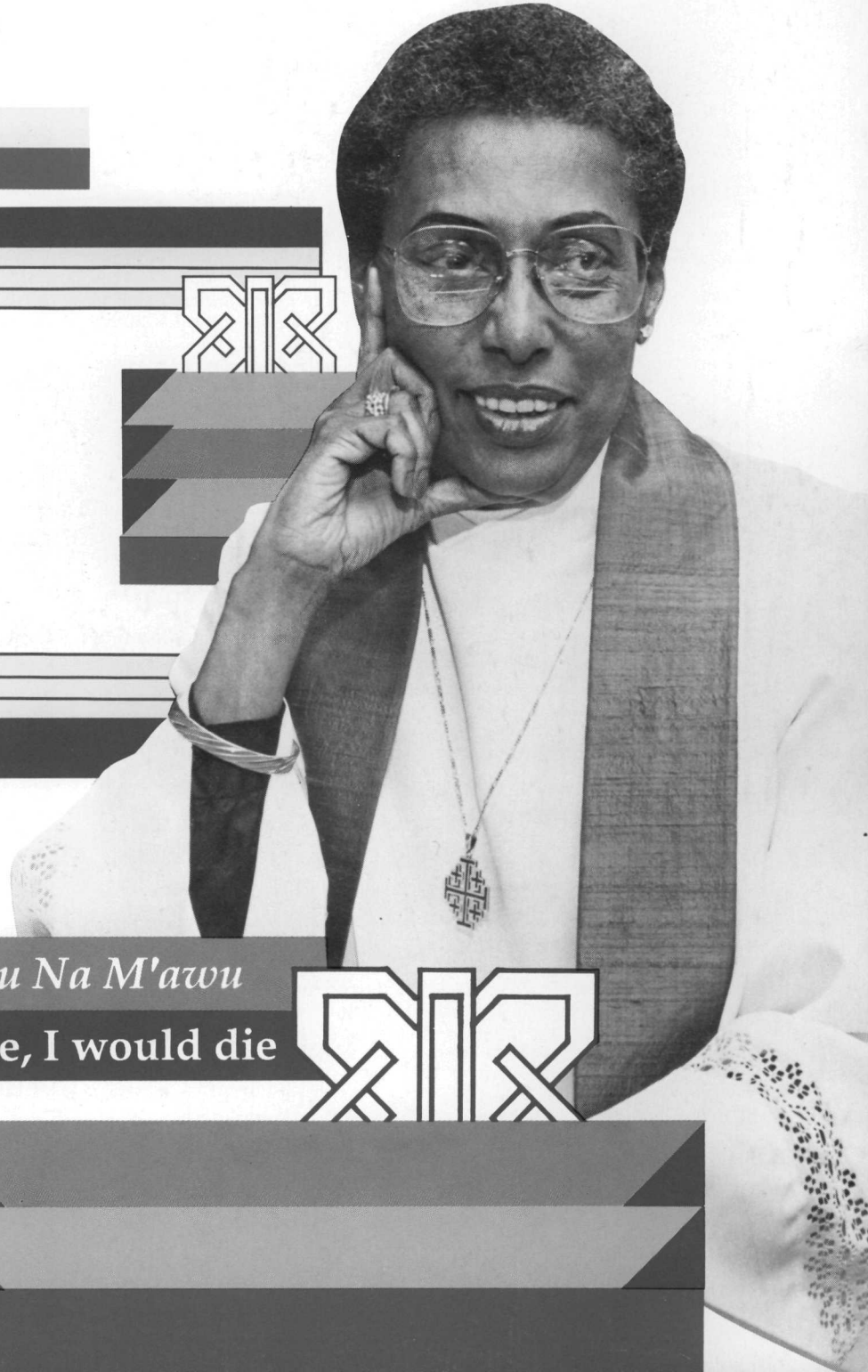


THE WITNESS

Barbara Harris: Bishop

- Li Tim-Oi
- J. Antonio Ramos
- Rosemary Ruether
- Robert L. DeWitt
- Monica Furlong
- Paul Washington

Nyame Nwu Na M'awu
Could God die, I would die



Chronology of events concerning women in holy orders

1862 The Bishop of London orders a deaconess with the laying on of hands.

1885 Deaconesses are ordered in the Episcopal church.

1920 Lambeth Conference (of all Anglican bishops) concludes "ordination of a deaconess confers on her holy orders."

1930 Lambeth changes its mind, asserts deaconesses are *not* in holy orders.

1935 A Church of England commission reports it finds no compelling reason for or against ordination of women, but affirms an all male-priesthood.

1944 Bishop R. O. Hall of Hong Kong ordains Li Tim-Oi as priest. In the face of worldwide censure, she ceases to function as a priest for many years.

1964 General Convention changes the canons to read that deaconesses are "ordered" rather than "appointed."

1965 Bishop James Pike formally recognizes Phyllis Edwards as a deacon because of her ordination as a deaconess.

1966 U.S. House of Bishops receives report on "The Proper Place of Women in the Ministry of the Church" and asks the next Lambeth to consider the ordination of women to the priesthood.

1968 Lambeth refers the question of ordaining women to the member churches of the Anglican Communion for further study. It endorses the principle that deaconesses are within the diaconate.

1970 At General Convention in the House of Deputies the lay order passes but the clergy order rejects ordination of women as priests. The bishops do not vote on the issue.

1971 The Anglican Consultative Council, an international lay and clergy body meeting between Lambeth, declares it is acceptable for a bishop to ordain a woman with consent of his national church or province. The Bishop of Hong Kong ordains two women. Episcopal women begin to be ordained as deacons.

1972 The House of Bishops votes 74-61 in favor of the principle of ordaining women as priests.

1973 The General Convention rejects ordination of women to the priesthood and 56 bishops issue a statement expressing distress.

1974 June: Sermons preached in Cambridge, Philadelphia and Syracuse call for ordination of women to the priesthood. **July 10:** Bishops, priests, deacons and laypeople meet in Philadelphia to plan an ordination. **July 29:** Service at Philadelphia's Church of the Advocate. Two retired and one resigned bishop ordain 11 women deacons to the priesthood. A diocesan bishop is present but does not ordain. **July 30:** Some of the women priests are inhibited by their bishops from priestly functions, some inhibited as deacons; others agree voluntarily to refrain from priestly ministry. **July 31:** Presiding Bishop John Allin calls a special meeting of the House of Bishops to deal with the questions raised by the ordination. **Aug. 15:** The bishops meet in Chicago, decry the action of the four bishops as a "violation of collegiality" and declare the ordinations did not fulfill the necessary conditions for validity. The 11 women state they cannot accept the bishops' actions. Dr. Charles Willie resigns as vice president of the House of Deputies in protest. **August:** Charges are filed against the Philadelphia bishops. **October:** The House of Bishops reaffirms its 1972 endorsement of the principle of women's ordination, but agrees almost unanimously not to act until an affirmative action of the next General Convention. **Oct. 27:** The Rev. Alison Cheek, the Rev. Carter Heyward, the Rev. Jeannette Piccard publicly celebrate an Episcopal Eucharist in New York's Riverside Church. **November:** The Rev. Alison Cheek celebrates at St. Stephen's and the Incarnation in Washington, D.C. at the invitation of the Rev. William Wendt who is charged and later tried for violations of the canons. **December:** Two women priests celebrate at Christ Church, Oberlin, Ohio at the invitation of the Rev. Peter Beebe who is charged and later tried for canonical violations.

