininity, and sexuality have divided conventions, councils, and congregations so deeply that schisms have sometimes seemed inevitable. The crisis precipitated by the ordination of women has religious and social ramifications. The Church of England's decision to ordain women quashed the hopes of those who wished to see the Anglican and Catholic churches reunited. The Catholic hierarchy, still insisting that the ordination of women would change the very nature of the priesthood, nevertheless cannot ignore the priestly functions its laywomen are performing - reading Scripture, distributing the consecrated bread and wine to the congregation, counseling, teaching, and administration. Now comfortable with their presence at the altar, over 75 percent of American Catholics favor women priests. (*ibid.* p. 2)

In light of what Torjesen says about 'close votes and bitter debates' it is interesting to note that in England the vote in favour of women priests was passed by a mere two votes. In an article entitled *Church of England Endorses Women's Path to Priesthood*, The Associated Press reported:

With a two-thirds majority required in each of the three houses of the church's General Synod, the legislation was approved 39-13 by the bishops, 176-74 by the clergy and 169-82 among the laity after a daylong debate.

A switch of just two votes among lay delegates would have blocked the path to priesthood for the church's 1,350 women deacons. (p. 1)

In another article on the same subject entitled *Church of England Admits Women as Priests*, a Reuters reporter commented on the vote: "The vote in the domed debating chamber of the General Synod in London, disrupted only by a protest from a single dissenting priest, finally enshrined what is the most momentous and divisive change in the church since its break with Rome in 1534." (p. 1) It is important to remind the reader that the Church of England did not go so far as to allow the ordination of women bishops.

In the Anglican Church of Canada, and specifically within the Dioceses of Quebec and Montreal, it has not always been possible to say that "the ordination of women is not an issue, but an historical fact." (Michael Peers, September, 1993) In the year 2001 the Anglican Church celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the ordination of women. As the three stories of the Anglican priests in this thesis will illustrate, there was considerable opposition to the ordination of women in the Anglican Church in the Dioceses of Quebec and Montreal. One of the main arguments against the ordination of women is the fact that Jesus was a man and the Apostles were all men. During the summer of 1999, I interviewed two elderly priests in the Diocese of Quebec who I knew were against the ordination of women. I asked them for their reasons. The first priest said that "God gave certain and differing attributes to men and women...there are certain types of work

that women cannot do...the role of women is procreation". He continued: "God created men and women differently for a reason. We have to give God credit for having a reason. Each performs the role for which they were created. In our society we digress from that and take a view of equality, but A does not equal B. God is reason, he doesn't do anything without a reason. Why else did He create men and women differently?" (Personal communication, July 12, 1999) This priest was known never to have allowed a woman into the sanctuary. At the time of writing this thesis the three parishes in which he served in the Diocese of Quebec were all in the charge of women.

The second retired priest in the Diocese of Quebec I interviewed said: "I wish with all my heart that I could agree with the ordination of women, but there is just something in me that won't." He continued: "At first I was horrified at the thought of women priests, but I have certainly moved beyond that, and see that women like yourself, Ruth (Matthews) and Heather (Thomson) have marvellous ministries". He also said that he names the three of us in his daily devotions. But this priest feels that the Anglican Church "did not have the right to make such a move apart from the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church". However, he did conclude: "If I was sick and on my deathbed, I would not hesitate to ask you to give me the blessing and last sacraments. One comes into Desert Island Theology: if a group is deserted on an island, you elect one to be the priest." (Personal communication, July 12, 1999)

This thesis is, in part, about three women: The Rev. Canon Doctor Lettie James, the Rev. Ruth Matthews, and the Rev. Canon Heather Thomson, who were among the first ordained priests in the Anglican Church of Canada, and the first to be ordained in the

Province of Quebec. It will look at what obstacles they had to overcome in order to be ordained. They all faced discrimination based on gender. The fact that Heather Thomson was pregnant at the time of her ordination caused concern among some because it seemed such a blatant statement of her femininity and her sexuality. Their stories will be told with a view to examining which issues they had to confront in order to reach the goal of ordination. These three women were the forerunners, the pioneers in their field. The story of Joanne Brousseau acts as a bridge between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church in Quebec. She is a francophone who left the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec in 1999 in order to join the Anglican Church and prepare for ordination to the priesthood. There are several male priests in the Diocese of Quebec who were formerly members of the Roman Catholic Church; and there is one woman who is a perpetual non-stipendiary deacon who was a former member of the Roman Catholic Church. Joanne Brousseau will be the first woman priest to serve in the Diocese of Quebec who was formerly a member of the Roman Catholic Church. She too is a pioneer.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1990) defines a pioneer as:

-n. 1 an initiator of a new enterprise, an inventor, etc. 2 an explorer or settler; a colonist. 3 *Mil.* a member of an infantry group preparing roads, terrain, etc. for the main body of troops. *v.* 1 *a tr.* initiate or originate (an enterprise etc) *b intr.* act or prepare the way as a pioneer. 2 *tr. Mil.* open up (a road etc) as a pioneer. 3 *tr.* go before, lead or conduct (another person or persons). (p. 905)

The definitions for both the noun and the verb are useful for the purposes of this thesis. This study is about women who are initiators, explorers, originators. They are all, the

anglophones and the francophones, women who have prepared the way for others to follow. The next section will look briefly at what the one existing history book about the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Quebec had to say about two of the pioneers, Ruth Matthews and Heather Thomson.

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE ONLY HISTORY BOOK THAT
DOCUMENTS THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN IN THE
ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE DIOCESE OF QUEBEC:**

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS,

A HISTORY OF THE DIOCESE OF QUEBEC

1793 - 1993

by Dr. Mary Ellen Reisner

To celebrate the bicentenary of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec in 1993 Dr. Mary Ellen Reisner, Professor at Laval University, was commissioned to write a history of the Diocese. Dr. Reisner accepted the project "on condition that I would retain full scholarly control over the project, without interference either from individuals or from committees. (p. 9) The result was **Strangers and Pilgrims, A History of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec 1793 - 1993**. As Bishop Bruce Stavert states in the Foreword: "Our journey in the present and the new and difficult challenges to which God calls us in the future will be undertaken with clearer vision if we know the story of our past." (p. 8) In his tribute to the book, Thomas R. Millman, first Archivist of general Synod, 1955 - 1974, writes of "the author's mastery of the subject and her sound judgment on persons and events."

There is no question of the author's mastery of the subject and of her judgement, as Millman goes on to say: "This is a professionally written, carefully crafted, historical study". However, it is noteworthy how little

space is given to the ordination of the first women priests in the Anglican Diocese of Quebec. Certainly at the time the events were considered newsworthy and were covered by the media. It was radical for the Bishop to ordain a woman, probably one of the most radical moves that had been made by a bishop in the two hundred years of the Diocese. In her book Dr. M. E. Reisner only mentions Ruth Matthews twice and Heather Thomson once. She writes:

On 6th March, 1977, Bishop Matthews installed Ruth H. Matthews (then a deacon) as rector of the parish of St Francis of Assisi, and, on 5th June of that year, ordained her to the priesthood. Since that time there has been a fairly steady stream of women presenting themselves for ordination in the Diocese. Their placement, once ordained, has been a different matter. Generally speaking, if they have been given parishes at all, it has been in outlying areas - on the Gaspé coast or the Lower North shore. Two chaplaincies in colleges and schools are presently held by women, but the appointments are not necessarily indicative of diocesan policy, as they are both within the power of the institutions themselves, and not the Diocese, to make.

After more than 15 years, female ministry has continued to meet with resistance in the Diocese, particularly among the priesthood. This is thanks to the conscience clause, which (until 1986) enabled clergy to act as if there simply were no women priests. Thus, when Ruth Matthews, as an ordinand, was put forward for the usual examination, the Bishop's Examining Chaplain refused point blank to have anything to do with the proceedings. The Archdeacon who, under ordinary circumstances, would have presented her at the ordination ceremony likewise declined to do so. True to his word, the Bishop did not try to compel

either of these men to act. Another examiner was found, and the candidate was presented by the Rev. David Whitehouse, Rector of Trinity Church, Ste-Foy, where she had worshipped as a child.

It has become customary at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity for one woman at least to assist at services calling for several priests, but there continue to be clergy in the Diocese who will not attend any religious ceremony in which a woman priest takes part. Similarly, there are parishes where no woman (unless equipped with a flower vase or a vacuum cleaner) is permitted to set foot within the sanctuary. Had the decision depended on the clergy instead of the Bishop, it seems that the ordination of women in this diocese might well have been delayed, perhaps for as long as a decade or more.

As the third centenary of the Diocese opens, the appointment of the first woman as a canon of the Cathedral - in the person of the Rev. Heather Thomson - will doubtless be perceived as a further opening of the way to responsibilities and honours that have hitherto been denied women in the Diocese of Quebec. (p. 119)

There is one other reference to Ruth Matthews in the book:

The W.A. not only enlisted the support of women in the home; it also sent women as missionaries into the field. The first woman to be ordained priest in the Diocese of Quebec, Ruth H. Matthews, had previously worked for six years in the Yukon as a W. A. missionary and, in her capacity as Bishop's Messenger (under Bishop Greenwood), had taken charge of several parishes in the North. In 1977, 23 years later, she became "the first woman to take complete charge of a parish in the diocese of Quebec." (p. 142)

Dr. Mary Ellen Reisner is sensitive to the role of women in the Diocese of Quebec. She cites in detail the length of time and the difficulty laywomen had just in becoming full members of Synod:

In his Charge to the Synod of 1934, Bishop Lennox Williams "presented the question of the desirability of women representation in the Synod." This subject, as the Bishop pointed out, had been prompted by a resolution adopted at the Lambeth Conference of 1920 that "women should be admitted to those Councils of the Church to which Laymen are admitted, and on equal terms. Diocesan, Provincial or National Synods may decide when or how this principle is to be brought into effect."

The notion met with determined resistance although the subject of extending the franchise came up regularly at Synod, especially after World War II. For three consecutive Synods the Very Rev. R.L. Seaborn was to move, seconded by Mr. S.A. Meade, that the canon barring laywomen from representing their congregations at Synod be amended. Parishes were consulted and of the 31 returning replies, 19 were in favour of the motion. In 1951, "after a spirited debate the motion was defeated by a standing vote by orders - Clerical: for 13, against 25; Lay: for 29, against 21." In 1953, Archbishop Carrington remarked rather testily in his Charge that "the admission of women to membership in this Synod has been more than once rejected on the floor of this house. It may interest you to know that the synod of Toronto has taken this step, and that 17 women have been elected as members." He might also have mentioned that women had been "duly appointed" as delegates to General Synod since 1946 when Mrs. R. E. Wodehouse, dominion President of the W.A., had taken her seat to represent the Diocese of the Yukon.

In 1963 and 1965, despite continued opposition (duly recorded in the Synod Journal), the necessary ratification at two consecutive Synods was at last secured. Among those supporting the motion were Archdeacons John Comfort, Guy Marston and T.J. Matthews, Canon W.H.M. Church, Chancellor H.E. Grundy, Q.C., and Dr. D.C. Masters. Of the original movers, Seaborn had left the Diocese in 1958 on his election as Assistance Bishop of Newfoundland and Bert Meads had died, aged 79, in 1961. Finally, at the 1968 Synod, Bishop Brown welcomed the first female delegates (15 of whom were present) with characteristic courtesy:

It is significant that at this Synod, at which we recognize the change in name of our national women's organization from "Women's Auxiliary" to "Anglican Church Women," we should also welcome as full delegates to our Synod - women from various parts of the Diocese. Their presence here to-day makes one wonder why in the past there should have been any debate about such an obviously desirable innovation.

It would appear, however, from the Report of the Committee on the Bishop's Charge, that the innovation had gone down hard. "We consider with you My Lord that it is cause for delight that women delegates are present," it began. "While some members of your committee, notwithstanding retain reservations on the feminine presence here, yet none of us, you may be sure withholds his hearty concurrence that Synod has admitted women delegates." Far from taking the lead from the Bishop in making the best of a *fait accompli*, the committee's stipulated "reservations on the feminine presence," its avowals of "delight" and "hearty concurrence," strike one as somewhat less than sincere - a fine instance of what might be termed as "Anglicant." (pp. 93 -96)

Although Dr. Reisner has not given much space in the book to Ruth Matthews and Heather Thomson, she has not held back in pointing out the difficulties that women have had in taking their place in the Church. As she writes: "I made a particular effort to treat the Diocese in all the diversity of its components, and to resist the temptation to focus on the centre. However, in a project of this magnitude, omissions are bound to occur. I regret them and take full responsibility for them." (p. 10) Although it is possible to feel regret that more space was not given to two women who are not only pilgrims, but also pioneers, at least it can be said that they have found their place in the history book. If women priests who came after Ruth Matthews and Heather Thomson are not mentioned it is because they were the first, and ordination is no longer an issue. Dr. Mary Ellen Reisner is currently working on a history of the Diocese of Montreal; Dr. Reverend Canon Lettie James will feature in that book.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

The second part of this thesis will look at the life and work of three Roman Catholic francophone women in Quebec: Marie Gratton, Monique Dumais and Yvonne Bergeron, who are pioneers in their field: feminist theology. One of their major concerns is the role of women in the church and their fight for equality and justice for women; the issue is power.

POWER

Power is an operative word in feminist theology, especially in Quebec. Feminist theologians are concerned with the role of women in the Bible, in the history of the Church, their role in contemporary religion and in the Church today. In all these areas power is the key word. It is the word that is at the heart of the struggle.

In **Harrap's Pocket French and English Dictionary**, the word 'power' is given eight different possible translations into French; they are: pouvoir; faculté; capacité; vigueur; force; puissance; influence, and autorité. When Quebec Francophone feminist theologians talk about power they use the word 'pouvoir'.

I will be writing about Marie Gratton later, but at this point I will deal with how she explains a feminist theologian's understanding of power, or, *pouvoir*, in an article that appeared in *Compass - A Jesuit Journal*, entitled "*Power in the Church - Must it*

Remain a Clerical Fiefdom?", in the Spring, 1987. Marie Gratton dissects the word 'power' and finds that the noun has six meanings: "possibility of, capacity for" doing something, and also the "right, mandate, mission" to exercise that capacity." Thus, she says, "the word's initial connotation is a place where freedom can be expressed", and it is only secondarily, she says, "that it should bring to mind the idea of authority, might, hegemony, with its possible - if not probable - corollaries of authoritarianism, despotism, and abuse". She goes on to probe: "But *pouvoir* is also a verb, meaning to be able to, to be in a position to." Used as an auxiliary verb, it also conveys the idea "to have the right, authorization, permission," to do something. This wide-ranging verb can express "possibility, hypothesis, wish." At this point Marie Gratton leaves the dictionary and goes on to her own hypothesis and vision; she writes:

The essence of what I am proposing is '*du pouvoir pour pouvoir*' - power to be able to do. To desire power of this sort is to hope that there will be room for every believer to express his or her own gifts freely. Looking at power, at '*pouvoir*', in this way not only demonstrates the term's ambivalence but also unleashes its explosive potential. From the beginning of the discussion, we see clearly the reality that underlies the term is made up of two aspects which, far from necessarily being opposed to each other, can be shown to be complementary or even inseparable. (p. 16)

In **Femmes et pouvoir dans l'église**, Marie-Andrée Roy, a feminist theologian at L'Université du Québec à Montréal, also analyses the word power, and writes in her section, entitled, "*Femmes, domination et pouvoir*" of the power that women do not have in the Church. She finds five meanings for the word 'power', the fifth of which is

'hegemony'. Marie-Andrée Roy writes: "Compte tenu de la situation objective des femmes dans cette institution, la prétention à l'hégémonie n'est pas plausible, n'est pratiquement pas imaginable. Quand on ne peut pas devenir prêtre, il est difficile de se rêver cardinale ou papesse!" (p. 116) The whole idea of power in the Church has developed to the point that those with it would argue that their power is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and that theirs is a life of service. The particular problem in Quebec is that women perform the bulk of the services and the priests, bishops and archbishops are the ones with the power. They make the decisions and they have the authority.

When talking about power and the Roman Catholic Church one has to refer to the Pope. Virtually all power lies in his hands. The hierarchical structure of the Church is such that all the power is weighted at the top, and very little is dispersed throughout the rest of the structure. Furthermore, there seems very little hope or chance of this changing in the foreseeable future, regardless of what people at the grass roots level think. The provinces of the Church around the world have no autonomy and no independence. In 1992, the Roman Catholic Church published the new Catechism - the first major doctrinal revision in four hundred and twenty-six years. Three thousand (male, celibate) bishops worked on the document for six years. The revision was not remarkable for bringing changes to the Church's structures and thinking.

In this document the faithful are told what to believe and how to live; they are told about God and the views they should hold on other religions; they are told what to think about modern science and modern technology, (especially medical technology); immigration,

freedom, war, disarmament, the environment, animals, the economy, property, work, and unemployment, the family, the couple, birth control, homosexuality, sports and suicide. One learns that abortion is forbidden, but capital punishment, if there is no better alternative, is acceptable. There seems to be no aspect of life which is not touched. The Pope and the bishops have a say in everything. (Michel Legris, "*Exclusif - Le Nouveau Catéchisme*", *L'Express*, 20 Nov., 1992) Perhaps the most appalling use (or abuse?) of power on the part of the Pope was his plea, in 1993, to Bosnian women who had been raped by Serbian forces, not to submit to abortions.

For Quebec francophone feminist theologians this document adds fuel to the flames of discontent. They have much to say about the Pope, his theology and his code of ethics. Some respond with quiet frustration and some respond with vocal outrage. Some have left the Church, in anger and despair; some have stayed, in anger and despair; and some carry on hoping that by working at the grass roots they may make a change - 'les petits pas' these are called.

But all of them, whether patient or not, are constantly reminded of the concept of service; which is a cruel irony since most of the feminists theologians are women who are deeply committed to the idea, and the practice, of community service and social justice. Most Quebec feminist theologians feel that if women did have more 'power', the structures would change from hierarchical to circular and communal, and that eventually, power would no longer be an issue; service would be the driving force.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE QUESTION OF THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

It took the conviction of Anglican Bishop Ronald Hall to ordain the Reverend Florence Li Tim-Oi, and the audacity of the “Renegade Bishops” of Philadelphia to ordain the Philadelphia Eleven. Are there such bishops of conviction and courage within the Roman Catholic Church? On May 22, 1994, Pope John Paul II categorically rejected the idea of women priests. He said it would never happen, and furthermore, forbade any debate on the issue. On that date His Holiness Pope John Paul II issued an **Ordinatio Sacerdotalis, an Apostolic Letter on reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone**. In this brief document the Pope gave his reasons against the ordination of women priests: “the example recorded in the Sacred Scriptures of Christ choosing his Apostles only from among men; the constant practice of the Church, which has imitated Christ in choosing only men; and her living teaching authority which has consistently held that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is in accordance with God’s plan for his Church.” John Paul II goes on to explain that the Church: “does not consider itself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination.” He says “To these fundamental reasons the document (*Inter Insigniores*, approved and ordered to be published by Pope Paul VI in 1976) adds other theological reasons which illustrate the appropriateness of the divine provision, and it also shows clearly that Christ’s way of acting did not proceed from sociological or cultural motives peculiar to his time. As Pope Paul VI later explained: “The real reason is that in giving the Church her fundamental constitution, her theological anthropology- thereafter always followed by the Church’s Tradition - Christ established things in this way.”

Pope John Paul II assures his readers that Christ chose his Apostles in a “completely free and sovereign manner” He writes: “In fact, the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles attest that his call was made in accordance with God’s eternal plan: Christ chose those whom he willed (cf. *Mk* 3:13-14; *Jn* 6:70), and he did so in union with the Father, “through the Holy Spirit” (1:2), after having spent the night in prayer (cf. *Lk* 6:12)..The Apostles did the same when they chose fellow workers who would succeed them in their ministry.”

The Pope goes on to emphasize the dignity of women:

Furthermore, the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, received neither the mission proper to the Apostles nor the ministerial priesthood clearly shows that the non-admission of women to priestly ordination cannot mean that women are of lesser dignity, nor can it be construed as discrimination against them. Rather, it is to be seen as the faithful observance of a plan to be ascribed to the wisdom of the Lord of the universe.

The presence and the role of women in the life and mission of the Church, although not linked to the ministerial priesthood, remain absolutely necessary and irreplaceable. As the Declaration *Inter Insigniores* points out, “the Church desires that Christian women should become fully aware of the greatness of their mission; today their role is of capital importance both for the renewal and humanization of society and for the rediscovery by believers of the true face of the Church”. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Inter Insigniores*, 6:AAS 69 (1977), 115-116)

The New Testament and the whole history of the Church give ample evidence of the presence in the Church of women, true disciples, witnesses to Christ in the family and in society, as well as to total

consecration to the service of God and of the Gospel. "By defending the dignity of women and their vocation, the Church has shown honour and gratitude for those women who - faithful to the Gospel - have shared in every age in the apostolic mission of the whole People of God. They are the holy martyrs, virgins, and the mothers of families, who bravely bore witness to the faith and passed on the Church's faith and tradition by bringing up their children in the spirit of the Gospel. (Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 27: AAs 80 (1988), 1719.)

There is no doubt in the Pope's mind about the role and place of women. This being the case, he goes on to forbid any further debate of the question of the ordination of women:

Although the teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal Tradition of the Church and firmly taught by the Magisterium in its more recent documents, at the present time in some places it is nonetheless considered still open to debate, or the Church's judgment that women are not to be admitted to ordination is considered to have a merely disciplinary force.

Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. LK 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by the Church's faithful.

Invoking an abundance of divine assistance upon you, venerable Brothers, and upon all the faithful, I impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, on 22 May, the Solemnity of Pentecost, in the year 1994, the sixteenth of my Pontificate.

Joannes Paulus Pp.II

This missive certainly aims to close the doors on the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood for all time. In Quebec this Papal decision was front page news. George Tombs of *The Gazette* (June 2, 1994) wrote: "*Le Soleil* editorialist Jean Martel wrote that it was sad the Pope had replied in such an absolute way to the growing number of Catholics who believe women should be priests". Martel continued: "Instead of leaving the question open and allowing theological research and pastoral reflection to continue" ...the Pope "has locked and bolted the door. There can be no more authoritarian way to act." Martel went on to say that the ordination of women in the Anglican Church was seen by the majority of Christians as a major event; and he added: "Sadly, the Catholic Church under John Paul II is attached instead to a static concept of tradition: if something has never been done in the past, that's enough to prevent it being done now."

Clerics and lay people around the Province of Quebec reacted negatively to the Pope's decision. A letter was written and signed by four women who belong to the group within the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec called 'Femmes et Ministères'. This letter was published in *Le Devoir* on June 29, 1994. It was endorsed by 725 Quebec Roman Catholics, including priests, theologians, teachers and laity. (*The Gazette*, June 30, 1994) The letter "called the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops to reconsider the ordination of women even though John Paul II recently ended the discussion" (*op. cit*) In *La Presse*, editorialist Pierre Gravel "noted that some of Quebec's bishops have an open mind on women priests, but all have come out officially supporting the Vatican position".

The letter, addressed to Msgr. Jean-Guy Hamelin, Archbishop of Rouyn-Noranda, President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, states that the Pope's decision on May 22 "has created anger and dissidence among many practising Catholics here." (*The Gazette*, June 30, 1994) It continues: "It is illogical in any modern, democratic society to affirm the equality of men and women, and then turn around and say that women, by virtue of their gender, cannot be priests". (*op. cit.*) The letter also "quotes a 1971 Vatican report that says that nowhere in the New Testament does it state that Jesus did not want to ordain women". (*op. cit.*) Apparently Hamelin "was surprised by the letter and the level of discontent with the Church." He is quoted saying: "Certainly, there's a question here, a problem. But I'm not closing the door on Femmes et Ministères. It is necessary to continue the dialogue with them." (*op. cit.*)

There are many people in the Roman Catholic Church who feel that the question of women priests is not the key issue. What they feel is more urgent is that women be increasingly involved in parish life, in positions of responsibility and decision-making. Indeed women can be found in the office of Chancellor in some dioceses; in others they are co-ordinating pastoral ministries and acting as administrators. Nevertheless, as long as women are barred from the priesthood, this has to be seen as discrimination against women. The next section will examine how the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec views certain important issues within the Church.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC:
THE PEOPLE

In concentrating on the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec, one must consult the people who are “the Church” to discover their thoughts and feelings. For this purpose the information comes from a survey and articles published in *La Presse Montréal* on the 4th and 5th April, 1993. The survey was entitled "*Sondage -SOM LA PRESSE TVA*" and it dealt with some key issues. The survey, conducted March, 1993, questioned 1006 carefully selected people. They identified themselves with the Roman Catholic Church (89%) or another Christian denomination (5%) or were atheists (6%). The results are representative of 92% of the population of Quebec.

One of the striking facts revealed in the survey is the similarity in the responses between women and men, and between French and English. The better educated and better off financially the respondents, the more liberal and progressive their views.

The survey asked questions about contraception and abortion, and in general, on questions of ethics, 57% felt that the Church was out of touch with the realities of the times. 48% of the respondents said that the values of the Church were in accord with the values of the Gospels. Another fact that emerged was the importance of these values to Quebecers, both practising and non-practising individuals.

The majority of the questions dealt with the ordination of women and married priests. 77% of those asked replied in favour of the ordination of women, 20% against. 67% considered this a decision that should be made by the national Churches and not the Pope. 54% expressed the opinion that the ordination of women would have no negative impact, and 35% felt that it would have a positive impact on their personal religious lives. 75% stated that it should not be necessary for women priests to remain celibate, 68% that it was discriminatory not to have women priests and 65% would be prepared to exert pressure to bring about the ordination of women. A massive 90% were in favour of women bishops. In summary, the majority of Quebecers supported the ordination of women and hoped to see it happen.

The same progressive views were expressed in reply to the question concerning married priests. 85% of those questioned were in favour of priests being allowed to marry; and 85% agreed that married men should be allowed to join the priesthood. In fact, Gregory Baum, Professor in the Faculty of Religious Sciences at McGill University, commenting on the survey, wrote in *La Presse* : "Je trouve aberrant qu'un groupe de célibataires par vocation tiennent à décider des pratiques sexuelles du monde entier." (5 avril, 1993)

Commenting on the overwhelming votes in favour of women priests and married priests, Jules Béliveau wrote: "C'est un signe des temps. C'est une démonstration de l'évolution des esprits et des mentalités face à ces questions litigieuses...Les autorités doivent prendre bonne note de ce sursaut d'intérêt." It is, of course, unlikely that the Pope was aware of the survey or the accompanying comments; nevertheless, Jules Béliveau offered the Pope

some advice: "À l'aube de l'an 2000 le Vatican doit à tout le moins accepter de rouvrir publiquement le débat et y associer étroitement les croyants. Pour l'avenir même de l'Église Catholique, une avenue à envisager serait de confier aux Églises nationales la décision de permettre ou non l'ordination des femmes et le mariage des prêtres. Rome ne peut plus tout contrôler." (5 avril, 1993)

Jean-Paul LeFebvre, author of **L'Église a-t-elle abandonné les croyants?** also had a warning for the Pope and the Church in Quebec. He concluded in his commentary on the survey: "l'autoritarisme et l'omniprésence de l'évêque de Rome ne laissent guère d'autres choix que de se faire répétiteur ou critique. Il faut souhaiter que plusieurs croyants, clercs et laïques voudront aller au-delà de la répétition. C'est un choix vital pour l'Église, car l'âge d'or, qui caractérise la communauté chrétienne au Québec, n'a pas d'avenir." (5 avril, 1993)

Marie Gratton also had a word of advice for this Church which "a peur de la modernité", whose adherents "peupleront bientôt les cimetières." She wrote that the findings of the survey "devrait plonger l'ensemble du peuple chrétien, fidèles et pasteurs, dans un questionnement profond appelant à d'héroïques exigences et à une conversion urgente et radicale." (5 avril, 1993)

Warnings, advice, ominous signs, divisions - where is this leading? Is this an institution worth saving? Is the Roman Catholic Church in the Province of Quebec an instrument of peace? Is it an instrument of justice? Is it an instrument of equality? A number of people, especially women, are studying theology at the universities in Quebec. New

visions and understandings are coming to light. Many people see the problems and hear the warnings. The warnings are a reality, and if the church authorities do not listen to them carefully, if the church refutes change, it may quite literally cease to exist.

This thesis will identify how Marie Gratton, Monique Dumais and Yvonne Bergeron have addressed the major doctrinal issues facing the Roman Catholic Church, and how they have challenged the existing patriarchal, hierarchal and undemocratic structures of the Church. Given the power of the Church, and the conservative nature of its structures and traditions, these women needed courage and conviction to devote their lives to such tasks as trying to change Church structures and attempting to introduce equality and justice for women. These women are considered pioneers within the realms of feminist theology in Quebec. This thesis will examine their lives and their work in an attempt to evaluate their roles and their influence.

PART TWO

SEVEN WOMEN: SEVEN PIONEERS

Chapter I

PROFESSEURE MARIE GRATTON

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

Marie Gratton was born April 7, 1935 in Montreal. Her family was French Canadian of French descent. She was an only child who was brought up by her mother. She received her primary and secondary education at the Académie Saint-Urbain in Montreal, and she went on to do Belles Lettres et rhétorique at College Marguerite-Bourgeoys. She obtained her B.A. and M.A. at the Université de Sherbrooke. She married Claude Boucher, a Professor of Mathematics at the Université de Sherbrooke; they have three children and four grandchildren.

Marie Gratton is one of Quebec's senior feminist theologians and one of its pioneers. She has been a member of the Roman Catholic Church all her life. She fondly remembers how she and her mother, a woman she loved, admired and respected, would walk to Church each Sunday, and how the walk was always a preparation for the celebration of the mass. The conversation would be directed towards what was about to happen in their spiritual lives in the Church. But a pious childhood does not necessarily produce feminist theologians. If her mother was a true believer, she was also a non-conformist who had to struggle to make a living before dying prematurely. She was an inspiration for her daughter.

Marie Gratton was a professor at the University of Sherbrooke. She is a scholar, mother, public figure, and leader of women. Marie Gratton is fearless and outspoken. Her main concerns are the inequalities and injustices within the Church. In spite of her disillusionment with the Roman Catholic Church, she stays in it believing that if she is to have any influence and effect at all it must be from within. She does not wish to see the future of the Church rest solely in the hands of the males in position of power and those who believe in guarding the *status quo*. Marie Gratton is on the receiving end of disapproval from some of the ecclesiastical and academic hierarchy, as well as from rude telephone calls and hate mail. Marie Gratton wonders if all the energy she has put into feminist theology over the past thirty years might have been more usefully expended elsewhere. History will decide. Marie Gratton has followed a vocation that will have long-lasting and far-reaching influences within, if not the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec, at least within the spiritual life of the province.

Two quotations changed Marie Gratton's life thirty years ago. The first was spoken by a priest who said: "Il serait inconvenant qu'une femme tînt dans ses mains le corps du Christ." Marie Gratton would point out that it is interesting to note that throughout the history of Christian art it is a woman, Christ's mother, who holds his body in her hands, both the infant and the crucified.

The second quotation which changed Marie Gratton's life was written by a layman, Jean Lemoyne, in *Convergences*. He wrote: "La foi sera à moitié pensée aussi longtemps qu'elle ne sera pas pensée par les femmes."

These two statements created what Marie Gratton calls "Le Boom!" in her life, the total change of direction. At the age of twenty-nine she began to study theology, and she began to write in 1974. She is sensitive, and does not relish verbal, or any kind, of abuse. However, she is no stranger to confrontation, and being articulate, with a mind that is intellectually fine-tuned, she is a worthy opponent in verbal confrontation.

Marie Gratton has a passionate love of language and her use of it is penetrating and precise. Her starting point in defining herself as a feminist theologian is with the words feminist and feminism, two words currently causing confusion and backlash. Marie Gratton's position is that feminism is about equality and justice for women. When challenged about words, or when writing about a particular subject she begins by giving the dictionary definition. She does this when asked to define her position as a feminist theologian. The dictionary definition for feminism from the **Petit Robert** is: "mouvement social pour l'amélioration du rôle et de la condition des femmes dans la société".

Marie Gratton's writing is prolific, and not confined to one or two sources. She has been interviewed extensively on radio, television and quoted in

reviews. She writes regularly for magazines, and has contributed chapters in various books. She is also a member of *L'autre Parole*, a collective of Christian feminists in Quebec, and writes frequently for their journal. This chapter will analyze her work, and will ask the questions, a) for whom is she writing? and b) what influence has her speaking and writing had on Roman Catholics in Quebec?

Feminist theologians in Quebec read and are influenced by other feminist theologians in other parts of the world. When Marie Gratton was asked by Jean-Paul Lefebvre to give the most important names in contemporary feminist theology, she cited: Ivone Gebara, Kari Elisabeth Borresen, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Virginia Ramsey Mollenkott, Dorothy Solle, Elisabeth Moltmann and Uta Ranke-Heinemann, Mary Daly, Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Annie Jaubert, and France Quéré. Furthermore, Marie Gratton mentioned the woman of the nineteenth century who has influenced all feminist theologians of today: Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

In Canada Marie Gratton refers to Denise Couture, Louise Melançon, Yvonne Bergeron, Elisabeth Lacelle, Anita Caron, Olivette Genest, Monique Dumais, Marie-Andrée Roy, and from English Canada, Pamela Dickey Young. (Jean-Paul Lefebvre, **En quoi l'Église doit-elle changer?** (Montreal: Fides.1994. pp. 37-39)

PART TWO

MAJOR THEMES **IN THE** **WORK OF** **MARIE GRATTON**

POWER, SEXISM AND FEMINISM

The recurring theme in the work of Marie Gratton is the role of women in the Church, generally throughout the Roman Catholic world, and specifically in the Province of Quebec. If one is to narrow this focus down even further, one comes up with one word: *power*. Marie Gratton is concerned with the notion of power in the Church: men have power, women have not; men have the privilege of decision making, some women are seen as having influence; a limited influence of course. Women are supposed to serve the Church, not to be preoccupied with ideas of power. When Marie Gratton hears the argument that the Church is about service, and that it is far more important to worry about the idea and fulfilment of service, than to waste time talking about power, she disagrees. (In interviews with various male clergy within the

Roman Catholic Diocese of Sherbrooke, when asked about the role of women, the reply was predictably the importance for all members of the Church to concern themselves with the notion of service.)

Marie Gratton is very specific about the word *power*. In an article in *Compass - A Jesuit Journal*, Spring '87, she defines the word:

As a noun, according to the Standard French Dictionary, the *Petit Robert*, pouvoir has no fewer than six senses. It conveys the "possibility of, capacity for" doing something, and also the "right, mandate, mission" to exercise that capacity, thus the word's initial connotation is a place where freedom can be expressed. It is only secondarily, in my view, that it should bring to mind the idea of authority, might, hegemony, with its possible - if not probable - corollaries of authoritarianism, despotism, and abuse.

But pouvoir is also a verb, meaning "to be able to, to be in a position to". Used as an auxiliary verb, it also conveys the idea of "to have the right authorization, permission" to do something. This wide ranging verb can express "possibility, hypothesis, wish".

The essence of what I am proposing is "du pouvoir pour pouvoir" - power to be able to do.(p. 16)

This is by no means the only time that Marie Gratton defines *power* in her writing, but this quotation is used because the original is in English.

Under present circumstances women in the Roman Catholic Church do not have the power "to do" very much. They do not have the right to be ordained

as deacons or priests. The Church, which is supposedly against racism, sexism, discrimination of any sort, tolerates this discrimination based on gender. Marie Gratton decries this form of discrimination. On women gaining power in the Church she writes:

Personnellement, je voudrais avoir assez de pouvoir pour mettre l'imagination au pouvoir! Ceci dit, quel rôle pourraient jouer les femmes dans l'Église? Je dirais celui d'être des promotrices de changements, des éducatrices au changement, des prophétesses de la révolution évangélique. Car, me semble-t-il, rien n'est plus révolutionnaire que l'Évangile. (*RND*, No 9, oct, '86, p. 27)

When the implication is that men in the Church should have power, and women should serve, Marie Gratton asks: "Si le pouvoir n'est pas mauvais pour les hommes, pourquoi le serait-il pour les femmes?" (*RND*, No 9, oct. '86, p. 17) Marie Gratton makes two points when she talks about women obtaining power within the existing Church structures. The first is that it is not the aim of women, in gaining power, to dominate men, they want rather, to use fully their intellectual and emotional resources. (*Ibid*, p. 18)

The second point is that women do not want power in order to maintain the *status quo* and the old structures of the Church. She writes: "c'est dans une perspective de renouveau que les femmes réclament le droit au pouvoir dans l'Église et non pas pour perpétuer les structures actuelles." (*ibid*. p. 18) Marie Gratton is a radical thinker, and she sees the role of women in the Church as

being truly revolutionary. She argues that the small number of women who are in positions of responsibility and influence is tokenism, the numbers must increase. For Marie Gratton the only way to bring justice into the Church is through radical change. When she was asked how a feminist such as herself could remain within the Church, she replied by defining radical feminism:

Qu'est-ce qu'une féministe radicale? Une femme qui désire voir rapidement l'homme et la femme sur un pied d'égalité? Si c'est cela, je me demande pourquoi il faut ostraciser les femmes qui veulent simplement prendre leur place. Nous sommes la moitié du monde. Pour quelles raisons n'occuperions-nous pas la moitié de la place? Ne serait-ce pas plutôt les hommes qui tiennent à garder à tout prix le monopole du pouvoir qui devraient être qualifiés de radicaux? À mon avis, vouloir prendre sa place, sans que les hommes soient rayés de la carte, me semble être une position modérée. De plus, pourquoi une féministe radicale devrait-elle quitter l'Église? A moins qu'on ait derrière la tête l'idée qu'une féministe radicale équivaut à une femme enragée? Quoi qu'il en soit, le radicalisme n'est-il pas d'une certaine façon la marque de commerce du christianisme? Ses exhortations à devenir parfait comme notre Père céleste est parfait, la pratique des conseils évangéliques, la vocation à la sainteté sont autant d'invitations au radicalisme. En ce sens, les féministes radicales devraient être accueillies les bras ouverts au sein de l'Église. (*ibid.* p. 24)

The religious right would argue that if women do not have an equal place with men in certain structures of the Church, it is because those places were not assigned to them by God. Marie Gratton would call this, not the Will of God, but simple sexism. She acknowledges that "au sein de l'Église, on n'appelle

pas cela du sexisme, mais plutôt l'expression de la volonté de Dieu". (*ibid.* p. 28) Marie Gratton would argue that sexism is sexism, wherever it is seen and in whatever form, and, furthermore, that God, who made men and women in his own image, equally and at the same time (according to the authors of *The Book of Genesis* 1:27), would not approve of sexism.

