

Power of Sisterhood: Women Religious Tell the Story of the Apostolic Visitation. Edited by Margaret Cain McCarthy and Mary Ann Zollmann. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2014. Pp. xvi + 220.

In 2008 the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life announced, with no preparation or reason given, that it would conduct an Apostolic Visitation of congregations of women religious in the United States, focusing on apostolic congregations as contrasted with contemplative religious orders. It took women religious by surprise.

This work answers many of the questions women religious pondered throughout the visitation, and it fills in some of the gaps that have not been clear. At the time this study went to press in 2014, there was strong support from many lay Catholics and congregations of male religious but there still had been no response to the women religious investigated from the Vatican committee in charge of the investigation.

The prologue of this important work thus positions the Apostolic Visitation as a story with all that it entails: what the experience meant in lived reality; how it felt; why women religious cared so deeply. It does this most effectively. The next two essays define and explain the history and theology of an Apostolic Visitation along with a study of the documents that the various congregations of women received. The work speaks strongly, clearly, and respectfully of the response of women religious to this initiative.

In preparation for initiating *Power of Sisterhood*, a grassroots group of eight sisters formed and invited Margaret Cain McCarthy to develop a questionnaire to survey the experiences of the various religious orders of women who were visited. Of the 328 surveys sent to participating congregational leaders, 143 responded. Based partly on experiences reported in the surveys, the book explores the process, content, theology, and the personal experiences of the sisters involved. By the end of the study, one cannot but be impressed by the power sisterhoods claimed and rejoiced in throughout this controversial exercise. The last chapter sums up the shared experience of women religious with the words “Remembered, Revisioned, Reclaimed, Released” (181).

The Epilogue states that in the long silence, “We have been pro-active in claiming our own outcomes to the experience of the Visitation” (206). Clearly, sisterhood prevails.

*Ann M. Harrington, B.V.M.
Loyola University Chicago (Emerita)*

The Church in the Modern World Fifty Years after Gaudium et spes. Edited by Erin Brigham. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2015. Pp. xi + 218. \$90.

These essays advance the foundations and tentative new directions set by *Gaudium et spes* 50 years ago. The editor Erin Brigham and five of the authors are all associated with the University of San Francisco. Despite this potentially limited perspective for

examining the church in the modern world, each author does a highly credible job of probing the theological, social, and political implications of this groundbreaking document, which moved the Catholic Church from a defensive posture toward the world to embracing it as a partner for discerning the divine initiative through the signs of the times.

Most of these essays were completed just as Pope Francis was elected, which leads Lois Lorentzen in her essay on liberation theology to ask, “Has Francis replaced Benedict’s ‘big chill’ with a ‘big thaw’?” (201). By now the answer seems obvious, so that many of the creative suggestions of these authors could now be imagined to take root and flourish in the world church.

In the opening essay, “The Challenge and Hope of *Gaudium et spes*,” James Hanvey, S.J. shows how the document “represents a cultural and political realignment and underpins this with a theological method and hermeneutic” (3). This positive turn to the world has, of course, been the source of 50 years of dispute between what Bernard Lonergan identified as the difference between a classical/essentialist way of thinking” and a “historical/dynamic” understanding, characteristic of modernity” (8).

Two other essays flow directly out of *Gaudium et spes*: “Catholic Social Teaching in the Secular Public Sphere,” by Frank Turner, S.J., and “The Role of Conscience in Catholic Participation in Politics since Vatican II,” by Thomas Massaro, S.J.

Subsequent essays take Vatican II for granted, just as Pope Francis does. It’s time to move on. And they do. They treat contemporary social, ecclesial issues, such as immigration (Kristin Heyer), women’s voices (Erin Brigham), climate change (John Coleman, S.J.), human rights (Kelly McBride), promoting justice and the common good in the modern economy (Carol Graham and Todd Sayre), and the joys and sorrows of Africa (Peter Henriot, S.J.).

The final essay on liberation theology by Lois Lorentzen provides a strong closing overview of the developments since the council. These include the struggles faced from a papal hermeneutic of suspicion, and ways in which liberation theology itself needs to break loose of its European moorings and utilize the hermeneutics of gender/sexuality, feminist, *mujerista*, Hispanic, and Asian perspectives for a more inclusive church.

Despite the price of this volume, these accessible, scholarly articles could serve as good launching points for an adult education series.

Patrick J. Howell, S.J.
Seattle University

Philosophy of Religion: Towards a More Humane Approach. By John Cottingham. New York: Cambridge University, 2014. Pp. xiv + 192. \$27.99.

The subtitle says it all. For decades, philosophy in English-speaking countries has been dominated by various forms of scientism such as linguistic analysis and logical positivism. Cottingham is old enough to remember an earlier era, and he is suggesting