1975 April: Board of Inquiry reviews charges against ordaining bishops — declares the matter is doctrinal and should be handled by the House of Bishops. **July:** The Church of England's Synod approves the principle of women's ordination. **September:** Bishops of the Church of Canada endorse women's ordination. **Sept. 7:** Bishop George Barrett, resigned Bishop of Rochester, ordains four women deacons at the Church of St. Stephen's and the Incarnation in Washington. **Sept. 19:** The House of Bishops

meeting censures the actions of the Philadelphia bishops.

1976 September: General Convention approves the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate, and agrees that the previous ordinations may be regularized, not repeated. **November:** The Church of Canada begins to ordain women priests.

1977 Jan. 1 marks the date that women may be ordained to the priesthood under Episcopal Church canons. **October:** At a House of Bishops meeting Presiding Bishop Allin announces he "is unable to accept women in the role of priest" and offers to resign. Bishops affirm Allin's leadership and adopt a "conscience clause" which states no bishop, priest or layperson will be penalized for opposing the ordination of women.

1978 Lambeth accepts women's ordination in principle, but recommends that no province consecrate a woman bishop "without consultation with the Primates and overwhelming support in any member Church. . . lest the Bishop's office become a source of disunity instead of a focus of unity."

1988 July: General Convention passes "Episcopal Visitors" resolution, which permits — for a six-year period — congregations or clergy opposed to a woman bishop to ask for a visiting male bishop. **August:** Lambeth states that provinces may appoint a woman bishop, but no part is obliged to and all are asked to respect each other's standpoint. **Sept. 24:** The Rev. Barbara C. Harris is elected Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts on the eighth ballot. **November:** The Archbishop of Canterbury issues a statement saying "The Church of England does not canonically accept the ministry of women priests and bishops."

1989 January: A majority of diocesan Standing Committees and bishops consent to Harris' election. **Feb. 11:** Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning leads the consecration of the Rt. Rev. Barbara C. Harris in Boston before a crowd of 8500 — 60 bishops participate in the laying on of hands.

Updated from a chronology compiled by **Janette S. Pierce** for *Daughters of Prophecy*, a special WITNESS issue on the 10th anniversary of the "Philadelphia 11" ordinations. Pierce, managing editor of *The Episcopalian* when she died in January, 1988, was a leading supporter of women's ordination.

THE WITNESS

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THE WITNESS (ISSN0197-8896) is published monthly except July/August by The Episcopal Church Publishing Company. Editorial Office: P.O. Box 359, Ambler, PA 19002. Telephone (215) 643-7067. THE WITNESS is indexed in *Religious and Theological Abstracts* and the American Theological Library Association's *Religion Index One Periodicals*. University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106, reproduces this publication in microform: microfiche and 16 mm or 35 mm film. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright 1989. SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$20 per year, \$2.50 per copy. Foreign subscriptions add \$5 per year.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please advise of changes at least 6 weeks in advance. Include your label from the magazine and send to: Subscription Dept., THE WITNESS, P.O. Box 359, Ambler PA 19002.

THE WITNESS

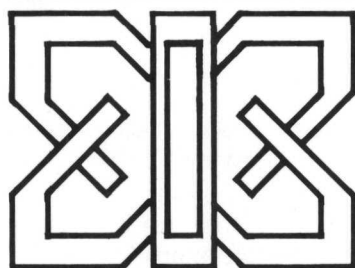


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Spirited, happy-go-lucky Bobby . . .



Bobby Harris 1948

“Slim, spirited, happy-go-lucky Bobby . . . Future: Surrounded by starry-eyed music students.” That’s what the June 1948 Milestone, the yearbook of The Philadelphia High School for Girls, had to say about Barbara Clementine Harris, who just over 40 years later, was to be consecrated a bishop in God’s holy catholic church.

I came across this yearbook entry as I was working recently with other Girls High alumnae on a history project. With this heightened remembrance of things past, it is perhaps not surprising that my journey on the midnight train from Philadelphia to Boston Feb. 11 was a journey into nostalgia, into sharply focused memories of my own childhood years in Cambridge, Mass. My father was then pastor of St. Paul’s African Methodist Episcopal Church, an old church steeped in the living history of the Black religious experience, expressed then as now in music and preaching that evoke response from the deepest levels of my memory, reaching beyond word and vision into a precon-

scious awareness of God’s presence throughout life and beyond time.

As an adult, an English teacher, and a lover of the great tradition of English literary mysticism and the history of the English church, I made with my husband the choice of raising our sons in the Episcopal Church and working actively in the congregation. With the example and encouragement of Barbara Harris and other “way-showing” women — among them Pauli Murray, Mary Adebajo, Nan Peete — I have been given the great privilege of priesthood in this church.

But I have never lost a certain sadness at leaving behind an essential core part of my religious experience — the music and the worship style of my childhood. One must make choices, I reasoned; you can’t have it all. Nevertheless, I thought, I must surely find a few moments away from the formal, liturgical Episcopal celebration and get over to Cambridge just to see if St. Paul’s Church is still there, and to hear with outward ears the melodies that are ringing in my heart.

Well, I didn’t get to Cambridge at all. How can I express my amazement, my joy, when I picked up the service book at Hynes Auditorium and saw on the opening page that the choir of St. Paul’s A.M.E. Church would be “singing the Bishop-elect in” with the great old hymns of the African-American church: “Ride on, King Jesus — no man can hinder me!” . . . “In dat great gittin’ up mornin’ fare thee well, fare thee well.”

You can have it all, Barbara’s consecration said to me; you don’t need to “steal away” to another place to be made whole. “There’s plenty good room” right here in this celebration, in our corporate worship of God. You can be confident in bringing to worship all of your gifts, all

the ways that God has spoken, moved, worked, and sung — in your life.

That was the particular message for me — a sharer with Barbara of the Black heritage. That is where my understanding of the event began, as it must for each of us, with the keen sense of wholeness and integrity of the self, and its holiness before God.

But what is most to be honored is the grace that flows from this self-knowledge, opening the way to acknowledgment and responsiveness to the uniqueness of each member of the human community.

I saw that what was happening for me was happening in vivid little epiphanies all over that auditorium — and beyond the visible congregation, through the media and throughout Christendom and beyond — wherever God’s people were standing ready to learn how we connect to our brothers and sisters everywhere.

The Rev. Li Tim-Oi, our sister priest, the first ordained in the Anglican communion, must have felt her own experience affirmed as the Chinese congregation sang the 23rd Psalm in their own language; the Gaelic blessing sung by the choir of Holy Trinity Church celebrated that special part of the English-Gaelic heritage; *O Sacrum Convivium* sung by the Schola Cantorum of the Church of St. John the Evangelist spoke to the classicists among us. And as Eleanor Farmer, a member of Barbara’s Philadelphia congregation, offered her clear soprano rendition of Mozart’s *Alleluia*, she expressed the broader experience of Black Episcopalians. The Gospel read in Spanish as well as in English, and the messages on Barbara’s vestments written in Ashanti and in Greek — all expanded the theme of the day — “A bishop for God’s people.”