In this particular interview which encompasses the breadth and depth of Marie Gratton's thinking, she makes it quite clear that her struggle is with the male hierarchy within the Church and not with women. She would not presume to speak for all women, but in her experience within (and beyond) the Church in Quebec many women are in agreement with her position, although most of them choose to remain silent on these issues, or are only prepared to express their views in private. When asked if women were not the first to oppose feminism in the Church, Marie Gratton is quick to reply: "Les hommes aimeraient bien nous convaincre qu'effectivement nos soeurs sont nos premières ennemies" (*ibid.* p. 26); but she says that is not the case. She concurs that not all women are in agreement concerning the importance and the urgency of having more power within the Church, but this is not surprising. Many women do not feel implicated in the power structure of the Church and the decision-making processes, because they think they have nothing to do with them. Furthermore, she says, many women have internalized their feelings of submission and subordination to men, as they have many other facets of life.

Finally she asks, why is it that so many women have left the Church, if it is not because they feel disillusioned with the fact that men hold all the power. Marie Gratton, nevertheless, would continue to call all these women her sisters. Marie Gratton acknowledges that not all women are feminists, and that some are strongly opposed to feminism. This fact puzzles her. As is her custom she quotes the dictionary: "Pourtant, si l'on croit le *Petit Robert*, le féminisme est un "mouvement social pour l'amélioration du rôle et de la condition des femmes dans la société". (Lefebvre, p. 34) In her opinion, given this definition, everyone, men and women, should support feminism. She admits that she does not understand women who are opposed to feminism, who do not support a move towards improving the role of women in society. She says: "Je comprends mal que certaines femmes se défendent d'être féministes". (p. 34) In her mind, what should reconcile all people to the word and the idea is the word 'justice'. She agrees that there is a type of feminism that entirely rejects men, but she says that this is not the type of feminism she sees practised in theological circles: "ce n'est pas le féminisme que je vois pratiqué dans les milieux théologiques". (p. 34)

Although Marie Gratton does not agree with, or understand, women being against women, the reality is there. In his textbook, **Sociology, An Introduction**, Alex Thio, in his discussion of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the United States mentions the fact that women are often the greatest opponents of equal rights because they feel it is "a threat to their cherished status as housewives and mothers." He writes:

"They fear ERA would take away long-enjoyed legal rights such as exemption from military service and economic support from their husbands or ex-husbands. They are afraid that they would have to compete with men in politics, business, and other traditionally male preserves if gender equality became a reality. Conservative political and religious groups have further helped to kill ERA. Spending huge sums of money on television commercials, they have told voters that ERA will produce egocentric women, increase abortions, encourage homosexual marriages, and spread AIDS." (Thio, p. 289)

Marie Gratton would consider these allegations if not absurd, at least grossly exaggerated, mistakenly confusing occasional side-effects with the remedy needed to bring a cure to a deadly disease: injustice. A sense of justice is probably Marie Gratton's predominant concern. When she discusses power, she does not want women to have power for the sake of having power, but because she foresees the fulfilment of justice when woman are in positions of power. In the course of history men have abused the power either assumed by them or bestowed on them. Marie Gratton believes that with women in equal positions of power the fulfilment of the Gospel can take place. She does not believe that women would abuse power. In fact, with women in positions of power, Marie Gratton is convinced that one would be able to truly devote oneself to service and justice.

When asked about the feminist struggle within the Church, and whether it is not 'sterile' while there are more pressing needs in the areas of faith and

charity, Marie Gratton answers that the struggle for justice is anything but 'sterile'. In an interview in 1986 she was asked: "Le mouvement féministe dans l'Église ne risque-t-il pas d'entraîner les femmes dans une revendication assez stérile alors qu'il y a des tâches pressantes de foi et de charité?" (*RND*, oct. 86, p. 28) For Marie Gratton the struggle for justice for half the population is just as pressing as questions of faith and charity. Furthermore, she feels that questions of faith are far more seriously jeopardized by sexism within the Church than by feminists demanding justice. Marie Gratton says that feminists fighting for justice, are doing so in the name of their faith.

Marie Gratton describes herself as an optimist (Lefebvre, p. 41) who believes that this justice will be achieved, and that it is her responsibility as a feminist theologian, along with other feminist theologians, to work towards its attainment, based on the liberating and revolutionizing effect of the Gospel. She writes: "...la force libératrice et révolutionnaire de l'Évangile. Avec la majorité des théologiennes féministes je continue, pour ma part, d'y fonder mon espérance d'un monde meilleur". (Lefebvre, p. 38) What distinguishes feminist theology from traditional theology as Marie Gratton explains it, "c'est précisément cette critique du système patriarcal et l'analyse de tous les enjeux qui découlent de ce cadre à la fois social et religieux". (Lefebvre, p., 35) It is this point of departure which upsets traditional theologians, and many women; they do not see anything to criticize in the patriarchal system since they believe that it is a system created by God and supported by biblical tradition.

Jean-Paul Lefebvre is a lay person who greatly admires Marie Gratton for her "culture, la clarté d'esprit et les talents pour l'écriture", and in his interview with her in his book **En quoi l'Église doit-elle changer?** he gives her the last word. She has already established, during the course of the interview, that feminist theologians have a different approach to theological questions and a different way of reading the Scriptures, (p. 35); but there are three additional points that she wants to make by way of conclusion. In the first place, she says that feminist theology is often accused of being subjective. She makes the point that it *is* , but that so is all theology. Secondly, she says that feminist theology has taken the position of women beyond the role model of the Virgin Mary, and the choice between virginity and motherhood. She says: "Les femmes ont démontré que leur expérience de vie est plus large que le choix entre la virginité et la maternité. Les femmes puisent maintenant le fondement de leur spiritualité dans le message révolutionnaire de l'Évangile". (p. 43) Finally, Marie Gratton makes the point that feminism is here to stay, it is not a passing fancy. As long as there is a need to fight for justice for women, feminism will be there.

Opponents of feminism would reject all three of Marie Gratton's closing comments. In the first place they scorn the value placed on one's own story and personal experience by feminism. They point to the Bible, to history and to tradition for the answers to theological questions. They find the subjective and experiential approach to theology unacceptable. Secondly they would argue that the Virgin Mary, in her purity and perfection, is beyond scrutiny,

especially by feminist theologians. Finally, traditional theologians view feminist theology as a wicked aberration from all that is true and beautiful and right within the Church and consider that the sooner it dies the better! Traditionalists would argue that they are equally concerned for justice for women, but that the answers for the attainment of this justice are to be found in the Bible and in Church tradition. These are the two points of view - those of the feminists and those of the traditionalists. There is not a dialogue going on between the two sides, rather there is an impasse.

MARY

Marie Gratton has a clear and compelling understanding of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and it goes beyond the simple virgin/mother forever-young model presented by the Church. In conversation Marie Gratton points out the fallacy of a young, beautiful image of Mary; a woman who never grows old and was never in touch with real life. The Mary in Marie Gratton's mind is the woman confronted with a free-minded son as a teenager and young adult, who then found herself at the foot of the cross, suffering with the pain and death of her son. She is a woman in her early fifties with hair tinged with grey. Her face is wrinkled, and her hands are strong and tough, hands that have known physical work. There is nothing fresh and blooming in this picture, but it is a very beautiful mental image in its strength and wisdom, and in its ability to relate to women in all their human conditions, then and now.

In contrast to this image, Pope John Paul II published, March 25, 1987, an encyclical entitled *Redemptoris Mater* in preparation for the Year of Mary, 1988, in which he paints a very different picture of Mary. Marie Gratton responded to the encyclical in an article entitled "Une rencontre avec Jean Paul II ou un rendez-vous manqué avec Marie?" (*L'autre Parole*, no. 37, mars, 1988) In this article she begins by pointing out four positive aspects to the encyclical. In the first place, Marie Gratton admires the way it deals with Mary's faith: "Une foi en cheminement, vécue comme une offre de salut qui interpelle la liberté et qui se déploie à travers elle. (*ibid.* p. 4). Secondly,

Marie Gratton applauds the way the mystery of Mary is treated as subordinate to the mystery of Christ, which, she feels, is not always the case. (*ibid.* pp. 4/5) Thirdly, she favours the way Mary is treated in the fact that "le salut de Dieu offert en Jésus-Christ a eu besoin de la liberté d'une femme pour s'accomplir." (*ibid.* p. 5) Finally, Marie Gratton commends the fact that "Jean-Paul II salue la piété mariale des Églises orthodoxes et favorise certainement ainsi l'oecuménisme." (*ibid.* p. 5)

However, Marie Gratton also has some criticisms against the encyclical. She acknowledges that even the pontiff's most ardent and loyal fans agree "qu'il est plus facile à regarder qu'à lire", (*ibid.* p. 4) by which she is saying that the Pope does not make for easy reading, or reading with which it is easy to identify. She also mentions "la longueur et la lourdeur de son style". (*ibid.* p. 5) Marie Gratton approached this document with high hopes and an open mind; she writes: "J'ai lu *Redemptoris Mater*, deux fois, le crayon à la main et l'esprit ouvert". (*ibid.* p. 4) Her objection is that this presentation of Mary gives modern women nothing in which they can recognize her as the mother, the sister, the neighbour, the friend, who as a woman would speak straight to the heart. The Church, in other words, has made Mary irrelevant in the modern context.

In addition, Marie Gratton has some very specific grievances against this encyclical. In the first place the document uses no outside references or resources; the Vatican relies upon itself for its inspiration and its authority. It

ignores liberation theology and feminist theology regarding Mary. For scholars and academics this is unacceptable.

Secondly, Marie Gratton objects to this document because the Scriptural texts are used in a fundamentalist fashion, everything is taken literally, and according to Marie Gratton historical-critical exegesis is ignored.

Thirdly, Marie Gratton is disappointed with this document because the worst stereotypes of women are presented; sexuality is seen as a dirty condition from which, happily, Mary has been spared, and she feels that "L'anthropologie sous-jacente à la réflexion théologique ne tient aucun compte des perspectives contemporaines". (*ibid.* p. 5)

Marie Gratton's fourth objection to the wisdom of the Pope is that women are only defined according to their relationship with men, they are not seen as whole people, as individuals in their own right. She writes: "Le message est clair: la femme a deux vocations, la virginité et la maternité. Le rêve, c'est qu'elle soit vierge et mère". (*ibid.*, p. 6) This is not a helpful message for modern women, and it certainly does not give women in their suffering any kind of reference point or solace.

Marie Gratton's final objection to the papal document is that Mary is used simply to reinforce and justify the *status quo*. In conclusion she writes:

Rien n'est plus triste qu'un rendez-vous manqué. Combien de fidèles seront passés à côté de Marie, paysanne de Galilée, mère du prophète crucifié, fille d'Israël, devenue lentement disciple de l'envoyé du Père, sans être fascinés et séduits, parce qu'à travers un discours long, ampoulé et mal arrimé aux réalités contemporaines, ils n'auront pas reconnu la mère, la soeur, la voisine, l'amie qui aurait pu leur parler au coeur. (*ibid.* p. 7)

In *L'autre Parole* Marie Gratton is writing for a small and limited audience, she is also writing to the converted. Nevertheless some people were alarmed by this article. It is 'unthinkable' to criticize the Pope and the accepted vision of Mary as virgin and mother. The following quotation taken from *The Gazette*, July 16, 1994, by Dr. Canon Lettie James of the Anglican Church in Montreal, illustrates that Marie Gratton is not alone in having reservations regarding the papacy. Lettie James said of the Pope: "He is a feeble old man living in a time warp. It's pathetic how out of touch he is. I ache for my sisters" (i.e. in the Roman Catholic Church). Marie Gratton would share her aching.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Marie Gratton sees the position taken by the papacy regarding the role of women in the Church as sexism. What makes it so difficult to combat this form of sexism is the fact that it comes from the papacy. In an article written in 1986 entitled "*Les femmes, "infortunées convives" de la pratique sacramentelle*" she tackles the problem of sexism within the Church, which she maintains, is even more "pernicious" than elsewhere because it is excused for being the will of God. In this article she writes:

Dans cet exposé, je me propose de montrer que l'univers sacramentel, lieu privilégié de l'expression symbolique du mystère chrétien, illustre hélas à l'envie ce phénomène ecclésial d'un sexisme d'autant plus pernicieux qu'il cherche à se justifier par une référence à la volonté divine. (*L'Initiation sacramentelle des enfants: étude de la politique de l'Église du Québec, Collection Cahiers d'études pastorales*; 3) Section des études pastorales, Faculté de Théologie, Université de Montréal. Montréal: Fides. 1986, p. 85)

Marie Gratton finds this position 'pernicious'; when she finds the position taken by women whom she would want to call sisters, it is even more tragic; and yet some of the ones holding the most vehement position in this regard are women. However, they do not represent a big threat because they are not in positions of power. One of the arguments Marie Gratton uses frequently is that women form half of the population of the Church and of society as a whole. She recognizes the need for women and men to fight so that half of the

population receives the justice to which they are entitled. She finds it difficult to accept that there are women working in the opposite direction. What she wants for women is explained in the following passage:

...illustrer l'enrichissement qu'il y aurait pour toute la communauté chrétienne à sortir les femmes de leur rôle de consommatrices de sacré et de sacrements pour leur permettre de manifester leur maturité et leur autonomie spirituelles et d'offrir à l'ensemble des fidèles les trésors de leur expérience et de son expression, (*ibid.* p. 86)

Marie Gratton sees women enlivening the life of the Church as they take their rightful place in the administration of the sacraments. Traditionalists feel that women do not have a rightful place in the administration of the sacraments of the Church (except in the case of baptism, and then only in cases of extreme necessity), because Jesus chose only male apostles, and was himself a man.

Marie Gratton refuses to accept this logic, and she has a question for those who hold this position: "Est-ce par sa virilité ou par son humanité que Jésus a sauvé le monde?" (*ibid.* p. 92) For her the answer is obvious, although she admits that it is not always obvious to others, particularly to those perpetuating this form of logic. She goes on to explain what occurs when one pursues this type of thinking to its limits:

Jésus était un homme. Cet homme était circonsis. Pour rendre des ministres plus semblables encore au modèle, peut-être faudrait-il les soumettre à ce rite vénérable? Pourquoi

s'arrêter court quand il est possible, à peu de frais, de pousser jusqu'au bout la ressemblance? Quand on la poursuit assez longtemps, cette logique ne montre-t-elle pas ses failles et la fragilité de l'argument traditionnel n'éclate-t-elle pas au grand jour? La personne de Jésus dit l'amour que Dieu porte à l'humanité, elle n'avance rien sur la soi-disant supériorité du sexe masculin. (*ibid.* p. 92)

Marie Gratton would like to see common sense and good faith determine the outcome of this argument, and she says that one only needs to take one small step to understand and accept this reasoning; a small but important step:

Il faut avoir déjà fait un premier pas, c'est-à-dire avoir accepté que le système patriarcal ne soit pas nécessairement l'expression du plan et du vouloir divin pour l'organisation des sociétés et des relations hommes-femmes. Un petit pas, compte tenu du bon sens; un grand pas, compte tenu de la ténacité de certaines idées reçues et de préjugés certains. (*ibid.* p. 93)

There are other arguments that have been used by Marie Gratton, and others, to reinforce her line of logic. Jesus only called poor people to be apostles, and yet many rich men have become priests; all the apostles were Jewish, how is it that Roman Catholic priests do not have to be Jewish in order to be priests? Finally, if one is going to accept the idea that Jesus was limited and influenced by the society and the sociological structures within which he lived, which the traditionalists do not accept, then one must produce a good answer for this last question on the Jewishness of the apostles. Marie Gratton believes in the fact

that Jesus lived in a particular time and was affected by the circumstances of that time, that place and those social conditions. She writes:

Je n'ai pas à revenir sur les limites des énoncés traditionnels et de l'idéologie sous-jacente. L'anthropologie biblique est le reflet d'une culture, d'un milieu, d'une société, d'un temps, elle ne peut pas sans retouches, fonder une ecclésiologie, ni fixer à jamais une théologie et une pratique sacramentaires. (*ibid.* p. 90)

Marie Gratton is arguing for justice; traditionalists argue for what they feel are God-given truths, and that feminists are actually fighting against God. There is an ideological impasse between the two.

A factor contributing to the problem is education. In the past canon law forbade women access to theologocial studies. Teaching and learning were done by men. They would not have been aware of perpetuating a sexist situation; it was the way it had always been. Sexism would have included all the taboos about women and their impurities. The traditionalists would have no trouble with this. For them the problems started when women gained access to theological studies, and then, even worse, managed to get into positions of teaching and influence! That is when ideas of sexism and discrimination were introduced. At the present there are very few young men entering seminary in Quebec to study theology in preparation for the priesthood. (There was one ordination in 2000 in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Quebec. (Personal communication with Anglican Bishop, Bruce Stavert.

September, 2002) There are, however, many women studying theology in the universities in the province. It is interesting to note that the same phenomenon is true in the Church of England. Fewer and fewer men are going into the Church; and yet when the law was passed allowing for the ordination of women to the priesthood, twelve hundred women were ordained between 12 March and 3 July, 1994. Twelve hundred women were ready and waiting as soon as the Church overcame its sexist barriers. Of the Church in Quebec Marie Gratton writes:

La pénurie d'ordinands issus des séminaires inquiète... Faut-il assez manquer d'imagination pour redouter que l'Église doive pour cela renoncer à nourrir et à fortifier l'assemblée croyante. Les femmes sont prêtes à exercer ces ministères, mais différemment avec leur savoir, leur savoir-faire et leur savoir-être. Un monde à découvrir. Un autre visage du Dieu vivant. (*ibid.* p. 98)

Women, according to Marie Gratton, would have to exercise their ministry differently, because she feels that the way it is being done supports the patriarchal system and perpetuates sexism. She gives the example of confirmation in which militaristic imagery is used, and male values are prevalent. Marie Gratton says that women would use different symbolism to encourage a different system of values. She says:

C'est avec les gestes de l'amour que les femmes ont appris à fortifier les êtres confiés à elles. Il faut se savoir objet d'amour pour avoir la force d'aimer à son tour. Voilà ce que pensent

les femmes, voilà ce que leur culture leur a appris. Voilà ce qu'elles pourraient transmettre au monde qui s'interroge sur l'action de l'Esprit. (*ibid.* p. 97)

Marie Gratton sees a deep divide between the manner in which clerics celebrate mass and the way women would like and need to see it celebrated. The way it is now, according to Marie Gratton, is counter to all that it means to be a woman. She writes:

Le messe est présentée comme une liturgie sacrificielle. Rien ne saurait être plus étranger à la culture des femmes. Et je dis bien à leur culture, je ne dis pas à leur sensibilité. Toute l'existence des femmes est orientée vers le développement, la protection, l'entretien de la vie. Ce qui vient la menacer, la blesser, la tuer va à l'encontre de leur fibre profonde. (*ibid.* p. 94)

Marie Gratton believes that current trends in liturgy offend women, and that they underline the sin of sexism within the Church. What upsets her in this matter is that she has never heard a clergyman express any kind of remorse for perpetuating this sin. She says:

Jamais je n'ai entendu un célébrant manifester même un court instant sa mauvaise conscience de sanctionner par son action liturgique le sexisme de l'ecclésiologie et de la théologie sacramentaire. Seule la discrimination dont sont victimes les femmes à l'extérieur de l'Église leur paraît digne de dénonciation. Tous les baisers de paix de la terre ne peuvent effacer l'injustice dont ils cherchent à émousser le dangereux tranchant. (*ibid.* p. 96)

Marie Gratton does not want to see minor alterations in the structures and methods of the Church, she wants the winds of change to blow through the whole institution, and she wants to see women sharing equally in all aspects of the change. She sees the participation of women who are allowed to take minor parts in the mass as tokenism. Marie Gratton explains her dream and vision of the new Church:

Quand les femmes font mémoire de leur place dans l'histoire du salut, quand elles nomment leurs mères dans la foi, les amies de Jésus, les premières messagères de sa résurrection, quand elles évoquent leurs luttes pour la justice à l'intérieur de l'Église, quand elles réfléchissent sur ce que cela signifie pour la manifestation visible du Royaume, quand elles s'imposent mutuellement les mains pour se fortifier dans leur marche vers l'égalité, quand elles se pardonnent entre elles leur tiédeur et leur lenteur à aller de l'avant, quand elles partagent le pain et rendent grâce pour l'Esprit qui les anime, les nourrit et les entraîne dans le mouvement libérateur de l'Évangile, les femmes défient, certes, le pouvoir patriarcal et la caste sacerdotale, mais elles ont la conviction ainsi de faire mémoire de Jésus. Et à ceux ou celles qui jugent ces célébrations sacrilèges, elles redisent avec force et courage que la profanation, la vraie, c'est celle qui cherche à valider culturellement leur état de subordination et qui sacralise la virilité. (*ibid.* p. 97)

Marie Gratton has taken part in new forms of liturgy devised by women for women, and she has found these experiences meaningful, and close to the true inheritance of Christ. She rejoiced with her sisters in the Anglican Communion when the vote for the ordination of women priests went through

in England in November, 1993. In a personal conversation Marie Gratton remarked that when she read the names of the twelve hundred women who were ordained between 12 March and 3 July, 1994, she felt that she was reading "une sainte litanie". Marie Gratton again explains her vision of the future:

Quand une femme, une femme enceinte, pourra dire devant une assemblée recueillie: "Ceci est mon corps, ceci est mon sang", avec une respectueuse et profonde assurance et quand l'assemblée, dans cette proclamation, saisira quelque chose du mystère de l'Incarnation, de la vie offerte et de la vie reçue, de la vie qui ouvre à la Vie, Dieu pourrait bien devenir plus signifiant et plus signifié que jamais. (*ibid.* p. 99)

Marie Gratton enjoyed hearing that the Chaplain of Bishop's University in Lennoxville, The Reverend Heather Thomson, an Anglican priest, was pregnant, and gave birth on Christmas day to a daughter, who was named Mary.

Marie Gratton has a clear idea of what the Church needs to have credibility in the second millenium: equality, justice, democracy and less centralization. This is evident in an article she wrote about the diaconate in the Roman Catholic Church, a system in which she sees a serious case of injustice. The article is entitled, "*Le diaconat permanent et l'avenir des femmes dans l'Église*", (*Prêtre et Pasteur*, nov. 1987). She was asked to write this article by la communauté diaconale du diocèse de Montréal. This surprised her

because she knows she has a reputation for being outspoken, especially on the question of the role of women in the Church. She acknowledges that some of the things she writes appear 'dures et sévères' (*ibid.* p. 596), but she says that she writes with the utmost respect for those who are actually involved in the system. As always her concern is to improve the situation of women in the Church, "travailler au bien de l'Église et des femmes". (*ibid.* p. 596) Her argument against the diaconate as it exists at the present time is that it is unfair towards the wives of the deacons. She writes:

Tel qu'il se vit, tel qu'il est conféré actuellement dans l'Église, le diaconat permanent constitue pour l'épouse du diacre un injustice manifeste. Obligée de suivre une formation spéciale d'une manière assidue et prolongée, elle ne recevra, en fin de course, aucune reconnaissance officielle, elle ne sera pas ordonnée. Elle manifestera tout juste son assentiment à l'ordination de son mari au cours de la cérémonie présidée par l'évêque. (*ibid.* p. 597)

Marie Gratton is aware through personal contacts of other tensions and pressures suffered by the wives of deacons: the latter receive no remuneration for their services, so financial strains may be added to the marriage. The wife might find herself feeling more and more isolated as the husband performs his duties in the times that were previously reserved for his wife and family. In addition, although the wife receives no official recognition for her training and her position, she is expected to maintain a certain standard of availability and behaviour, but with no support system for herself to go with these

expectations. Marie Gratton writes: "Il lui faut être disponible, être là sur commande, mais ne jamais s'imposer." (*ibid.* p. 597) The final injustice, according to Marie Gratton, is the fact that if the wife dies, the deacon is forbidden to marry again; in other words, she says, the Church is saying that he is better off not married, the state of celibacy is the ideal. (*ibid.* pp. 597/8) Marie Gratton finds it difficult to imagine any woman wanting such a situation in her marriage, or finding it a rewarding one if this is what happens to her in the course of her marriage.

Marie Gratton does not feel that the answer to this questionable system is to ordain the wife as well. Since there is no remuneration, she sees the wife ending up being little more than a glorified volunteer, a position in which too many women find themselves. In any event, this is not likely to happen in the foreseeable future, Marie Gratton is speculating. She also tests the idea of women being ordained deacon in their own right, but similarly she does not think this is the answer to the injustices inflicted on women. In fact, given "les schémas traditionnels de cléricisation" she feels that this would be a dead-end route for women. (*ibid.* p. 601) She says: "pour ma part, je vois l'avenir ailleurs..." (*ibid.* p. 601) and what she sees is an urgent need to revise "toute l'ecclésiologie". She writes:

L'Église a besoin d'une conversion radicale de ses attitudes, de ses comportements marqués par le système patriarcal et ses corollaires pernicioseux que sont le classisme et le sexisme. Il faut que l'Église se débarrasse d'une peur issue du fond des âges qui voit le rapprochement

entre sacré et sexualité comme une réalité explosive, tout à la fois fascinante et terrifiante. Il faut qu'elle arrime sa réflexion théologique à l'anthropologie contemporaine, qu'elle perçoive la richesse des nouveaux rapports hommes/femmes qui sont en train de se développer, qu'elle cesse de se représenter la femme comme fille d'Eve tentatrice, séductrice, source du péché, et de ce fait danger public qu'il faut garder à l'oeil, maintenir à l'écart et, surtout, écarter des centres de décision où la faiblesse de sa chair et de son esprit risquerait d'entraîner d'irréparables catastrophes pour l'Église. (*ibid.* p. 601)

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

In spite of her radical position, Marie Gratton is not an angry woman; she is, however, fiercely disillusioned; she says: "je suis une femme inconsolable de voir le message libérateur de Jésus aussi terriblement galvaudé par ceux-là mêmes qui font profession de le servir et de le répandre". (*ibid.* p. 601) Having outlined where changes need to be made, Marie Gratton concludes this article with another vision of the future Church and the role of women in it:

... c'est une Église vivant un véritable partenariat où l'égalité de tous ses membres se trouve manifestée à travers la diversité des ministères, attribués non pas en fonction d'un système hiérarchique préétabli et de stéréotypes fondés sur une vision périmée des rapports entre les sexes, mais où chaque femme et chaque homme en tant que disciples de Jésus, sont impérieusement appelés à participer à la construction du Royaume, mettant l'ensemble de leurs dons au service de tous, sous la mouvance de l'Esprit qui souffle où il veut, quand il veut. Ainsi l'Église tout entière témoignerait de sa foi et de son espérance en un Dieu vivant qui fait sans cesse toutes choses nouvelles. (*ibid.* p. 601)

Marie Gratton would unfortunately agree that the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec in the 1990s is a long way from her vision of what the Church should embody. And yet she stays within it, although it becomes increasingly difficult for her to do so. In the July, 1988 issue of *Compass, a Jesuit Journal*, Marie Gratton reviews a book written by a woman who felt unable to continue being a member of the Roman Catholic Church. The book is

entitled **A Woman and Catholicism: My Break with the Roman Catholic Church**, and is written by Sheelagh Conway. In her review Marie Gratton cites two incidents in Sheelagh Conway's life which finally brought about the rupture between herself and the Church. The first was "a priest telling a sexist, antiwoman joke from the pulpit"; and the second was "the spectacle of "a sea of men" (members of the Catholic clergy of Ontario gathered in St. Michael's Cathedral in Toronto during Pope JohnPaul II's visit to Canada) celebrating their own power" (*Compass*, p. 46) Marie Gratton witnessed a similar spectacle of a "sea of men" in Rome, and was struck by the pomp and ceremony, and the elaborate, expensive robes bordered with beautiful Italian lace, all such a long way away, she felt, from the itinerant healer, teacher and preacher who had only the clothes on his back and the sandals on his feet.

When one considers that, according to Marie Gratton, 65% of practicing Roman Catholics are women, and 75% "des laïques engagées dans les activités pastorales" are women, (*Prêtre et Pasteur*, novembre, 1987, p. 596) one can understand why she says she is "une femme inconsolable". However, resilience is another aspect of Marie Gratton's character, and this is seen in her review of Sheelagh Conway's book in which she discusses what it is that keeps some women in the Roman Catholic Church when so many, especially young women, have left it. She explains that what keeps these women in the Church is "a sense of humour". Marie Gratton is also capable of seeing the

funny side of a "sea of men"; she would be very happy to see the Church laugh its way into change.

But it seems unlikely that this will happen. In a more recent article entitled "*Chemins de l'unité, chemins de liberté*" in *Relations*, (mars, 1993)

Marie Gratton talks about the effect that the vote for the ordination of women priests had on Rome. She says: "On sait la désolante et rapide réaction de Rome à l'annonce du vote historique de l'Église d'Angleterre qui a donné son assentiment à l'accès des femmes à ce ministère. Le dialogue oecuménique s'en trouve, paraît-il, gravement compromis". (p. 43) Marie Gratton points out that these differences are nothing new, they are "de vieilles querelles" which have been going on since 1534. She says it is hypocritical to blame any distancing between the two Churches on the question of women priests. She points out: "Prétendre aujourd'hui que le dossier des femmes prêtres serait la pomme de discorde qui retarderait la grande réconciliation de l'Église catholique romaine avec sa soeur anglicane a de quoi troubler celles et ceux qui connaissent un peu l'histoire." (*ibid.* p. 44) She also points out the irony of the fact that women have had virtually nothing to do with the debates, arguments and decisions that have been part of the history of the division between the two Churches. This article stresses how ecumenically minded so many Church women in Quebec are, how they are comfortable working together; she writes: "les femmes ont développé des solidarités qui comblent les fossés et construisent des ponts. Pour ce faire, elles ont créé leurs propres lieux de rencontres et d'échanges." (*ibid.* p. 44) Marie Gratton sees women in

Quebec working towards real unity; she says, "les féministes chrétiennes que je connais et qui oeuvrent pour l'unité la veulent intensément, pour vrai". (*ibid.* p. 45) Like so many other feminist theologians, Marie Gratton returns to the origins of the Church to underline the valid and legitimate place that women once held in the Church. She writes:

Des femmes sont les premières messagères de la Bonne nouvelle pascale et des femmes ont joué des rôles de premier plan là où les charismes avaient encore préséance, avant de céder la place aux modèles hiérarchiques et patriarcaux dans l'attribution des ministères. L'Église, à son début, a su s'acculturer et respecter les dynamismes des communautés locales pour assurer la diffusion du message qui lui tenait à coeur. (*ibid.* p. 45)

Just as Marie Gratton pointed out earlier in discussing the diaconate that the Roman Catholic Church urgently needs to "réviser toute l'ecclésiologie", so in this article she says that ecclesiology has been responsible for the divisions between denominations. She argues: "Les divisions, j'y insiste, portent essentiellement sur l'ecclésiologie et sur la conception des ministères véhiculée par chacune des Églises qui revendiquent Jésus comme leur Seigneur et Maître. (*ibid.* p. 44)

WOMEN IN THE LIFE
OF JESUS
AND IN THE EARLY CHURCH

One of Marie Gratton's favourite themes, as it is with many feminist theologians, is to return to women in the New Testament to re-evaluate their relationship with Jesus, with the early Church, and with Paul. This was the subject of an interview she had with Gilles Langevin, which was subsequently published as an article entitled, "*La place de la femme dans le passé chrétien*", in the book **Le Christ et les cultures dans le monde et l'histoire**, under the direction of Gilles Langevin and Raphaël Pirro, (Bellarmin: Québec, 1991.) In this article Marie Gratton underlines the fact that Jesus accepted women in his following. She cites Martha and Mary as close friends that he liked to stay with on his travels. She explains that it is through women that many of the most important Christian messages have come to us. She writes:

Des femmes ont aussi été ses interlocutrices privilégiées. Quelques-uns des message très importants de l'Évangile sont donnés par Jésus à l'occasion de rencontres avec des femmes. Est-ce qu'il faut évoquer la Samaritaine, la Cananéenne, la femme adultère, la femme dont l'Évangile nous dit qu'elle était affligée d'un flux de sang depuis douze ans... (p. 63)

These encounters, Marie Gratton explains, show that Jesus "est une personne capable de surmonter des interdits...qu'il a été proche des femmes, qu'il les a acceptées dans son entourage. (p. 64) This is a fact which traditionalists

ignore when considering the question of the ordination of women. The only valid argument for them is the fact that the twelve apostles were men. Traditionalists are also selective when considering Paul and women, and will often overlook the fact that women played an important role in the early Church. Marie Gratton explains this role:

Dans les Églises de saint Paul, on ne pensait pas que l'Esprit soufflait seulement sur les hommes. On croyait qu'il soufflait où il voulait; on prenait cela au sérieux, quand on retrouvait ses dons chez des gens de tout rang social, de toute condition, des hommes et des femmes.

Alors, les femmes ont eu dans les communautés pauliniennes un rôle très important: c'est clair, les Épîtres de saint Paul en témoignent à plusieurs reprises. On les voit même comme chef de communauté. Parfois elles sont nommées seules, et on voit qu'elles ont des responsabilités considérables - Saint Paul les nomme, les salue comme des collaboratrices - parfois elles sont nommées avec leur mari. Donc, elles ont eu de l'importance. (p. 64)

But if women in the early Christian communities had power and prestige, women in the surrounding cultural communities did not, and it did not take the Church long to adopt the hierarchical and patriarchal models of the surrounding Roman civilization, which meant: "il a fallu ramener les femmes dans le rang pour qu'elles ne deviennent pas trop subversives". (p. 65) Traditionalists argue that there is evidence in the Bible which states clearly the roles of men and women, they will not accept that most of the roles were determined by societies and cultures of the time, and that these cultures were changing in the

time that the Bible was being written. In their minds there is no place for sociological or anthropological arguments when dealing with biblical truths. Marie Gratton, in turn, argues that so many of the problems of the Church and the difficult position of women in the Church are traced to the fact that tradition accepted the Greco-Roman system of nearly two thousand years ago, as the social system designed and desired by God. She writes:

Effectivement, l'Église a entériné le vécu social. Mais ce qui aggrave peut-être un peu la chose, c'est cette espèce de sacralisation d'un donné culturel. Que dans la société gréco-romaine et ensuite dans la société occidentale, dans l'Occident médiéval, les femmes aient été soumises aux hommes, c'est une chose, mais que l'Église, systématiquement, à l'époque patristique, à celle des théologiens scolastiques, ait continuellement sacralisé ce modèle patriarcal en y voyant l'expression de la volonté de Dieu, c'est là que la situation s'aggrave.
(p. 65)

Marie Gratton explains that the reason there is a need to control women is because men find women both terrifying and fascinating. She writes: "la femme représente, pour l'inconscient des hommes à tout le moins, la sexualité, les forces de la vie. Les femmes, ce sont celles qui donnent la vie, qui transmettent la vie, et qui représentent de ce point de vue, une puissance à la fois fascinante et terrifiante"; (p. 67) and is thus a force that must be controlled. Marie Gratton argues that people approach God, the divine, in the same way: as a force that is both fascinating and terrifying, and that to unite the two - woman and the divine - "c'est de la dynamite, c'est explosif". Because

of this 'dangerous' combination men have disassociated the two as much as possible. She says: "on a justement cherché à les dissocier le plus possible pour que cette conjonction ne s'effectue pas et que ça n'éclate pas". (p. 68)

In conjunction with this impossible position of women, Marie Gratton returns, in this article, to two of her favourite themes: Eve and Mary. As far as the story of Eve is concerned, Marie Gratton would have all those who return to Eve and to the idea of the Fall remember: "Il faudrait prendre conscience à tout prix que ces récits-là, par exemple ceux de Genèse, sont moins l'expression de la volonté de Dieu que la projection de l'univers social et culturel dans lequel vivait l'auteur. Il observe finalement que dans sa société les femmes sont subordonnées aux hommes et qu'elles leurs sont soumises, et il cherche à expliquer comment on en est arrivé là" (p. 66) Traditionalists decry this method of undermining what they call biblical truths by talking about myths, stories, and sociological allusions.