The Rev. Marjorie Nichols Farmer, Ed.D., is priest-in-charge of the Church of St. Matthias, Philadelphia; and a participant in The Episcopal Women’s History Project.

Pauli Murray, the first Black woman ordained to the priesthood, said of her poems in *Dark Testament*, "I speak for my race and my people — the human race and just people." That is what Barbara did for all of us in her consecration service — through her choice of music, her preacher and other participants, her vestments, her manner; most effectively by her grace in being clearly, enthusiastically and unaffectedly herself. The "scandal of particularity" opens the way for the honoring of community.

There are other ways through which

Barbara's distinguished earlier career as a corporate executive spoke clearly also to the world of the governing class, the corporate leaders, the ultimate "insiders."

In a brief conversation with Barbara a few hours after the consecration, I could not resist a word of totally unexpected thanks for the gift of my childhood's presence in the service. There were so many people around, she had hardly time to be more than startled. "But Marjorie, I had no way of knowing that — how can you thank me for it?"

Barbara celebrates in her life the joy — and the fun — of being a person in God's image, living in community with God's people. "Just pray me over," she said to her friends at lunch on Friday.

Each of us, carrying out faithfully our own ministries wherever God calls us, can own this new perception of our special place in God's wholeness and love. We can know that that place begins where we are, being our own best selves, made in God's image — women, men, Asian, Hispanic, European, African, American — each a part of the divine

now bishop in God's church Marjorie Farmer

Barbara's episcopate has released and will continue to release the captives among us. Not only those who were gathered in Hynes auditorium as supporters, but the dissenters as well were heard. Barbara said in an informal conversation with a group of women clergy the day before the service, "What we will have in Hynes is 'the church gathered'" — and so it was, the whole church — the church which does not need to fear or to quench dissent, but to struggle continuously to understand its roots as each of us works to make of our own fragment of the truth the wholeness that is God's will for our lives and our ministries.

There is new freedom for women, of course, to be and continually to become whole persons, discerning and exercising God's gifts for ministry; but not only for women — for men as well, who have new reason for being able to affirm their maleness as part of God's gracious self-expression, not as a matter of superiority or inferiority.

This consecration spoke — as Paul Washington said so eloquently in his moving sermon — clearly and affirmatively to the outsider, the rejected, the socially excluded; our knowledge of

And that's just the point. Just by being clearly, authentically, unaffectedly herself, honoring God's gifts and presence in her own life, Bishop Harris just naturally invites the wholeness and freedom of all God's people.

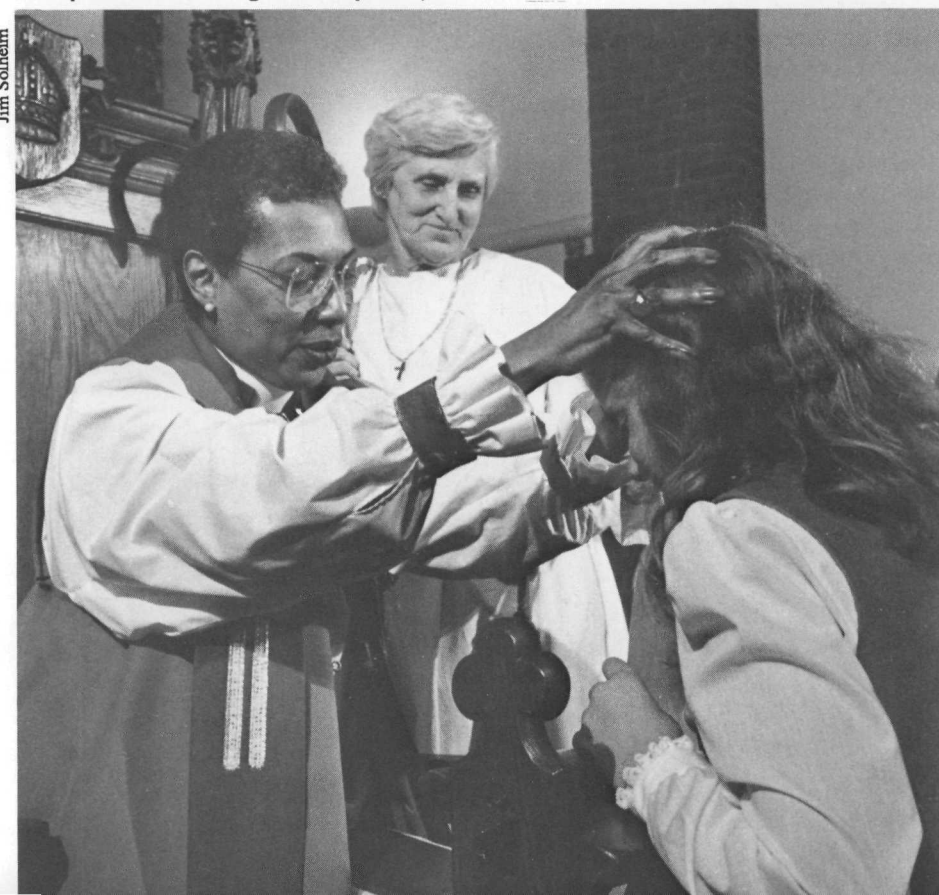
As her high school classmates knew,

self-expression.

As Barbara told her friends in our pre-consecration visit, when we discern and make ourselves available for whatever is the special work of the Holy Spirit in each of us, "beautiful things keep happening."

TV

Bishop Harris confirming at St. Stephen's, Boston 1989



Jim Solheim

Li Tim-Oi

Barbara C. Harris



Mark Ellidge/*The London Times*

Two pioneers at Lambeth, 1988

The Rev. Florence Li Tim-Oi is the “spiritual godmother” of women’s ordination in the Anglican Communion. Li Tim-Oi, now 80 years old, was born in Hong Kong to a Chinese Christian family. She was serving as a deaconess in the Portuguese colony of Macao when the Japanese invaded South China in 1940.

Refugees came pouring into Macao, which was neutral. Anglican Bishop of Hong Kong and South China Ronald Hall sent a priest to celebrate communion whenever it was safe to travel, but soon none dared make the hazardous trip. Hall, hearing of Li Tim-Oi’s extraordinary work with Macao’s refugee community,

said he would ordain her if she came to Xingxing, a week’s journey through the war zone.

She made the trip and in the winter of 1944 was ordained the first woman priest in the worldwide Anglican Communion. When word of her ordination reached England, it caused an uproar. Bishop Hall was reprimanded by Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple and censured by his fellow provincial bishops.

To spare Hall, Li Tim-Oi voluntarily “returned” her priesthood and continued to quietly serve the church until the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s closed the churches and she was sent to cut wood

in the hills.

But she remained true to her faith and was priest of the first church to reopen in Canton in the 1970s. In 1971, the Diocese of Hong Kong voted to ordain women and reconfirmed Li Tim-Oi’s priesthood.

Li Tim-Oi now lives with her sister in Toronto and assists at a local church. She met Barbara Harris at the 1988 Lambeth Conference, and walked in the procession at Harris’ February consecration. The first woman priest shared her thoughts on the first woman bishop with *THE WITNESS* in the accompanying interview.