As far as Mary is concerned, Marie Gratton once again points out what an impossible role model the Church has inflicted on her. Whereas Mary should be a figure to inspire and support women, the Church Fathers and men in the Church have turned her into someone whose pedestal is just too high. Marie Gratton writes:

Pour ce qui est de la dévotion à Marie, le résultat obtenu a quelque chose d'ambigu. On aurait pu supposer que l'exaltation de Marie aurait ouvert une voie royale, dans laquelle les

femmes auraient pu s'engager et retrouver pleinement leur dignité. Mais non, face au modèle, elles ont toujours l'air un peu déçues: le modèle est si élevé... (p. 71)

The Church Fathers took Mary away from women; virginity and motherhood do not go together and the model is *too* perfect.

The issue of what the Church has done to the image of women is a recurring theme in Marie Gratton's writing. In *L'autre Salut, (Recherches féministes, Vol. 3. no. 2. Université Laval, sous la direction de Huguette Dagenais, 1990)*, she has written an article entitled "*Femmes et Église à l'aube du troisième millénaire, recension d'un livre de Hans Küng, (Theology of the Third Millenium, An Ecumenical View. 1988. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday.)*, in which she discusses how women have been stereotyped by the Church. She writes:

Ne sommes-nous pas passées du statut de tentatrices, de séductrices, d'occasions de péché qui était le nôtre chez les Pères de l'Église, dans la théologie médiévale et chez tant de théologiens et de prédicateurs jusqu'au siècle dernier (Delumeau 1978), à celui de gardiennes de la civilisation et de la culture chrétiennes, comme tant de documents pontificaux récents se plaisent à nous représenter (Rondeau 1969)? Mais une question surgit, bien sûr: pourquoi faut-il toujours que les femmes soient charriées d'un stéréotype à l'autre? Pourquoi, sinon parce qu'en dépit de tous les énoncés de principe et des droits issus de leur baptême, elles ne sont pas encore pleinement reconnues comme sujets à part entière et demeurent trop souvent traitées comme des objets théologiques dont il appartient aux hommes de dire qui elles sont

et en quoi consiste la "vraie féminité" (Jean-Paul II 1988: 70) D'où vient donc cet acharnement à ne considérer la femme comme vraiment définie qu'à travers le regard de l'homme, c'est-à-dire en tant que vierge ou mère? Idéalement, vierge et mère. (p. 176)

Although Marie Gratton acknowledges that some people might question her use of the work of a man to write about the role of women in the Church in the future, she says she does so because the thinking of Hans Küng and his theology are in line with hers. He too sees a need for "une théologie renouvelée" (p.177), in which women have an equal partnership with men within the Church. Marie Gratton says that women will be enlightened and encouraged by reading Hans Küng. She concludes this article with another version of her vision of the future Church:

Les femmes apprendraient... que leur longue marche vers plus d'autonomie et de justice dans l'Église est à la fois en conformité avec l'essentiel du message chrétien et solidement arrimée à l'expérience et à l'espérance contemporaines. Enracinées dans leur terreau originel, passionnément attentives aux exigences de renouvellement, vaillamment tendues vers l'avenir, c'est ainsi seulement que théologie et vie chrétienne doivent se penser, s'articuler l'une à l'autre, s'écrire et se vivre. (p. 177)

In the book **Un Savoir à notre image? Critiques féministes des disciplines** (vol. 1, sous la direction de Roberta Mura. 1991. Montreal: Les Éditions Adage Inc.), Marie Gratton has contributed an article called "*La Récupération de Dieu au service de l'idéologie patriarcale*", and once again she

deals with how the Church has a limited and limiting view of women. She explains: "Dans ce texte, je limiterai mon analyse à la réflexion systématique liée au judéo-christianisme et, plus spécifiquement, à son expression dans la théologie catholique qui porte d'une manière radicale, obstinée et impénitente, la marque de l'idéologie patriarcale dans ce qu'elle a de plus discriminatoire à l'égard des femmes". (p. 269)

In this essay Marie Gratton traces the damaging effect the thinking of Plato and Aristotle, and the theology of Augustin and Thomas Aquinas has had on women. She illustrates again how Eve comes under attack and how the interpretation of the story of Eve has moulded the Church's thinking about women. She discusses how feminist theologians have revisited the Scriptures and reinterpreted the role of women. She says of her sister theologians: "Les théologiennes et leurs consœurs exégètes ont montré l'importance des autres femmes de l'Évangile, ces premières disciples étonnantes par leur foi, leur audace, leur marginalité parfois et, le plus souvent, par leur non-conformisme." (p. 273) It is up to women to redress the vision of themselves, Marie Gratton does not see the current patriarchal system doing it for them. Marie Gratton again uses the Church's interpretation of Eve and Mary to illustrate the impossible position of women. As an example she again refers to Jean-Paul II and the way he uses Mary:

Marie a été exaltée dans la réflexion théologique comme vierge et comme mère. Ces deux attributs n'ont pas été associés à la figure de la jeune paysanne de Nazareth, entrée dans

l'histoire à la faveur du fulgurant destin de son fils, comme illustrant deux moments signifiants de sa vie, de telle sorte qu'une multitude de femmes puissent y retrouver la préfiguration et l'écho de leur propre expérience, mais comme deux états vécus concurremment. Marie est réputée être demeurée vierge même dans sa maternité et c'est là précisément qu'est censée résider sa gloire (Note: C'est en 649, au Concile du Latran que fut défini le dogme de la virginité perpétuelle de Marie. "Si quelqu'un ne confesse pas selon les saints pères, que Marie, sainte, toujours vierge et immaculée, est, en un sens propre et véritable, Mère de Dieu, elle qui à la fin a, sans semence humaine, conçu spécialement et vraiment du Saint-Esprit le Verbe lui-même, né de Dieu le Père avant tous les siècles, et qui l'a enfanté sans que se corrompe sa virginité, demeurée inaltérable même après l'enfantement, qu'il soit condamné". (Dumeige, 1961, p. 232). Cette formule, qui prétend avant tout renforcer la foi en la divinité de Jésus, porte néanmoins la marque indiscutable d'un soupçon radical et inquiétant à l'égard de la sexualité. On comprendra qu'elle devient ainsi, pour ce que j'appellerai volontiers "les vraies femmes de la vraie vie", le modèle inimitable, le paradigme inaccessible. Cette impuissance fondamentale à imiter l'idéal proposé condamne les femmes à paraître d'éternelles déçues aux yeux d'une multitude de théologiens depuis saint Augustin, peut-être même depuis saint Justin, ce martyr du IIe siècle qui le premier eut l'idée de mettre en parallèle Eve et Marie. (p. 277)

The way Eve has been portrayed by the Church is even worse. It is difficult to believe what the Church has done with this character from ancient myth. Marie Gratton describes what her story has done to women:

Identifiées pour les siècles des siècles à Eve la tentatrice et la séductrice, celle par qui, selon le mythe biblique (*Genèse*, chapitre 3, verset 6), le mal est entré dans le monde et avec lui la souffrance et la mort, les femmes ne pouvaient qu'accepter les conséquences d'un pareil héritage. Faute de pouvoir être une sœur ressemblante à Marie, toute femme devenait fille d'Eve et sur elle devait peser l'antique malédiction venant sanctionner sa faute présumée: "Ton désir te tournera vers ton mari et il dominera sur toi." (*Genèse*, chapitre 3, verset 16)

On ne dira jamais assez que le sort fait aux femmes dans l'Église, que l'état de soumission, de dépendance et de subordination dans lequel la tradition théologique les a enfermées, prennent là leur source. C'est à un récit mythique et à son exploitation symbolique par l'idéologie patriarcale que les femmes doivent leur carcan... (pp. 277/8)

In the subsequent paragraph Marie Gratton refers to Eve as "la mythique mégalomane qui a déclenché tous les cataclysmes". (p. 278) It is difficult to believe that traditionalists accept Eve at face value, as responsible for the sins of the world. It is hard to accept that any woman would take seriously the story of Eve and would not be offended by what the Church has done with this story throughout its history. Feminist theologians have turned around the story of Eve, and see her as enterprising, assertive and academically curious, they see her, in this light, as a role model. Marie Gratton sees a need for more dialogue among women on this subject. She sees a need for "un regard neuf sur cette discipline" (which is biblical study). (p, 282); she feels it is time for feminist theologians to redress the harm done to and by Eve and Mary, and other biblical women. She writes: "Quand les femmes reprennent à frais nouveaux la réflexion théologique et la recherche biblique, quand elles

repensent l'éthique et se forgent une spiritualité qui exprime leur expérience profonde, elles ressuscitent une "bonne nouvelle" subversive et génératrice d'espérance parce que porteuse de justice". (p. 282) In conversation Marie Gratton explains: "I have never, myself, made Eve into a "role model". Wanting to be "like God" must be seen as a sin; but wanting to have access to knowledge seems to me a quality. It is a question of degree." (March, 1996)

With her interest in Mary, Marie Gratton was intrigued to see the Mother of Jesus on the front of *Time* (30 December, 1991); as she says, "**les femmes ne se retrouvent pas souvent en page frontispice du *Time*".** (*Présence*, mai, 1992). Marie Gratton's article on the subject is called "Deux "Superstars" revisitées", (the other superstar is Jesus who was featured in *L'Express*, 3 janvier, 1992), and she was pleased that the magazine had featured an article trying "de lui restituer, dans la mesure possible, son vrai visage, en la présentant comme une vraie femme, une vraie mère, une vraie croyante juive qui s'est laissée gagner par la "bonne nouvelle" de son fils." (p. 5) Marie Gratton's article is a response to all those who were offended that an article about a sacred person appeared in a secular magazine, especially under the title: "The Search for Mary - Was the most revered woman in history God's handmaid - or the first feminist?" Marie Gratton blames the Church for this reaction, and she says it is because "les curés ne parlent jamais de cela". (p. 5) She uses this opportunity to say that the sermon heard in the Roman Catholic churches "(L'instruction) ne devrait pas se contenter d'être moralisatrice, elle devrait aussi être instructive" (p. 5). She says it says

something serious about the state of teaching within the Church when "des chrétiens et des chrétiennes pour qui l'homélie dominicale est la principale, sinon la seule ressource pour mieux approfondir leur foi, viennent à devoir compter plutôt sur des magazines à grands tirages et sur le cinéma quand ils souhaitent se renseigner sur l'état de la réflexion théologique et de la recherche exégétique" (p. 5).

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN QUEBEC TODAY
AND MARIE GRATTON'S
HOPES FOR AND VISIONS OF ITS FUTURE

Marie Gratton's commitment to women and women's issues, particularly within the Church, has caused her considerable frustration. In her article in *Prêtre et Pasteur* (vol. 87, no. 5, mai 1984, Imprimerie Notre Dame Inc.: Richelieu) entitled "*Entrave ou compagne? L'Église du Québec et la libération de la femme*" she articulates this frustration:

...les orgueilleuses prétentions d'une Église qui, non contente de se considérer "experte en humanité", estimait tout savoir sur la femme, sa fonction, sa destinée et les voies obligées de son bonheur temporel et éternel. (p. 258)

The advice given to women, single, married and divorced, by celibate men, on matters concerning birth control, marriage and sexuality, childbirth and childrearing, and family life in general is cause for concern, but in these areas the Church is moving ahead. In Quebec women and couples now do marriage preparation sessions, confirmation preparation, counselling and other pastoral duties. It is interesting to note that in the **Canadian Catholic Church Directory, 1993**, on the pages indicating Diocesan Services, of 25 services, six are directed by men, (lay men and clergy), ten are run by women (lay women and nuns) and nine are directed by a woman and a man together.

(pp. 296/7) This is a significant development; in the past these services would have been covered by the parish priest. Another interesting statistic is found in the same directory in the Diocese of Saint-Jérôme. The directory gives the list of sixty-eight parishes; in twenty-one of these parishes, the person listed as the person in charge of the parish is a woman. (pp. 646/652) These women hold most of the responsibilities of the parish priest; but of the seven Sacraments the only one that they can perform, and this only in the case of extreme necessity and if no clergy is available, is baptism. One question that is not answered in the directory is whether these women are paid the same stipend for their work as a parish priest?

It is clear from the above figures (and it is possible to find similar instances in other dioceses in the province of Quebec) that men and women are working more closely together within the Church in Quebec, and it is becoming more common to find men who are in favour of married priests and the ordination of women to the priesthood. Marie Gratton concludes her article about the Church in Quebec and the liberation of women, indicating the relationship she would like to see between women and their parish priests. She says women will lead their own battle for justice, but she would like to see them get the full support of priests. She writes: "Les femmes n'attendent pas de leur pasteurs qu'ils soient aux avant-postes des luttes qu'elles mènent pour obtenir justice, mais elles souhaitent trouver en eux des compagnons fiables, généreux, éclairés". (p. 266)

In this article Marie Gratton again mentions the tragedy that women do not always support women. She analyses the situation and categorises women in the Church into four different types. In doing so she illustrates her understanding of the nature and thinking of such women in Quebec. She says:

Un certain nombre de femmes d'ici prennent la vie comme elle vient. Peu renseignées, peu politisées, habituées au silence et à la résignation ou trouvant au contraire leur profit au maintien des systèmes sociaux et politiques tels qu'ils sont, convaincues par ailleurs que la structure hiérarchisée, autoritaire et masculine de l'Église est le fait d'une volonté divine qu'il serait blasphématoire de remettre en question, ces "fidèles" constituent un troupeau docile, mais souvent peu dynamique de l'aveu même de ses pasteurs. (pp. 258/9)

One finds this type of women in all religions. The idea of change is not only abhorrent, it is blasphemous! If one is not aware of injustice, one is not going to do anything to stop or to change it, the idea of doing so is offensive. Awareness is the first step in striving for change in the name of justice.

Marie Gratton describes the second type of woman in the Church:

Il est d'autres femmes pour qui tous les "ismes" riment avec satanisme. Dieu merci, elles ne sont pas légion. Celles-là ont retenu les mises en garde, venues de Rome et de plus près, qui, depuis Léon XIII, n'ont pas manqué de créer un lien entre féminisme et socialisme, communisme, nihilisme et athéisme. Marx et Engels ont prôné l'égalité des femmes. Il n'en fallait pas plus pour la rendre suspecte aux yeux de bien des chrétiens. (p. 259)

The first type of woman causes frustration, the second causes real concern; as Marie Gratton says, "Thank God, there are not that many of them." Possibly this is true in the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec, but in other parts of North America, and in other Christian denominations Marie Gratton would find there are far too many of this type. These women are aware of the situation, they are educated and many teach at the university level, but they see feminism as an invention of the devil.

The third group of women Marie Gratton discusses are those who leave the Church. She writes:

Beaucoup de Québécoises, on le sait, ont cru devoir choisir, ces dernières années, d'une part entre leur épanouissement personnel et leur solidarité avec le mouvement de libération des femmes, et d'autre part, leur appartenance à la communauté ecclésiale. Ainsi plusieurs ont quitté l'Église. Comme les intellectuels ont fui au siècle des Lumières, comme la classe ouvrière s'est détachée avec fracas, au XIXe siècle, les femmes vont porter ailleurs leurs espérances. (p. 259)

These women are turning away from the Church of their birth, but not necessarily away from their faith or from God. Some have joined other established denominations. The Anglican Church in particular has gained several. Others have joined sects or cults, and many have joined together to develop personal forms of worship and liturgy. The group *L'autre Parole*,

in particular, is noted for designing forms of worship answering the needs and aspirations of Quebec women. The phenomenon of Quebec women leaving the Church is an issue that Marie Gratton discusses on numerous occasions, notably in *Ecumenism*, No 110, June 1993, where she writes: (the article was subsequently translated into English)

The mistrust and the fear of women which are still too often rampant in many of our Catholic communities and among their leaders have alienated many women from the church. They pursue their quest for God elsewhere, where their female experience is valued and recognized. Thus they come to understand that they too can be images of God. When they give birth, when they wash, feed, comfort and reconcile their children, when they "raise" them (a beautiful expression), when they make themselves all things to all people, not only are they able to enjoy an intense experience of God, but they can also be humble mediators of that experience for others. God as Creator and as Providence is revealed through the fruit of their flesh, the concerns of their heart and the work of their hands. (p. 6)

These are feminine attributes which the Church purports to value, but which are a part of humanity never properly honoured or respected by the Church. In the course of history these same attributes have been mistrusted, feared and even ridiculed. It is not surprising therefore that a number of women have made the decision to leave the Church. One notable example, though not in Quebec, was the defection from Christianity as a whole of Mary T. Malone, Associate Professor at the University of St. Jerome's College at Waterloo. This was reported in the May, 1996 edition of *Présence*, which stated:

L'une des historiennes les plus respectées du Canada, la professeure Mary T. Malone, a annoncé qu'elle ne peut désormais plus se considérer comme chrétienne. *"Il m'a finalement fallu reconnaître qu'il m'est devenu impossible de prier ou de participer à un service religieux."* Son problème, a-t-elle déclaré, c'est de n'être plus capable d'admettre le caractère strictement masculin du Dieu de la tradition chrétienne.

...Sa décision est un véritable soufflet pour le catholicisme canadien puisqu'elle a toujours été perçue comme représentant l'aile classique et modérée du féminisme.

...Mary T. Malone n'avait pu arriver à se convaincre que la tradition chrétienne pouvait échapper à son penchant pour la masculinité. *"Dans les fondements mêmes des écrits officiels et de la plupart des textes non officiels, Dieu est masculin"* a-t-elle conclu. (p. 7)

Although Mary T. Malone is not an example of a Quebec woman leaving the Roman Catholic Church, her thinking is typical of the women in Quebec who are abandoning the Church: they have found the patriarchal and hierarchical nature of the Church, and the masculine nature of God too much to bear.

Marie Gratton classifies herself "as a Christian woman within the Catholic tradition who dreams of a breath of fresh air". (*Ecumenism*, No 110, June 1993. p. 4) Her fourth and final category of Quebec women are those who stay in the Church but with a view to radical change. She writes:

Il en est d'autres, et je suis de celles-là, qui refusent obstinément de choisir entre leur appartenance chrétienne et leurs solidarités féministes. Et si elles agissent ainsi ce n'est pas

par mollesse ou indécision, mais sur la foi d'une indéclinable conviction: le message de Jésus de Nazareth porte en lui le ferment révolutionnaire et libérateur qui peut rompre toutes les entraves, dénouer tous les liens, combler tous les fossés qui séparent les êtres humains, hommes et femmes, de la pleine possession de leur autonomie et de leur liberté. Elles restent, et ruent dans les brancards de l'intérieur, jusqu'à ce que justice leur soit rendue. (p. 259)

There are remarkably few young men preparing for the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec, and the majority of students studying theology in the universities in the province are women. There are more than hints of change in these two facts alone. The convents and monasteries are inhabited by aging nuns and monks, and the priests in the province are getting older. Change within the Church is inevitable simply because of the demographics of the Church's clerical population. When the current generation of priests has died and is no longer followed by equal numbers of young men, change will happen.

This is the turning point which Marie Gratton visualizes, and as she has said and written on many occasions, she does not want the change to bring more of the same, she hopes for and aspires to radical change. It is this vision that gives her the strength to stay within the Church. As she writes: "Et pour ma part, même si cela est fort exigeant, je continue à vouloir mener le combat de l'intérieur, au risque de me faire dire..."Tu sanctionnes le système, tu lui permets de se perpétuer." (*RND*, no 9/octobre 86. p. 27) It must be noted

that if Marie Gratton said it was difficult for her to stay within the Church in 1986, it is even more difficult for her to do so today. Her ethical stance, however, has not changed. She wrote in 1986, but still feels:

En outre, il ne faudrait pas oublier que les femmes qui luttent contre ce qui est perçu par un nombre toujours grandissant comme de la discrimination, le font au nom de leur foi. Leur intention profonde est de donner corps à l'Esprit de Jésus qui est venu libérer toute les personnes de leurs oppressions. L'Évangile nous fournit, entre autres à travers la figure de la Samaritaine, un exemple de cette pratique de Jésus. Les femmes qui travaillent à la libération d'autres femmes s'inscrivent donc dans une tradition dont elles n'ont pas à rougir. Les femmes se souviennent de cet aspect révolutionnaire de l'héritage de Jésus. Et elles le rappellent à l'Église qui, par moments, a tendance à l'oublier. (*ibid.* p. 28)

Marie Gratton herself never loses sight of the revolutionary aspect of the Gospel.

PART THREE

CONCLUSION

The deceased former Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Quebec, the Right Reverend Timothy Matthews, the first bishop in Quebec to ordain a women priest and one of the first in Canada to do so, wrote the following words:

May He who walks on wounded feet, walk with you to the end of the road.

May He who serves with wounded hands, help you to serve each other.

May He who loves with a wounded heart, be your love always.

I quote Timothy Matthews in the context of Marie Gratton, because I would conclude that the reason that she has been able to hold fast to the Christian faith and stay within the Roman Catholic Church is because she has never lost sight of the wounded feet, the wounded hands and the wounded heart of the man she calls her "Saviour"; or veered from her belief in the strength of character and inspiration of his mother. She has been inspired by the passion of Christ's revolutionary message; and she has inspired others by her passion for this message. Love in action was the heart of the message of Jesus, and love in action is the key to Marie Gratton's credibility. She is a social activist; and she uses her skills as a writer and speaker not only to develop her theology, but also to strengthen her role as a social activist. Marie Gratton is a regular contributor to the magazine *Présence*, in which she covers many

issues dealing with the sufferings of humanity. She uses these same skills to speak out against what she feels is wrong, and in favour of what she believes is the truth, no matter how much personal anguish or recrimination this may cause her.

I would also conclude that Marie Gratton has derived the strength to carry on, sometimes against considerable odds, because of the love and support of her family and her circle of friends, particularly her friends in the group that calls itself *L'autre Parole*, a group of feminist Christians. Within this group Marie Gratton's roles as a woman, a feminist, a theologian and a Christian are all nourished and encouraged by a group of women all sharing, more or less, the same pilgrimage, all working together towards the same ends of equality and justice for women in the Church and in society. When one senses the discouragement of Marie Gratton at the lack of, or slowness of, progress; or when one feels discouragement on her behalf, one realises that although hers is a voice in the wilderness, it is not the only voice, and she does not stand alone, but together, hand in hand, with women who are soulmates.

Marie Gratton will have the last word and it is a word about solidarity, the key to her methodology. The passage was written in response to Pope John Paul II's declaration that once and for all and forever the question of the ordination of women in the Roman Catholic Church was closed;

Quant à nous, notre faillibilité, infailliblement confirmée pour la suite du monde, nous assure d'une inestimable faveur. Nous trouvons une place de choix au coeur de l'Évangile entre Zachée, la femme adultère et la Samaritaine; la fille publique, à qui "il sera beaucoup pardonné parce qu'elle a beaucoup aimé"; l'hémorroïsse, frappée d'exclusion parce qu'impure; le publicain qui, se reconnaissant pécheur, se tenait au temple à distance du saint des saints. Étrange, mais enviable compagnie, puisqu'un jour, au bord d'une route, à la margelle d'un puits, au nez des bien-pensants, le Nazaréen a levé les yeux sur ces femmes et ces hommes, au coeur blessé, au coeur ouvert, et les a guéris et remplis de tendresse et de miséricorde.

J'attends de pied ferme qui me contestera l'insigne espérance de faire à jamais partie de ce clan-là. (*L'autre Parole*, no 69, printemps 1996, p. 45)

CHAPTER II

DOCTEURE MONIQUE DUMAIS

F

Femme

Ferment

Ferveur

C'est le printemps.

La vie verte éclate dans les arbres.

Les dynamismes ne peuvent plus se dissimuler,

ils veulent étaler leur beauté, leur tendresse

et leur puissance.

C'est la ferveur qui surgit.

Depuis quelques années,

j'ai pris le goût de prendre parole,

d'écrire, d'annoncer un début de rupture

avec un monde trop au masculin,

fier et obsédé par son pouvoir.

L'Église dont je fais partie

vibre encore sur l'unique corde masculine.

La participation des femmes

y est limitée, contrôlée.

La réflexion théologique

demeure fermée à l'expérience des femmes....

30 mai 1978

**Monique Dumais
Université du Québec,
Rimouski**

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

Monique Dumais was born August 9, 1939 in Rimouski, Quebec. Her parents were Doria Tanguay and François Dumais. Her mother was a primary schoolteacher; her father was a farmer, dairymand and tradesman. Monique is the eldest of a family of eleven children: six boys and five girls.

Monique Dumais is a nun, a teacher, and a feminist theologian. She was born and brought up in Rimouski where she was deeply affected by the rhythms, tides and winds of the Lower Saint Lawrence River, a fact she frequently mentions. The following are two quotations which illustrate how important the river is to her:

Sous un mode marin,
inspiré par le Bas du Fleuve,
di-vagations théologiques,
où elles disent les vagues,
les mouvances de leur être,
de leurs perceptions collectives. (*Dialogues de femmes et praxis théologique*, par Monique Dumais,
Société canadienne de théologie, Montréal, 24 octobre 1981, p. 1)

and:

L'évocation de la mer au point de départ de ma communication théologique correspondait à un désir plutôt gratuit de verser quelques gouttes poétiques dans une élaboration rationnelle. Mais dans le processus d'écriture de ce texte, je me suis rendu compte que ce plaisir n'était pas complètement superflu, qu'il reflète mon expérience de femme née dans une région ouverte sur la mer.

J'oserai dire que je me sens une "personne-paysagée", marquée par l'environnement physique; le paysage devient alors non seulement source d'inspiration, mais alimente toutes les racines de l'être, le façonne directement. Regard orienté par les vastes horizons, contemplant les mouvements de la mer, attentif aux variations qui s'y manifestent. La solitude que l'on ressent face à la mer nourrit les pensées, propose une communion avec tout l'univers en même temps qu'il invite à trouver les autres. (*Ibid.* pp. 11/12)

At a conference given at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi on 24th February, 1979, Monique Dumais told how she came to be a feminist theologian in a paper entitled: *AU POINT OU J'EN SUIS COMME THÉOLOGIENNE DANS L'ÉGLISE*. Monique Dumais defines theology as "une tentative d'exprimer de façon rationnelle et cohérente notre compréhension et notre vision du mystère divin transcendant". (pp. 8/9) The basis of her theology is personal experience, and she credits this avenue of theology to James Wm. McClendon, Jr., and his book, **Biography as Theology. How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology**. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974) in which he says: "This book advances the thesis that theology may be undertaken via biography". (p. 39) This is particularly true for feminist theologians who feel that the stories of women have been either neglected or silenced throughout history. As Monique Dumais writes:

"La théologie nouvelle dont nous rêvons ne peut se faire qu'à partir de l'expérience...notre expérience de femmes devra y être inscrite". (p. 8) At the conference in Chicoutimi she told her story to:

faire voir comment les réalités socio-culturelles, y compris celles de la foi chrétienne m'ont poussée à m'inscrire dans un réseau d'action, de communion et ainsi m'appellent à ETRE...Vous verrez que les théologiennes féministes ne tombent pas du ciel! (p. 1)

Before continuing, it is important to quote her understanding of the word 'experience'. In a paper entitled "*Dialogues de femmes et praxis théologique*", given at the Société canadienne de théologie in Montreal on 24th October, 1981, Monique Dumais explains: "Ma définition du mot "expérience" impliquait alors la nécessité du dialogue des sujets faisant la science, et des nouveaux sujets que sont les femmes". (p. 1) She quotes herself, saying:

J'utiliserai le mot "expérience" surtout dans le sens de découverte d'un vécu in-connu, d'une naissance à ce qui est gardé à l'état de non-né et qui peut enfin émerger grâce à la co-naissance. La construction du mot français "connaissance" est très inspirante: une sortie du non-connu dans un acte de solidarité avec d'autres une signification bien importante pour les femmes. ("*Expérience des femmes et théologie*". **Documentation sur la recherche féministe.** Publication spéciale no 8 (Automne 1980, p. 39) (p. 1)

It is through this understanding of the term 'experience', which in fact is in verbal exchanges with others - the dialogue - that Monique Dumais feels that women can free themselves from patriarchal theology.

Monique Dumais, as she said in her paper in Chicoutimi in 1979, was a student with the Ursulines of Rimouski, where three of her aunts were nuns, and went on from there to do "Phil. II" at the Petit Séminaire de Rimouski. Already she was stepping out of the mould - this institution until that point had been for boys only. Monique Dumais was part of a very small group of girls who were the first to be allowed to study there. That experience must have been challenging, it was in the late fifties and one can imagine the suspicion with which girls would have been viewed in such an institution. She then spent a year in Toronto working as a secretary in order to learn English. Following that year she entered the convent as a postulant, where she spent three years teaching at Rimouski and Amqui at the secondary level with the Ursulines, and she completed a baccalauréat in philosophy at Laval in the summers of 1964 to 1967.

Monique Dumais took another pioneering step in her academic development when she began studying theology at the Grand Séminaire de Rimouski which only the year before had opened its doors to the laity, including women. She obtained her baccalauréat in theology from the Université du Québec à Rimouski in 1970 and was immediately offered a job teaching social ethics, which she did for two years.

By this time Monique Dumais was well grounded in philosophy and theology and she knew first hand the Roman Catholic situation in Quebec. With this background she went

off to the United States in 1972, and in 1973 she earned her M.A. in Ethics from Harvard, and then her Ph. D. in May, 1977 from Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Her thesis was entitled: 'L'Église de Rimouski et un Plan de développement (1963-72)'. It is interesting to speculate what directions Monique Dumais would have taken had she remained in Rimouski, but her exposure to American and European feminist theologians accelerated a change. As she says, in the United States she came in contact with Liberation Theology, Black Theology and Feminist Theology. She met Rosemary Radford Ruether and Letty Russell, and she read Mary Daly. These were women who were bound to influence Monique Dumais with her Quebecois upbringing. She says: "...j'ai essayé de faire partie d'un Woman's Caucus, mais mon évolution québécoise n'était pas aussi chaude que celle des américaines. La 'contamination' était cependant commencée." (*Ibid.* p. 2) By the Spring of 1976, back in Rimouski and having taught a course entitled 'Women in Society and in the Church' for a year at the university there, Monique Dumais felt ready to start a radical feminist group in Quebec. She wrote to a few like-minded women and, four of them met in Rimouski where they decided to create a journal and a collective, and in August, 1976, *L'autre Parole* was born. Monique Dumais explains that the journal:

a pour but principal de créer une solidarité parmi les femmes, féministes et chrétiennes, en nous conscientisant à notre situation particulière de femmes, et en essayant de faire surgir tous les dynamismes créateurs de notre expérience de femmes. (*Ibid.* p. 3)

Before looking at the major themes in the work of Monique Dumais, it is interesting to note how Carolyn Sharp, Directrice de la revue *Relations*, sums up the work of Monique Dumais in the spring, 1996 issue of *L'autre Parole* :

Chez Monique Dumais, nous rencontrons une plus grande conscience de la dimension militante de la théologie féministe. Sa préoccupation constante de faire état de l'émergence des forces nouvelles chez les femmes se traduit par une attention spécifique à celles qui s'organisent dans les réseaux théologiques et ecclésiaux. D'ailleurs, c'est à elle que nous devons plusieurs analyses des enjeux du mouvement des femmes au sein de la société québécoise et au sein de l'Église du Québec. Dans une étude comparative entre le mouvement des femmes avant la révolution tranquille et celui qui a suivi ce bouleversement de la société québécoise, elle souligne le passage d'un féminisme hétéronome soucieux de la sainteté des femmes, de la survie du peuple canadien français et de la fidélité à l'Église à un féminisme autonome, soucieux de la liberté des femmes et de la lutte contre le patriarcat. De même, dans ses écrits sur le mouvement des femmes dans l'Église, elle insiste sur les liens qui sont à faire avec le mouvement des femmes dans son ensemble, sur l'émergence d'un discours théologique enraciné dans l'expérience des femmes et sur la contestation pratique de l'exclusion des femmes des lieux de pouvoir. (pp. 23/24)

This is the first theme that will be examined: the role of women in the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec and the challenges to feminist theologians.

PART TWO

MAJOR THEMES IN THE WORK OF MONIQUE DUMAIS

FEMINIST THEOLOGY **AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH** **IN QUEBEC**

When Monique Dumais was writing in 1978 she found that women's awareness of their situation within the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec was weak; and that, on the whole, they did not dare speak out about their hopes, frustrations and demands against an "autorité mâle sacralisée". (*Ibid.* p. 16) Monique Dumais, however, was prepared to speak out against and write about this sacred male authority. But she, like other feminist theologians, especially within the Roman Catholic Church, realised the importance of solidarity among women. She is not the only one who feels that a woman working alone against the powerful male hierarchy within the Church will achieve very little, if anything. Solidarity is crucial, as Monique Dumais wrote: "Un aspect essentiel au mouvement des femmes est leur dynamisme érigé collectivement et non individuellement, et cela par chacune dans son lieu privé". (*L'Autre salut - recherches féministes*, 1990

volume 3 numéro 2, p. 5) This is why *L'autre Parole* was formed. In 1978 Monique Dumais identified seven challenges that she recognized faced feminist theologians; they were as follows: 1) to re-write Scripture giving women an equal place with men; 2) to make sure that women had an equal say in matters concerning the life of a couple: contraception, abortion and rape, those matters which touched women directly; 3) to ensure that women were not merely defined by their capacity to give birth or in their sexual relationships with men; 4) to try out new forms of ministry which appealed to women, which helped bring out the talents of women and which benefitted the whole Christian community; 5) to use inclusive language in liturgy; 6) to help women appreciate other women and not be threatened by them; and 7) to participate in the decision-making processes of the Church at all levels. (*Ibid.* p. 20) Monique Dumais realised that these changes would require a radical shift in attitude among women and particularly among men. In 1978 she felt that she was at the beginning; she wrote: "Il reste beaucoup à vivre, à échanger, à écouter, à recevoir, à expérimenter, et à exiger. Je fais confiance à la vie qui nous entraînera toujours plus loin et plus sûrement...". (*Ibid.* p. 20)

In her book, **Les droits des femmes**, published in 1992, Monique Dumais gives the facts about the actual roles of women in the Church in Quebec today. Her information is from the sociological study by Sarah Bélanger entitled **Les soutanes roses** (Sarah Bélanger, **Les soutanes roses. Portrait du personnel pastoral féminin au Québec**, Montréal, Bellarmin, 1988). The work was commissioned by the group *Femmes et Ministères*, and Monique Dumais says that the author discovered that:

"animatrice de (en) pastorale paroissiale", "animatrice paroissiale en pastorale", "co-animatrice ou agente permanente de pastorale", "animatrice pastorale responsable de toute la pastorale et de l'administration".
(*Les soutanes roses*, p. 279 -291. *Les droits des femmes* p. 122-123)

Monique Dumais and Sarah Bélanger recognize that with this bizarre system and the confusion of titles, the women involved remain unknown and invisible. It is unlikely that the Church deliberately set out to establish such a subtle system, nevertheless it is very effective in keeping women out of positions of power and authority.

However, if Monique Dumais is skeptical about the actual role of women in the Church in Quebec today, she is much more optimistic about the role of women as professors of theology and as theologians. Writing recently in *Religiologiques/Religiologiques 11, Regard nord-américains sur religion/ North American insights into Religion*, Edited by Mathieu Boisvert. 22-24 avril, 1994. Montréal: Université du Québec à Montréal. Papers Presented in the Annual Meeting of the Eastern International Region. "Synergie: femme et religion au Québec depuis 1970", Monique Dumais) Monique Dumais outlines the progress made by women in these areas in the past twenty years. She gives the facts and evaluates the progress. She is impressed with the progress. In fact, in conclusion to the paper she is quite jubilant about the progress:

La saison hivernale est dépassée - du passé - espérons-le pour les femmes! Est disparue la couche de neige que retenait captives les pousses de vitalité, qui rendait invisible toute possibilité d'effervescence. Le printemps est venue avec ses changements impérieux et fleuris. Les versets du Cantique des cantiques résonnent à nos oreilles attentives:

Car voilà l'hiver passé
c'en est fini des pluies, elles ont disparu.
Sur la terre les fleurs se montrent
La saison vient des gais refrains (...)
Le figuier forme ses premiers fruits
et les vignes en fleur exhalent leur parfum.

(Cant. 2, 11-13. Traduction de la Bible de Jérusalem)

C'est même l'été qui est là qui donne aux fleurs et aux fruits leur maturité. Les activités et les événements qui ont impliqué les femmes dans le domaine religieux au Québec manifestent qu'existe une synergie entre femmes et religions qui continuera de se déployer au cours des années qui suivront. Argumentations, recherches, publications, colloques, célébrations, engagement, forment un cercle dynamique qui devrait s'inscrire de façon permanente dans les traditions religieuses. (p. 62)

If in 1978, when Monique Dumais wrote with such confidence about the fact that feminist theologians in Quebec were at the beginning and that there was much to be done; had she been able to foresee the future, she would have been happy with the vision. What Monique Dumais has witnessed in the intervening years is an evolution which has taken place in both the social sphere and the academic sphere. In the social sphere Monique Dumais points to the formation of several women's groups, to the controversial theatrical presentation in 1978 of *Les fées ont soif*, (a work that Monique Dumais refers to frequently), the Conference of Bishops of Canada in 1971, and its report on the ministries

of the Church, the meeting in 1986 between one hundred Quebec women from all walks of life and the bishops of Quebec, and the demand for an apology from the bishops in 1990 on the 50th anniversary of women gaining the right to vote. These were all significant events in the liberation of Quebec women.