Li Tim-Oi on Barbara Harris

Do you think it is significant that the first woman priest in the Anglican Communion is Chinese and the first woman bishop is African-American? What does this mean for the Anglican Church?

In spite of the stormy controversy over the suitability of Barbara C. Harris as bishop, her consecration is, in my opinion, entirely God's will. I cannot help recalling what Jesus said to his disciples: "You did not choose me. I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit." So, as I see it, Barbara Harris has really been chosen by God to do more important work for the glory of the church. I am convinced that as a bishop, she will be capable of developing her parish into a boundless communion that stretches behind the "White circle."

I, a Chinese woman, was ordained the first Anglican woman priest and now Harris, a Black woman, is consecrated as the first woman bishop. To me, this certainly has great significance, since the Anglican Communion was predominantly in the hands of the White race in the past. This evolution helps the Anglican Communion play an increasing role as peacemaker in a multi-racial society. And it cannot be denied that racial peacemaking is particularly important as the 21st century is fast approaching. This connection immediately calls to mind what St. Paul said: "For Christ Himself has brought us peace by making Jews and Gentiles one people. With His own body He broke down the wall that separated them and kept them enemies."

You met Barbara Harris at Canterbury — can you give your impressions of her?

I had the privilege of meeting Barbara Harris on July 15 last year when a photographer from the London *Sunday Times* brought her to my hotel. Afterwards, the photographer drove us to the Canterbury Cathedral grounds to have some photos taken of the two "first ladies." Barbara then had great prospects of becoming the first Anglican woman bishop.

As I talked with her I was struck by her neat and well-groomed appearance, but was impressed more especially by her sharp features, bright eyes, alertness and friendly, radiant smile. Since our meeting, I always remember her as an energetic, capable and determined person. Moreover, she impressed me as being very kind and understanding. In conversation with her, I gathered she was quite aware of the important role she was expected to play in the church of God should she win the election as bishop.

What do you think Barbara Harris can bring to the episcopate?

Harris had eight years of experience in parish work, which is not such a short period. I daresay that an intelligent person like her must have acquired much valuable experience which will help her in her challenging job. If people are honest and have no prejudice against women clergy, and if they would bring themselves to recognize the importance of

loving one another in Christ, they should have no reason not to welcome a valuable person like Harris to the episcopate. Now Harris is in the prime of her life; on the basis of her experiences she will undoubtedly have much to contribute. She will learn from the senior bishops and colleagues and enrich and deepen further her spiritual life.

In giving encouragement and support to Harris as the first Anglican woman bishop, I quote what Jesus said: "I have told you this so that you will have peace by being united to me. The world will make you suffer. But be brave! I have defeated the world." Thus, Jesus taught us how to overcome hardship by being closely united to Him.

Your ordination in 1944 caused a tempest. Barbara Harris' election has caused much controversy, too. Can you tell us how her situation today compares to yours years ago?

Harris' consecration has opened up the way for other women to enter this vocation in the future. Unfortunately, this seems to cause alarm to the male clergy who are inclined to think that this is still the man's world and the bishop's place should be occupied by men only!

I feel very sorry that Harris has had a really hard time. Severe attacks and criticism have been hurled at her before, during and after the election campaign, questioning and cross-examining her suitability for the position. I believe, as many others do, that if Harris was a man the attacks and criticisms would have

been much less harsh.

My own ordination in 1944 certainly caused a tempest — but that was 45 years ago. The late Bishop Ronald O. Hall, who ordained me during wartime, was mercilessly attacked and censured by the bishops at the Lambeth Conference of 1948, who accused him of overstepping his authority by ordaining a woman priest. I suffered a lot not only for my fate but for the greater embarrassment that Bishop Hall was brought to face by his fellow bishops. Today, I am comforted by the fact that in the history of the movement for the ordination of women in the Anglican Communion, Bishop Hall's name will occupy a conspicuous place.

Did you ever believe that a woman would become a bishop in your lifetime?

Thirty years ago I never would have dreamed this would happen. However, in the last decade, having witnessed the rapid progress made in the ordination of women, especially in Canada and the United States, I began to believe that one day women could be made bishops. And now my conjecture has become a reality. We must, however, not forget to give recognition to the efforts of the movements for the ordination of women to the priesthood, which have definitely made a considerable impact in quite a few countries. Here it may be relevant to refer to the Bible story which tells of a woman who was bent over and could not straighten up at all. "Jesus saw her and

called out to her: 'Woman, you are free from your sickness.' He placed his hands on her, and at once she straightened herself up and praised God."

Sisters in Christ, we have already had our backs straightened. We must express our gratitude to God for the new woman bishop and pray that God will support her and give her strength, courage and wisdom to carry out her duties.

Are there any other reflections you would like to share with WITNESS readers?

In Harris' case, as in my own, the gender question has been the basic cause of opposition and strong disapproval from an overwhelming number of bishops and other Christian leaders.

It is indeed a great pity that people who have harsh words against ordaining women keep forgetting or ignoring what St. Paul said: "So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles and between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus".

As human beings, we all agree that no one is perfect. Concerning the criticisms of Harris' suitability as bishop, one may conjure up the picture of the High Priest Joshua: "The Angel said to his heavenly attendants, 'Take away the filthy clothes this man is wearing!' Then he said to Joshua, 'I have taken away your sin and will give you new clothes to wear.'"

May God give Barbara Harris His richest blessing and grant her a refreshed mind and a new spirit to carry out her new challenging and sacred duties! **WV**

NCR editorial: Anglicans one, Rome zero

Demonstrating wisdom and pastoral concern beyond what Roman Catholicism has yet mustered, the Boston Episcopal Diocese consecrated a woman bishop. Barbara Harris became the first woman bishop in any of the three major branches of Christianity (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican) claiming apostolic succession.

Meanwhile the Roman Catholic bishop of Charlotte, N.C., was refusing to let women have their feet washed in a Holy Thursday ritual. Bishop John Donoghue based his ruling on an arcane Roman interpretation of some liturgical Latin. It makes about as little sense as the primary theological reason for excluding women from the priesthood.

Jesus called only men, some traditionalists say, so only men can serve. But Jesus was working in a heavily patriarchal society that shut women from public life at nearly every turn. Fortunately, he was like the rest of us in at least one respect: He learned as he went along.

Whether the arguments preclude ordaining women or washing their feet on Holy Thursday, both cases are essentially as frivolous as they are pastorally deficient, and the people of God should waste no more time before laughing them out of court. (*Reprinted by permission. National Catholic Reporter, P.O. Box 419281, Kansas City, MO 64141.*)

Patriarchy strikes back

by Pamela W. Darling

“If any of you know any reason why we should not proceed, let it now be made known.”

At most ordinations, these words are followed by a polite silence, and the service continues. But on Feb. 11 in Boston, two White men rose to speak. John Jamieson, a layman from Chicago, representing the Prayer Book Society, asserted that to continue would be an “imposture” because women simply cannot be ordained. The Rev. James H. Cupit, Jr. of New York implored the Presiding Bishop not to proceed, citing the resulting impediments to union with Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. Bishop Browning quieted the booing congregation and responded that the issues raised had been “well-ventilated” in preceding months and that, scrupulously observing all prescribed procedures, the church had determined to proceed.

And so it was done. But, as the Rev. Paul Washington wisely noted in his consecration sermon, the objectors remind us that some still sincerely believe this action is contrary to God’s will. We need to take the protests seriously, not because they are valid, but because two contradictory world views are struggling to shape the future of the Episcopal Church, and indeed of American society. The battles over the election and consecration of Barbara Harris as Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts reveal the di-

mensions of the struggle between these two views. John Throop, a Harris opponent, was probably right when he said that she “will demonstrate all the worst nightmares of what women in the episcopate will be like to the traditionalists.”

Another opponent, William Oddie, took a different approach, observing that “what American traditionalists had feared was the election of a woman bishop who would seem to confirm the hierarchy’s claim: one of the quieter and more moderate women clergy who could be used to demonstrate by her mildness that nothing has really changed, that no one is threatened.”

Oddie is an English columnist for *The Christian Challenge*, a publication begun in 1962 “to defend the Christian faith as embodied in traditional Anglicanism, defined in Holy Scripture, and enshrined in the Historic Book of Common Prayer” and “to resist false teaching within the church.” Throop is Executive Director of Episcopalians United for Revelation, Renewal and Reformation (EURRR), formed in 1987 to “challenge the direction the church’s leadership has taken in biblical and moral matters.” Their comments are part of a chorus of outrage and objection which began as soon as the vote was reported in Massachusetts.

Polarization of U.S. religion

Why does the very idea of elevating a woman to the episcopate generate urgent debate, and the choice of Barbara Harris confirm the worst nightmares of traditionalists? What is being threatened by Harris’ election?

Observers of the American scene in recent decades have noted an increasing gulf between two sets of convictions

about how the world is and ought to be. These are variously labelled as conservative vs. liberal, traditionalist vs. modernist, biblical fundamentalist vs. secular humanist, or patriarchal vs. feminist. Nationally, the split is most easily recognized in the phenomena of the Moral Majority, the New Right, and the coalition seeking to outlaw a woman’s choice about abortion.

Within the churches, this conflict is evident in attacks on the National Council of Churches and the growth of televangelist fundamentalism; in the controversies, takeovers and expulsions over Scriptural inerrancy and orthodox teaching; in the Roman Catholic hierarchy’s leading role in the “pro-family” movement; and in the Episcopal Church’s struggles over social justice ministries, the language of the Prayer Book, the ordination of women, and sexuality.

Those for whom the heart of the Christian Gospel involves following Jesus’ example — healing the sick, feeding the hungry and preaching good news to the poor — grow impatient over the preoccupation of other religious people with issues of authority and church order, or with changing patterns of personal relationships.

But the personal does have enormous political import, and structures of theology and ecclesiastical polity both reflect and create the social environment of our daily lives and ministries. Issues such as how we address God, who can be a priest, and what kinds of interpersonal behavior is approved all work together as part of a total world view, a framework within which we determine values, make decisions and discover meaning in our lives.

Pamela W. Darling, a doctoral candidate at General Theological Seminary, is editor of *Reaching Toward Wholeness: The Participation of Women in the Episcopal Church*, a report of a survey conducted by the Committee for the Full Participation of Women in the Church, released at the 1988 General Convention.

The traditional world view — the patriarchal framework — is threatened by the consecration of Barbara Harris. Only by understanding how the various pieces of that framework reinforce each other can we begin to fathom the depth and passion of the resistance to her consecration.

What traditionalists say

Reviewing the rhetoric opposing Harris' ordination to the episcopate in the context of traditionalists' overall programs offers a valuable case study in the escalating clash of world views:

Item: "Cancer of terrorism endorsed by national Episcopal leadership" was the headline of a Prayer Book Society (PBS) news release following the confirmation of Harris' election. The release discusses the support which Harris and the Episcopal Church Publishing Company (ECPC) — of which she was Executive Director — gave to Hispanic activist Episcopalians Maria Cueto and Steve Guerra. Cueto and Guerra were jailed for refusing in conscience to testify before a Grand Jury investigating the Puerto Rican liberation movement.

The Prayer Book Society's agenda has clearly broadened since its founding to preserve the 1928 Prayer Book. As its brochure proclaims, "We are, indeed, traditionalists because we believe the church is a place of worship — not a platform for secular humanism." In the PBS view, the ECPC "has for years sullied the image, patriotism, and stature of Episcopalians through its "radical, Marxist, left-wing extremism."

Item: Sharing the PBS concern about social activism and "Marxist" politics, EURRR's Throop cited Harris' advocacy of "homosexual rights, the feminization of worship, and the Sandinista government in Nicaragua" as evidence that she is unacceptably "far to the left," while telling the *New York Times* that "we have no problem with the fact she is female or Black."

EURRR's overall agenda provides a

helpful context for Throop's statements about Harris. In a letter publicly inviting support for its challenge to Episcopal Church leadership, EURRR listed five issues under the heading, "We oppose": The ordination of practicing homosexuals, normalization of homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle, sexual relations outside marriage, liberalization of the church's position on abortion, and inclusive language. Apparently the ordination of women was originally a sixth item — but, acknowledging differing views among EURRR organizers, they compromised by warning that ordaining a woman as bishop could lead to schism. Despite Throop's disclaimer, Harris' views are the more threatening precisely because they are expressed by a woman, and a Black woman at that — why mention her race at all if it is "no problem"?

EURRR's opposition to Harris is thus consistent with an overall agenda which seeks to uphold the traditional American social order in opposition to recent movements for freedom and equality — between men and women, and between races.

Item: Sharing a concern for order and sexual conformity, the Evangelical and Catholic Mission (ECM) — founded to resist the church's 1976 decision to ordain women — issued a pastoral letter in November 1988. It declared that with Harris' election, "the final crisis of the Episcopal Church is now upon us," and decried this rebellion against the "God-given order of the church." The principles cited as the foundation of order are the familiar four points of the 1888 Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral — the Scriptures, Creeds, Sacraments and historic Episcopate.

Although the connection between these points and the "final crisis" is not explained, the ECM letter echoes EURR and the Prayer Book Society concerns, summarizing the threat epitomized by Harris' election:

At the root of the present crisis is the rejection of God's revelation of Himself and His will for humanity in favor of religiosity tailored to human convenience. This rejection expresses itself in the challenge to the central authority of Holy Scripture, the denial of Jesus Christ as the full, perfect and sufficient self-revelation of God, the proposals to rewrite the language of the Bible and liturgical prayer to suit humanistic ideologies, the decay of marital discipline, and the pressure to abandon the received standards of chastity, as well as the purported admission of women to priestly and episcopal orders. The institutions of the Episcopal Church have allowed, aided, and encouraged these deviations.

So strongly do the signers feel about the "crisis" that they have called a synod of "clergy and laity holding the convictions we have declared. . . to consider how we shall be the church within the Episcopal Church," a move observers think may lead them out of the church altogether.

Curiously, the issue of women — though it was the triggering factor — appears almost as an afterthought in the ECM statement. This suggests that to conservatives, the traditionally subordinate place of women in church and society is the hidden but essential element upholding existing authority structures.