In the academic sphere Monique Dumais underlines the fact that the number of female students in Quebec universities studying theology and religious sciences has reached more than 70%, a figure that is impressive. She makes the observation that although those hiring professors in the universities are predominantly men, they are only just now 'starting to favour the hiring of women professors'. (p. 63) Monique Dumais points to other encouraging signs:

...the creation of interdisciplinary feminist research networks, such as the Canadian Center of Research on Women and Religions at the University of Ottawa in 1988: publications specializing in the domain concerned, more and more research identified with feminist concerns; colloquiums, for example, the one focusing on 'Femmes et religions' (Women and Religions) which was held in May of 1990 at the congress of the ACFAS at Laval University; and the workshop "Pouvoir et religions" (Power and Religions) at the time of the World Summit on Women and the Multidimensionality of Power, held in Montreal in June 1990. (pp. 63/64)

Monique Dumais also emphasizes the fact that feminist theology in Quebec is moving into its second generation. She says: "Une deuxième génération se présente et découvre ses couleurs"; (p. 60) these are the daughters of feminist mothers, and she mentions such names as Denise Couture, Denise Welch, Rebecca Chopp and Sheila G. Davaney. (p. 61)

Monique Dumais has reason to speak of the spring and summer of women and religion in Quebec. There is, without question, a flowering of achievements and definite visible progress in both the social and academic realms. Where Marie Gratton occasionally questions the value of having spent thirty years devoted to feminist theology, Monique Dumais rejoices in the achievements of such dedication.

In 1978, in her paper entitled "*Ferveurs d'une Théologienne*", Monique Dumais asked the question: "La théologie peut-elle être du genre féminin au Québec?" and she answered her own question in the affirmative based on six propositions:

- Elle sera au féminin si les femmes acceptent de se mettre les mains à la pâte et de pétrir de façon énergique.**

- Elle devra être au féminin pluriel, enrichie de la voix pluridimensionnelle des femmes laïques, religieuses, mariées, célibataires, monoparentales, séparées, divorcées, défavorisées, délaissées, violentées.**

- Elle pourra témoigner nettement du genre féminin si les femmes découvrent, consentent à approfondir, osent livrer leurs expériences typiques de femmes.**

- Elle sera au féminin si les femmes au Québec l'inscrivent dans l'histoire du Québec. Nous ne devons pas refuser notre passé, où se trouvent des dynamismes qui nous engagent à poursuivre la route et qui nous sollicitent à nous engager toujours en avant.**

- Cette théologie m'apparaît principalement - axée sur une compréhension intégrale de la création de l'homme et de la femme "à l'image de Dieu". Nous n'avons pas besoin de nouveaux mythes pour permettre cette représentation génétique.

- La "théologisation" entreprise par les femmes est de type nomade, toujours en train de se faire, émergeant du processus de cheminement, de l'exode vers l'ailleurs toujours en avant. (pp. 21/22)

Those challenging words were addressed to women in Quebec in 1978. In 1992, with the publication of **Les droits des femmes**, Monique Dumais concludes the work with words of pride outlining the achievements of women in Quebec, in society as a whole, and in the Church:

Les trois "A", Autonomie, Accomplissement et Affirmation, semblent couvrir et signifier les démarches entreprises par les femmes. L'autonomie des femmes s'impose de plus en plus dans les multiples relations à leur corps et dans le vécu familial. L'accomplissement des femmes trouve un aboutissement dans l'accès à tous les niveaux d'éducation et à tous les métiers et à toutes les professions. L'affirmation des femmes gagne du terrain dans le domaine public par leur participation active à l'économie, à la politique, aux religions. (p. 128)

The fifth proposition, from "*Ferveurs d'une Théologienne*", about women and men being created in the image of God, leads to the next major themes of Monique Dumais: the female body; her code of ethics regarding the equality of women and men; and justice in society as a result of this equality.

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THE BODY AND MONIQUE DUMAIS' ETHICAL VIEWS

Throughout her development as a feminist theologian Monique Dumais has had a significant preoccupation with the human body, particularly the female body. In her paper entitled "*Dialogues de femmes et praxis théologique*", given at the société canadienne de théologie in Montreal in October, 1981, she explained the importance of this concern with the body:

La religion chrétienne se présente comme une religion d'incarnation, où les fabricants de la tradition ont souvent eu peur que le corps entraîne l'esprit dans des profondeurs de déchéance, d'anéantissement. Le corps et l'esprit s'opposaient, l'un devant disparaître au profit de l'épanouissement de l'autre. Les corps masculins ont pu plus facilement faire semblant d'oublier leurs besoins quotidiens, leur sensibilité. Mais les femmes n'ont jamais pu négliger ou faire taire leur corps qui a des manifestations mensuelles, qui se modifie de façon très évidente au rythme des grossesses et des saisons de la vie. Pourtant les hommes ont réussi pendant des siècles à dissimuler cette présence intense du corps, même de celui des femmes. C'est pourquoi les mouvements des femmes ont notamment revendiqué cette réappropriation du corps. En tant que chrétiennes, les femmes ont découvert comment l'incarnation pouvait être révélée à travers toute la dynamique du corps, comment à travers le corps, la vie de l'esprit, de l'Esprit était manifestée. (p. 6)

The Church Fathers perceived the female body as something dark, threatening, sinister. Monique Dumais set herself the task of proving that the female body is not something to be feared and rejected, but rather something to be honoured and celebrated. She feels that this celebration and honour can be found in Scripture, and that it was the early Church tradition that transformed the female body into something so negative. In her essay,

"Femmes faites chair", written in 1983 in *La femme, son corps, la religion*, (sous la direction d'Élisabeth J. Lacelle, Collection "*Femmes et religions*" 2, Les Éditions Bellarmin, Montréal, 1983) Monique Dumais points out that Christianity is about the body. She writes: "...s'il est une religion qui est obligée de parler du corps, c'est bien le christianisme, qui repose sur la foi en un Dieu incarné, fait chair. "Et le Verbe s'est fait chair, il a habité parmi nous" (Jean 1,14) (p. 52) Monique Dumais sees that the challenge to feminist theologians is to reread the Scriptures in such a way that the female body is respected. This is what she sets out to do. As she says:

Ces femmes faites chair, je vous convie à mieux les connaître à travers cette foi chrétienne qui révèle les corps, qui célèbre le corps. C'est en tant que croyante et féministe que je vous offre une lecture théologique du corps, notamment de celui des femmes. (pp. 52/53)

Monique Dumais does not limit herself to Christian Scripture, she studies the Hebrew Bible as well, looking at the stories of the women and what we can learn from the stories and how we can celebrate the female body no matter what its condition: whether whole or handicapped, fruitful or sterile, virgin or not. One example of how the Scriptures can be reinterpreted from a woman's point of view is the story of the woman who had been haemorrhaging for twelve years, the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' clothes and was healed. Monique Dumais writes in 'Femmes faites chair':

En guérissant l'hémorroïsse, Jésus redonne à cette femme le processus normal de son corps et lui permet de vivre de façon régulière sa sexualité (Lc 8, 43 - 48). Au milieu de cette foule qui l'enserme de toutes parts, Jésus prend conscience qu'il vient d'accomplir un geste de salut pour l'être complet de cette

femme. "Ma fille, ta foi t'a sauvée, va en paix", car toute ta sexualité de femme a été restaurée, la foi dont parle Jésus est une foi qui guérit tout l'être, y compris le corps. (pp. 59/60)

In this essay Monique Dumais also talks about virginity which she does in a very personal way from her point of view as a nun. She talks about how the mass media has exploited women's sexuality and how the women's movement has liberated women in their sexuality. Monique Dumais sees virginity as a liberating phenomenon; she says: "La virginité se présente surtout comme une qualité, une attitude intérieure, plutôt qu'un fait physiologique ou extérieur; elle offre l'image d'un être libéré qui est libre de servir Dieu". (p. 63) In discussing virginity, she concludes:

La virginité signifie donc une ouverture, non un état de fermeture, une célébration d'amitiés et parfois d'amours. La libération qu'elle apporte suppose une connaissance intime de soi-même et permet l'émergence des forces créatrices. (p. 63)

In a province where just a few decades earlier the parish priest felt he had the right and the responsibility to tell women in his charge when to conceive, when their skirts were too short, or that wearing shorts was unladylike, Monique Dumais writing so openly and honestly about the female body in the late 1970s and early 1980s must have raised a few ecclesiastical eyebrows. At the time of writing '*Femmes faite chair*', she did not know what sort of impact her study and her approach would have on women and on the Church. She admits:

Je ne connais pas, présentement, toute la portée révolutionnaire du travail que j'ai entrepris: celui d'exprimer les expériences des femmes, de les valoriser, de les rendre le plus fécondes possible et surtout de les intégrer complètement à notre vie dans la foi chrétienne. C'est une tâche qui est merveilleuse, en ce qu'elle fait puiser à mes sources les plus vitales. C'est une tâche inquiétante, aussi, face à certaines femmes qui ne veulent pas sonder leurs entrailles fermées culturellement, face à certains hommes qui se sentent menacés dans leur moitié de perception de l'humanité. C'est une aventure où je fais confiance à toute les fécondités, les miennes et celles des autres femmes, où j'ai foi et espérance en un support déjà là et à venir des sœurs et des frères. C'est, en somme, un chant de délivrance où tout semble permis parce que sauvé. (p. 70)

What is apparent in Monique Dumais is her joy and optimism in facing the challenge. She knows she is being radical and she is prepared to face the opposition. She knows she is exploring new territory and the risks involved do not deter her. She knows that she has some support and she is confident that more will follow. As a feminist theologian she knows the task is valid and will ultimately bring about justice and equality for women. The sense of defiance, militancy and solidarity with other women is always strong in Monique Dumais. The author's concern for the body touches every aspect of a woman's life Monique Dumais demonstrates in **Les droits des femmes**. In the section entitled *Autonomie*, she maintains that women must take charge of their own bodies and all matters concerning their bodies. She discusses women's health, both physical and mental, their sexuality and their fertility. In this last area she deals with contraception, abortion and new reproductive technology. These are all matters prohibited by the Roman Catholic Church, which has made it very difficult in the past for women to make personal decisions concerning their bodies. Feminist theologians are opening up these issues for

public debate and they are encouraging women to act as mature, responsible, thinking adults in making decisions concerning their whole being, body and soul. Monique Dumais writes:

...les Québécoises ont fait entendre leur voix dans ce domaine.

Nous voulons nous battre pour un monde qui permettrait de rendre nos enfants heureux. En attendant, dans ce monde d'aujourd'hui où on a de la misère à survivre, nous voulons entièrement contrôler notre corps par:

- l'avortement légal, accordé sur simple demande de la femme, *gratuit* et sans limites d'âge;
- une information complète sur le fonctionnement de notre corps et sur la contraception distribuée dans tout le Québec;
- le droit de choisir le moment où nous voulons des enfants. Mais aucune femme n'est obligée d'avoir des enfants; quel que soit notre choix, il doit être respecté. (Québécoises Deboutte! no 1, novembre 1976, p. 16, in V. O'Leary et L. Toupin, op. cit., p. 96 p. 74)

The secular world in Quebec is more progressive than the Roman Catholic Church, and so it is reasonable to expect these demands to be attainable. They are, however, demands that shock the Church. It is a fact that within the Roman Catholic Church, all decisions concerning women's bodies are made, and have been made over the centuries, by celibate men. It is only when women attain positions of authority and responsibility within the Church that this male-dominated institution will change its corporate mind; that is not likely to happen in the foreseeable future. It is no secret that many priests in Quebec now turn a blind eye to the rules regarding contraception. They realize, quite rightly, that it is

none of their business. It was a complete invasion of privacy for the parish priest to assume the right to dictate what went on in the bedrooms of his parish.

Monique Dumais realizes, however, that there is still much to be done before women have complete autonomy over their bodies. She concludes:

L'autonomie des femmes par rapport à leur corps est une vaste entreprise qui est déterminante pour l'ensemble de la démarche de transformation socio-politique poursuivie par les femmes. Le corps est le lieu le plus personnel, il est le passage obligé pour les femmes en vue d'une conquête de leur emprise sur le réel. La réclamation des droits pour la santé physique et mentale, pour une sexualité entière, pour le choix de sa fécondité, pour la défense de son intégrité est donc une tâche prioritaire pour parvenir à cette autonomie. (p. 87)

What Monique Dumais wants for women is a whole new way of being, one that is not dictated by anyone but themselves. As she writes in **Souffles de femmes**: " En effet, il appartient désormais aux femmes de s'inventer, de "se donner naissance à elles-mêmes", selon l'expression qui m'est chère." (Monique Dumais et Marie-Andrée Roy, **Souffles de femmes, lectures féministes de la religion**. 1989. Montréal: Éditions Paulines. p. 125.) She feels that women are at a critical point in their history, a period of profound transformation. She writes:

En acceptant un questionnement fondamental de leur condition, les femmes veulent se donner naissance. Elles sont parvenues à l'étape historique où elles reconnaissent comme valides et importantes, leurs propres expériences, aussi valides et importantes que celles des hommes. Elles ont décidé

conséquentement de nommer leurs expériences, de leur reconnaître pleine valeur. Elles reprennent ainsi contact avec leurs sensations, leurs énergies, leurs désirs; elles osent les déployer et permettent ainsi de faire voir de nouvelles façons d'être humain. (p. 125)

I included *Monique Dumais' Ethical Views* in this section because so much that has to do with the body has to do with ethical choices. (I had originally called the section *Monique Dumais' Code of Ethics*, but in reviewing this work she wrote to me: "Je ne perçois pas l'éthique comme un code, mais plutôt une vision, un questionnement". (August, 1996) Monique Dumais does not feel that there is anything set or rigid about ethics, they should be fluid, growing and developing. The Church tries to impose a system of ethics upon its people, and until the Quiet Revolution it was successful. Even the New Catechism of the Catholic Church, which was published in 1994, attempts to tell the faithful what to think, do, and believe concerning every conceivable human and non-human matter. But feminist theologians in Quebec (and elsewhere) no longer accept this kind of rigidity, this imposition from 'above', especially since it derives from celibate men and discriminates against women. In discussing ethical systems that are *relevant* to women, Monique Dumais writes:

Aujourd'hui, les femmes tiennent comme morale acceptable celle qui reconnaît comme base d'affirmation les expériences des femmes. Ainsi, se profile comme principe structurant, la responsabilisation et non pas la mise sous tutelle comme "marque distinctive de toute éthique de libération féministe". (Mary Hunt, "Changer la théologie moral. Un défi éthique féministe". *Concilium* 202 (1985) pp.109-117). Toute proposition de morale chrétienne concernant les femmes doit désormais donner une participation entière des femmes à la position et à la disposition des acquis des expériences des femmes. Le mouvement des

femmes établit comme principe de déploiement éthique la responsabilité des personnes impliquées dans une actualisation... Déjà nous, les femmes, avons inscrit nos traces dans le questionnement éthique de la société québécoise...apporter une vitalité régénératrice à la fluidité éthique. (pp. 133/4)

This section will conclude with two further quotations of Monique Dumais on feminist ethics to further understand her point of view. In a paper entitled *Éthique féministe et transcendance*, given in Hamilton to SCER>CSSR, on 1st June, 1987, she wrote:

- L'éthique féministe manifeste la nécessité d'une référence à une symbolique du divin au féminin pour permettre aux femmes de poser leur identité dans sa plénitude et dans ses limites...
- L'éthique féministe peut s'inscrire dans la tradition chrétienne dans la mesure où celle-ci supporte des projets de justice pour les gens démunis, marginalisés. Des traces sont marquées qui doivent être constamment refaites, mieux désignées pour que le message de libération y soit signifié de façon claire.
- Ainsi l'éthique féministe débouche sur des réseaux de solidarité où les relations entre les femmes révèlent un au-delà dans la communion, la prise en charge réciproque. Transcendance et immanence se conjuguent ensemble. (p. 9)

One must underline again the importance of solidarity in the thinking of Monique Dumais, women must stand together in this new way of being, seeing, thinking.

Possibly the most appealing passage about feminist ethics written by Monique Dumais comes at the end of a paper which she wrote in 1992 entitled *Variations éthiques sur les femmes majeures en théologie* :

L'éthique féministe peut donc être comparée à une symphonie en train d'être composée. Plusieurs variations sont possibles à partir du thème de base: les expériences des femmes. Cette musique est donc en pleine élaboration; elle demande à être entendue, appréciée. Elle ne cherche pas à exclure des partitions, mais à intégrer toutes les voix qui veulent participer à une humanité forte de l'expression de toutes les expériences diversifiées. (p. 26)

GOD, MARY AND THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATION

Monique Dumais is an avid student of other feminist theologians and of feminist theology. She has written a book on women in the Bible, and she includes this topic in much of her writing. A large part of her work is research and analysis of the writings of other feminist theologians from around the world, particularly the United States. She brings the thoughts of these women to her own audience, especially in Quebec. This study is an attempt to isolate what is uniquely the philosophical thinking of Monique Dumais. When one bases one's work on the concept of solidarity, as Monique Dumais has done, and when one is a dedicated student of other people's work, as she is, it might seem a contradiction to use the term 'uniquely'. There is no question that Monique Dumais is, and has been for years, influenced by the work of her colleagues, but she also has a voice of her own and an identity which is her own. A study of her writing shows the scope of her research; her knowledge of history and Scripture is extensive. She is furthermore a prolific writer. I have chosen to limit the discussion of themes to a final three: God, Mary and the ordination of women.

There is an unmistakable connection to be discovered in the study of Monique Dumais' work between the vision of God, the relationship between God and Mary, and between Mary and her Son, and the relationship between all women and God, which should not exclude the possibility of the ordination of women in the Church. These themes appear intimately connected.

GOD

Monique Dumais feels that the concept of the male and the female should be incorporated into the understanding of God, and that we should progress beyond thinking of God as either male or female. She finds the discussion of the understanding of God very much a live debate. As she writes in her article entitled "*Pour que les noces aient lieu entre Dieu et les femmes*": "Dieu n'est pas mort dans les textes féministes". (*canadienne/ A Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses, Revue canadienne/ Canadian Journal*, Volume 16 Number 1/1987. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo. p. 53). In this article Monique Dumais examines how the best known feminist theologians have chosen to view God. Her conclusion is:

Les expériences sont variées, se nourrissent l'une l'autre. La découverte des aspects féminins dans la conception du divin ne doit pas, toutefois, conduire à une formulation uniquement féminine du divin. Elle permet de montrer qu'en Dieu, il y a du masculin et du féminin, bien plus que Dieu est au-delà du masculin et du féminin, tout en n'étant pas dans un ciel abstrait où les expériences des hommes et des femmes n'auraient plus rien à signifier dans notre découverte quotidienne du divin. (*ibid.* p. 64)

In **Souffles de femmes** Monique Dumais points out how this vision of God incorporating both the feminine and the masculine, going beyond gender, will benefit the whole Church community. In her article, "*Sortir Dieu du ghetto masculin/ Dieu masculin/féminin*", she writes: "Reconnaître Dieu à la fois au masculin et au féminin entraîne un changement de mentalités et d'attitudes où l'Église, communautés des hommes et des femmes, trouvera une plus grande signification." (*op. cit.* p. 146)

Church tradition has put the emphasis on the story of Adam and Eve, and the temptation of Eve. Tradition chose to ignore the first creation story in which men and women are created equal, at the same time, and in the image of God. Feminist theologians are re-interpreting Eve, and are putting the emphasis on the first creation story in which they can celebrate the notion that the image of God contains both male and female.

MARY

The person of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a subject close to the heart of most Christian (and other) feminist theologians; and most feminist theologians are not comfortable with the way she has been depicted by the Church throughout the ages. Feminist theologians tend to agree that Mary has been transformed into a figure who is unapproachable and impossible to imitate. They want the real woman to emerge; the woman who has been put on a pedestal, or turned into an eternally beautiful, but cold, stone statue, to come down off the pedestal, to break through the stone and to emerge as a warm, caring, strong, compassionate and suffering human being. They want a woman with whom all women in all conditions can identify.

On many occasions in her writing, Monique Dumais refers to the theatrical production **Les fées ont soif**, written by Denise Boucher, in Montreal in 1978, (l'Hexagone, Les Édition Intermède). The play deals with the idealization of Mary as problematic, and it offended many in the Roman Catholic Church when it first appeared. For a time the play was banned. In an essay entitled "*Une théologie du service pour les femmes*", (*Concilium* 214 , 1987) Monique Dumais writes about the importance of the play for Quebec feminists:

Des féministes au Québec ont particulièrement dénoncé dans la pièce *Les fées ont soif* l'aliénation des femmes supportée par la statufication de Marie. Les trois seuls personnages de cette pièce, la ménagère, la putain et la statue de Marie, protestent contre le confinement des femmes dans des tâches de service asservissantes, leur embrigadement dans des disponibilités qui ne sont utiles qu'aux hommes. La statue

de Marie a été une caution d'un état de servitude pour les femmes: "Je suis le miroir de l'injustice. Je suis le siège de l'esclavage (...) Je suis le symbole pourri de l'abnégation pourrie. Je suis un silence plus opprimant et plus oppressant que toutes les paroles. (p. 91)." (p. 139)

One can imagine how such language would shock those in the Church who wanted to keep Mary quietly, passively, obediently, forever beautiful, on her pedestal. In the winter edition of *L'autre Parole* in 1988, several feminist theologians wrote about Mary. Monique Dumais' article was entitled "*Marie au quotidien*", and in it she makes a plea for the real Mary of everyday life to appear, the woman with whom all women can identify. She wants to get to know this Mary. She writes:

Penser à Marie dans les différentes phases de sa vie: dans le ventre de sa mère Anne, jeune bébé, enfant, adolescente, menstruée pour la première fois, fiancée, épouse, enceinte, s'occupant de Jésus, ménopausé, malade, vieillissante.

Saisir les comportements et les qualités qu'elle a développés: **acceptation** des événements, annonce inattendue d'une grossesse, **force** dans les souffrances, **jolie** devant la beauté, **tendresse** envers les autres, **patience**, **vivacité** et **lucidité**, détermination devant les décisions à prendre, par exemple à Cana, **partage** avec les autres, **simplicité**, etc.

Marie, quand elle est considérée comme une femme toute proche de nous, engagée dans le quotidien, permet de vivre une relation avec elle sereine, réconfortante. Elle nous communique une simplicité et une ardeur de vivre selon la volonté de Dieu. (p. 12)

The task, common to feminist theologians, is to make Mary *real*.

THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

Monique Dumais first dealt formally with the question of the ordination of women in 1978 in a paper entitled "*Discours religieux sur la femme. Critique de la Déclaration romaine sur la question de l'admission des femmes au sacerdoce ministériel*", (*Ferveurs d'une théologienne*, Département des Sciences religieuses, Université du Québec, Rimouski, pp. 64-83). The question of the ordination of women in the Roman Catholic Church has been an issue for almost twenty years. It is a question that will not go away, no matter how vehemently Rome insists that it is not an issue, never has been, and never will be. Monique Dumais points out how the Pope tries to brush aside the question: "le magistère romain semble avoir comme fonction propre de faire disparaître les questions le plus vite possible avant qu'elle ne deviennent trop envahissantes". (p. 66) Monique Dumais' choice of words is interesting: *envahissante* = invasion. The question is seen as invasive by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, and the admission of women into the priesthood would be seen as an invasion, women entering a sacred and holy space reserved for men only. In a lively and detailed critique, Monique Dumais points out what she feels are the weaknesses of the papal declaration. In the first place, she says:

Ainsi, par son refus des motifs socio-culturels, ses expressions catégoriques, visant à figer une tradition, la présence de contradictions, la Déclaration me semble réussir à évacuer la question qu'elle veut traiter. Comme le pouvoir peut-il s'auto-critiquer, s'il n'est pas d'abord libéré, détendu? (p. 70)

Monique Dumais examines at length the question of equality, and finally asks the question: "Faut-il continuer à maintenir une différence au niveau des rôles? La différence

au niveau de l'expression de ces mêmes rôles ne serait-elle pas suffisante?" (p. 76) It is a rhetorical question. In fact, for all its weaknesses and contradictions, the truth of the matter is that the papal declaration is a debate, albeit one-sided from which women are excluded. Monique Dumais writes:

Dans l'ensemble du texte de la Déclaration, les femmes prennent nettement conscience qu'il s'agit d'un discours masculin, clos sur lui-même, ne s'adressant qu'à des hommes qu'ils veulent défendre un pouvoir établi selon une longue tradition, et les femmes sont expressément exclues de ce circuit. Comment parviendrons-nous à prendre la parole dans une telle enclave masculine? (p. 80)

Writing nine years later in a paper entitled, "*Une théologie du service pour les femmes*" Monique Dumais' feeling and arguments have not changed: men still make the decisions and women are excluded from the decision-making process. The absence of logic and the lack of justice still exist. She writes:

Quant aux femmes, elles ne peuvent aspirer à ces services qui sont des ministères ordonnés, puisqu'en raison de leur sexe la Tradition ne leur a jamais permis de les exercer... Une argumentation basée sur une tradition qui se défend d'avoir des assises culturelles circonscrit les activités des femmes selon les volontés d'un magistère uniquement de sexe masculin. (*Concilium* 214, 1987, Beauchesne, Paris, p. 137)

In the Spring of 1995 Monique Dumais joined the other contributors of *L'autre Parole* to react against the letter from Pope John Paul II which said that the question of the ordination of women was not even to be discussed in the Roman Catholic Church. Her contribution to this edition was to bring the readers' reactions to the Pope's letter. She

talks about her own personal contacts and only gives reactions of which she is personally aware; these come from the Maritimes, British Columbia and France. Once again Monique Dumais acts as a link between the outside theological world and those interested in feminist theology in Quebec. The reactions to the papal letter are, she discovered, negative. She concludes:

Les réactions sont de deux ordres:

- celles qui visent à créer des réseaux de solidarité et de communion en une même espérance, c'est l'action par des lettres océanes qui recueillent des milliers de signatures.
- celles qui sont axées sur des actualisations, des actions de grâce où sont mises en scène des femmes qui ont déjà été ordonnées dans des ministères, ce sont les célébrations réalisées à l'émission *Jour de Seigneur* et à Paris. (*L'autre Parole* no 65, printemps 1995, Montréal, p. 19)

In an issue such as the ordination of women which involves such basic injustice and blatant discrimination Monique Dumais, with her determination and militancy, will not be quiet or content until the Roman Catholic Church ordains women.

PART THREE

CONCLUSION

Monique Dumais has been actively involved in feminist theology for over twenty years. Her enthusiasm has never wavered. One detects the same confidence, optimism and militancy in her latest writings that one noted in her earliest endeavours. She writes with the same determination and the same conviction. Her themes and her challenges are global - the rights of women, not just in Quebec, and not just in the Church, but universally. She still feels that solidarity and justice for women achieved in Quebec society and in the Church in Quebec will reverberate worldwide. As she wrote at the end of **Les droits des femmes** : "La solidarité tant espérée pourra faire le tour de la terre et rejoindre les aspirations les plus chères et les plus profondes des femmes et des hommes.:" (p. 128)

Monique Dumais has been a pioneer in Quebec feminist theology. She has been described by her colleagues as both 'a locomotive' (Marie Gratton) and 'a bridge' (Marie-Andrée Roy). Monique Dumais was one of the first to bring feminist theology to Quebec, she brought the knowledge she had acquired in the United States back to Quebec. She has been an avid student and she has generously shared the fruits of her work with women in Quebec and beyond; she is a tireless advocate for that better world.

It is interesting to speculate, and impossible to predict, the future direction of Monique Dumais' work. In the poem at the beginning of this study she uses the word 'rupture':

**j'ai pris le goût de prendre parole,
d'écrire, d'annoncer un début de rupture
avec un monde trop au masculin
fier et obsédé par son pouvoir.**

Monique Dumais wrote those words in 1978, It is tempting to wonder if in the future there will not be a complete rupture between Monique Dumais and the male-dominated and hierarchical Roman Catholic Church in Quebec. This temptation comes from reading one of her most recent papers entitled "*Préoccupations écologiques et éthique féministe*", (*Religiologiques* , no 13, printemps 1996, pp. 115-124). The paper is a global overview of the preoccupations of feminism and feminist theology; and it is a definition and explanation of what is known as écoféminisme, which, she says, is "une nouvelle façon de considérer les femmes et la nature". (p. 117) In this paper Monique Dumais quotes numerous other feminists, traces the development of goddess worship, denounces the Christian "tradition spirituelle de domination" (pp. 119-121) and looks for "une transformation de la symbolique chrétienne" (pp. 121-124). What is noteworthy in this paper is Monique Dumais' enthusiasm for the subject, for example:

Nous sommes donc des corps spiritualisés, qui vivent, qui aiment, qui pensent. Le modèle de l'univers comme corps de Dieu unit conséquemment de façon magnifique, selon ce que Sallie McFague nous propose, l'immanence et la transcendance. (p. 122)

and

Mary Hunt l'exprime de façon splendide à la fin de son étude sur l'amitié *Fierce Tenderness*. "L'écologie est à la terre ce que l'amitié est pour les personnes." (Mary Hunt, *Fierce Tenderness. A Feminist Theology of Friendship*. New York: Crossroad, 1991, p. 173) (p. 123)

In the conclusion to this paper one sees a vision in which Monique Dumais goes far beyond the doors of the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec:

Nous apprenons ainsi à faire corps avec tous les autres êtres de l'univers, qu'ils soient des humains, des minéraux, des végétaux, sur notre planète ou dans une autre galaxie. (p. 124)

Whatever direction Monique Dumais chooses to follow, her decision will be based on honesty, integrity and what she feels is best for women and men in Quebec and in the world.

POST SCRIPTUM

Monique Dumais will have the last word in the section on her life and work. The following is the letter I received in response to the work I submitted for her scrutiny in the summer of 1996:

Rimouski, le 2 septembre 1996

Chère Patricia,

Quelle belle surprise j'ai eue en cette fin d'été de recevoir le texte que tu as rédigé sur mes écrits, à la recherche de ma pensée! J'ai ressenti assez fréquemment en te lisant à la fois une grande émotion et une bonne satisfaction en découvrant tes perceptions très justes et aussi tes appréciations souvent élogieuses.

J'ai goûté que tu me situes dès le début dans l'amour de la mer, un plaisir que je cultive toujours...Je dois te dire que je suis très impressionnée par le fait que tu aies collectionné presque tous mes écrits, le plus brefs comme les plus élaborés. Tu m'as fait voir des aspects très marquants qui ressortent de ces vingt années d'écriture; cette lecture transversale est très éclairante...

Tes efforts pour identifier ce qui m'est propre sont très intéressants pour moi. C'est une question que je me pose de temps en temps: qu'est-ce que j'apporte de spécifique? Le fait de traverser et mettre en évidence les recherches de plusieurs féministes est déjà très significatif pour moi: dans ce processus qui est forcément sélectif passe une énergie bien particulière de transformation.

Au sujet de la conclusion, concernant la direction que je prendrai, je dois dire que je me sens encore fortement enracinée dans la tradition chrétienne et catholique, et que je travaille à l'épiphanie des femmes!

Bonne chance pour la fin de ta rédaction. J'aimerais avoir un exemplaire de ton texte quand tu auras terminé. Merci pour ton intérêt chaleureux et si cordial pour mes écrits.

Monique Dumais

August, 2000

In 1998 Médiaspaul in Montreal published the latest book written by Monique Dumais, *Femmes et Pauvreté*. In this work Monique Dumais is true to the themes and convictions that have concerned her throughout her career as a writer and a feminist theologian: equality, justice, human dignity, recognition and responsibility, creativity and change, hope and solidarity.

CHAPTER III

DOCTEURE YVONNE BERGERON

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

My first contact with Yvonne Bergeron came in December, 1992 when I was given a copy of her book, **PARTENAIRES EN EGLISE femmes et hommes à part égale**, published by Editions Paulines in 1991, by Jean-Marie Fortier, Roman Catholic Archbishop of the Diocese of Sherbrooke. In the front of the book the Archbishop had written : "A Madame Patricia Peacock en respectueux hommage et en témoignage d'amitié. Avec mes meilleurs voeux de joyeux Noël et de bonne année. Jean-Marie Fortier, archevêque de Sherbrooke, le 5 décembre, 1992". My first personal contact with Yvonne Bergeron came in 1993, when I received a letter from her dated (Sherbrooke), le 8 février, 1993. Her letter was in response to an article I had written reviewing her book. She wrote:

Bien chère madame,

Permettez-moi d'abord un merci de tout coeur pour cet appui précieux que vous m'exprimez dans votre essai. Cela me réjouit et m'a fait grand bien. Merci de nouveau!

Oui il se vit encore beaucoup de souffrance dans l'Eglise catholique au sujet de la condition des femmes. La lutte n'est pas facile et ses conséquences, sans aller jusqu'à l'excommunication, peuvent être lourdes à porter.

Présentement quelques diocèses au Québec (dont celui de Chicoutimi) marquent des points importants et nous lisons en cela des signes d'espérance. Mais, comme vous le dites si bien, Rome demeure plutôt stable dans ses positions.

J'aime particulièrement votre affirmation de solidarité traduite en ces termes: "No single individual is going to change the heart and soul and mind of the Pope(...) then the eyes of the Pope might be opened to the pain and hurt within his Church "(p 2-3) Oui, il nous faut intensifier la SOLIDARITÉ au nom de la grande ESPÉRANCE que nous partageons. Merci pour celle que vous nous offrez et merci pour l'interpellation importante qui nous vient de vous.

Dans l'espoir de vous connaître davantage, je vous souhaite une joyeuse fête de la Saint-Valentin!
Yvonne Bergeron

Yvonne Bergeron is a notable academic, with a mind that is focused and disciplined. She is a determined fighter for social justice, especially the role of women in society and in the Church. She is a person who has given her life to God in the service of humanity. There is no bitterness in spite of the fact that her life's work has been carried out in the face of injustice and inequality meted out to women, men and children. There is an extraordinary simplicity,(in the most positive sense) about Yvonne Bergeron. When I asked her if she would consider allowing me to do a chapter on her life and work for this doctoral dissertation, she responded immediately with surprise and delight, and said she would be honoured to have me do the chapter.

I believe the characteristics, evident in Yvonne Bergeron, have their origin in her upbringing in Alma, Lac St.-Jean. Of this region she writes:

Je viens d'une région qui a souvent fait parler d'elle pour la beauté de son lac, la taille de ses bleuets et la couleur indépendantiste de ses choix politiques. Il arrive aussi que l'on souligne - trop faiblement à mon point de vue - le courage historique, l'audace et la créativité des femmes et des hommes de ce merveilleux coin du Québec où mes racines continuent de s'alimenter. En effet, fille de paysans, héritière par ma mère d'une descendance indienne, je suis née à Alma, Lac St-Jean. (Groupe Krisis, 1991, p. 64)

Touched by the history and beauty of the region of Quebec in which she grew up, Yvonne Bergeron was even more strongly influenced by her family upbringing. In the same book, **Chemin faisant**, she writes:

Quatrième d'une famille qui comptera neuf enfants (dont quatre seulement survivront), j'arrive après trois garçons. Enfin une fille! Pour moi, première impression d'un accueil qui ne se démentira jamais. Année après année, incontestablement, je serai marquée par cet accueil qui, au plus profond, me redit de mille façons: "Tu es importante pour nous."

Et mon histoire se déroule ainsi simplement en des quotidiens où se tissent serrées mes relations avec des êtres chers. Des présences vivifiantes. Présence attentive d'une tante qui nous considère comme ses enfants, prévient nos turbulences et n'hésite pas à relativiser les désastres de nos mauvais coups. Présence fidèle, parfois conflictuelle mais si bienfaisante, des garçons qui sont pour moi tantôt des frères, tantôt des soeurs et presque toujours des complices. Présence rassurante et sereine d'un père plutôt silencieux et réservé, mais dont les gestes de chaque jour traduisent éloquemment une tendresse rarement verbalisée.

Enfin, présence merveilleuse et créatrice d'une mère à la fois réaliste et mystique, dont la fermeté en éducation n'a d'égal que la vérité et la profondeur de son amour. (pp. 64-65)

Yvonne Bergeron's father was a farmer and her mother a teacher until she married. Yvonne was twelve years old when her father died. She described her father as a man of "grande simplicité, proche de la nature, qui ne parlait pas beaucoup, mais qui montrait par des gestes combien il nous aimait". She said he was a man of great patience. Initially, and understandably for one so young, Yvonne found it very difficult to deal with her father's death. In fact, when her mother warned her that her father was very ill and his time on this earth was limited, Yvonne believed that through her intervention with a loving God through prayer, she could reverse the inevitable. She believed she could keep her father alive. Her faith and her natural *joie de vivre* were both shaken when he died; the sound of laughter disappeared, as did the sound of music. The piano was silenced, as she said: "comme s'il m'était pas convenable" to play the instrument she and her mother both loved so much. Yvonne and her family mourned the loss of a kind, gentle, loving father and husband.

Happily the courage and the strength of character of Yvonne's mother carried the family through this stage and onto another level of understanding and faith. Yvonne learned at a young age that death cannot destroy love or a relationship; she learned that God is love, and that that love can carry one through the pain and sadnesses encountered in life. These were very important lessons for Yvonne; and lessons that she would remember forever. She writes:

Et, portée ici encore par la présence réconfortante de mes frères, secouée par la réponse courageuse, la prière fidèle et l'espérance concrète de ma mère, j'ai progressivement découvert que l'amour peut vivre, même dans la mort: "Être fidèle à votre père, nous rappelait ma mère, c'est continuer de vivre pleinement." Alors j'ai fini par croire aussi, comme on sait le faire à cet âge, que Dieu-Amour était capable, lui, de faire vivre pour toujours. (Groupe Krisis, p.66)

When Yvonne's father died, her mother was left with four adolescents. Yvonne said her mother demonstrated "un courage remarquable", and she brought her four children into all the decision making that had to go on regarding their home life. Mother and children were very close and remained so until Yvonne's mother died at the age of eighty-three.

Of Yvonne's three brothers, the two oldest were twins. One twin is a pulmonary physician in Quebec. The other twin died in 2000 of lung cancer. He had worked for the agricultural co-op in Alma, St.-Jean. The other brother stayed on the family farm, and eventually passed it on to his son.

Yvonne's mother was a strong role model. She was a musician and taught Yvonne to play the piano. For six years she had lived in a contemplative community, Les Soeurs Servantes du Très-Saint-Sacrement, which was devoted to silent prayer and adoration. She did not make her perpetual vows, just her temporary vows; she left after six years because of illness.

Yvonne's mother then became a teacher, and lived with a family through whom she met her future husband. He was sixteen years her senior, and they were married for sixteen years. Yvonne testifies that they were "très heureux". The qualities Yvonne attributes to her mother are "la foi, le courage, une grande pédagogie et surtout un amour qui a su nous garder ensemble comme famille". Yvonne's mother spent the last years of her life in a home for the elderly and Yvonne explains: "ce temps lui a permis de retrouver un climat de prière et de méditation semblable à celui qu'elle avait beaucoup apprécié dans la communauté religieuse".

The aunt, mentioned in the quotation from **Chemin Faisant**, her father's sister, lived with the family and was a great help to Yvonne's mother. She too had been a teacher. Yvonne says that she was like a second mother to the children, although she had more influence on the boys than she did on Yvonne. (Personal communication, May, 2000)

PART TWO

EDUCATION AND VOCATION

Yvonne Bergeron loved school, and always did well. She attended primary school at a tiny country school in Alma; and secondary level, also in Alma, with Les Soeurs de la Congregation de Notre Dame. She received her Diplôme Supérieur de pédagogie and her Brevet d'enseignement, Class "A" at Baie St. Paul. She then taught for three years at the same one-teacher elementary school she had attended in Alma, and for one year at a secondary school run by les Soeurs de la Congrégation de Notre-Dame.

While Yvonne Bergeron was beginning her career as a teacher there was a young man in her life. They were very close, and occasionally even talked about an engagement. But there was a problem. Ever since Yvonne had attended primary school she had had a sense of vocation to the life of a nun. The fact that her mother had spent six years in a convent undoubtedly had an influence on the young girl. There was also a Sister in secondary school who taught Yvonne piano, who also had a strong influence on her. This latter was particularly sympathetic and understanding when Yvonne's father died.

There were other nuns who influenced Yvonne, all teachers, and by the time she was sixteen years old the sense of calling was quite precise. She did not talk about it to anyone except her mother, and she did not talk to her about it very often.

After two years of 'going out' with her young man, Yvonne Bergeron realized that she had to make a decision. To the heartache of the young man, Yvonne chose the religious life. She had never spoken to him about her vocation, which caused him all the more pain. Yvonne informed him of her choice in a letter.

Yvonne entered the Communauté de la Congrégation de Notre Dame in Beauport as a noviate. She was twenty-one years old. During this time she studied religious and spiritual formation. She continued her musical studies, and she worked as a seamstress making nuns' habits. After six months she wore the same habit as the other nuns. During the eighteen months that one is a noviate no vows are taken, the young women can leave any time. During those two years the young man continued to visit Yvonne's mother in the hopes that Yvonne would leave the religious community. After two years Yvonne took her temporary vows. The period of temporary vows lasts for six years. During this time Yvonne taught secondary school in Quebec and on Ile d'Orléans, before continuing her studies. Yvonne says that she did not waver in her sense of calling, and after six years took her perpetual vows.

Yvonne continued teaching and studying. From the Université de Montréal she obtained her Baccalauréat ès arts; her Licence ès Sciences religieuses (théologie); her Maîtrise ès arts (théologie) and her Ph.D (théologie). The title of her doctoral dissertation was: *Conditions d'un discours sur l'Esprit, les discours sur l'Esprit et leur dépendance des structures d'autorité et des pratiques historiques de libération* . This thesis was published by Fides in Montreal in 1986 under the title: *Fuir la société ou la transformer? Deux groupes de chrétiens parlent de l'Esprit..* Yvonne taught at the Université de Montréal,

at l'Institut de pastorale de Montréal (théologie) and at l'Université de Sherbrooke (théologie). At one point in her life she was teaching in both Montreal at l'Université de Montréal, and in Sherbrooke at the Collège Mont Notre-Dame.

In 1987 Yvonne Bergeron left her teaching at the Collège Mont Notre-Dame to work full time as La Coordonnatrice du Service de la pastorale sociale du diocèse de Sherbrooke. She did this for one year; and then divided her time between teaching at the University of Sherbrooke and working for the Diocese of Sherbrooke. She left the University of Sherbrooke in 1997, and now works three days a week for the Diocese and one day a week in her religious community in Montreal with a group called **Solidarité Justice**, she is on the executive.

PART THREE

PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

One could say that Yvonne Bergeron was born with a prayer on her lips and praise in her heart, a reflection of how her mother and father and brothers welcomed her birth. There has never been a time when Yvonne was not a believer, but her beliefs have passed through many stages and periods of questioning and doubt. She learned along the way that the low passages of darkness and doubt are part of the journey, and are often times which deepen one's faith. For Yvonne Bergeron faith is not a place to be at, it is a journey, a pilgrimage, a passage through highs and lows, darkness and light, music and silence. Throughout her journey Yvonne has always used the powers of her intellect, the strength of her social convictions and the generosity of her heart.

Prayer and the presence of God were part of Yvonne's life from the beginning. She explains: "C'est dans ce milieu modeste, où la prière fait partie du quotidien, que j'ai appris à nommer Dieu aussi naturellement qu'à parler aux êtres qui m'entourent. Un Dieu à la fois très grand (il sait tout, il voit tout, il peut tout) et très proche (un Dieu bon, aimant, compréhensif)." (**Groupe Krisis**, p. 65) As a child Yvonne did struggle with one theological dilemma: if God was so loving and so good, how could there exist a terrible place called Hell where anyone could be sent after one mortal sin if one died unrepentant. Once again, it was the strong and loving influence of her parents that resolved this dilemma for Yvonne; she writes: "Fort heureusement, l'accent mis par mes parents sur la tendresse de Dieu finissait par prendre le dessus. Et, somme toute, leur foi

forte, intelligente et sereine me rassurait et me permettait de goûter la présence de Dieu un peu comme je savourais la vie qui s'offrait à moi libéralement.' (p. 65) Yvonne was growing in her faith and understanding of God as love; and which progressed, as explained above, when her father died and she learned that life and love and joy and music could go on in spite of sadness and pain.

At a very early age, thanks again to the strong influence of her mother, Yvonne learned that faith in God means love of God and love of one's neighbour. It means having a social conscience and a sense of justice. Yvonne says that she was awakened to the importance of social justice in watching her mother defend the quality of life for farm women. She says: "Avec quelle admiration je l'entendais et l'observais!" (p. 67) As a young girl Yvonne was able to put this sense of social justice into action. At the time there were various Catholic youth groups which encouraged social action combined with knowledge of the gospels. Yvonne joined Jeunesse agricole catholique (J.A.C.) and Jeunesse étudiante catholique (J.É.C.). This was an exhilarating time for Yvonne when she first began to experience her faith in social action. She writes: "Engagement précieux qui me permit surtout de prendre conscience à la fois de l'importance d'un questionnement du vécu à partir de la foi et de la nécessaire "vérification" de la foi par l'implication sociale." (p. 67) She goes on to explain the exhilaration: "Cet engagement dans l'Action catholique fut pour moi, comme pour beaucoup d'autres jeunes, chemin d'enthousiasme et de promesse. Je portais la conviction que mon existence était vécue dans le bon sens: nous étions du côté des croyants, donc du bon côté. (p. 68) Yvonne often compares the various stages of her faith to seasons of the year; and this stage she said was very much like the Spring, her favourite season.

Yvonne Bergeron had always held church officials in high regard. This esteem was to be shaken, and the officials would fall from the pedestal on which Yvonne had placed them. When she was in the process of making the difficult decision to enter the religious life, two of these officials profoundly disappointed her by trivializing the sense of calling. The first was a spiritual director she had at the time, who commented, on the subject of her vocation: "Pour toi, c'est une question de générosité". She goes on to write: "S'est-il jamais douté - ce prêtre - de l'impasse dans laquelle m'avait momentanément plongée son affirmation? Comment refuser à Dieu la réponse qui, selon un "homme de Dieu", était pour moi la meilleure? Il me fallut une longue période de discernement avant d'opter pour cette voie qu'on nous présentait comme le chemin privilégié vers la perfection". (pp. 68/9)

As far as Yvonne Bergeron was concerned her vocation had nothing to do with generosity, and how could she possibly discern whether she should follow this sense of calling or not, if it was simply a question of generosity or lack of it.

The other occasion was in conversation with a nun who, hoping to please Yvonne, said to her "Marguerite Bourgeois te regarde avec des yeux de prédilection", implying that Yvonne was among the chosen. Rather than pleasing Yvonne, it had the effect of acutely annoying her because it was said in the company of other people and she found it intensely embarrassing; this was not a topic she wished to discuss with just anyone at the time, and certainly not one she wanted to discuss in public.

In the early days of Yvonne's conviction of her calling to the religious life, she felt that there was a need to choose between God and the world, and she was going to choose

God. She felt that “l’amour gratuit de Dieu pour les humains et son invitation à le suivre sont un trésor incomparable à tout ce que la vie peut nous offrir”. (p. 69) She also found the idea of living in community with like-minded and like-spirited women very appealing. She entered the religious life and continued her studies in theology. She revelled in studying “des grands maîtres spirituels” such as Ignace de Loyola, Thérèse d’Avila, Marguerite Bourgeoys, Jean de la Croix, and other teachers who were responsible for her training. She never tired of studying the subject of God. She also immersed herself in the life of prayer and liturgical celebrations. She recalls that her faith “prenait de l’assurance et de la fermeté”. (p. 71)

There was, however, a problem. It had to do with the apparent need to choose between God and the world. She felt a sense of emptiness and writes that she had to “chercher la volonté de Dieu “par le vide”. Vide en soi et autour de soi.” (p. 71) Her inclination towards social action and social justice, formed in her earliest childhood, were being denied their natural expression. She felt an incompleteness which she called “*la froideur du déracinement* “. Yvonne Bergeron saw “l’orage à l’horizon”. (p. 72) She was approaching the realization she could not believe for long in a god who rivaled human beings, or a god jealous of attention given to human beings. It was the faith of others that kept Yvonne Bergeron’s faith alive at this point in her life. She explains:

Rencontres significatives, dans ma communauté, de ces femmes remarquables pour qui l’adhésion de foi, la sensibilité artistique et la compétence intellectuelle se nourrissaient réciproquement. Des femmes qui savaient garder les questions ouvertes et qui prenaient le risque des amitiés dites particulières. Fréquentation aussi de certains romanciers et philosophes contemporains dont la vision humaniste, la

profondeur de l'interrogation et surtout l'exigence de la pensée me fascinaient. Contacts, enfin, plus fréquents et combien bénéfiques, avec les membres de ma famille qui me rappelaient la densité et la force de nos racines. (p. 73)

Questions and doubt are important elements of faith; Yvonne had more and more of both during this period. She realized that most of her concerns were directed towards the Church. She questioned her life and her community; she questioned the debates going on within the Church concerning God, Jesus Christ, life and human beings. She found the Church too assured of its own rightness, turning a deaf ear to the mysteries surrounding God, historical facts, and the contemporary revolution taking place among men and women, particularly within the Church in Quebec. She found the liturgy irrelevant. She became revolted by empty phrases used by clergy and the Church. She did not agree that on one hand the Church could affirm: "Dieu vous envoie cette souffrance", and on the other hand state: "Dieu vous aime infiniment". She found the Church deaf to the problems of humanity, to current moral dilemmas, and to the idea of human freedom. Yvonne Bergeron was questioning every aspect of her faith and her life within the Church. She explains: "Il me fallait tout vérifier. Accepter de tout bousculer, d'aller au fond en prenant le risque d'y rester." (p. 75)

Yvonne Bergeron was a trained teacher, a university professor and a social "militante"; she could easily have made a good living outside of the Church, she could easily have walked away, many did. The childhood question that Yvonne had concerning the juxtaposition of a loving God and the existence of hell again raised its head. Was this truth, or was it simply the invention of the Church to keep its adherents in line? At

university Yvonne was prepared to examine everything in the interest of truth and freedom; and she had professors who encouraged and nurtured her adventures in spiritual investigation. Academically and spiritually this was a rewarding time: “la passion théologique m’a envahie”. (p. 76) Courses in literary and historical criticism opened new ways of reading and studying the Bible, ways that the Church does not always encourage. Yvonne discovered:

“Non seulement la Parole de Dieu n’avait rien de magique, mais c’était au cœur de l’existence concrète qu’elle devenait vivante. Je redécouvrais ainsi le primat de l’expérience humaine comme étant la matrice où cette Parole reprend vie. Quelle importance revêtaient alors les questions que je portais avec tant de femmes et d’hommes! N’était-ce pas précisément à partir de ces questions que nous pouvions à la fois interroger la Parole de Dieu et nous laisser interroger par elle? Ne fallait-il pas en conséquence les accueillir dans toutes leurs dimensions et dans tout ce qu’elles nous livraient de sens? (p. 76)

In these discoveries Yvonne must have remembered her mother and how her mother’s faith was always implicated in the middle of social action. As President of *l’Action catholique*, it was her faith that drove Yvonne’s mother to speak out for the rights of women. Yvonne’s study of *ecclésiologie* opened up certain truths about the Church. She realised to what extent the Church had been shaped and formed throughout its history, changed by differing social, sociological, political and historical factors. She wrestled with what she called “dualité ecclésiale: L’Église est à la fois et en même temps salut et monde, sauvée et à sauver, liberté de l’Esprit et humanité limitée.” In this duality it was not surprising, Yvonne said: “d’identifier en elle des lourdeurs institutionnelles, des structures déficientes, des rapports de force, des pouvoirs autoritaires, des pratiques

encombrantes, des discours dépassés, etc.”. But in spite of these negatives Yvonne did not see a reason to abandon the Church, she saw a challenge: “il fallait rester (ou devenir) lucide, vigilant, critique. Ne pas tout accepter dans une soumission aveugle. Apprendre plutôt à contester, proposer, transformer au nom de la liberté évangélique”. (p. 77)

Yvonne Bergeron has remained true to these challenges, she remained in the Church and she remained lucid, vigilant, critical; she has played her part in contesting, suggesting and transforming the Church, especially the role of women within the Church. The driving force behind the decision to stay within and work within the Church was the fact that Yvonne Bergeron fell in love - with Jesus! “Car il y eut pour moi cette rencontre indicible avec l’homme de Galilée, le Nazaréen m’a “attirée”. (p. 77) She read the scriptures with new eyes and a change of heart, she discovered a very real, very concrete human being and she became fascinated with his every word and action. She was particularly intrigued with his relationship with God, and with people, especially with women. She thrilled at the way she saw him reacting to injustice, and she empathized with his reactions towards civil and religious authorities. She discovered the relevance of the gospels in every aspect of human life; she perceived the driving force for the direction of her own life and she rejoiced in “La voie vers la liberté, la vérité, l’accomplissement”. (p. 78)

Yvonne Bergeron had finally found the connection between God and the world, and she realised that it was not necessary to make a choice between one or the other. On the contrary, she had discovered that the two were inextricably connected and interconnected. She embraced “une Église qui ne devait pas être un réduit en dehors de la cité, mais un lieu où s’exprime, se célèbre, se fabrique la vie de la cité.” (p. 78)

Yvonne emerged from this period spiritually rejuvenated and energized. She explains: “une énergie renaissait. Un espace de liberté s’était ouvert.” (p. 78) At one point, when a friend asked if she was in the process of losing her faith, Yvonne answered: “Je ne sais pas, mais ce que je sais, c’est que je retrouve l’espérance”. (p. 78) She was ready to go out into the world, to embrace “l’amour, la liberté, la vie et l’histoire”. (p. 79)

It was at this time that Yvonne left the large community of the convent, and went to live in a residence with a small group of like-minded sisters. This was another exhilarating phase of her life. Everything was new: paying rent, buying food, buying a car, living in and among people, the reality of it all was almost overwhelming; she realized how protected her life in the convent had been; no wonder there was a perception of the need to choose between God and the world, the world was kept at arms length outside the walls of the enclosed community. What a brave group of grown women, to leave behind such security and protection, to go into the real world and discover how to live within it! And their going was not without criticism and resentment. There were objections from both the religious community and from the Church, arguments that it was not possible to live the life of a nun if one was immersed completely in the material and secular world. Yvonne admits that the change was not easy; but she and her companions were more than equal to the challenge: “Fortes de l’espérance têtue qui nous habitait, nous allions de l’avant. Et cela me passionnait.” (p. 81) These young women were pioneers, in the forefront of dramatic changes taking place within the Church. And it was at this juncture that Yvonne felt most strongly her calling to work with the poor and the oppressed.

This led her to spend time (not nearly enough, she admits) doing an internship in Brazil working for the Communautés ecclésiales de base (C.E.B.). It was here that Yvonne discovered the importance of the concept of “solidarité”, that freedom comes when people work together. This is a reality and a strategy that she still embraces with passion. Yvonne Bergeron’s sense of direction became very clear and very concrete, and the answers to some of her deepest questions were equally transparent. She writes:

l’immensité et la profondeur des défis posés à l’espérance chrétienne et à l’Église m’apparaissaient avec beaucoup plus d’acuité. Les questions sociales posaient radicalement la question de Dieu. La pauvreté n’était plus seulement une situation économique, mais une expérience évangélique. Foi en Dieu et condition des pauvres s’éclairaient mutuellement: quand des femmes, des hommes et des enfants sont eux-mêmes niés, Dieu ne peut être nommé. Aussi l’enjeu fondamental pour l’humanité et l’Église devenait-il non plus seulement une question de sens ou de non-sens, mais de libération ou d’oppression, de vie ou de mort. Et si la présence active du Ressuscité avait encore quelque chose à dire au creux des angoisses et des espoirs humains, cela devait concerner le changement de ce monde d’injustices. Cela devait aussi en conséquence nous renvoyer, comme chrétiens et chrétiennes, à des tâches précises de TRANSFORMATION. Par là même nous rejoignait la dimension collective du Royaume de Dieu. Comment, en effet, saurions-nous annoncer la liberté en plénitude et devenir des agents de libération historique sans être nous-mêmes affranchis? (p. 82)

Yvonne Bergeron realized just to what extent these challenges were political, “l’amour du prochain devenait “politique””. (p. 83) The gospels became also political mandates. Yvonne became immersed in social work and social action. She joined le Carrefour de Solidarité Internationale, Développement et Paix, le Conseil diocésain de pastorale,

l'Éducation populaire, la Pastorale baptismale en paroisse. Her current responsibilities include: Coordonnatrice du Service de la pastorale sociale du diocèse de Sherbrooke, membre du réseau "*Femmes et Ministères*", membre du Conseil national de "*Développement et Paix*", membre du réseau des chercheuses féministes du Québec, membre du Conseil d'administration du restaurant populaire "*La Grande Table* ", membre du Comité de soutien au partenariat hommes et femmes en Église (Assemblée des évêques du Québec), et membre du Comité de théologie de la C.R.C. (Conférence religieuse canadienne). Saint John wrote: "let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 St. John 3: 18), Yvonne Bergeron searched out the truth, found it, embraced it and expresses her love in deeds and actions.

This is an account of the spiritual journey she has experienced until the present time; but she explains:

" La vie continue. D'autres questions surgissent, me conduisant toujours plus loin car l'horizon recule à mesure que progresse la marche... Et parce que la foi est mouvement, personne ne peut s'y installer. Nous y entrons comme des *passants* en investissant notre vie et son mystère dans une aventure avec le Dieu de l'avenir. Le drame ne serait-il pas d'arrêter le mouvement? (p.85)

PART FOUR

YVONNE BERGERON AND THE WRITTEN WORD

PARTENAIRES EN ÉGLISE

femmes et hommes à part égale

par

Yvonne Bergeron

It is difficult for an outsider to appreciate what it is like to be a member of the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec. It would seem, however, that there are many members of that Church, who, while wanting to stay fully within the heart of the Church, would also like to see it undergo radical structural changes. It appears that the dioceses of Sherbrooke and Chicoutimi are in the forefront of Quebec ecclesiastical liberals. Sherbrooke took a lead because it was the first diocese to appoint a 'répondante à la condition des femmes'. For three years this was a full time position; when it was reduced to a part time position there was a feeling of disillusionment and deception among many in Sherbrooke. The appointment was a progressive move on behalf of the archbishop, its reduction was regressive. Chicoutimi seems to be setting an example for several reasons. According to Nicole Leblanc, who is the répondante à la condition des femmes dans le diocèse de Sherbrooke, there are ten women currently in Chicoutimi who feel called to the ordained ministry. Although their bishop has told them that he cannot ordain them, they, nevertheless, want to follow through with the process of study and having their vocations tested.

It was also in Chicoutimi that the issue of washing women's feet was not seen as a problem; elsewhere in the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec it was. It came from a recent decision made in the Diocese of Montreal "Interdire officiellement le rite du lavement des pieds aux femmes". (Bergeron, p. 13) This left other dioceses in a dilemma: compromise the unity of the Church or compromise the conscience of the Church? The Diocese of Quebec resolved the dilemma by cutting out the ceremony of washing feet entirely, (not to compromise unity). The Diocese of Chicoutimi, and others, were not prepared to participate in such acts of discrimination and washed the feet of an equal number of women and men. (p. 14) It is from Chicoutimi that the impetus and encouragement came for Yvonne Bergeron to put her thoughts and reflections in writing in **Partenaires en Église. Femmes et hommes à part égale** (1991. Montréal: Éditions Paulines), This was Yvonne Bergeron's second published book. (Her first was the publication of her doctoral thesis, *Fuir la société ou la transformer? Deux groupes de chrétiens parlent de l'Esprit* (Montréal: Fides, 1986).

In March, 1986, The Roman Catholic bishops of Quebec devoted their entire Assembly to the question of the condition of women in the Church. Apparently this meeting was important in raising the consciousness of the problems of inequality within the Church. In the Preface Yvonne Bergeron quotes Simon Dufour: "cette assemblée a été un événement important en termes de circulation de parole, de prises de conscience et de propositions d'action. Parmi ces recommandations, on suggérait de tenir dans les divers diocèses du Québec, des Forums sur la question du partenariat homme-femme." (p. 13)

These Forums took place throughout the province and Yvonne Bergeron was the resource person. She was asked to situate the problem in a biblical, historical and theological context. As a Professor of Theology at the University of Sherbrooke and Co-ordinator of Social and Pastoral services in the Diocese of Sherbrooke, she was well equipped for the position. One is told that she was warmly received in the Diocese of Chicoutimi where its participants in the Forum found her “clear, dynamic, competent, frank and open” (p. 13). She encouraged those who heard her to become involved in the dialogue towards true partnership - involving mutual respect, open communication and Christian Love. (p. 15) Simon Dufour and Évangeline Bouchard write of their hopes in the Preface to the book: “Que sa parole contribue à nous aider tous et toutes à entendre ce qu’aujourd’hui l’Esprit dit aux Églises au sujet de la pleine reconnaissance de la dignité des femmes”. (p. 16) Yvonne Bergeron is writing for the people in the pews, and for “les agents et les agentes de pastorale”. Her aim is justice; her means is solidarity; she begins the book with the words: “Ce livre est né d’une solidarité”. (p. 17) She recognizes the importance of bringing together the people in the pews, priests, bishops, theologians and historians, and members of such organizations as *l’autre Parole* and *Femmes et Ministères*, people who share a vision of justice and equality.

The theme of solidarity runs throughout Yvonne Bergeron’s book: solidarity among women, with women of the past, for women of the future, and solidarity with a growing number of men in Quebec. In the section dealing with the role of women in the Bible, “*Un fondement Biblique; l’homme et la femme comme unique reflet de Dieu*”, she writes: “Mais de plus en plus de théologiens hommes se sentent solidaires de la démarche des femmes et cherchent à y participer.” (p. 24) Yvonne Bergeron concludes the section on

the biblical analysis with the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood: “Une telle question comme celle d’ailleurs plus précise de l’accès des femmes au ministère ordonné ne relèvent pas de la seule exégèse. Comme Église, nous sommes donc renvoyés à l’unique source possible de solutions: *l’Esprit du Ressuscité vivant aujourd’hui avec nous*. Cela nous conduit à approfondir la réalité du partenariat à partir cette fois de son fondement ecclésiologique. (p. 42)

Yvonne Bergeron constantly underlines the need for equality, justice, solidarity and true partnership, and she continually encourages the Church to listen to the Holy Spirit. She explains that the Holy Gospel of Christ ought to be lived as movement, suggesting that more appropriate structures can and must be created. (p. 60) This can be done by listening to the Holy Spirit, as she says: “se laisser inspirer par l’Esprit”. (p. 60)

There are lessons to be learned from other Churches, and Yvonne Bergeron examines the approach other Christian Churches have taken and expands on some of the difficulties, frustrations and barriers that these Churches, and the women who have been ordained, or not, have faced. She concludes:

Prendre au sérieux la parole des autres Églises, voilà donc le risque auquel nous devons consentir pour le devenir de notre propre Tradition, en fidélité à l’Évangile avec tout ce que cela implique d’appel à une perpétuelle et courageuse conversion. D’ailleurs nous enfermer sur nos propres vues ne serait-il pas un signe de profonde suffisance et un grave manque de foi en l’Esprit? Au point où nous en sommes, il reste encore à voir comment nous serons ensemble, femmes et hommes, artisans d’un partenariat plus authentiquement évangélique. (p. 83)

The Church should feel inspired by the Holy Spirit to look to the present and to the future, as Yvonne Bergeron says, “pour y faire avec lui des “choses nouvelles”. (p. 86) She feels that it is by following the guidance of the Holy Spirit that the barriers will be torn down, the obstacles will be overcome and new ways will be found. Yvonne Bergeron’s book is full of hope. She writes with the conviction that true partnership between women and men in the Church is not only possible, but will happen. She ends the book underlining the difference in attitude of ‘yes, but...’ and ‘but yes’:

Dès lors, elle s’inverse la problématique du OUI MAIS... En fidélité au Dieu de Jésus Christ et à l’audace prophétique de la vivante Tradition, nous pouvons et devons affirmer: “MAIS OUI! Mais oui il est possible de consentir au partenariat intégral. Mais oui il est grand temps que les baptisées deviennent citoyennes à part entière dans l’Église. Mais oui il est urgent de supprimer les normes d’exclusion qui empêchent les femmes d’accéder à toutes les fonctions ecclésiales. Car ces normes ne sont pas au service de la liberté évangélique. L’affirmation du MAIS OUI cependant ne nous épargne pas du souci de la vigilance. Évitant de confondre les signes avec la réalité, nous devons tenir bien en vue la mission qui fait exister la communauté et qui définit les rapports de réciprocité. Mission dont l’indicible nous garde tous en état permanent de conversion. (p. 113)

Yvonne Bergeron is an optimistic realist, full of hope, but with eyes wide open to the realities of the situation.

PART FIVE

OTHER WRITTEN WORKS BY YVONNE BERGERON

Yvonne Bergeron is a strong believer in the power of the word, both written and spoken. She is a well known speaker in ecclesiastical and pastoral circles in Quebec, and her list of published works is considerable. Notably, with her strong conviction in the importance of solidarity, most of her written work is done in collaboration with other writers. It is interesting to note that her first two works were written with male authors. The first work, **Dieu écrit-il dans les marges?** (Montréal: Fides, 1984) was written under the direction of Louis Racine and Lucien Ferland. This is a book dealing with social, communal and family issues, and Yvonne Bergeron's chapter in the section entitled *Le monde des handicapés*, is called *Une communauté de l'Arche: le Printemps*. Her work deals with history and society, the importance of change and the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of change and evolution. She concludes with the statement: "Parce que l'Esprit rejoint les hommes et les femmes au creux de leur situation, le point d'arrivée devient un nouveau point de départ: TOUT peut changer et il est possible de faire une histoire "autre". (Racine et Ferland, p. 134)

The next work in which Yvonne Bergeron collaborated was the book entitled **Des ministères nouveaux?** (Montréal/Paris: Éditions Paulines/Médiaspaul. 1985). In this book Yvonne worked with Simon Dufour, Jean-Marc Gauthier, André Myre, Rémi Parent et Gilles Raymond. Yvonne Bergeron wrote the opening chapter which she called: *Les Nouveaux Ministères: Quel modèle ecclésial?* She organized the chapter as

follows: I. Des faits: A. Les tâches, B. La responsabilité, C. La reconnaissance et l'identité; II. Réactions et questions A. Les tâches, B. La responsabilité, C. La reconnaissance et l'identité; III. Un modèle persistant, Église = d'abord une société, Église = d'abord un mystère de communion; Conclusion, Notes. This is an example of the clarity and precision of Yvonne Bergeron's thinking and of her vision. She cites the problem:

De nombreux blocages, dont les résistances des clercs, les peurs des chrétiens et les structures ecclésiales empêchent la nouveauté. La question de fond paraît être celle du réajustement des mentalités qui consiste dans l'établissement d'une meilleure crédibilité réciproque entre clercs et laïcs, entre la hiérarchie et le peuple des baptisés. Les blocages s'avèrent particulièrement lourds au regard des femmes: préjugés et réticences chez les prêtres et /ou les laïcs-hommes, incompréhensions ou refus, etc. Un défi majeur est à relever et c'est celui de la place des femmes dans le respect du spécifique de leur vie et de leur rôle. Souvent les femmes sont considérées derrière leur mari, leur communauté, leur Église. Des pas ont été faits mais avec beaucoup de lenteur. (p. 11)

As always, Yvonne Bergeron is sensitive to the role of women and the injustices they suffer. In 1985, however, she was able to rejoice in a few changes taking place within the Church, notably, she writes: "Dans l'Église de nombreux laïcs, des femmes surtout, sont passés de la condition de consommateur à celle de participant actif"; and she adds " Cette présence de laïcs aux lieux de décision, de gérance, d'animation et de célébration de l'Église porte des forces prophétiques indéniables. Voilà dont un déplacement susceptible d'orienter vers un autre modèle ecclésial". (p. 15) But Yvonne Bergeron had to conclude, at the time, that the changes were in fact superficial, as she writes: "Malgré les

quelques percées de nouveauté qui commencent à poindre, un modèle d'Église bloque la transformation en profondeur. Il n'est donc pas possible de parler d'innovation..." (p. 18)

Yvonne Bergeron finishes her section with her vision of the changes the Church needs to undergo to witness deep and lasting transformation towards an institution that is just to all its members. She writes:

En résumé, les observations suivantes paraissent s'imposer:

1. Sur le plan des faits, une constatation s'impose aussi bien par rapport aux tâches qu'à la responsabilité et à la reconnaissance: les rapports clercs-laïcs en termes de gouvernants/gouvernés, enseignants/enseignés, experts/exécutants sont globalement confirmés malgré les quelques indices de changement.
2. En conséquence, réactions et questions concernant pratiquement toute l'influence massive du modèle clérical et l'inquiétant problème des relations qui sont alors posées entre ministère et communautés.
3. Un approfondissement de la situation actuelle montre que la façon selon laquelle l'Église est pensée et vécue relève d'abord du modèle sociétaire hiérarchisé.
4. Pour favoriser le passage de l'Église au modèle communionnel, il importe d'instaurer des pratiques qui tiennent compte de certaines orientations: le primat de la mission, la reconnaissance des croyants et croyantes comme sujets responsables et la concrétisation de la collégialité. (p. 21)

Yvonne Bergeron's latest book, **Voix de femmes, voies de passage**, published in Montreal in 1995 by Éditions Paulines, was written in collaboration with Lise Baroni, Pierrette Daviau and Micheline Laguë. The subtitle of the book is **Pratiques pastorales et enjeux ecclésiaux**. Ten years after writing **Des ministères nouveaux?** Yvonne is writing about the same challenges and difficulties. Women have continued to make important strides within the Church, but the structures are the same and obstacles they face are just as complex. The authors of this book, all members of **Réseau Femmes et Ministères**, are still demanding 'une véritable égalité entre les hommes et les femmes dans l'Église' and they are still looking for 'une autre façon de faire Église'. Yvonne Bergeron is still true to her vision of a Church fulfilling its mission of justice and equality. The authors of this book spoke to and interviewed some two hundred women involved in pastoral work within the Church. They report with clarity and honesty their findings, using several direct quotes. They write of these women:

Derrière de très nombreux récits, on peut deviner des situations conflictuelles frustrantes pour ne pas dire épuisantes. Et certainement, autant pour les prêtres que pour les femmes. Il ne s'agit pas ici de juger la culpabilité des uns et des autres, mais de rendre compte, du point de vue des femmes, d'une réalité que l'on refuse trop souvent de regarder en Église. Pourtant, les conflits qui dégénèrent ne réussissent qu'à mettre en évidence les limites et les vulnérabilités. Il faudra cesser un jour de refouler sous le tapis le côté sombre de nos belles intentions communionnelles. Par la force et l'ampleur de leurs récriminations, les femmes interviewées ne nous laissent pas le choix. (p. 32)

The authors made two important discoveries, namely the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those interviewed, and their sense of being called to the service of the Church.

They write: “Mais scrutant à la loupe les récits, une analyse plus fine laisse apparaître deux caractéristiques particulières: l’importance de l’Esprit Saint dans la vie et l’engagement des répondantes, et la certitude d’être appelée par Dieu à jouer, dans l’Église, un rôle important dans son avenir.” (p. 37) The notable change in the work of Yvonne Bergeron is the new sense of urgency and daring with which she, and the women with whom she shares such a strong sense of solidarity, are now facing the challenges and the tasks ahead. They are now looking for new strategies and means of making their voices heard and their wills known. The authors write of “l’urgence de mettre le rêve en œuvre immédiatement”. (p. 69)

To describe the dream that the authors and the women they interviewed would like to see established immediately, they quote Ivone Gebara in **Liaisons internationales**, (74, 1993, p. 18-19) in her paper entitled “*Elles sont en train d’arriver...Sorcières ou anges gardiens de l’âme chrétienne du continent*”:

Que dire alors? Liquidons tout? Détruisons nos institutions et nos symboles éternels? Fermons nos séminaires et noviciats? Nions le Magistère et la Tradition? Détrônons le Pape? Renvoyons chez eux les nonces apostoliques? Où irions-nous? que ferions-nous?

Je suis absolument sûre que le chemin n’est pas celui-là. Il semble être une aventure intérieure, fragile, dans l’insécurité, un chemin d’auto-conscience personnelle et collective, de rencontre en profondeur avec nous-mêmes et les autres. Un chemin intérieur qui nous mène jusqu’à cet endroit commun dans lequel tous, femmes et hommes, nous nous sentons égaux et en même temps différents, forts et en même temps fragiles (...). Nous ne nous imposerons plus comme maîtres - ni au masculin ni au féminin - mais le

dialogue, l'apprentissage commun, la réciprocité affective, le respect des différences feront partie de notre comportement habituel.