Oddie's piece in the December *Christian Challenge* furthers this suggestion: He writes, "Within the Episcopal Church there are two worlds, hermetically sealed from each other . . . women's ordination is seen as a key symbolic issue defining the line of separation." He goes on to bewail Harris' "strident social activism" and the state of the Episcopal Church, which has bought into "the Harris package of radical feminism (including God the Mother), left-wing political activism, the sexual revolution, and theological

and liturgical modernism.” In this scheme, feminism has surpassed communism as the paradigmatic threat facing the world we know.

In the same issue William DeMerritt criticizes Harris and THE WITNESS for concerns “centered around feminist and minority causes, racism, labor, capital punishment, nuclear arms, Grand Jury resisters, and international issues ranging from South Africa and Northern Ireland to El Salvador, Haiti, Guatemala and Nicaragua.” This follows criticism of her unconventional educational preparation for ministry, which “defied custom.” Here again is the implicit belief that “proper” education would promote conformity to societal norms.

Then DeMerritt makes an odd and telling comment: “She has been excused from being a part of a functional marriage or family setting, a projection [*sic*] that both political and ecclesial America expects for other office seekers . . . Instead, Harris, who is divorced, maintained a separate apartment from her mother and unmarried sister.”

Lessons for days ahead

All these criticisms, objections and arguments are interlocking elements in the social/religious framework of White middle-class America: women belong in the home; sex belongs only in heterosexual marriage; education should produce standardized behavior; government policies and actions are not to be questioned; those marginalized by economic status, race or ethnicity, gender or sexuality, are to remain silent and invisible; life-and-death decisions are made only by men who wage war, execute criminals, and decide whether women may have abortions. All this is sanctified by a church whose hierarchical order is God-given, and whose worship and Scriptures are in masculine language because that is how God has revealed Himself.

Though disparate on the surface, each prescription and prohibition deals with power and the authority which justifies

its exercise, and constitutes ways of managing the differences between human beings, race and gender being the most fundamental. At the top of the hierarchy are wealthy, straight, White men.

Challenging any aspect of this order threatens the entire structure, and the sense of place and personal identity of everyone in it. Those comfortable with the status quo have much invested in the preservation of this order. Those excluded from power and privilege have little to lose if things change.

And things are changing. The traditional economic structure is decaying. The melting pot has overflowed, losing its ability to assimilate diverse people into some idealized norm. Blacks, ethnic minorities, women, gay men and lesbians are resisting subordination to the straight, White male power structure. And some Christians have re-examined Scripture, liturgy and theology, discovering fresh insights in ancient texts which suggest other possibilities for the organization of human society.

Rather than rejecting “the authority of God’s revelation of Himself and His will for humanity,” these believers are challenging traditional interpretations of that revelation, questioning not the authority of Scripture, but the authority of the interpreter. In response, those who traditionally had the power to interpret are galvanized into asserting their authority by appeal to ancient custom, and trying to shore up the structure wherever it is challenged.

So far, this conservative reaction has had more effect on secular American politics than on the Episcopal Church. The generalized “leadership” of the church is criticized as much as Harris herself by the various traditionalist groups. But this fact must not lead to complacency.

Traditionalists in the Episcopal Church are very attuned to the range of issues which constitute the conservative paradigm, as their articulate opposition

to Barbara Harris demonstrates. Unfortunately, some who welcome her election seem a bit vague about its implications. Many really would have preferred a less controversial woman to break into the brotherhood of the House of Bishops. That would have enabled them to sustain the comforting fiction that ordaining women is really no big deal, and life will go on as before, all structures and privileges intact.

Evidently the Holy Spirit decided we ought to let go of that fiction, to work more deliberately and creatively on the newly-emerging paradigm of church and society.

But the full emergence of the new is by no means assured. We must assume that as the danger to the old order increases, so will the traditionalist backlash. Some supporters of women’s ordination are preoccupied now with damage control, trying to hold together the church and the Anglican Communion — to keep the traditional order intact — and are not eager to face the fact that many of their opponents’ arguments are profoundly accurate.

Thus there is much work for us to do. We must pay careful attention to the rhetoric of the traditionalists — not for the sake of refuting their arguments, but to let that rhetoric instruct us about the terms and conditions which have shaped the old order, so that we can articulate a compelling vision of the new to replace their “worst nightmare.”

For both traditionalists and the “feminist cabal” they fear, Barbara Harris’ ordination to the episcopate symbolizes the beginning of a new order for church and society. If the process of change is to continue, if she is not to be tokenized by a self-protecting structure of power and privilege, we must find ways to win the hearts of those who fear change, to call to conversion those whose privilege binds them to the dysfunction and evils of the old order, and to speak plainly the eternal Word of God’s saving love. **W**

Preacher makes history again

by Susan E. Pierce

We cannot, and we must not, overlook the fact that this woman who is being consecrated today is not just an American woman. She is a Black woman. Called at one time a Negro. Called at one time colored. Stony the road that you've trod. Bitter the chastening rod felt in the days when hope had died. Yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet come to this place for which our fathers sighed? However, while our church will have consecrated 17 persons of African descent to the office of a bishop, including one woman, to this date, only seven Black priests have ever been elected to be priests or rectors in White congregations.

The Rev. Paul Washington Consecration sermon

Some preachers lull congregations to sleep with soothing words; others terrify with images of hellfire and damnation. Then there are preachers like the Rev. Paul Washington, who are so eloquent and filled with the spirit of the word that for a moment, it seems as if the gates of heaven are nudged open. During his remarkable sermon at Barbara Harris' consecration, Washington held the assembly spellbound for nearly an hour. In an outpouring of spontaneous emotion, people laughed, wept and called out as he shared his vision of what Barbara's consecration meant to the church and the world. At the end, the crowd of 8500 gave him a standing ovation.

From 1962 to 1985, Washington was rector of the Church of the Advocate, in one of Philadelphia's most impoverished neighborhoods. Over the years, he and his congregation offered the Advocate as

a haven for the hungry and homeless and for a variety of controversial causes, such as civil rights marches and Black Power meetings. In 1974, the Advocate made headlines and generated much debate when Washington hosted the July 29 "irregular" ordinations of 11 Episcopal women deacons as priests. When he retired from the Advocate, a former parishioner, the Rev. Barbara C. Harris, replaced him as interim rector until she got a job offer she couldn't refuse.

In his "retirement," Washington is on countless boards and committees in Philadelphia. He assists his wife Christine, serving as chaplain for the Advocate Community Development Corporation (ACDC), of which she is founder and President. ACDC provides affordable housing for North Philadelphia residents.

For all his fiery style in the pulpit, Washington is an easy-going, soft-spoken conversationalist. In a recent interview, he reminisced about the consecration of his long-time friend, the role of Blacks in the Episcopal Church, and how the events of July 29 differed from those of Feb. 11.

*In this continued drama of the incarnation the eternal word speaks
". . . Today I send you one who has spent enough time in prisons ministering to prisoners and captives to have almost served a two-year sentence herself. Oh my church, today I am sending one to you who is from a church that feeds hungry people . . . provides clothes for naked people. A church that is about to build 25 units of housing for the homeless. I am sending one to you who went down to Mississippi to lift up those*

who were participating in their own oppression, to lift them up to participate in their own liberation . . . Today I am sending you one who burns when others are offended."

Many in the Episcopal Church objected to Harris' election because of her strong social activist background. "One reporter at the consecration press conference raised the question of Barbara being a radical," recalled Washington. "I said I advise anyone using the term to look it up. 'Radical' comes from 'radix,' which means getting to the root. And Barbara will speak to the root of a problem, and I'm glad she will. The people who object to this are those interested in maintaining the status quo — but the status quo is not the kingdom."

Washington was one of the first people Harris called when she found out she'd been elected. He never had any doubt that she was the one for the job. "In terms of Barbara handling herself, I have no fears. It's hard to imagine it could have anyone else — Barbara was the person," he said.

On Saturday afternoon, September 24, I received a call from a friend, one who is very, very dear to me. She said, "Paul, guess what?" I said, "What?" "I just got a call from David Johnson, the Bishop of Massachusetts. He said that I've been elected to be a suffragan bishop." I softly exclaimed, "What? I can't believe it." She continued, "I can't believe it either. How could I have been elected to be a bishop in this church?" That news to her was as incredulous as the news was to another woman some 2,000 years ago when she asked, "How can this

be, seeing I know not a man?"

To some, Harris is a symbol of everything that's wrong with the church. Washington noted wryly that being a pioneer is not easy. "Prophets have always had a rough time," he said. "Jesus said, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those sent to you.' People don't want to be reminded of the abject reality. People resent precedents — it means the door has been opened, others are coming in, and it's not a comfortable thought."

He cautioned, though, against the other extreme — expecting that her consecration would magically cure racism and other societal ills. "She can't do anything alone. Any group that is down can't be lifted up — they have to lift up themselves, and struggle and fight to stay up," he said.

Did you come to see the first woman consecrated as a bishop in the Episcopal Church? If that is all you came here for, you have missed the point. This isn't just a woman. This is a woman who was born in slavery. This is a woman who has had to struggle. She has been despised. She has been rejected. She has been kicked in the teeth. She has been counted in our society as nothing. When she entered America there was a sign over the gate saying "Abandon all hope all you who enter herein."

Harris' consecration signaled a shift in the role African-American culture plays in the Episcopal Church, according to Washington. "The consecration, the service itself, might cause people to say, 'Now something outside is in the mainstream, someone who has had the Black experience.' It was the biggest consecration in history and it was a total mix of traditions. That's a sign of change," he said.

Then that awful day; July 29, 1974. Eleven women were ordained. They were untimely ripped from their

mother's womb. It shook this church to its very foundation . . . Barbara, you were in California that morning, you jumped on a plane and came to your church and you led the procession. You did not know when you led that procession that God was preparing you to lead another procession.

When asked how the service 15 years ago — at which he was also the preacher — and the one in Boston differed, Washington replied, "It felt different, no question. It has the establishment's stamp of approval. We didn't have to go through on February 11 what we went through on July 29, which is a victory for the church."

All involved in the July 29 ordinations were putting their careers and possibly even their safety at stake, Washington recalled. "As I look back at the suffering of July 29, there were those who felt a divine imperative to right this wrong, and to take risks.

"Those present on July 29 were what I call a 'remnant.' This refers to a faithful few and goes back to Jewish history, when the Jews were in exile, and scattered. The remnant held onto the faith and preserved it for the larger body so that someday they could come back to it," said Washington.

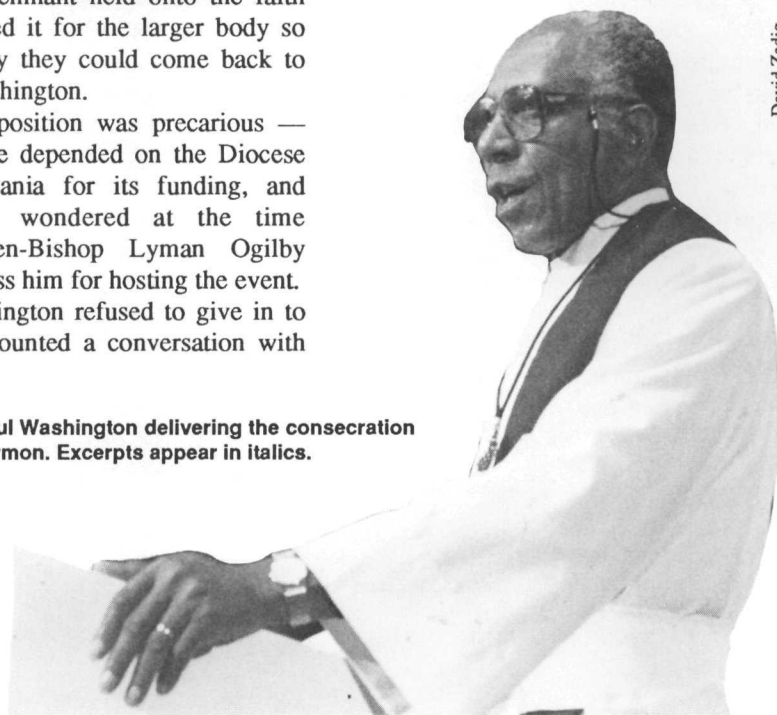
His own position was precarious — the Advocate depended on the Diocese of Pennsylvania for its funding, and Washington wondered at the time whether then-Bishop Lyman Ogilby would dismiss him for hosting the event.

But Washington refused to give in to fear. He recounted a conversation with

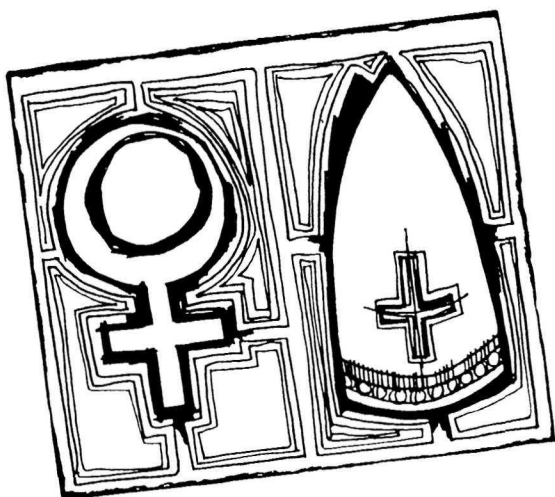
resigned Bishop of Pennsylvania Robert L. DeWitt, one of the ordaining bishops, who told Washington that some of the women were afraid of violence and wanted to have a private ceremony. "I told him that would be a deception," said Washington, "and to count me out. Bishop DeWitt said, 'The church is very, very small right now. We can't afford to lose you.' So we took the risks — we were disobedient to the church, but obedient to God."

. . . I think of a collect in the Book of Common Prayer: "Grant that we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not sight of things eternal." Being creatures of flesh and blood in this world our first actions and reactions are usually in response to the temporal . . . In doing so, however, we may not give ourselves sufficient time to pass beyond the temporal demand to the divine imperative. So don't let the world, don't let anyone set your clock or agenda. You are marching to the beat of a different drummer. If you wait on that beat, you will always be on time, and on target. **TW**

Paul Washington delivering the consecration sermon. Excerpts appear in italics.