Ce que les femmes demandent, ce n'est pas la destruction de ceux qui exercent des fonctions d'autorité dans ce système. Elle proposent simplement qu'ils s'ouvrent à eux-mêmes, qu'ils s'ouvrent aux dires et aux expériences différents des leurs, qu'ils ne se sentent pas si responsables d'une façon dominatrice, si paternellement infaillibles, si sagement investis du pouvoir de Dieu qu'ils finissent par oublier leur propre condition humaine. (Gebara, p. 18-19)

The authors of *Voix des femmes, voies de passage* sum up, writing: "Voilà le rêve rencontré en cette longue fréquentation de la parole de quelque deux cents femmes". (p. 86)

There is a very compelling chapter in this book about the sense of calling; not just a calling to the priesthood, but a calling to serve the Church and the community in a particular way as an indication of faith. The authors write:

Interrogées sur les raisons de leur engagement dans l'Église, plusieurs femmes ont répondu: l'appel. "Appel de Dieu", "appel du Christ", "appel de l'Évangile", "appel de la vocation baptismale", "appel à être au service de l'Église", "appel de la communauté", voilà autant d'expressions employées pour marquer l'aspect mystérieux du cheminement personnel devenu chez plusieurs synonyme de vocation. (Cf. chap.2,"La relation des femmes avec Dieu", p. 36) Le recours aux catégories de l'appel et de la vocation permet ici de cerner un phénomène divino-humain qui a conduit des femmes à s'engager dans les tâches pastorales. (p. 153)

This chapter is divided into the following subtitles: “L’appel comme vocation”, (p. 153), “L’appel reçu de l’Évangile”, (p. 154), “Un appel venu de l’intérieur et de l’extérieur”, (p. 156), “La réponse à l’appel”, (p. 159), “Une réponse-en-acte”, (p. 160), “Un chemin de croissance”, (p.163), “Une théologie de l’appel questionnée”, (p. 164), “Vocation presbytérale et refus de discernement”, (p. 164), “Fondement de toute vocation: le baptême”, (p. 166), and finally “Mystère de l’initiative divine et vocation ministérielle”, (p. 168). Although this section does not deal specifically with the calling of women to the priesthood, one cannot discuss the idea of vocation without also discussing the priesthood. The authors write: “ Nous somme en présence d’un débat toujours en cours - malgré l’interdiction papale de discuter publiquement de la question (Cf. Sur l’ordination sacerdotale exclusivement réservée aux hommes, no 4.) - et dont la gravité met en cause la crédibilité même de l’Église...”(pp. 169-170) The Church and God do seem to be working at odds, the Holy Spirit calling both men and women to serve the Church and the community in a number of different ways, including the priesthood; while the Church continues to claim that only men are called to the priesthood. Pope John Paul II is not budging on this issue, as the authors point out “Le Pape juge cependant que cela équivaut à entretenir de “faux espoirs”. (p. 170)

But Yvonne Bergeron and the other writers see in the numerous signs of women being called a concrete sign of hope for the future. They write:

En soulevant ces questions, les travailleuses en église, dans leurs pratiques de déplacement, d’opposition, de transformation, de rupture, ne réclament pas nécessairement l’ordination pour elles-mêmes, ainsi que

nous le disions précédemment, mais dénoncent la pratique d'une discrimination fondée sur une interprétation de la théologie de l'appel. Ne font-elles pas ainsi la preuve que "le principe prophétique" de la Bible est toujours à l'œuvre: dénoncer toutes les formes de discrimination, toutes les attitudes contraires au dessein d'amour de Dieu? Ce principe prophétique porteur d'une force de transformation est signe d'espérance pour quiconque travaille à l'avènement du Royaume, à l'humanisation du monde, au renouvellement de l'Église. N'est-ce pas sous ce signe que les autorités ecclésiales devraient accueillir comme une chance pour l'Église les vocations inattendues qui se manifestent aujourd'hui? (p. 171)

The truth is that the Holy Spirit has been calling women from the beginning, but it is only recently that some of the Christian Churches have taken these callings seriously. There are many within the Roman Catholic Church who are taking women's vocations seriously, but as long as the hierarchical structures persist, the Church authorities are in a position to ignore the workings of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Church women.

The authors point out what is at stake if the Church does not make some fundamental changes. In the first place they write: "Si les ministères ne sont pas repensés en lien avec les théologies de la mission et de l'appel, l'institution ecclésiastique continuera de priver des communautés de ministères et de maintenir des pratiques discriminatoires". This is the "Enjeu Ministériel". (p. 224)

The second issue at stake is "Enjeu Missionnaire", and the writers explain: "Si le sort des exclus et leur libération ne devient pas la priorité réelle de sa pratique, l'Église passe à côté d'une dimension constitutive de sa mission". (p. 233)

The third challenge is “Enjeu Communional” and the authors write: “Si les communautés chrétiennes n’adoptent pas une structure collégiale de participation de leurs membres à l’exercice de la mission, l’Église risque de manquer à sa vocation de communion”. (p. 238)

The final issue the authors address is “Enjeu Institutionnel”, and they maintain “Si l’institution ecclésiale ne reconnaît pas les femmes d’une façon pleine et entière, aux plans idéologique, structurel et juridique, elle devra faire face à une perte de crédibilité qui risque de compromettre très sérieusement sa pertinence sociale et culturelle, et cela pour plusieurs générations”. (p. 243)

Yvonne Bergeron, Lise Baroni, Pierrette Daviau and Micheline Laguë did not work together as those without hope. They worked together with women and for women, they worked together as women with vision; they fully believe the fundamental and radical changes within the Church which they call for can and will take place. They feel the tide is rising, the voices are getting louder, the voices of women. In conclusion they write:

Si les interpellations qui montent de la pratique des femmes deviennent de “vraies questions”, le débat sur les ministères (y compris le ministère ordonné) apparaîtra comme primordial. Cela permettra non seulement d’accueillir les recherches théologiques faites au sein de la Tradition catholique, mais aussi d’élargir l’horizon de la réflexion en prenant au sérieux la pratique et le discours des autres Églises chrétiennes. Enfin, nous le croyons, ces interpellations renverront aux enjeux dont elles sont porteuses *comme à des lieux de passage...* Là où l’Esprit nous convoque et nous accompagne vers une liberté radicale. Alors les VOIX de FEMMES deviendront VOIES de PASSAGE. (p. 251)

The authors finish on a note of faith, hope and determination.



PART SIX

YVONNE BERGERON AND POVERTY

Poverty is an issue that has troubled and concerned Yvonne Bergeron since the time, as a young child, she heard her mother speak out against the injustices suffered by certain farm women in Lac St-Jean and elsewhere. It is a concern that influences every aspect of her life. She wants a better world, especially for those who have suffered so much because of social, legal, political and economic situations. In an article in *Présence*, (Octobre, 1993) Yvonne Bergeron articulated her concerns and her theology regarding poverty. To begin with she explained: “Au fond, ce ne sont pas les pauvres qui ont besoin de nous. C’est nous qui avons besoin d’eux. Parce que ce sont eux qui savent ce qu’il y a de mieux à faire pour que cesse leur pauvreté. Nous, ce que nous avons à faire, c’est d’être avec eux”. (p.19)

This is what Yvonne Bergeron has done, she has dedicated her life to being with the poor, the abused, the marginalized; as she explains, her desire has been: “Apprendre comment avec eux défendre leur point de vue, supprimer les causes de leur appauvrissement”. As with her objections towards the Church and its structures, it is the economic system that she is fighting, the system, she says, “qui prive de plus en plus d’individus de toute dignité humaine”. (p. 19) She describes the interconnection between the system and the individual: “ Pour moi, la pauvreté prend sa source première dans une situation économique défailante où une personne n’a pas ce qu’il lui faut pour pouvoir vivre selon les possibilités qu’offre une société. Cette personne se retrouve donc en

marge. Il y a des caractéristiques à la pauvreté aujourd'hui. La pauvreté est une réalité conflictuelle et non seulement l'incapacité d'une personne de s'en tirer."(p.19) Yvonne Bergeron talks about what needs to be done, she says: "Une des urgences actuelles, c'est de fournir aux chrétiens des outils pour apprivoiser le collectif... Parler de foi avec une exigence d'intervention sur le plan social et politique, c'est beaucoup demander. D'ailleurs, ces résistances, je les vis moi-même. Moi aussi, ça me fait parfois peur quand je désoriente un groupe parce que j'apporte un questionnement nouveau." (p.21)

The journalist who interviewed Yvonne Bergeron, Miville Boudreault, noticed in her the optimism that lights up her work and life. He writes: "Yvonne Bergeron refuse toutefois de brosser un tableau trop sombre de la situation". (p. 21) Yvonne Bergeron explains her optimism:

Il se passe de plus en plus de choses dans le sens de la justice sociale. Des réseaux s'organisent. Il y a des diocèses qui font des percées très intéressantes. De plus en plus de communautés se rendent compte des problèmes. Quand tu ouvres un centre de dépannage et que tu aperçois qu'il y a toujours plus de monde qui se présente, tu prends conscience que quelque chose ne tourne pas rond. Et quand la conscience se réveille, elle devient rapidement critique et se transforme, du moins pour une minorité, en une conscience libératrice. (P. 21)

Yvonne Bergeron wants to see this liberating social conscience awaken in more and more people, especially those who call themselves Christians; and to some considerable extent she sees it happening.

The culminating work of Yvonne Bergeron, to date, to this end, has been one of the key organizers in the two year process throughout Quebec called *La Libération des captives*. This event was and is important in the life and development of Yvonne Bergeron. The success of this venture is a direct result of and reason for the optimism of Yvonne Bergeron

Yvonne Bergeron will have the last word on her present situation. I asked her where she was in her thinking and in her writing. As far as her spiritual development is concerned she said: "Présentement ma réflexion porte sur les rapports entre les questions de genre (féminin et masculin), celle du patriarcat et du néolibéralisme socio-économique. Comment comprendre ces rapports de manière à mieux servir la libération intégrale des femmes et de l'humanité". (1st August, 2000) She has two works in progress. The first examines "comment ressaisir, dans les communautés religieuses, l'influence, la nouveauté et les interpellations du féminisme actuel?" The second is a work in conjunction with Lise Baroni; in this work the two feminist theologians will "à partir du Québec, analyser, réfléchir et approfondir l'impact de l'engagement social des chrétiennes et des chrétiens sur l'univers du politique." In discussing the latter work, Yvonne Bergeron explained a subtlety of language: in French *la politique* deals with the specifics of politics, *le politique* deals with the whole gamut of social organization; the work of Yvonne Bergeron and Lise Baroni will deal with *le politique* !

As Yvonne Bergeron wrote in **Chemin faisant** : "la vie continue", life goes on, and there is no question that for as long as she is able Yvonne Bergeron will fight for social justice.

CHAPTER IV

THE REVEREND CANON DOCTOR

LETTIE JAMES

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

The title, The Reverend Canon Doctor Lettie James, is an impressive one. In fact there are three doctorates: the first was a D.Th from the University of Durham (1948); the second was a Ph.D in Clinical Psychology from King's College, London (1951); and the third was a D.D. awarded to her in recognition of her work for the Montreal Diocesan Theological College (1991). The title suits this vibrant, dynamic woman who exudes fun, feistiness and energy.

Lettie James was born Lettie Woodall on 18th November, 1924, in West Hartlepool in County Durham, England. Lettie was the seventh child, of the seventh child of the seventh child, and therefore she explains: "so I'm a witch!". There are no witch-like qualities in this diminutive, white haired woman, but as a pioneer in the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Montreal, she has been the object of many witch hunts.

Lettie James has three brothers and three sisters. Four of the children were born before the war, three were post war children. Lettie describes her upbringing as 'very religious'. As children she and her siblings would go to Sunday School, and then to Church, and then to Sunday School again in the afternoon. As they got older they went to Church again in the evening. She explains that her social life was also tied up with the Church through Brownies and the Junior Choir. Two or three evenings a week she

would be at Church. She describes her family as 'very close', and her childhood as 'very happy'. There was nothing unusual about the close affiliation with the Church which Lettie experienced as a child, all her friends did the same thing.

Lettie James had a sense of being called to the priesthood from a very early age. As children she remembers that she and her friends would 'play Church', and when they did, Lettie was always the priest. Her mother contracted Parkinson's Disease when Lettie was eight years old; her father died when she was twelve. Lettie had been very close to her father and she felt severely bereaved at his death. She voiced her desire to be a priest several times to her own parish priest, who said simply: "You can't!". He also tried to explain that this desire was tied in with her father's death and her desire to replace her father. Lettie, who later studied psychology, was not impressed with this reasoning, and it did nothing to dampen her sense of vocation to the priesthood. As she says: "I just knew that when I grew up that was what I wanted to be." (July, 1998) It would take years of obstacles and opposition, but eventually her dream would be fulfilled.

PART TWO

THE YEARS OF PREPARATION

After finishing her secondary education, Lettie James got her Bachelor of Arts from Durham University in 1942. At the age of seventeen, in 1942/3, she entered the air force as a plotter. She worked in front of a huge map, following the course of two or three pilots. Lettie knew the pilots and enjoyed the work. In the meantime she sent her transcripts and application form to the Department of Theology at Durham University. She signed her application form 'L. Woodall', wisely, otherwise it would have been rejected outright. She was invited for interview. The interviewer was shocked when a woman walked into the office. The interviewer happened to be Michael Ramsey, who would later become Archbishop of Canterbury. At the time he was absolutely against the ordination of women, although he later changed his thinking and became an advocate.

Lettie James knew to expect opposition and she was prepared to fight her way into the Department of Theology. She says: "I persisted right then and there" and she was accepted into the Department. She received her D.Th. in 1948; and she went on to do her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at Kings' College, London, which she finished in 1951. During all these years of study Lettie says that she was never allowed to teach, because, as she remarks; "women were an anathema at the time".(Personal communication, July, 1998)

Two months after graduating with her doctoral degree, Lettie James got married. She met Clifford James in High School. He was a very studious, and it seems attractive young man, and Lettie and her friends had a bet to see who would be first to go out with him. Any child who would tell her parish priest that she was going to become a priest when the idea was unheard of, who would then convince a to-be Archbishop of Canterbury to let her into the Department of Theology, would not be daunted by such a bet. Nor would she show any less determination in winning the bet. Since Clifford James was a studious young man, Lettie made it her business to find out what book he was currently reading. It happened to be a book of prose about London. Lettie promptly went out, bought the book and read it. One can imagine the rest: "Oh, I see you're reading the same book I am.....". It worked, Lettie won the bet and got the man. Lettie still has the book.

Lettie and Clifford were friends for many years, but at the time they never talked about marriage. Lettie was going to be a priest, she was still convinced of the sense of calling, and Clifford was only nominally religious. Gradually matters changed. As Lettie says, she was almost thirty years old and was beginning to give up the hope of ordination, and, she and Clifford were growing closer together. Lettie still felt called to be a priest, but felt no sense of the Church moving in that direction. She decided to use her gifts and sense of vocation in the field of Psychology.

Lettie was married in July, 1951. Two weeks later she and Clifford came to Canada. Clifford had a job as an engineer with Dominion Bridge in Montreal. The couple stayed

there for six years. In 1957 Lettie and her husband moved to West Toronto where they attended Saint Mathias, Etobicoke.

It was at Saint Matthias that, for the first time, Lettie was asked to do anything of a ministerial nature. The priest was part of a ministerial team as a pastoral counsellor. Apparently the priest was very attractive and the women of the congregation flocked to him with their problems, to the annoyance of the priest's wife. With Lettie on the team the women were now encouraged to take their problems to her.

While in Toronto Clifford and Lettie's daughter Lesley was born in 1958 and their son Paul was born in 1963. The couple moved to Atlanta, Georgia in 1965 where Clifford had a job with the space programme. They were in Atlanta for the first moon landing, after which most of the engineers were let go, including Clifford.

What followed were several years of moving around in the United States, while Lettie worked off and on as a psychologist. She was also involved with the National Liturgical Committee of the Episcopal Church. From Atlanta the family moved to New Orleans where Clifford got a job with American Steel. There was a strike among steel workers and Clifford again lost his job. For four months he was unemployed. He then found work in Chicago, while Lettie stayed in New Orleans to sell their house. The firm in Chicago closed down and Clifford again found himself without work. Meanwhile Lettie explains that it was the time of the Vietnam war and she did not want to be in the United States. Clifford registered with a firm of Head Hunters and was all set to go to a job in Pittsburgh, when he got a call from Montreal offering him a job back with Dominion

Bridge. In 1971 the family happily moved back to Canada and to Montreal where they still live.

PART THREE

THE ORDINATIONS OF LETTIE JAMES

Once back in Montreal Lettie began the process towards ordination. From 1971 until 1976 she worked at the Diocesan Counselling Centre. At the same time she was often asked to preach in her parish church, and she was in charge of the confirmation classes. She explains that in 1974 it looked as though the ordination of women might happen. She says that at this time she had a 'long, painful' session with the Bishop, the Right Reverend Reginald Hollis about her sense of vocation. He was very uncomfortable with the idea of the ordination of women priests, but he did send her off to A.C.P.O. (The Advisory Committee for the Postulants for Ordination) in 1974. There was one other woman there.

The first women were ordained priests in Canada during Advent, 1976. Lettie James was ordained Deacon in May, 1976. Two men were ordained during the same service. Saint Philips Church in Montreal West asked for Lettie James, and she went there as a curate in 1976. She says that only one family left because of the fact that she was a woman.

The next step was obviously ordination to the priesthood, but the Right Reverend Reginald Hollis said he would not ordain Lettie to the priesthood until after the Lambeth Conference of 1978. The Bishop telephoned Lettie James from Lambeth to say he was prepared to ordain her and this took place on 1st October, 1979. She was the first woman to be ordained priest in the Diocese of Montreal.

Aside from Bishop Hollis, there was another interesting character who figured in the ordination of Lettie and who was opposed to the ordination of women. His name is the Reverend Canon Peter Hannen. Lettie explains that they were good friends, and he had invited her to conduct the Lenten studies in his parish. But he also wrote the Manifesto against women priests that was circulated across the country. Lettie says they "hurt for each other". Peter did not feel that the Anglican Church should ordain women before the Roman Catholic Church or the Orthodox Church. The day before Lettie's ordination Peter Hannen brought Lettie flowers and read her the statement he had written against the ordination of women. Lettie recalls that she "felt more worried about him" than he was about her.

At Lettie's ordination to the priesthood Peter Hannen read the protest statement. There were about fifty protesters standing at the back of the church. Lettie says that for the first time the people saw the Right Reverend Reginald Hollis 'as Bishop'. Apparently, before proceeding, the Bishop addressed the protesters and said: "If you are going to leave, leave now; if you are going to stay, sit down!" The protesters sat down and the service went on.

During the course of the years and his friendship with Lettie, Canon Peter Hannen changed his thinking about the ordination of women, about fifteen years ago he decided he was in favour of women priests. Lettie James must have had much to do with this change of heart. Lettie tells the story of serving Holy Communion at the funeral service of a mutual friend. For the first time Peter Hannen came forward to the altar rail and

received the sacraments from Lettie James. She remembers that afterwards he said: "If I had to lose my virginity, I'd just as soon lose it to you." In 1992, when the Reverend Canon Doctor Lettie James was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity from the Montreal Diocesan Theological College, Peter Hannen gave the words of appreciation prior to the award .

PART FOUR

LETTIE JAMES' PROFESSIONAL LIFE **FOLLOWING ORDINATION**

As a deacon Lettie James worked two days a week at the Diocesan Counselling Centre, where she was Interim Director of Diocesan Counselling from 1976 until 1979; and for the rest of the week she worked at Saint Philip's Anglican Church as a curate. The rector, the Reverend Ian Stuchbury, was very supportive of Lettie's ministry.

During this period Lettie James experienced a certain amount of anger and frustration. The two men who were ordained deacon with her, were ordained priests. Reginald Hollis, the Bishop, held regular monthly meetings with the deacons of the diocese, but Lettie was never invited to these meetings. Lettie worked in the basement of the building where they were held. Finally, exasperated, Lettie went to see the Bishop. He said that because she had her doctoral degree he did not feel that she needed to attend the meetings. Lettie answered him: "But Bishop, I'm a deacon and I need a shepherd." Lettie says that it was clear to her that he did not know what to do with her, in response "he just lowered his eyes."(July, 1998)

When Ian Stuchbury left Saint Philip's he was replaced by the Reverend Stephen Eardley as rector. Stephen Eardley was against the ordination of women and is described by Lettie James as the only one in the Diocese who "is rude about it." That was twenty years ago, but Lettie says he is still "rude and angry".

Because of his attitude Lettie James left Saint Philip's to become rector of Saint Stephen's, Lachine, and Saint David's, Delson. She says this was a very hectic period in her life, and explains that she would take an 8.00 a.m. service at St. Stephen's, a 9.30 a.m. service at Saint David's and then return to do an 11.00 a.m. at Saint Stephen's. She says that Christmas and Easter "were wild". She particularly remembers one Christmas when she had seventeen services between the two churches, which involved driving in winter across the Mercier Bridge. But she recalls that both congregations were "so appreciative", and she felt, at last, that she was doing what she was supposed to be doing. This period lasted from 1979 until 1981.

In 1983 Lettie James became rector of Saint Hilda's, Senior Chaplain at the Montreal Chest Hospital, and Founder and Warden of Diocesan Lay Pastoral Visitors and Coordinator of the Lay Training Programme. This lasted until 1985 at which point she became Director of Pastoral Services at the Montreal General Hospital.

In 1985 Lettie James was made a Canon of the Cathedral by the Right Reverend Reginald Hollis. Lettie learned of Bishop Hollis' decision following a service in Notre Dame Basilica in Old Montreal. The service was attended by Archbishop Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury and about forty other bishops. After the service Lettie got a message that the Bishop wanted to see her. Reginald Hollis made the announcement in the presence of Archbishop Runcie. Lettie was surprised but delighted. At the time her photograph was taken by Bruce Baker. It was the last picture on his camera, he died of a massive heart attack the next morning.

Lettie was at the Montreal General Hospital for fourteen years, six of them as Director of Pastoral Services. She says the work was hard, but she always felt welcome there, she did rounds with the medical teams and she was part of the Ethics Committee. She did, however, miss parish work during this period of her life. Lettie retired in 1991. In 1991 she also retired from the position of Warden of Diocesan Lay Pastoral Visitors.

Almost the first thing that happened to Lettie James after she retired was that she was hospitalized for a month in the Montreal General Hospital. Her granddaughter had just been born and everyone was taking photographs of her. Lettie was concerned about her three year old grandson, and in ensuring that he did not run out the front door she fell and hurt her knee, hip, wrist and neck. It was a year before she was back to normal.

Presently Lettie James fills in wherever she is needed, she works with a literacy programme for women, and she takes services once a month at the Cathedral. In 1992 she was awarded an Honorary Doctoral Degree by the Montreal Diocesan Theological College, and she was awarded a Certificate as the First Honorary Nurse at the Montreal General Hospital.

When asked what progress she has seen in the role of women in the Church in the past twenty years, Lettie James points out that now women are appointed to various positions and 'people think nothing of it'. She does not feel that she has much in common with many of the younger women priests. Some of these women she finds 'rude and aggressive', and some felt that Lettie 'had sold out to the Church, because her closest

friends in the Church were male priests, and because she was not interested in attending social events organized by the women priests'.

Lettie herself is not an aggressive person, but she is assertive when necessary. She explains that she is not a vicious person unless attacked, and then her tongue is acerbic. She cites one occasion before she was ordained when a male priest said to her: "Any woman who wants to be ordained is a spiritual whore". Lettie responded: "Well, you would know more about whores than I would!"

There were many hurtful moments in Lettie's career, and she frequently turned to her husband for support. She never complained or confided in her children about the difficult times, and her daughter still attends St. Philip's Church with her children, the Church Lettie left twenty years ago because the rector, Stephen Eardley, was critical about women priests. Although Lettie and her husband live just around the corner from St. Philip's, she has never been asked to fill in or help in any way, until recently when the rector called her up on Wednesday evening to ask if she could do the Thursday service of Holy Communion. He had already called all the male priests and found no one who could fill in for him. Lettie James said 'no'. He asked her if she was busy, and she said: " No, but if it's wrong for me to serve on a Sunday, it is wrong for me to serve on a Thursday."

Given the incidents of discrimination that she has frequently experienced, Lettie James is remarkably free of bitterness. I personally witnessed this in the summer of 1993. I received a letter from Lettie and she apologised for leaving out a page of a document she sent me. She wrote:

I must apologise. Our house was robbed while I was at a wedding and Cliff was out of town. My computer and printer and silverware etc. were stolen. The house was turned upside down....Not until today did I realise that it was an early draft and page 6 was missing altogether. I feel dreadful. Fortunately I had the copy from which I spoke although it does not have the references on it. (All that material was in the computer). Sorry about that!

Lettie might have complained about the damage done to her home and private property, instead she apologised for being unable to send page 6. This is just one example of Lettie James' strength of character in the face of adversity. It is because of Lettie's keen mind, sharp wit, and strong sense of principle and integrity, that women coming after her in the Church have not had to undergo the same forms of discrimination. She fought the battles so that her successors would have an easier time.

(Note: Anecdotal comments have been included to provide the reader with a sense of Lettie James' personality and character; they should not detract from her professionalism.)

PART FIVE

LETTIE JAMES

HER WRITING AND PUBLIC SPEAKING

Lettie James handles words, ideas, problems, issues, and challenges with obvious delight and a dedication to truth. In her writing and public speaking she strives for excellence. But Lettie James chose to work with people and to use the spoken word in their service. When it seemed to Lettie James that ordination to the priesthood was an impossibility, she decided to study psychology, another way of being with people where they are, and helping them in their most difficult times of life. Consequently there is very little written documentation on the life and work of Lettie James. She refers to this documentation as her "stuff": newspaper articles and a few sermons and public addresses, and she provided me with copies of her "stuff". This material is now in the hands of Dr. Meb Reisner who is writing a history of the Diocese of Montreal, following her publication of **Strangers and Pilgrims. A History of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec 1793 -1993**, (1995. Toronto: Anglican Book Centre) It is regrettable that there is so little written material to reflect the life and work of Lettie James.

Among the documentation which Lettie James gave me are three addresses in which she deals with the role of women in the Church and the question of the ordination of women. The first was delivered in Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal in 1975; the second was a talk given exactly one year after she was ordained to the priesthood; and the third was her address on being awarded an Honorary Doctor of Divinity, in May 1992, sixteen years

after her ordination to the diaconate. In this last address, Lettie James told her audience that: "The sermon that day (of her ordination) was preached by a somewhat fundamentalist priest, (no longer with us.) His sermon topic was, 'The place of Christian women - in the home.'" She made no comment on the insensitivity of the sermon topic, but continued with her subject of the ordination of women and 'God the Mother'. She is aware of the powerful effect of the understatement, the irony of the situation needed no explanation.

From the time of the first address, in 1975, before her own ordination, until the address in 1992, Lettie James is consistent in her solidarity with women and in her unshakeable belief in the rightness of the ordination of women. Her convictions are backed up with scholarly presentation on the role of women in the Bible, and the role of women in the Church throughout history. In fact, in the 1992 address, her discussion of 'God the Mother' traces feminine symbolism in the concept of God from ancient societies until the present. She argues that feminine imagery is just as prevalent and just as important as masculine imagery in the understanding of God, and justice for women has always been important. In 1975 she wrote in her address at Christ Church Cathedral:

WHAT WAS THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TOWARDS WOMEN?

One of the first things that we notice is that He taught them the gospel, the meaning of the Scriptures and religious truths in general. This was a deliberate decision to break with custom. Moreover, women became disciples of his, not only in the sense of learning from Him, but also in the sense of following and ministering to Him. (Luke 8;1ff Mark 15;40f.) The significance of this can only be appreciated when

it is recalled that not only were women forbidden to read or study the Scriptures, but in the more observant settings they were not even allowed to leave their homes, whether as a daughter, a wife or a member of a harem.

His first post-resurrection appearance was to a woman, and His words to her were simply, "Go and tell." The Eleven refused to believe a woman, for according to Judaic law, women were not allowed to bear legal or religious witness. Jesus was obviously aware of this stricture, yet His first commissioning of a woman - to bear witness to the most important event of his career could not have been anything but deliberate; it was clearly a rejection of the second-class status of women, linking it with the very centre of his gospel. It is so obvious, that it is an overwhelming tribute to man's intellectual myopia not to have discerned it effectively in almost two thousand years. (p. 2)

Lettie James does not mince her words. Further on in the address Lettie James gives another example of how Jesus broke down the stereotypes of women, and yet the Church continued to perpetuate them.

One day as He was teaching, a woman from the crowd was deeply impressed, and perhaps imagining how happy she would be to have such a son, raised her voice to pay him a compliment. She did so by referring to His mother, but her image of a woman was sexually reductionist in the extreme. I was reminded so much of this story when the dear, gentle old Jesuit priest at the recent discuss-in tenderly reminded us that the good Catholic mother is completely fulfilled as she watches her son being ordained to the priesthood. Touching, but surely old Irish Catholic sentiment, rather like the typical stage mother or "my son the doctor." The woman said to Jesus, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that

you sucked.” Jesus clearly felt it necessary to reject this ‘baby machine’ image of women. He said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of the Lord and keep it.”

It would therefore appear that the attitudes of society today are more closely related to those of Christ, than are those of the established Church (p. 4)

Lettie James had been fighting these stereotypes all her life, it is not surprising that she is articulate on the subject. It is interesting in this address to read what she had to say about the ordination of women, given that it was written/spoken before the ordination of women was accepted by the Anglican Church of Canada, and before her own ordinations to the diaconate and then the priesthood. She said:

The Church must be cautious that she ‘Quench not the Spirit.’ If a woman has a vocation, she has an obligation to have it tested in the same way that a man’s vocation is tested. It is part of her response to God. The Church also has an equal obligation to respond to that situation and decide whether or not that vocation is valid. If the Holy Spirit is calling the Church to ordain women (and only if we pray for discernment will we know) then how can they be denied?

Perhaps the worst reason of all, and yet probably one that is heard more often than any others is, ‘Well, it all depends on the woman.’ This is not a valid reason and is not used to deny men ordination....

It is not difficult to imagine a woman celebrating the Eucharist or giving absolution, a woman deeply united to Christ, a woman indwelt by the Holy Spirit. If she is a pure channel through which the Holy

Spirit can flow, and if she speaks and acts with the humble authority which comes from the gospels - we have great need of such priests whether male or female.

It is not her womanhood that qualifies her for, or disqualifies her from the priesthood, it is the grace that abounds, the call, the vocation. (pp. 6,7)

These arguments are no longer an issue in the Anglican Church in Canada and have not been for a number of years. In her 1992 address Lettie James reflected back on her own ordination. She said:

It is difficult for me to realise that there are people of prominence in the Diocese who were not around at that time and who do not know the genesis of the Ordination of Women in this Diocese. They ask, 'Was is really that bad? Did that really happen? Didn't you feel awful when there was a protest at your priesting?' No, I didn't feel awful. I had alot of sympathy for those who were protesting, but I knew that what I was doing was right. I knew that I was repsonding to a vocation.

I have brought with me part of the front page of the *The Gazette* which headlines my ordination. Underneath it is another headline - 'Pope John dies in his sleep.' No! There was no connection, but it just demonstrates what a traumatic event my ordination was, and the priorites of the press. When the second woman priest was ordained some time later, there was no protest, no headlines, no t.v. cameras. People had experienced the ministry of a woman priest without losing their faith. We experienced and shared each others' hurt and sought to help each other.

Why was there such difficulty in accepting the ordination of women? Why is it that there are still some altars at which we are not welcome? I have a theory and I would like to share it with you. (p.1)

Lettie James went on to discuss 'God the Mother' and feminine symbolism in the understanding of God. She concluded her address saying:

Image breaking is a part of religious tradition. The proposal to name God in the image of both female and male holds the promise of renewing the tradition, in line with one of its own best insights into the mystery of God, at the same time that it allies itself with the emerging understanding of the human dignity of women. Our language about God becomes truly analogical at the same time that we slip the bonds of the stereotyping and subordination of persons.

This will be your task as you begin your ministry, whether it be religious or not, for service is itself a ministry. May God be with you and may She crown your efforts with success as you widen your experience of God, and consequently your ministry to the whole of God's people. (p. 11)

Compassion, humour and academic accuracy are the hallmarks of Lettie James' writing and speaking, and they are frequently related to her rich store of personal experiences and her vivid imagination. In her sermon delivered at Saint George's Anglican Church in Montreal on August 23, 1998, Lettie James was talking about the Sabbath (The sermon is entitled "Never on Sunday" Luke 13:10-17) and began with the story of the woman who was bent over for eighteen years. With a stroke of imaginative genius Lettie James helped the congregation to put themselves in the woman's shoes. She began:

There was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could in no wise lift herself up. Can you imagine what that must have been like? I want you to go even further than that. I want you to bend over as far as you can, right down in your seat. Put your head down in your lap if you can. Do it now and I will tell you when eighteen seconds has gone, then you can come back up.

What was it like? You couldn't look anyone in the face. Perhaps you had difficulty in concentrating on what was happening because you missed so much of what was going on around you. You were not conscious of your neighbour because if you did it right, you could not see him. If you had been walking you would have missed the sky, the birds, and maybe you would have bumped into something that was in your way. Imagine that woman being like that for eighteen years.

She went to church, she went to the synagogue, and Jesus was there. This was the last time that we ever hear of Jesus being in the synagogue. And something wonderful happened - Jesus noticed her! (p. 1)

Having undoubtedly caught the congregation's attention and stirred the people's imagination, Lettie James went on to talk about the healing effect of the words and touch of Jesus, the role of women in the time of Jesus, and the need to do service, to do what is right, at any time and on any day. She also spoke about how all people are bent over at some time in their lives, and that Jesus still notices those in need, that his healing touch and word are still available to all people.

There is another delightful example of the imagination of Lettie James and her sense of whimsy in a sermon delivered at Saint George's on July 26, 1996. She is talking about the importance of prayer and how to pray. She said:

As I write this, a bee is flying to and fro between the windows of the attic where I am writing, going from one closed window to the other. Then another bee joined it, and together they went back and forth beating their wings against the window pane. Both were imprisoned, or thought they were, but if they had only looked up, the skylight was wide open. Perhaps that is how you feel about prayer, it's all beyond you, you are trapped and can't get through to what the window reveals. It will remain so until you make a beginning. (pp. 1/2)

Lettie James has an incisive sense of justice. On numerous occasions her letters to the Editor have been published in *The Gazette* in response to some injustice or outrage. In fact, one notable letter, published on February 3, 1998, is preceded with the bold headline saying : **“Judge’s sentence for rapists sparks outrage”**. The letter is worth quoting in full as it is a clear reflection of the heart, mind and character of Lettie James:

When I read about the Quebec judge who passed sentence on two Montreal men for sexual assault, the words which came to my mind were, 'racist, sexist'. After reflection on this matter I now add, 'moronic, uninformed, unintelligent, uneducated and pathetic.' I don't think that there is a word which really describes my outrage. That outrage grew when, expecting to see the name of some post-menopausal male, I saw that this perpetrator of stupidity was a woman.

What kind of people are being appointed to our courts? We have had so many examples of late of judges who seem to be completely unaware of the seriousness of the abuse of women. It is time that someone

challenged the appointments of these people who are in positions of authority and power and yet have no idea of what they are about.

Violence against women in any form is wrong. Whether it takes place in the home or on the street, in Montreal or Haiti. It has far-reaching effects for the victim, the offender, and the nature and quality of our society. We have come far in educating men (and women) about how they ought to relate to each other.

It makes no difference that 'the victim was not a child.' If the act was consensual, why did one of the offenders have to hold her down while the other raped her, not once, but continually over a period of hours?' The judge said further that the two men did not pose a danger to society. Really? Has she not read about all the men who have been released from prison or given light sentences and have returned to commit further violence even hours after their release?

A review of all judges is required. Education in the complex causes of violence against women should be mandatory. These include an examination of our history of imbalance of power, the failure of our own cultural pressures to prevent such abuse, a distorted view of sexuality, the contributions of pornography and commercial advertising such as is seen on our main streets. Now must we add, 'the notion that rape is not serious if you come from a culture where it is condoned'? Maybe she should visit Haiti and become more informed.

This is Canada and Canadian judges, even Quebec ones, are bound by Canadian law. Rape is rape is rape!

REV. LETTIE JAMES

Montreal West

This case *is* an outrage, and is yet another example, similar to many in this dissertation, of women being against women, hindering their cause rather than moving forward together in solidarity. Moving from sinners to saints, I finish with another letter to the Editor of *The Gazette*, which is an example of Lettie James at her most theologically sublime:

WE ARE ALL CALLED TO BE SAINTS

In his eulogy, Earl Spencer warned us about canonizing Diana, Princess of Wales, reminding us of her very human qualities. Howard B. Ripstein (Letter, Sept. 12) juxtaposes Diana with Mother Teresa, whom he regards as a real saint, exposing a misunderstanding of the nature of sanctity, and the difference between official recognition of one part of the church and public appreciation and love for a person who did good works.

Thomas Merton in *Life and Holiness* addresses this question in simple yet profound language. He writes, "If we are to be perfect, as Christ is perfect, we must strive to be as perfectly human as he is. Hence, sanctity is not a matter of being less human, but more human.

"This implies a greater capacity for concern, for suffering, for understanding, for sympathy, and also for humour, for joy, for appreciation of the good and beautiful things of life.

"To be perfect, then, is not so much a matter of seeking God with ardour and generosity as of being found, loved and possessed by God in such a way that his action in us makes us completely generous and helps us transcend our limitations and react against our own weakness."

Perhaps then, sainthood, like beauty, is perceived by the beholder of those who have helped us through the dark nights of our lives, but have also rejoiced with us in the lighter, happier moments, even with fun and celebration.

That is quite different from an official recognition of one part of the church. We are all called to be saints, even though not many will be recognized on the “holy calendar.”

REV. LETTIE JAMES

Montreal West

Lettie James has enormous ‘capacity for concern, suffering, for understanding, for sympathy, for humour, for joy, for appreciation of the good and beautiful things of life’. It is impossible to do justice to this woman, as it is with all the women in this dissertation, in one chapter; but it can be seen that she shares the same concerns for social justice as Marie Gratton, Monique Dumais and Yvonne Bergeron.

CHAPTER V

THE REVEREND RUTH H. MATTHEWS

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

I interviewed Ruth H. Matthews on a number of occasions during the summers of 1997 and 1998. Ruth H. Matthews has been a pioneer in her family and in the Anglican Church of Canada. As a child she was sent to a Roman Catholic school for three years because her father considered the public school too rough. It was virtually unheard of for a Protestant at the time to go to a Roman Catholic convent, and the parishioners in her Anglican church in Quebec City were shocked. This was Ruth's first experience of being a pioneer. She was to have many more such experiences throughout her life. She was the first woman ordained deacon in the Diocese of Quebec; and she was the first woman ordained priest in the Ecclesiastical Province of Canada. Ruth was always conscious of the responsibilities that accompanied the role of the pioneer. In 1997 she wrote in a sermon: "Being a pioneer all my life, the first woman in so many places, has been difficult. I have always prayed that I would not make so many mistakes that it would cause the door to be shut for other women to be accepted." On the contrary, Ruth's role as a deacon and then as a priest in the Diocese of Quebec has opened the doors for other women.

Ruth has always been a shy, self-effacing person. She did not go into life in the church for herself, or to prove anything to anyone. She experienced a strong sense of vocation, and she responded to the call because of her belief in obeying the will of God. She

explains that 'if she felt joy on the occasion of her ordination to the priesthood, it was not joy from a sense of pride, but joy in her sense of the overwhelming love of God'.

PART TWO

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

Ruth Helenor Matthew was born in Quebec City on 10th September, 1916. Her parents, Arthur Henry Matthews and Ruth Helenor Ward, both came from England. They were married in Quebec. Ruth was the eldest of four children, her brother Ray was two years younger. He was a fighter pilot who was killed just before his twenty-fifth birthday. He is buried in Tripoli. Her sister Mildred is four years younger, and is married with a family. Her brother, Humphrey Arthur, was fourteen years younger, and died suddenly of a heart attack in January, 1998. Ruth never married.

Ruth attended church as a child and enjoyed it. She usually went with her mother whom she described as "a great church person, full of joy". Her mother played the piano, and Ruth was brought up with music. Her father sometimes went to church, but Ruth has the impression that he did not always agree with some of the clergy. He was an electrical engineer for the Canadian Pacific Railway, and often worked Sundays. Ruth describes herself as "very shy and very insecure", and she says that as a child she was always "looking for something". Ruth says her upbringing was very strict, more like the Baptist Church than the Anglican. In her family there was no smoking, no drinking, no swearing, no gambling, no lipstick, no nailpolish and so on. There were many books at home and the children were encouraged to read, but they had to ask first to ensure that they would not read something that was unsuitable.

The Church Ruth Matthews attended in Quebec city was St. Peter's, she was baptized by the Reverend P.R. Roy. She went to Sunday School and the school she attended was beside the rectory, and also called St. Peters. She remembers that at lunch time when she ate her sandwiches, she would sit on the grass with Mr. Roy and he would tell her Bible stories.

Ruth describes herself as a pioneer in the Church, but she adds that she was a pioneer even as a child. When she had completed grade three her father would not let her go to Victoria School. Apparently he did not come up with an alternative, but one of their neighbours did, she suggested that Ruth attend the Roman Catholic convent. Ruth met the Mother Superior who she described as a "lovely person". She said Ruth would be welcome to attend the school and would not be expected to do any of the Roman Catholic studies. This was in the 1920's when the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec had little to do with Protestants. Ruth recalls that "the people at St. Peter's were shocked and afraid that Ruth would be turned into a Roman Catholic".

Ruth was interested in religious studies and took the courses, at one point even receiving a silver medal for her achievements. There were prayers every morning and Ruth often led them. She went to church with her Roman Catholic friends. Even as a young girl she was showing leadership in worship and establishing close relationships with Roman Catholics which she still maintains.

Ruth attended the convent for grades four, five and six. She skipped grade seven and went into grade eight at Commissioner's High. One of the first things she remembers about that school was "the shouting". She says that at home they were never allowed to shout, and the booming voice of the Headmaster made her "tremble". Ruth was still, in many ways, shy and insecure. The school had recently become co-educational.

Ruth enjoyed school and loved her teachers. She describes herself as an obedient child. There was, however, one teacher in grade eight who had a particularly negative effect on Ruth. Ruth had been taught at home that if you did not understand something you should ask. During a mathematics class in grade eight Ruth put up her hand to ask a question. Rather than explain, the teacher replied: "you should have learned that in grade five!" Ruth was shocked at the lack of "compassion and understanding" and says that she felt "totally humiliated".

For a time the family stopped going to St. Peter's and went to Trinity Church which was a low evangelical church. Ruth suspects that there was some sort of falling out at St. Peter's, but she does not know the details, she was only twelve years old. Even at that age Ruth felt strongly drawn toward Trinity Church. She describes it as a "happy Church", and says that she senses "when a church is filled with the Holy Spirit." Apparently she felt Trinity Church was.

The family subsequently went back to St. Peter's where Ruth was confirmed with her brother; she was eighteen. She always felt a desire to go back to Trinity to discover what

it was that had drawn her so forcefully, but she did not manage this until the Second World War.

PART THREE

THE SENSE OF VOCATION

Ruth Matthews took a secretarial course when she was eighteen and then began working for Bell Canada in the long distance department. (She became a supervisor in that department for eight years) When she started working she moved back into Quebec City and lived at the Y.W.C.A.. At this point she returned to Trinity Church where she joined the Anglican Young People's Association (A.Y.P.A.) and the Bible Study group, and she also taught Sunday School.

It was at this point in her life that Ruth Matthews began to feel a very distinct sense of vocation. The Church and the Bible had always been important to her, and she had always played an active role in church life. But now teaching Sunday School was not enough. Ruth had always loved to read stories of women missionaries and women doctors in far off countries. She now had a very specific sense that God was calling her to serve in the North. She remembers particularly one woman missionary coming and speaking at Trinity Church and challenging the people, saying that in the past twenty-five years no one from that church had gone into the ministry or the mission field. Ruth immediately remembered the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Here am I, send me", (Isaiah 6:8) and felt that they applied directly to her.

This proved very difficult for Ruth. As she felt the calling, she was very nervous and did not tell anyone or discuss it with anyone. She prayed about it fervently. She even

thought that her father might disown her, knowing his disregard for the clergy. She recalls that there were two Biblical passages that went through her mind over and over again: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13); and "Underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33: 27); that helped her maintain her convictions; but she did not know what to do with the sense of calling. As she says: "I had no self-confidence, no money, and I wondered what my father would think". (July, 1998) The feeling of being called to the North remained strong. Ruth Matthews had read the life of Archibald Fleming, Bishop of the Arctic, who ate his boots in order to stay alive, but she confesses she knew nothing about the people.

Finally she took the first steps. She spoke to a woman in her prayer group, then to the rector's wife and finally to her rector, the Reverend Albert Kemp. He was supportive and encouraging; her favourite quote from him was: "You can go and sit in the garage, but that does not make you a car; the same is true of Christianity, you can go and sit in a church, but that does not make you a Christian".) Ruth explains that at that time the Dominion Women's Auxillary offered assistance to young women seeking training; she applied and was accepted under the W. A. at the Anglican Women's Training College in Toronto.

Ruth Matthews was thirty-five years old at the time. She left her job as a supervisor at Bell Canada; left Quebec City where she had been brought up, and moved to Toronto. She registered at the Anglican Women's Training College as a mature student and moved into the residence. She said the students "were packed in like sardines." In her first year she had to share a room with three other, much younger, women. As young students are

apt to do, they were always playing tricks on each other and they included Ruth in their tricks. She says: "It was fun." In her last year she had a room of her own. She graduated in 1954.

PART FOUR

FOLLOWING THE CALL

Ruth's ecclesiastical adventures now began, and her sense of being called was fulfilled, she went north. The Right Reverend Tom Greenwood invited her to serve as a missionary under him in the Yukon Diocese, where she worked for the next six years. Ruth says that the hardest part about going north was leaving her mother who, by then, had a heart condition and had been diagnosed with diabetes. Ruth was allowed to go home every two years, supported by the Women's Auxiliary.

Her first job was looking after twenty-eight native high school children in an Anglican hostel in Whitehorse. Ruth remembers how she sewed, mended, scrubbed and fixed things. There was one other adult with her, Miss M. Ideson, the cook. Ruth noticed that the children's mattresses were in a terrible state, they were old army cast offs. She persuaded the A.C.W. (Anglican Church Women) to give the hostel a new set of mattresses; they subsequently decided to give the hostel an electric polisher as well. Ruth says she was strict with the young people and always made sure they did their homework, which was appreciated by the school Principal. During the summer most of the children went home, but there were some who had no home and remained with Ruth.

Ruth speaks with affection of the children in her care at the time. She tells the story of Lena, a teenager who wanted to be a nurse. Lena was one of the students who did not

leave during the summer. One evening Ruth, the matron from the hospital and a teacher went to the movies, and Ruth brought Lena with her. After the movies they usually went back to the teacher's house for tea. Ruth was worried that Lena might not be included in the invitation because she was native. She need not have worried. At one point the matron asked Lena what she wanted to do when she left school. Lena replied that she wanted to be a nurse. Shortly afterwards Lena got a summer job working in the hospital, thanks to the matron, and she did in fact go on to be a nurse.

During the time Ruth was in the Yukon, she was disturbed by the treatment of the native people, and she regretted the fact that there was no protection for women and children. Ruth found the native school system very cruel. The children were rounded up in open trucks in September and taken to the school until the following June. At school they were not allowed to speak their own language, or to associate with their brothers and sisters. Bishop Greenwood felt as Ruth did about the treatment of the native people, but he had no authority. The native people loved him and called him 'Yukon Tom'.

Ruth was not at the hostel for native children long before the bishop sent her to Carcross to open the church. Ruth was to take services there, and also at Teslin and Swift River. Ruth lived in a log cabin with no running water and no electricity. The cabin was lit by an oil lamp and heated by a small stove. Ruth describes herself as very athletic at the time, which is just as well since she had to spend much time chopping wood and hauling water. She had a 1937 pick up truck with which to get around. This life probably came close to Ruth's original vision of the life of a missionary. This phase, however, did prove detrimental to her health. She was paid a pittance for her work, and at one point

she says she "almost starved to death". Ruth, who had always been used to fresh food, now had none. She says she never told her mother just how difficult conditions were.

At one point, when Ruth was living in Carcross, she woke up one morning and could not get out of her old camp cot. She forced herself, took the Sunday service, and then drove to Whitehorse to the bishop's home. Mrs. Greenwood, the bishop's wife, arranged for her to see the doctor, and she spent the next month flat on her back in the Greenwood's home. Ruth suffered with back problems for the next twenty-one years.

The bishop made some changes, he got Ruth a new car, and two boys from the native school were allowed to chop wood and haul water for Ruth on Saturdays. Normally the children were not allowed out of the school except with their own staff, but Ruth had done favours for the school and had run the Girl Guides, so an exception was made in her case. But there was still a general deterioration in her health.

After six years Ruth left the north with the intention of returning. She wanted to take courses in social studies, 'so that she would know what she was talking about and would be able to help the native people, especially the women and children'. Bishop Greenwood had insisted that she see a doctor when she got to Montreal. She did and the doctor told her she would have to change her job, she would not be able to return to the north. Ruth was disappointed, and so was Bishop Greenwood.

Ruth went to Toronto to study social work, and then moved to Hamilton to follow her profession. Again there were health problems. Ruth explains: "I would worry about

these people and I couldn't sleep. My heart really acted up." Again she was told by medical experts that she would have to quit her job. She had nothing to live on, so she had to give up her apartment in Hamilton. Ruth's friends took her in and her faith kept her going.

It was not long before she received a letter from Hudson Heights offering her a job as rector's assistant to the Reverend Cecil Royle. In her new position Ruth would be permitted to preach, teach Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, train Sunday School teachers and visit as a clergy person, but she would not be allowed to help with Holy Communion. Ruth was happy to be back in the province of Quebec, where she has been ever since, and she was anxious to get home to see her mother. Ruth went to Hudson Heights in 1962 and remained there until 1968.

PART FIVE
THE ORDINATION SERVICES
OF
RUTH MATTHEWS

Ruth Matthews took up her position as Assistant to the Rector of Saint James in Hudson Heights in 1962. On 6th August, 1964, on the Feast of the Transfiguration, Ruth was ordained a Deaconess. She was forty-eight. Bishop Maguire officiated at the service and Ruth recounts that "it was a joy and a great privilege" to have her former bishop the Right Reverend Tom Greenwood preach at the service.

Ruth Matthews was always ready to go wherever she was asked. After Hudson Heights her next venture was in Forestville. For two years she was hired by the Anglo Pulp and Paper Co. to teach school in the one room elementary school. While there she took services at the Anglican church, taught Sunday School, and also started the first Forestville Brownie Pack. Ruth notes, with no sense of bitterness, that she did not receive any honorarium from the Diocese of Quebec, nor was she recognized as part of synod. While in Forestville Ruth made arrangements with the priest in charge of Baie Comeau, the Reverend Neville Tucker, to take Morning Prayer services in Baie Comeau, if he would come and give Holy Communion to the people of Forestville.

However, when Bishop Timothy Matthews became Bishop of the Diocese of Quebec, he did take notice that Ruth Matthews (no relative) was part of the Diocese of Quebec. He asked to see Ruth and invited her to go to Murdochville in the Gaspé. Murdochville is a

small, isolated, mining town in the heart of the Gaspé Peninsula. Ruth moved to this community in 1972. She says she lived there and "travelled to and from Saint Matthew's Church, eighty-five miles over dreadful roads."

On 25th June, 1973 Ruth Matthews was ordained the first woman deacon in the Diocese of Quebec by the Right Reverend Timothy Matthews in St. Philip's Anglican Church in Murdochville. Her friend from Hudson Heights, the Reverend Cecil Royle preached the sermon. A deacon is a member of Holy Orders; Ruth Matthews was now the Reverend Ruth Matthews, and she could assist with Holy Communion.

In January, 1977, after five years of living and working in Murdochville, Bishop Matthews asked Ruth to go to St. George's Church in Drummondville as the first woman rector. Meanwhile in 1976, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, had passed a motion in favour of the ordination of women priests. The first four women were ordained priest on 30th November, 1976. Bishop Timothy Matthews and Ruth Matthews had discussed her ordination to the priesthood, and decided to wait until she was settled in Drummondville.

Thus, on 5th June, 1977, Trinity Sunday, Ruth Matthews was ordained the first woman priest in the Ecclesiastical Province of Canada. Ruth described the occasion in a sermon she gave in 1997; she said: "What a wonderful day that was! The church was filled to overflowing with family, friends, parishioners and representatives from other churches, Diocesan Women's Auxiliary members, Roman Catholic Ursuline sisters, etc., a truly joyful occasion. The Principal of the Anglican Women's Training College, Marion

Niven, was the preacher. Bishop elect Allen Goodings led the Litany. There was no opposition to the ordination, Bishop Matthews, although not well, had his dream fulfilled of being able to ordain me." Ruth Matthews was sixty-one. She was rector in charge of the Greater Parish of Saint Francis, which in those days included Drummondville, South Durham and Kirkdale. She stayed there until she was over sixty-five.

PART SIX

THE LATER YEARS

When Ruth Matthews reached the age of sixty-five, Bishop Allen Goodings asked her if she would fill in in Danville until he could find a younger man. Ruth agreed and offered to work for half salary since the parish was having difficulties. Bishop Goodings said that if she was going to work for part time salary then she would only be expected to work part time. Ruth responded that that was not possible, she would work full time for half pay. She moved there in January, 1982. Eventually, without her knowledge the wardens spoke to Bishop Goodings to say that they were more than satisfied with the services of Ruth, and asked him if she could stay there. The official service of Induction took place in September, 1982, with Bishop Timothy Matthews and Bishop Allen Goodings in attendance. On October 25, 1987 Ruth Matthews preached her last service as rector of St. Augustine and Denison Mills. She retired to Richmond, but her work was far from over. She became Honourary Assistant at St. Anne's, Richmond; and she continued to be in charge of St. Mark's in Acton Vale where there is a yearly service of Thanksgiving every September. In 1997 Ruth Matthews said to the congregation of St. Anne's: "Now I feel it is time I slowed down." That might have been so, but when I interviewed Ruth Matthews in July, 1998, she said that she was responsible for seventeen services and anything else that might crop up while the rector was on holiday.

In reviewing her twenty years in the Eastern Townships, and her forty-three years of service in the Church, Ruth Matthews wrote:

It has been a joy to be with the people there. The people have always been so helpful and made me very welcome. I have had the pleasure of having the Roman Catholic priest of St. André's church take part in the services; I have invited many clergy as our guest preachers. And as we have a number of French people, I take the service in both English and French...I am thankful to Our Lord for giving me the strength to share His love for people and I know that He walks with me and underneath are His everlasting arms... Looking back over the forty-three years of service I thank God for all His mercies, for His patience and love; if I have helped anyone it has been only because of God's presence and guidance. He has never failed me. Life has had many ups and downs, it has had many challenges and continues to have them... I know that I was called to serve the Lord and He has never let me down. I thank all those in all the parishes in which I served, for their trust and support. I pray that the message of God's love will continue to reach out and young people will respond to the call to COME TO THE SAVIOUR and GO THEN AND SERVE OTHERS IN CHRIST'S NAME. (1997)

In her ministry Ruth Matthews has been totally focussed on service to others. She has taken no part in, and has no interest in diocesan political differences; she has too much respect for the Church and its people. She is a woman of integrity, who has always put others before herself. It is for this reason her parishioners have always trusted and supported her. They learned very quickly that they would get nothing but the best from Ruth Matthews; that she has, all her life, been willing to work "full time for half pay". Because of her modesty and self-effacement Ruth has never been awarded any of the diocesan honours often awarded or given to those who are more ambitious and outspoken. Most of Ruth's fellow clergy are not aware of her remarkable story of courage, perseverance, endurance and faith. But Ruth is not looking for honours and

awards; she says her reward has been that she has been able to dedicate her life to the service of God aand the Christian community.

CHAPTER VI

THE REVEREND CANON

HEATHER THOMSON

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

Heather Thomson is a pioneer in the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Quebec, and beyond its boundaries into the rest of Canada. She was among the first twenty women to be ordained priest in the Anglican Church of Canada, and she was the third woman to be ordained in the Diocese of Quebec. When asked about the possibility of studying her life and her work in the church as part of this doctoral thesis, Canon Thomson said: "My only reservation is that I do not consider myself an academic or a scholar. The pastoral side of my work has always been more important to me." (July, 1998) Heather Thomson was not able to find early sermons or recent sermons, although she was very articulate in talking about her preaching. She was able to find a few articles that were written about her at the time of her ordination to the priesthood, and these proved helpful. Thus in examining the life and work of Heather Thomson and her influence on the role of women in the church, the approach was direct and personal. This is primarily oral history.

PART TWO

THE ROAD TO ORDINATION **TO THE PRIESTHOOD**

Heather Thomson was born of 18th August, 1952 in Montreal. Her family moved to Sherbrooke when she was five years old. The Anglican Church was always an important part of her life and her upbringing. Her parents were service oriented and people of strong faith. Heather's father, Lorne George Thomson, was raised as a Methodist, but attended the Anglican Church with his wife. Lorne Thomson was born in Toronto, and grew up in Montreal. He went to Lower Canada College and was an investment dealer. Heather Thomson's mother, Joan Ward, grew up in Saint Lambert. The couple married later in life because of the depression and the war. Heather Thomson's father served overseas for six years, and her mother for three years with the Red Cross. Following the war the couple met in November and were married in February. After Lorne Thomson died, Joan never remarried. Now in her late eighties she is still a very active woman. Heather Thomson has one sister, Nora, who is a year younger. The sisters are very close.

Heather Thomson remembers when her father wanted to become confirmed as an Anglican there was no record of his baptism; so within the space of three weeks he was baptized and confirmed into the Anglican church, and then made a warden. These events made a strong impression on Heather Thomson at the time, she was ten years old.

As a very young child Heather Thomson wanted to be a missionary. As a member of the Little Helpers, an organization for children which encourages them to give their pennies to missionaries, Heather was impressed by what she imagined to be the lives of the missionaries.

Heather Thomson remembers one occasion when she actually met a missionary and the meeting had an important impact on her. He was a black priest from South Africa. At the time her sister had rheumatic fever and was in bed for four months. The missionary priest came to Heather Thomson's home a couple of times, and each time Heather Thomson remembers him kneeling beside her sister's bed praying.

Heather Thomson also remembers that the youth groups she belonged to at St. Peter's in Sherbrooke were always run by young theological students from Bishop's University. These young men impressed her. She was beginning to formulate the idea that she wanted to do what they were doing. As a young child, Heather Thomson and her friends would often 'play church', and in these make believe games Heather always wanted to be the priest. She had a childhood dream of one day preaching from a parish pulpit. This notion did not fade as she grew older.

When Heather Thomson was preparing for her own confirmation, at the age of twelve, the priest giving the classes asked the members of the group what they wanted to be when they grew up. When it was Heather's turn to answer, she said: "I want to do what you do." The priest was shocked, but even at that age Heather Thomson had a strong feeling of being drawn towards ordination. Her mother also knew that, as Heather Thomson put

it: "it was very strongly in my head". When she was 20 years old, her mother clipped an article about women and the possibility of ordination out of the paper, and wrote on the article: "It looks like it will be possible".

Heather Thomson's father died of cancer when she was seventeen. When she was fifteen her father spent three months in hospital. This period was followed by two good years. Then suddenly, she recalls: "He did not feel well, was taken to hospital and died three weeks later." This was a difficult time for Heather and her family. Heather Thomson had just started at Bishop's University and the pain she felt as the result of her father's death was reflected in her academic work.

After two years of university Heather Thomson took time out to travel around Europe. She travelled with Jim Sweeny, the man she would later marry. They had started to go out together ten months after Heather's father died. Heather Thomson is specific about the timing of this period in her life. After a year off Heather Thomson transferred to Concordia and she graduated from that university in 1975 with a degree in Psychology and Sociology.

During the latter part of 1973 Heather Thomson went through a time of inner turmoil. On the one hand she still had a strong sense of calling to the ordained ministry; on the other she was in love with Jim Sweeny. She thought at the time that she would have to make a choice, that it would have to be either ordination or marriage; she did not feel she could have both. She kept her worries to herself until she could stand it no longer, at

which point she told Jim Sweeny of her dilemma. Jim did not feel that there was a problem; in fact he was very encouraging. They were married in October, 1974.

Heather took the first step towards ordination which was to go and talk to The Right Reverend Timothy Matthews, Bishop of Quebec. He told Heather Thomson that he felt the ordination of women was inevitable. He said to her : "I want you to start at 'Dio' when you graduate." Heather Thomson started her studies at Diocesan Theological College in September 1975.

Heather Thomson had known Bishop Timothy Matthews when he was rector at Saint George's Anglican Church in Lennoxville. At the time she attended Saint Peter's Anglican Church in Sherbrooke. When Heather Thomson's father died, Bishop Timothy wrote her a letter which she cherished. In it he wrote: "Don't cry too long. Your father wouldn't want it that way. You and your father had some grand times together. You made each other happy. Neither he nor you could want more than that". When Heather was asked to speak at the funeral of Bishop Timothy, she read these words to his wife and children, certain that they would comfort them as much as they had comforted her.

Shortly after Heather Thomson's father died, Bishop Timothy paid a visit to her mother. He said: "I know you need a job and I have a proposition for you; but you will need a car and you will need to get your driver's license." Mrs. Thomson did both, and subsequently became the person in charge of finding homes for students from the Quebec North Shore while they completed their schooling at Alexander Galt Regional High School. Bishop Timothy had a strong sense of dedication and commitment to the people

of the North Shore and it was a serious concern to him that the children were not receiving high school education.

Throughout her time at Diocesan Theological College, Heather Thomson knew that Bishop Timothy Matthews was there to support her, encourage her, and ordain her when she was ready. She spent three years at seminary. For the first year she and Jim lived in Notre Dame de Grace, but after that Heather Thomson was pressured into moving into the married students' quarters. While she was doing her theological training, Jim Sweeny was working on his Masters Degree in History at McGill, which he later finished at Bishop's University. There was one other female student at seminary with Heather, a young woman from Nova Scotia.

The Diocesan Theological College is made up of three colleges: the Anglican, the United and the Presbyterian, all have a legal affiliation with the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University. For the first two years a student at seminary does courses at McGill in Religious Studies. In Heather Thomson's class there were eight students, and Heather explained that in that group there were 'two or three who were opposed to the ordination of women and did not feel that Heather Thomson and the other woman should be there'. These male students either ignored the women or were actually unpleasant.

In the Spring of 1976 Heather Thomson was sent to A.C.P.O. (Advisory Committee for the Postulants for Ordination) in Quebec City. There were three women going through the process. When she went into the dining room for the first meal after arriving, she got her tray and went to sit down at a table of male postulants. As she sat down, they all,

her tray and went to sit down at a table of male postulants. As she sat down, they all, with one simultaneous motion, got up, picked up their trays and moved to another table. Needless to say, Heather Thomson had a feeling of complete rejection. Fortunately, the interviewers were more open-minded, and the rest of the weekend went well.

During her second year of seminary Heather Thomson was assigned to Saint Philip's Anglican parish in Montreal West. There Heather Thomson met Dr. Lettie James who was serving as a curate and who was another pioneer in the Anglican Church in the province of Quebec. During December and January of that academic year Heather Thomson did a service project in Haiti. She was part of a group of six, five students and a priest leader, the Reverend Christopher Carr. The aim was to learn about the life of a priest in a French setting and in a Third World country. Heather describes this experience as 'life-changing'; the poverty and the politics of terror affected her deeply. She found it very difficult to come back to the affluent, materialistic world of Montreal

In the Spring of 1977 Heather Thomson graduated from McGill with her Bachelor of Theology. In June, 1977 she was ordained Deacon at Saint George's Anglican Church in Lennoxville. She was now the Reverend Heather Thomson, Deacon. This event occurred just before Bishop Timothy Matthews retired as Bishop. During that summer Heather Thomson did three month's work at Magog, Fitch Bay and Georgeville. At the time the rector of Magog, the Reverend John McIlmurray was not in favour of the ordination of women, but he was "very kind and helpful" to Heather Thomson. She was left in charge for one month while Reverend McIlmurray took his family to the summer placement at Saint James the Apostle in Cacouna. Heather lived in the rectory in Magog

and found the summer a great learning experience. She had all the responsibilities of the parish priest. During this time Heather Thomson met the renowned theologian, Dr. Robert Slater, in Georgeville; Dr. Slater was later to conduct the ordination to the priesthood retreat with Heather.

The third and final year at Diocesan Theological College was a tense and difficult time for Heather Thomson, and she felt it was also hard on Jim, although she says he was very supportive. During that year she did a half unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at the Douglas Hospital; she worked in a community day care centre, and she did parish work at L'Église de la Nativité with a Haitian congregation which rented Saint Hilda's Anglican Church in East End Montreal. This she described as "a really neat experience". The language and the culture were totally different. Her supervisor at the time was the Reverend Christopher Carr, who was helpful; but Heather felt she had "too many bosses, and no women teachers, professors or role models. In fact the only other woman with whom Heather could identify was Dr. Lettie James, and she was considerably older.

Heather graduated from the Diocesan Theological College in the Spring of 1978 with her Masters of Divinity. Throughout her time at seminary, in spite of hardships and instances of discrimination, Heather never wavered from her vision of herself as a priest.

Heather Thomson was ordained priest on January 7, 1979 in Saint Barnabas Anglican Church in North Hatley. She was the third woman to be ordained in the Diocese of Quebec.

PART THREE

THE ORDINATION

The ordination in North Hatley caused quite a stir. It was held on the night of one of the worst storms of the winter. The event was written up in *The Sherbrooke Record*, *La Tribune*, and *The Diocesan Gazette*. This was an historical event and it was well attended. Many travelled long distances to be there to support Heather Thomson.

The Bishop of the diocese, the Right Reverend Allen Goodings presided, assisted by the former Bishop, the Right Reverend Timothy Matthews. Also in attendance for the laying on of hands were Canon Hal Church; Canon Mervyn Awcock; The Rev. Keith Perry-Gore; the Rev. Ruth Matthews; the Rev. Ron Smith; the Rev. Lynn Ross; the Rev. George Pell and the Rev. Lin Westman. Several clergy came from the Diocese of Montreal including the Rev. Tony Capon, Principal of the Montreal Diocesan Theological College; the Rev. Christopher Carr, who gave the sermon; the Rev. Lettie James; the Rev. David Oliver, and two deacons, the Rev. Arthur Sheffield and the Rev. Barry Clarke. The Rev. Doug Warren of Lennoxville, the Rev. Max Surjadinata of Waterville and the Rev. Tom Edmonds, Director of Students at the United Church Theological College in Montreal, represented the United Church; and the Rev. Paul Brault of St. Pat's Church in Sherbrooke represented the Roman Catholic Church. The church was full.

In his sermon the Rev. Christopher Carr said: "To care for the Gospel is to spend it, not, like a bank account, to keep it safe." He also told Heather Thomson she was to 'feed the

Lord's family by word and sacrament; to seek for the dispersed sheep; to take time for nourishment and recreation for herself and to remember that the priest is the gathering point for the Christian family'. (*The Diocesan Gazette*, February, 1979) Heather remembers that after the laying on of hands the Bishop, Allen Goodings, kissed her. What was not commonly known at the time, (although the Bishop did know), was that Heather Thomson was three months pregnant with her first child. Heather Thomson felt obliged to tell her Bishop that she was pregnant, it might have been an issue, and in fact Heather did learn subsequently that there was one male priest in the Diocese who was outraged when he learned of her condition.

The local archdeacon felt obliged to pay Heather Thomson a visit before the ordination service. He was not in favour of the ordination of women, he would not attend the service, but he said he would not voice an official protest. Normally the archdeacon presents the candidate to the Bishop. (Six years later when I was ordained deacon in Lennoxville the same archdeacon did attend the service with the intention of presenting me. He had not told the bishop, or anyone that he intended to be there, and as I had never met him, other presenters had already been approached. However, his intention was noted, and it would seem that some change of attitude had occurred during the intervening years, (possibly influenced by the ministries of Heather Thomson and Ruth Matthews).

Heather Thomson was the first woman to be ordained by Bishop Allen Goodings. The other women were ordained by Bishop Timothy Matthews. In a conversation I had with Allen Goodings in 1983 he told me he *had* been strongly against the ordination of women, but after a number of women had come to him, to say they had a strong sense

of vocation to the priesthood, he changed his mind. Allen Goodings inherited Heather Thomson from Timothy Matthews, and regardless of his attitude at the time he could not easily have stopped the process started and supported by his friend and mentor. Heather Thomson would have been one of the first to influence a change in attitude in Bishop Goodings.

For Heather gender has never been an issue in the matter of the priesthood. She feels "women bring gifts to the priesthood which are unique;" she adds: "I never tried and am not trying to be as good as anyone else, I am trying to be myself". (July, 1998) She explains that this is why she does not wear a clerical collar, although in the beginning of her ministry as a priest she did. In her opinion "the clerical collar is all wrapped up in a male/female sense of authority". (July, 1998)

After the ordination service, while people gathered in the church hall, official photographs were taken for publicity and for posterity. Heather Thomson, beaming and looking very young, is in the middle of the photograph flanked on one side by the Reverend Ron Smith and the Right Reverend Allen Goodings; and on the other by the Reverend Lynn Ross and the Right Reverend Timothy Matthews. Heather Thomson was twenty-six years of age, the youngest female priest in the province of Quebec, if not in the whole country. A dream had been fulfilled.

PART FOUR

AFTER THE ORDINATION

After Heather Thomson's graduation from the Montreal Diocesan Theological College, Bishop Allen Goodings requested a meeting with her and her husband Jim Sweeny. This meeting was not to offer Heather a placement as a priest, it was to ask Jim Sweeny to become Executive Director of Quebec Lodge Camp on Lake Massiwiippi. The Bishop did not have a position to offer Heather Thomson, who was then still a deacon; in fact he did not know what to do with her.

Fortunately for Heather Thomson, she had seen an advertisement for the job of Protestant Chaplain at Alexander Galt Regional High School. She says that her training in Clinic Pastoral Education, and her studies at McGill had opened her mind to the variety of possibilities for the role of a priest. She was receptive to the idea of a being a school chaplain. She applied, was short listed, interviewed and got the job. She began in September, 1978. She was the first female chaplain at Galt, and her colleague, the Roman Catholic Chaplain, Joseph Prah, was the first lay person to hold this position. Heather Thomson explains that because she grew up in the area and was well known, there was no problem with the fact that she was a woman. Several of the students attended her ordination the following January. Heather Thomson and Joe Prah worked together for twelve years.

Heather also acted as Honorary Assistant at St. Barnabas in North Hatley for two years, working with the Reverend Keith Perry-Gore. He was very helpful, letting her preach, run the vacation Bible School, the Sunday School, and also officiate at several weddings. She left when her husband left the camp and they moved to a farm in Waterville. Heather Thomson then became Honorary Assistant at St. George's in Lennoxville, with the Reverend Mervyn Awcock for the next nine years.

Heather Thomson enjoyed her work at Alexander Galt Regional High School. There was no liturgical work, but the compensation was her work at St. Barnabas and then St. George's. While working at Alexander Galt, Heather would also spend several hours at St. Georges, running a youth group, helping with Sunday School, visiting parishioners, and preaching. When interviewed by *McGill News* in the Spring of 1981 Heather was quoted as saying: "I enjoy being able to celebrate the Eucharist on a regular basis. At school my Anglican background is played in consideration of all the other Protestant denominations represented there."

Heather Thomson enjoyed the freedom she had as a school chaplain and the variety of her daily responsibilities. She considered that her mandate was "to serve as a Christian presence in school", and she never knew ahead of time what that would mean on a day to day basis. She told the interviewer of *McGill News*: " I never know from one day to the next what problems will arise, that's what I enjoy about it". She described her duties as those of chaplain, social worker and guidance counsellor. When asked if she was anxious to have her own parish, Heather answered that she was in no hurry for that form of ministry. She explained: "Part of my reluctance to get into the parish setting is due to

the expectations placed upon you. You must be at everybody's beck and call. I don't feel called to sacrifice everything. I also have a family, a farm and other interests. These have sustained by my spiritual life." She also explained the importance of prayer in her life: "In the work I'm doing, I'm called upon to give out an awful lot. If I didn't have time to replenish myself through devotion and meditation, I'd soon become a pretty hollow person." As the Chaplain of Alexander Galt, and now as the Chaplain of Bishop's University Heather has always appreciated "rubbing shoulders with people and gaining an appreciation of people in their daily lives". (July, 1998) In *McGill News* (Spring, 1981) she is quoted as saying: "I belong out in the world working with people on their level, not with the churchgoers, or the religious students in the schools." She said that she felt the Church ostracized many potential parishioners: "If you're divorced or gay, you get the message that the Church is not for you. The Gospel is really there for the outcast; for those without hope. Too often it is interpreted in completely the opposite light."

One aspect of her job at Alexander Galt that Heather Thomson did not enjoy was teaching Moral and Religious Education. She did not feel called to be a teacher, and she was uncomfortable with the discipline involved. She said that she found it very difficult, for example, knowing the troubled background of a child and feeling sympathy for that child, and yet having to deal with disruptive behaviour in the classroom. She was much happier leaving that aspect of school life to those who felt a vocation to teaching. Nevertheless, she had no choice and had to do more and more teaching as part of her job as chaplain. In her twelfth year at the school she realized that she was no longer happy in

the job. She was on antibiotics in that final year for a variety of illnesses, and she asked herself: "What is my body trying to tell me?"

It was also a painful and hurtful time at St. George's in Lennoxville, a time everyone in the town remembers. The Rev. Mervyn Awcock left and Heather filled in for him during that final year. The parish became divided and acrimonious in its search for a new rector. Three people were short listed for the job, the Rev. Heather Thomson, the Rev. Nick Brotherwood and the Rev. Lynn Ross. For a variety of reasons none of the candidates were chosen, all three were emotionally hurt in the process, and the parish was split in two as a result. Many people left, some to find another Anglican home, some to find a more "Christian" home and some in disgust with religion in general. Heather Thomson was caught in the middle of this ecclesiastical turmoil, through no fault of her own. Her third child, Bridget, was born that year, and Heather was ready for a change, from Alexander Galt and from St. George's.

Circumstances favoured Heather Thomson. Her friend, the Rev. Bradley Hicks, was chaplain at Bishop's University. He was leaving at very short notice and he called Heather to ask if there was any chance of her filling in for him while they looked for a new chaplain. Heather agreed and was given a year's leave of absence from Alexander Galt. She started in September, 1990, and is still there. After one year there was no question among the congregation at St. Mark's Chapel, Bishop's University, who they wanted as their Chaplain. Although Heather went through the due process, no one else was even considered. Many former members of St. George's found their way around the corner in Lennoxville to St. Mark's and to a more stable spiritual environment.

Heather Thomson is very happy in her job as the first female Chaplain at Bishop's University, she "loves the people and loves the job", and she enjoys the fact that "the Chapel is the core of the job". (July, 1998) She works with a strong and supportive team, and every working day begins with this group celebrating Morning Prayer together in the Chapel at 8.00 a.m.. Heather Thomson is open to where the future may lead her, but for the time being she is content to be the Chaplain at Bishop's University.

PART FIVE

OTHER IMPORTANT EVENTS

In the past three years there have been two happenings that have had an enormous impact on the direction and development of Heather Thomson as a woman, wife, mother and priest. The first was the arrival of two more beloved daughters into the Thomson Sweeny family, Jim Sweeny would now be living with six young women. The second was the diagnosis of breast cancer.

Claire was sixteen, Mary was eleven and Bridget was eight when Heather Thomson and Jim Sweeny decided to adopt two baby girls from Haiti. The three daughters were instrumental in their parents' decision to go ahead with adoption. They knew of families who had adopted children from other countries. The three daughters were inspired by a documentary film they watched with Heather Thomson on adoption, after the film they said to their parents: "We're a nice family, why don't we do that?" That question was the deciding factor and Heather Thomson and Jim Sweeny went ahead with the arrangements. From friends who had adopted children they found out about an organization called *Soleil des Nations*, based in Trois Rivières, which made the arrangements for adoption. Everything went smoothly and relatively quickly.

Heather Thomson's congregation at St. Mark's Chapel was delighted and excited about the arrival of the two little daughters. They had a shower for the little girls, and when

they finally arrived Heather Thomson and Jim Sweeny were presented with two baby car seats in Chapel.

It was love at first sight all around when Johanne and Tamara arrived at the airport at Mirabel. The little girls knew immediately that they had arrived home. They were happy children, easy going and relaxed. Claire, Mary and Bridget were thrilled with their new sisters from Haiti. Heather Thomson and Jim Sweeny had prepared themselves for all sorts of emotional turmoil and psychological upheavals that never happened. The new family dynamics worked well from the start. And they not only had their new extended family, the entire community of Bishop's University adopted them as their own.

The second event was negative, but with many positive repercussions. In March, 1997 Heather Thomson was diagnosed with breast cancer. This was a shock for everyone close to Heather, her family, friends and congregation. On the Sunday that Heather Thomson announced to the congregation that she was ill and would need to take a leave of absence the congregation wept.

In the months ahead Heather Thomson's family was strong and supportive; and her congregation could not do enough to help. A roster of cooks and drivers was immediately organized and the Thomson Sweeny family had meals provided for the next two months, and thereafter whenever Heather had a treatment. Their home looked like a combination of a flower and card shop. Heather Thomson said she had never realized how important

and helpful cards were until she was on the receiving end. She had surgery, radiation and chemotherapy treatments until the end of June, 1997.

On 9th July, 1998 Heather Thomson was due for her six month check up. The night before she worked herself into a state worrying about what the next day might bring. She later chided herself for her lack of faith. The results in fact were excellent and the doctor said he did not want to see her for another six months.

In retrospect Heather says that having cancer was a learning experience. She used the metaphor of "a bump in the road that slows down and helps one to understand the situation." Heather Thomson says that the experience of being sick changed her; before that she confesses to being "a control freak", feeling she always had to be there, do everything, and never say no. Being sick has given her freedom to say no and put less pressure on herself. Her congregation found it could cope without her and deal with issues in her absence. Their joy, however, when she returned was tangible. Now, if she cannot be there for whatever reason, she knows that the life of the congregation and the worship of the community will go on.

Two years after completing this chapter Heather Thomson is in excellent health, and still Chaplain at Bishop's University and Champlain College.

CHAPTER VII

MADAME JOANNE BROUSSEAU

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

AN IMPORTANT LIAISON **BETWEEN** **THE ANGLICAN CHURCH** **AND** **THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH** **IN QUEBEC**

I received a telephone call from Joanne Brousseau in January, 2000. She identified herself and said she had been given my telephone number by Marie Gratton. She explained that she was Roman Catholic and that she felt she had a calling to the priesthood. She said that she had been encouraged by several Roman Catholic friends to seek out the Anglican Church. I made an appointment to see her, and also put her in touch with a woman in Quebec City who had formerly been a Roman Catholic and was now an ordained deacon in the Anglican Church.

When I met Joanne Brousseau I was touched and impressed by her story, and I put her in touch with our Anglican Bishop, The Right Reverend Bruce Stavert. In June, 2000 Joanne Brousseau was officially welcomed into the Anglican Church, and she is now working towards the priesthood. She will have to be an Anglican for three years before

she can become a postulant for ordination and before she can have her vocation tested by A.C.P.O., the Advisory Council for Postulants for Ordination.

In June, 2000, at Saint Peter's Church in Sherbrooke, where I am Priest-in-Charge, we began to have services of the Holy Eucharist in French on the third Saturday of the month at 4.00 p.m.. The idea is to build up a francophone Anglican community in which Joanne can exercise her ministry. At the first service there were twenty-two people in the congregation, many of them family and friends of Joanne. At the service Joanne delivered her first sermon in which she told her story:

SERMON GIVEN BY JOANNE BROUSSEAU
ON THE SATURDAY BEFORE TRINITY SUNDAY, 2000

(Text printed with permission)

Aujourd'hui dans notre liturgie l'emphase est mise sur la Trinité. Dans la première lecture, il est question de Dieu qui choisit, Dieu qui appelle pour l'annoncer. Dans la deuxième lecture, la place est mise sur L'Esprit qui conduit et enfin dans l'évangile, c'est Jésus qui envoie ses disciples. "Allez donc de par le monde".

A la suggestion de la Révérende Patricia Peacock, je vais vous raconter comment la Trinité s'est manifestée dans mon histoire et qui finalement, m'a amené jusqu'à vous aujourd'hui.

Tout a commencé il y cinq ans. J'étais étudiante à l'université de Sherbrooke à la Faculté d'éducation. Je me préparais pour être conseillère en orientation. A la fin de ma première session, c'est-à-dire à la fin d'avril, j'étais relativement fatiguée parce que j'avais suivi deux formations professionnelles en même temps. Un de mes bons amis qui est un père Oblat m'a invité à passer quelques jours à leur maison de retraite au bord de la mer en Gaspésie.

C'est un de ces après-midi ensoleillés alors que je contempiais la mer que j'ai eu la certitude que Dieu m'appelait au sacerdoce. A ce moment-là le sacerdoce n'était pas accessible pour nous, mais par contre, aucun document officiel de l'Église n'avait fermé les portes définitivement aux femmes. Donc, je pouvais espérer qu'un jour assez proche je pourrais vivre mon appel. Je me souviens que c'est assis dans l'église St-Patrice de Magog que j'ai eu l'idée de m'inscrire en théologie. Je me disais, que je serais prête quand le moment serait venu, mes études seraient faites. J'ai donc laissé la Faculté d'éducation pour me diriger vers la Faculté de théologie.

Un jour une de mes professeurs, Madame Marie Gratton, m'a invité a assister à une soirée où il y avait huit femmes de religions différentes qui se rencontraient. Une de ces huit femmes était Réverende Patricia Peacock. J'ai été impressionnée par elle. Imaginez que vous aspirez à devenir chanteuse et que vous avez Céline Dion en avant de vous! Après la soirée, j'ai demandé à Madame Gratton si je pouvais avoir le numéro de téléphone de Madame Peacock. Elle m'a répondu "vous savez Madame Peacock est très occupée..." J'ai donc laissé faire. Avec le recul, je comprends que ce n'était pas encore le temps.

C'est en novembre 95 que j'ai eu ma première grande déception. Le cardinal Razingher à Rome faisait circuler un document officiel qui affirmait un non définitif au sacerdoce des femmes. Toutes mes espérances que je puisse vivre mon appel au sacerdoce étaient anéanties. Dans les mois qui ont suivi, je suis allée vérifier dans certaines communautés religieuses s'il me serait possible de faire un compromis. Mais je n'avais pas la paix en dedans de moi. J'ai passé une année avec une équipe vocationnelle pour voir où je pourrais me diriger. Celle qui était responsable à ce moment-là, m'a dit: "Je sais que tu es appelée, c'est évident, mais je ne sais pas où tu pourras vivre cet appel."

Il s'en est suivi une longue période de confusion. Je me suis mise à douter. Je ne savais même plus ce que je faisais en théologie. Quel était le sens de ces études? J'ai eu l'impression d'être oubliée par Dieu. Oui il m'avait appelé, mais où était-il maintenant? Je ne trouvais pas ma place. Mais même si j'avais l'impression d'être en exil, je me suis quand même impliquée en pastorale paroissiale, scolaire et carcérale.

Un soir l'an passé que je venais de terminer mon travail au centre de détention j'ai partagé à Donald Thomson, aumonier du centre de détention, que j'avais eu l'appel pour le sacerdoce. Il m'a dit alors: "Joanne, vas chez les anglicans. C'est la même chose que nous autres. Ils vont te recevoir." Il m'a proposé de me présenter à une de ses connaissances. Mais je voulais réfléchir plus à fond. J'ai laissé le temps faire son œuvre comme on dit.

En novembre dernier, dans un de mes cours, un professeur m'a remis un texte sur l'appel. Ce texte m'a parlé beaucoup. Ça dit ceci:

“Peu importe le nom donné à la voix formulant l'appel. on peut l'appeler Dieu, divinité Vie, Lumière. Il est possible de la concevoir comme le cri inlassable du grain de sénévé, de moutarde, de riz dont parlent les traditions et qui exige d'être nourri. Le Dieu appelle... Ce cri poursuit l'homme indépendamment de ses routes, de l'erreur de ses chemins. Parfois le cri semble étouffé par les passions: les soucis le recouvrent et il devient discret. Quand l'homme souffre et par ce raccourci entre en lui-même, il le perçoit telle une clameur. L'appel, privé du moindre repos, engendre une ouverture; il veut être perçu et avec une infinie patience il attend, sans se lasser, d'être entendu” (auteur inconnu)

J'avais beau faire plein de choses en pastorale, l'appel pour le sacerdoce cognait encore à ma porte. C'est entre Noël et le Jour de l'An que j'ai eu la certitude que je devais aller voir du côté de la tradition anglicane. Mais encore je suis allée parler à un de mes professeurs qui a fait son doctorat sur la condition des femmes dans l'Église catholique romaine et il m'a dit: “Joanne si tu as l'appel, attend pas ici, c'est fermé.” Il m'a offert de me présenter à un de ses amis qui était prêtre chez les anglicans. C'était le deuxième qui me proposait de me mettre en contact avec un prêtre anglican.

Mais je n'avais pas oublié ma rencontre avec Patricia. J'ai donc téléphoné à Madame Gratton pour demander le numéro de téléphone et cette fois-ci, cinq ans après, elle m'a dit oui je vais te le donner. J'ai pris contact avec Patricia et elle m'a reçu à son bureau.

Elle a écouté mon histoire et sans hésiter sur la véracité de mon appel, elle a téléphoné à l'évêque de Québec pour qu'il me reçoive. Patricia m'a invité à venir célébrer avec la communauté de St-Peter's le dimanche suivant. Elle m'avait dit : "sois attentive à ce qui se va passer en toi quand tu entreras dans l'église." Je me souviendrai toujours de ce qui s'est passé. Je me suis sentie envahie par une impression d'être enfin arrivé chez moi. Après cinq ans de recherche, de chemin de travers, enfin j'étais arrivée à destination. Mon exil était terminé.

Pour en revenir à l'évêque, deux semaines plus tard, j'étais à Québec en entretien avec lui. Les exigences de l'évêque à ce moment là étaient que je parle la langue anglaise et que je lise des ouvrages sur la tradition. Mais je n'avais pas eu la permission de faire certaines choses dans l'église avec Patricia. J'ai donc après un mois écrit une lettre à l'évêque lui demandant si je pouvais commencer à faire des choses. Après trois semaines, toujours pas des réponses.

Un après-midi que j'allais faire ajuster mon aube chez les pères du lac St. Benoît, au moment de sortir j'ai fait un face à face avec l'évêque. Une minute plus tôt ou plus tard, on ne se serait pas rencontré. J'ai pu parler avec lui et il m'a permis de faire certaines choses avec Patricia.

C'est à Pâques que j'ai annoncé officiellement à ma communauté de Magog que je laissais mes fonctions dans l'église pour me diriger vers le sacerdoce dans l'Église anglicane. A ma grande surprise, les gens ont réagi très favorablement. J'appréhendais de le dire à mon curé et ami de trente ans Mgr André Tardif. Mais j'avais tort parce qu'il a accueilli la

nouvelle en me disant qu'il était content pour moi. Enfin je dois ajouter que la communauté de St-Peter's m'a reçu très chaleureusement.

J'ai eu il y a deux semaines une deuxième rencontre avec l'évêque pour discuter de mon cheminement. De part et d'autre, nous sommes très satisfaits de ce qui se fait présentement et il m'a assuré son support dans les initiatives que nous prenons telle que de mettre sur pied la messe en langue française ici à St-Peter's. Je vous remercie tous et chacun de vous êtes déplacés pour venir célébrer avec nous.

Et voilà comment s'est manifesté la Trinité dans mon histoire comme dans tant d'autres d'ailleurs. Dieu qui appelle, l'Esprit qui conduit et Jésus qui envoie annoncer l'amour de Dieu à toute l'humanité.

PART TWO

THE LIFE AND WORK OF JOANNE BROUSSEAU

Joanne Brousseau was born on 24th July, 1955 in Magog, Quebec. Her mother, Henriette Lowe, born in Kingscroft and was one of eight children. She worked at home and later in the hospital in Magog. Her father, André Brousseau, was one of four children and he worked as a postman. Joanne is one of ten children, of whom eight have survived. One brother died of leukemia at the age of forty-three; and another brother died of malaria at the age of thirty-nine.

Joanne's grandfather, on her mother's side, had a significant influence on Joanne's life. No one knows anything about his family, except that he came from England. He was put on a boat alone at the age of ten, and sent to Canada. He was very religious and Joanne Brousseau describes him as "très croyant et pratiquant". This man built a house and eventually Joanne's mother and father went to live with him. Joanne always went to church as a young girl and she belonged to a youth group called "Les Croisés". Her family is still a believing, practicing Roman Catholic family. Home prayers were never a part of Joanne's upbringing.

Joanne liked school and always did well. Although academics were never promoted in her family, Joanne had a hunger for education. Two other siblings had the same taste for education, but Joanne was the only member of the family who has gone beyond secondary education.

In fact education was seen as a waste of time, it was not considered necessary, and so under family pressure Joanne had to leave school after grade nine and begin work in a factory. She hated the work. She was married at the age of seventeen, this made everyone happy, it was what was expected of her. Her husband also worked in the factory. Joanne Brousseau was married for nineteen and a half years and she had three children. She lived in Trois Rivières and continued to go to church regularly. Joanne Brousseau stayed at home with the children until they went to school, she then went to work as a dental assistant.

Joanne Brousseau divorced in 1991. In 1993 she finished her secondary education and spent one year training as a secretary. She returned to Magog and worked as a secretary. She still had two children living with her. At the time she had no idea of the call to the ordained ministry that was going to further change her life. She then registered at the University of Sherbrooke in the Department of Education, intending to become a Guidance Counsellor. Her family questioned the direction her life was taking, they saw her ventures in higher education as a waste of time and money. Now that Joanne Brousseau has completed her training in theology and is on the way to becoming an Anglican priest Joanne says of her family: “ils observent, ils voient que moi, je suis bien”.

Joanne Brousseau is a dedicated and determined student as she follows her call to the ordained ministry. I asked her what she likes to do in her almost non-existent spare time; she says she likes to sing, to play the guitar, to read, to watch documentaries and to walk.

At the time of writing, during the summer of 2000 Joanne Brousseau was in the middle of an intense course at the University of Sherbrooke on mysticism and the religious experience. She had just finished one course, and her curriculum demanded eight hours a day. Joanne needed the two courses to complete her degree in theology. Her intention is to complete a Master's degree in Social Work so that she will be able to work in a pastoral field and not be dependent on the Anglican Church for an income. The congregation of Saint Peter's Church is encouraging and supporting her in her endeavour.

PART THREE

THE FUTURE

On Saturday, 15th July, at two o'clock in the afternoon, Joanne Brousseau's daughter Kym, was married in the Anglican Church of St. Peter's, Sherbooke. She married Etienne. After the wedding their seven month old baby was baptized. Joanne told me that half the people among the guests had nothing to do with religion, they had been so put off by the Roman Catholic Church, that they rejected religion completely. In fact the groom's mother could not understand why her son would bother with a religious wedding ceremony and why the couple would have their baby baptized.

Following the wedding and the baptism ceremonies, and after the young family with their guests had left for a reception in Magog, Joanne Brousseau changed into her white alb, in preparation for the second all-French celebration of the Holy Eucharist in Saint Peter's Church. This time there were nine in attendance. Many of the people who had come to the first all-French celebration had left for the wedding reception. Joanne Brousseau had organized the readings and the readers and she delivered the sermon. She was not discouraged with the numbers, she feels that it will take time to build up the congregation, but she is confident that the potential is there.

Joanne Brousseau is currently studying English, and she intends to start a Master's degree in Social Work in 2001. She is assisting at Saint Peter's Anglican Church in

Sherbrooke at the Sunday service, and at the francophone service held on the third Saturday of every month. She is immersing herself as much as possible in the Anglican tradition. She is also working at the detention centre in Sherbrooke and at the geriatric hospital. In all likelihood she will be ordained a deacon in the Anglican Church in the year 2002, and probably within six months she will be ordained a priest. It will have been a long and complicated journey from that day, many years previously, when she stood on the shores of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence and felt a calling to the priesthood.

The day that Joanne is ordained to the priesthood will be the day of a dream fulfilled. It is a dream that women who stay within the Roman Catholic Church cannot fulfil, at least not within the foreseeable future. Women such as Monique Dumais dream of the ordination of women, but women such as Monique Dumais cannot imagine leaving the Roman Catholic Church. It is an alternative, one chosen by at least half a dozen priests in the Anglican Church in Quebec at the time of writing, both female and male. The fact that Joanne had a grandparent, on both sides of her family, who was Anglican no doubt made it easier for her to leave one tradition and join the other.

There is no conclusion to the chapter on Joanne Brousseau, hers is a story in progress, one that I felt had a valuable place in this discussion of pioneers in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church in Quebec.

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PART ONE

THE CHURCHES NOW

In January, 2001, there were thirty-two active clergy in the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Quebec, four were women priests, and four women were permanent, non-stipendiary deacons; in other words a quarter of the clergy were women, and their numbers were growing. In the Diocese of Montreal there were 80 active clergy, 14 were women priests, one of whom was an archdeacon; at the time of writing, seven women were in various stages of preparation for the diaconate and the priesthood. In these two dioceses, Ruth Matthews, Lettie James and Heather Thomson prepared the way for all the women who have come forward for ordination. The ordination of women is no longer an issue in either diocese.

But the Anglican Church is in a precarious position with dwindling numbers and aging congregations. The Church in Quebec, (and across Canada) is working towards healing and reconciliation with Aboriginal people. The National Church is facing millions of dollars in legal actions as a result of allegations against the residential schools which existed in Canada until 1958. The Bishop of Quebec is involved with legal problems within the diocese. On a positive note women are playing a more active and influential role in the life of the church. It is still, however, a hierarchical and patriarchal system.

The Roman Catholic Church also remains staunchly hierarchical and patriarchal. It is retreating from some of the responsibilities it allowed the laity to assume, and is returning

to a position of guarding all aspects of power within the confines of the clergy. The Roman Catholic Church is also facing millions of dollars in legal actions against residential schools. Feminist theologians and Christian women are reacting with less tolerance and with more anger than they displayed just half a dozen years ago. One result was the colloquium held in Montreal in the Spring, 2000 following three years of work by women from across the province: *Virage 2000 - RECHERCHE D'ALTERNATIVES LIBERATRICES*. (viz. the chapter on Yvonne Bergeron) Yvonne Bergeron was a key figure in the organization of this three day conference. At the end of the conference the members came up with a plan of action which they would set in place over the next three years. The organizers wanted daring and concrete strategies. The following is the press release:

Destinataires: direction de l'information, pupitre, affaires sociales

Réseau " Femmes et Ministères"

Communiqué de presse

Pour publication immédiate

Le 14 mai 2000

Femmes et Église: on ne peut plus éviter un changement structurel

Montéal - Un colloque sur le thème *Femmes et église: un bogue ou un défi?* a réuni, du 12 au 14 mai, plus de 250 femmes afin d'élaborer des pistes d'action pour contrer l'inégalité structurelle dans l'Église catholique au Québec. Dès l'inauguration, l'écrivaine Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, présidente d'honneur,

attiré l'attention sur la nécessité d'identifier des objectifs à court et à long terme et des zones de pouvoir individuelles et collectives, de nouer des alliances et des partenariats et de rechercher une compétence véritablement stratégique. Quant à Patricia Peacock, prêtre responsable de l'Église anglicane St. Peters à Sherbrooke, elle a démontré combien la ténacité est important. Selon elle, à un "non" de l'Église à l'ordination des femmes, il faut opposer un "oui" aux études théologiques dès maintenant. Les femmes doivent poursuivre leur formation et être prêtes le moment venu.

Le colloque s'est conclu sur l'adoption d'un plan d'action de trois ans. Un des signes repérables de la mobilisation et des interventions des femmes sera, entre autres, une action d'éclat, un geste prophétique, autour d'un arrêt de travail, pour rendre visible l'importance de la place des femmes dans l'Église de manière à ce qu'elle soit fidèle à sa mission évangélique.

PART TWO

COMMON THREADS **AND** **CULTURAL DIFFERENCES**

The colloquium mentioned above, *Virage 2000 - RECHERCHES D'ALTERNATIVES LIBERATRUCES* underlines one of the main differences between women in the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec and women in the Anglican Church in the Province of Quebec: women in the Roman Catholic Church are working **together** towards change and social justice. Two words they commonly use are: *solidarité* and *collective*. Women in the Roman Catholic Church are politically and socially active. Marie Gratton, Monique Dumais and Yvonne Bergeron are all members of collective organizations in which they share common visions with other women.

For women in the Anglican Church in the Province of Quebec there are different problems. To a large extent Ruth Matthews, Lettie James and Heather Thomson work in isolation. That is not to say that they do not have support, but the nature of the institution is very different, and one of the major differences is in numbers. The Anglican congregations in the Province of Quebec are diminishing and aging. In the Diocese of Quebec, which is largely rural, the women of the Church run thrift shops, organize bazaars and bake sales, and give their time and attention to the Church as members of the altar guilds and as members of the local A.C.W.s (Anglican Church Women). With very few exceptions, in the Diocese of Quebec, Anglican Church women do not write and do

not teach theology at the university level. The situation is somewhat different in Montreal where the environment is more cosmopolitan, but again the problem is numbers, there are relatively few and they tend to congregate in parishes. Women in the Anglican Church in the Province of Quebec, are not primarily concerned with issues of gender or of power. They are concerned with survival, hence with issues involving evangelism; and with issues concerned with harm done by the residential schools, i.e. healing and reconciliation.

To conclude I asked the subjects of this thesis for their opinions concerning the changing role of women in the Church and their vision for the future. Their responses ranged from the prophetic and the positive to discouragement.

In answer to the question about the role of women in the Church, Marie Gratton replied that there had never been so many women who work for the Church, “sans le pouvoir, elles sont traitées comme les enfants de l’école.” She acknowledged that if the parish priest changed, then “ça peut tout changer.” When I asked her what special gifts women bring to the Church, she said: “tout ce qui leur manque: expériences féminines, disponibilités féminines, générosités féminines, imaginations féminines, créativité féminines...” as for her vision of the future of the Roman Catholic Church, she said: “Ça va encore refouler; ça va être l’Église du IIIe monde, l’Église officielle va perdre contrôle.” (Interview ,16th July, 1999)

Monique Dumais’ vision is similar. In answer to the question about the special gifts that women bring to the Church, she answered:

Cadeaux de nommer et d'intégrer leurs expériences de femmes dans la spiritualité.

Développement de leurs qualités relationnelles, de leur spontanéité et de leur simplicité dans l'expression de leur foi.

Leur générosité dans les engagement de toutes sorts. (e-mail, 25th August, 1999)

As for her vision of the Roman Catholic Church in the future she wrote: "Une Église qui saura intégrer tout le potentiel des femmes et des hommes, plus communautaire. Une Église en solidarité avec les besoins de l'humanité.

L'ordination des femmes dans l'Église catholique, il faudra un coup très fort de l'Esprit pour y arriver. (25th August, 1999)

The question about the role of women in the Roman Catholic Church and whether there have been any significant changes is a question close to the heart of Yvonne Bergeron. She says there have been changes, but they have been small but important. The tragedy, according to her, is that they are changes "qui laisse intacte les structures d'inégalité". She feels that in the day to day life of the Church there have been more significant changes: 'women are now part of committees and teams, there is more equality at this level, women participate more, speak out more and speak out collectively.' She feels that women have special gifts to bring to the Church: "Le regard qu'elles portent sur la vie, sur les êtres, sur l'avenir, sur Dieu, sur la foi et l'espérance, sur la prière; elles ont une façon de vivre, de penser, de parler, de découvrir et de recréer leur spiritualité.'

I asked Yvonne Bergeron about her vision of the future of the Church. She wants to see the Church make radical changes in its structures so that there will be equality for women and men. She feels if this does not happen, a new, parallel church will be formed, a break-off from the Roman Catholic Church, and she does not want to see this happen. What is needed, Yvonne Bergeron concluded is: “Également une Église qui réapprenne constamment à “se faire proche” des personnes et des groupes laissés pour compte; à relire la réalité à partir de leurs yeux et à travailler avec eux au changement social dans le sens de la justice et du respect de la dignité humaine”. (Interview, 6th July, 2000)

Joanne Brousseau feels that women have specific gifts to bring to the Church and she was explicit on the subject. she said they brought:

Une vision beaucoup plus holistique du monde dans lequel nous vivons. Tout un pan de la société est absent du discours de l'Église. Le fait que la femme ait été mise à l'écart a permis à la hiérarchie masculine de l'Église de se construire un idéal qu'elle prône à tout un peuple, mais qui est tout à fait en dehors de la réalité qui se vit. Je crois que la venue de la femme au sein de l'Église amènerait une compréhension plus juste des réalités humaines. Dans la mesure où vous comprenez l'ensemble d'une situation vous êtes à même d'apporter des solutions valides et valables. Faire vivre l'Évangile au coeur même de notre histoire humaine, voilà ce que les femmes apporteraient! (Interview, 25th July, 2000)

Joanne Brousseau does not see the Roman Catholic Church changing in any significant way in the foreseeable future; and as she is in the process of learning about the Anglican tradition and the Anglican Church she does not feel that she is competent to comment on its future.

I asked Ruth Matthews if she felt that women bring special gifts to the Church and she replied that she felt they are more sensitive, and they minister in a different way. She acknowledged that most of the people she has been able to help through her ministry are women.

Ruth Matthews' vision of the Anglican Church is not optimistic. She spoke of "the fact that there are so many parishes with no clergy, that the churches are empty, that no young people are going into the ministry, and that there appears to be little Christian teaching in the schools and in the homes". (Interview, 15th July, 1999)

I asked Lettie James what special gifts women bring to the Church, and she replied:

As a psychologist, I do not buy into the nurturing, caring role as peculiar to women, however, I tend to think that women do it better. Women bring gifts of intuition and I think tend to deal with things more broadly than men. I think that one of the greatest gifts that women bring is their insight and interpretation of the Gospel, it is refreshing and thought provoking.

As for her vision of the future of the Church, she wrote:

A less structured Church which becomes more family than organization. I hope that we will leave room in our lives for others who think and believe differently . I hope that the Church will really become inclusive, and that it will be the Body of Christ IN THE WORLD, not just in the Diocese. That involves understanding, humility and sharing. (e-mail, 2nd July, 1999)

Heather Thomson's responses to the questions were similar. She feels that "women have as great a diversity of gifts as men, and that it is important to see both men and women in positions of leadership". For the future of the Church she said: "The Church is presently going through a difficult time with the problems of the residential schools being addressed; but it is also a time of challenge and of hope." She sees the Church having to become "more grass roots", possibly working out of homes, in small groups. She personally is optimistic, saying that she senses "that people really do have a hunger and a desire to know God". She sees, particularly among young people, less attachment to denomination, and more of a desire to attend a church "where they can be useful." (Interviews 1st June, 20th June, 2000)

It is interesting to note that the French women in this study have followed the academic route; the English "pioneers" have followed a pastoral approach. Marie Gratton, Monique Dumais, Yvonne Bergeron, Joanne Brousseau, Lettie James, Ruth Matthews and Heather Thomson are women who are vibrant, energetic and continue to be involved. It is difficult to put a full stop to this thesis because their efforts will go on.

In the final analysis what is the significance of this thesis? I submit that these women are taking their place along with their sister pioneers in every field of endeavour; women in the board rooms of large corporations, women struggling to be heard in the political arena, women insisting on equality in academia, and human rights for women

throughout the world. The list is long, and there is a sense that something is missing, a yearning, for something beyond power and material wealth. Women pioneers in the church know this, have always known it. Their efforts to create a more fulfilling structure including men and women, a more equal playing field, will, if successful, have an immense impact on the church in Quebec, the economy of Quebec, and the quality of life for all Quebecers.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

PATRICIA ELLEN PEACOCK
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Date of Birth: 27th March, 1949
Citizenship: Canadian
Status: Married; Two children
Languages Spoken: Bilingual: English and French

EDUCATION:

1966 Secondary School Diploma, The Study, Montreal
1970 B.A. (McGill University, Montreal) in English (Third year, of four, spent at Université de Laval, Quebec - in French)
1974 M.A. (Essex University, England) in Literature (Sociology of Literature)
1984 B.A. (Bishop's University, Lennoxville, Qc.) with a major in Religion
1990 Diploma in Theological, Religious, and Ethical Studies (Concordia University, Montreal)
2001 B.A. (Bishop's University) in Education - with Distinction. Member of the Golden Key International Honourary Society as the result of graduating in the top 15%.

In progress: Doctor of Philosophy in Religion (Concordia). Courses and exams completed.
Advanced to candidacy: November 19, 1993. To finish 31st December, 2002.

In progress: Training towards Private Pilot's License - 90% completed

ACADEMIC AWARDS:

1970 - The Lionel Shapiro Award for Creative Writing, McGill University.
1984 - The Religion Prize, Bishop's University.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

1983 - January 2002 Teacher, Houseparent (9 years), Senior Houseparent (6 years) and Chaplain at Bishop's College School.

Duties included:

Teacher of Sociology, 7th Form
Teacher of Philosophy, 7th form
Teacher of Moral and Religious Education
Senior Houseparent
Coaching - Cross Country Running, Track and Field, Aerobics
Secretary/Treasurer - Faculty Association
School Chaplain: Responsible for Daily Chapel, Major Services of the Church Year, Teaching of Moral and Religious Education, Pastoral care for the B.C.S. Community

1982-83 Teacher of Grade 5 English at Lennoxville Elementary School, Lennoxville, QC
1978-82 Elementary school teaching in rural England
1978-82 Work as a Licensed Lay Reader (after 2 years training) in Diocese of Carlisle, England

1974-82 Work as a Teacher and Tutor for The National Childbirth Trust, (an educational charity) Carlisle, England. Also member of the Board and Chair of the Board
1972-73 Teacher of English Literature and Adult Education in Sudbury, England
1971 Teacher of French at Christopher Whitehead Secondary Modern School in Worcester, England, (a class of 50 teenage boys)

CHURCH RELATED DUTIES:

1993 - 1999: Chair of Quebec Lodge Camp, run by the Anglican church in the Eastern Townships
1998 - Present: Priest-in-Charge - St. Peter's Anglican Church, Sherbrooke, Quebec.

Positions held at various times during the period 1985 - present:

- Chair of Board of Diocesan Council for Social Responsibility and Service
- Rural Dean of St. Francis Deanery
- Member of Diocesan Board of Ministry and Mission
- Member of Diocesan Board of Religious Education
- Member of Central Board of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec
- Assessor at A.C.P.O. (Advisory Board for the Candidates to the Postulancy For Ordination)
- Diocesan Representative at Provincial Synod
- Member of Corporation of Séjour Bonne Oeuvre, Martinville, QC (a Roman Catholic shelter for women and children)
- Seminars at Laval, Concordia and Université de Sherbrooke
- Seminars given in French to Roman Catholic groups interested in the Ordination of Women Priests. (The latest was in March, 2002)

COMMUNITY SERVICES:

- Years of Hospital Visiting and visiting Homes for the Elderly
- Volunteer at Lennoxville Elementary School in the Library and as an English Teacher
- Celebration of Holy Communion with Shut-ins and those in hospital
- Organized Operation Shoebox (shoeboxes filled with gifts for sailors away from home arriving in Quebec City at Christmas) at B.C.S. for sixteen years
- Support for and visits to Auberge Madeleine (Shelter for homeless women in Montreal) since its opening
- Encouraged the raising of thousands of dollars to go to various organizations to support cancer research, cancer victims, the homeless, famine relief and other causes.
- Initiated, organized, trained for, and ran a marathon (August 1999) and raised \$16,000 for Quebec Lodge Camp.

PUBLISHED WORKS:

In Another Frame of Mind, a hardback collection of poetry published by the Mitre Press, London, 1972
Articles in the *Diocesan Gazette* to do with Family Violence and Quebec Feminist Theologians

INTERESTS:

- Creative Writing, Photography - Sewing, Gardening, Old Homes and Interior Decorating
- Music, Theatre, Dance
- Cross Country Running
- Biking, Skiing, Swimming, Fly Fishing

The Reverend Canon Robert S. Jervis-Read.
106 Lapointe Road,
R.R.#1, Martinville, Quebec, Canada, J0B 2A0
(819)-875-3567.

December 18, 2000

The Rev. Patricia Peacock,
Bishop's College School,
Lennoxville, QC J1M 1Z8

Dear Patricia,

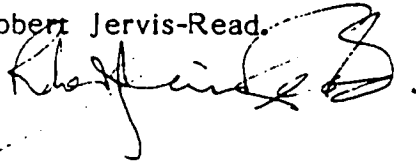
I am very pleased to give whatever permission is required for the purpose of your doctoral thesis for you to refer to, or quote therein, from our telephone interview on the subject of the ordination of women to the priesthood.

With very best wishes,

Sincerely,

RS

Robert Jervis-Read.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Jervis-Read', written over the printed name.

I HEREBY GIVE THE REVEREND PATRICIA PEACOCK PERMISSION TO USE THE INFORMATION GIVEN TO HER DURING INTERVIEWS AND CORRESPONDENCE. I HAVE READ AND APPROVED THE FINISHED CHAPTER ON MY LIFE AND WORK.

December 11, 2000

Date

Heather Thomson

Signature

I HEREBY GIVE THE REVEREND PATRICIA PEACOCK PERMISSION TO USE THE INFORMATION GIVEN TO HER DURING INTERVIEWS AND CORRESPONDENCE. I HAVE READ AND APPROVED THE FINISHED CHAPTER ON MY LIFE AND WORK.

January 30, 2001
Date

Rev. Peter H. Matthews
Signature

I HEREBY GIVE THE REVEREND PATRICIA PEACOCK PERMISSION TO USE THE INFORMATION GIVEN TO HER DURING INTERVIEWS AND CORRESPONDENCE. I HAVE READ AND APPROVED THE FINISHED CHAPTER ON MY LIFE AND WORK.

18 November 2000

Date

James Beausseau

Signature

I HEREBY GIVE THE REVEREND PATRICIA PEACOCK PERMISSION TO USE THE INFORMATION GIVEN TO HER DURING INTERVIEWS AND CORRESPONDENCE. I HAVE READ AND APPROVED THE FINISHED CHAPTER ON MY LIFE AND WORK.

February 2, 2001
Date

Lettie James
Signature

I HEREBY GIVE THE REVEREND PATRICIA PEACOCK PERMISSION TO USE THE INFORMATION GIVEN TO HER DURING INTERVIEWS AND CORRESPONDENCE. I HAVE READ AND APPROVED THE FINISHED CHAPTER ON MY LIFE AND WORK.

March 10, 2001

Date

Marie Gratton

Signature

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30 janvier 2001

Date

Yvonne Bergeron

Signature



I HEREBY GIVE THE REVEREND PATRICIA PEACOCK PERMISSION TO USE THE INFORMATION GIVEN TO HER DURING INTERVIEWS AND CORRESPONDENCE. I HAVE READ AND APPROVED THE FINISHED CHAPTER ON MY LIFE AND WORK.

17 février 2001

Date

Monique Durrant

Signature

I HEREBY GIVE THE REVEREND PATRICIA PEACOCK PERMISSION TO USE THE INFORMATION GIVEN TO HER DURING INTERVIEWS AND CORRESPONDENCE. I HAVE READ AND APPROVED THE FINISHED CHAPTER ON MY LIFE AND WORK.

le 9 décembre 2000

Date

Hayse F. T.

Signature

3/12/00

To whom it may concern,

I hereby give the
Reverend Patricia Peacock permission to use
the material in an interview I gave her
for her Doctoral Thesis.

Wile Lasse Bross