David Zelig



From England, with love . . .

by Monica Furlong

It is not too much to say that I was changed by attending Barbara Harris' consecration. Like most churchgoers I am inured to boredom, long patches of irrelevance, words that are no more than words to me, and prayers that rarely touch my heart. Occasionally a good sermon, a good choir, a well-read lesson, will pull me out of the fog of absent-mindedness and towards the warmth and light of living religion, but what church services have mostly taught me is a resigned patience and a feeling that the whole thing has little, if anything, to do with me and my life. Certainly past experience had not prepared me for that extraordinary Saturday in February when Barbara Harris was consecrated, for the color, the drama, the piercing truthfulness, the weeping, the laughter, the joy, the singing. It was a service that did not demand patience, that did not induce boredom, that made the Christian religion come unmistakably, almost unbearably, alive, that spoke to the heart,

simply and clearly. It spoke because of the courage and integrity of the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A., it spoke because of the courage and integrity of Barbara Harris, and it spoke because of the passion of its huge congregation.

A woman, a *Black* woman, stood in front of us, challenging, for no other reason than that she *was* Black and a woman, centuries of prejudice and oppression. But, as many in that rapturous audience knew well, there is no way out of oppression except for individuals to make the scary journey of doing what is different, of breaking the mold, of taking the path that has no comforting role model walking ahead. And whenever that happens those who prefer custom and certainty and habit, no matter what it costs in human waste and limitation, predictably rage together, like the heathen in Handel's *Messiah*.

In Britain we often cloak our raging in an icy coldness more wounding than any insult. Such a coldness was all too evident at the press conference after the consecration when it emerged that not only had the Church of England sent no official representative, but that no English bishop had sent a message of goodwill. Publicly, that is. It was rumored that in a private message carried by a

woman who had traveled from England there were messages from bishops. But this was not an occasion for private pleasantries but for public acclamation, not so much a moment for the "courtesy and respect" of which both the Archbishop of Canterbury and Archbishop Robin Eames of Ireland had spoken so stiffly, but for love and caring.

Of course, the official response was not the only response that mattered from the Church of England. Five women, all much involved in the women's ordination movement, attended, and several male clergy. Alan Webster, the ex-Dean of St. Paul's, London, made a moving speech in a place where it really mattered — at the press conference. Back at home there was a day's rejoicing and prayers at St. James, Piccadilly, at which one banner read "God is an equal-opportunity employer." The Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW) hired Fulham Palace, until a few years ago the residence of the Bishops of London, for a celebration. Up and down the country, people held services, watched television, exchanged excited impressions.

The Sunday before the consecration the St. Hilda Community, an influential little group which advocates "non-sexist liturgy" and invites visiting women

Monica Furlong, a feminist theologian and writer, is a leading figure in the Anglican women's rights movement in England. A founding member of the St. Hilda Community in London, a non-sexist worship group, she is the author of numerous books and articles.

priests to celebrate at its services, lit a candle and prayed for Barbara, instructing two of their members to carry loving messages to her on their behalf. For them, as for MOW, it compensated for years of hard work, ridicule, and charges of how “selfish” they were to trouble the Church of England with the concerns of women.

In Britain it must be said the sin of sexism is still scarcely recognized. Bishops make fine, noble speeches about racism in this country (and quite right, too). But most of them live far from the streets and neighborhoods where the racial conflicts are fought. The gender conflict, on the other hand, is uncomfortably close to home — it affects relationships with their wives, their mothers and daughters, their secretaries, the women deacons who now serve under them. Old unhealed wounds are opened, some real shift in the structures of power is asked for. Worst of all, in this slow-moving country, it involves *change*.

This leaves the women in the Church of England in an odd position of having a great deal of token support from the bishops, while finding it to be a sort of fairy gold. Turn to your valiant supporters when you are being attacked by the opposition, expect them to speak up, or to vote at some crucial debate, and suddenly all but one or two of them are silent or gone, turned to dust in your hands. Some of them have fits of courage, and in moments of vision will make a statement that thrills the blood. But the Old Boy Network, which, to a depressing extent, *is* the Church of England, has a discipline so subtle that the bruises don’t even show. Nobody in that regiment marches for long to a different drummer.

Yet perhaps this discovery has been the most useful that women have made. On the one hand it has made us much stronger and more self-reliant, and has caused us to look closely and critically at the church in a way unimaginable

even 10 years ago. We know now that we are not just interested in getting women ordained as we were when we first asked for this — now we want much more. We want the church changed to an extent at present almost unimaginable and we are prepared to put a lot of work and thought into making sure it happens. The eye-opening process has made us much more appreciative, too, of the handful of men who have stood with us through good times and bad — busy parish priests who have turned out to our meetings and services and conferences, in some cases damaging their careers by doing so. Other men who have cheered us and urged us on when times were hard, often seeing the issues of unfairness and injustice more clearly than we saw them ourselves, encouraging us to forget being “good girls” and insist on the changes we needed.

Finally, of course, the whole process has taught us to love and trust and appreciate our sisters as we move out of old fears and timidity. We have learned so much about how to work together, how to express Christian thinking in words and prayers and various kinds of action. What has been rich about the whole thing has been the extraordinary release of our energy. “It’s like being part of the early church,” one woman said to me. A long-imprisoned genie, or Jeannie, has been let out of its bottle, and its newfound strength is something to marvel at.

One of the things the Jeannie has achieved is that we have actually got to know women in other parts of the world, who once seemed impossibly far away. At MOW’s Canterbury Conference in 1986, as hangers-on at the edges of the Lambeth Conference, and as joyful participants at Barbara Harris’ consecration, we have become friends with women in Africa and India and South America and Hong Kong, in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States — we write and telephone and share the coming church with them and they hear us

and understand us in the way that so many of our fathers in God in this country repeatedly fail to do (though the door is always open). The network grows, and grows stronger.

There is no doubt that at present the strongest allegiance of some of us is to the women of the Anglican Communion — it is an allegiance that transcends national and church frontiers — and at this time in particular it is to Barbara Harris and the women of the Episcopal Church.

This comes as a sort of love letter to all of you and to the church that made this historical decision, a decision that points to the end, however distant, of sexism, as it also incidentally points to the end of racism. In a world torn by racism and sexism Barbara’s election is a loving and healing act, one that will have unforeseeable creative consequences.

Never mind courtesy and respect, those are not in question. Like the fairy godmother at the christening we think we can do much better than that. Please accept, Barbara, our wonder, our enthusiasm, our joy, our delight, our pleasure, our laughter, our tears, our hope, our pride, our sympathy, our support, our loyalty and above all, our love. We think it’s smashing, marvelous, bliss, fantastic, the nicest thing to happen in years. We will make songs about it, we will tell stories about it, we will tell our daughters, and our daughters’ daughters. It will become a myth and a legend and part of that history of which women have been most deprived. The soil of Massachusetts will become special, sacred to us. When we go there we will say “This is the place where Barbara Harris . . .” and we will tell the story all over again and be glad for ourselves and for other women. For in Boston, one Saturday morning, history was made, and those whose hearts were groaning and travailing in the Spirit to give birth to the future came to help that birth happen.

And they rejoiced . . .

WV

Uppity women & authentic ecumenism

by Rosemary Ruether

Among the panoply of arguments in the Anglican Communion against the consecration of women priests, and now of Barbara C. Harris as bishop, is that such procedures would jeopardize ecumenical relationships with Rome. The Pope himself has encouraged this concern with a note to the Archbishop of Canterbury, echoed by an occasional conservative Roman Catholic bishop, such as Raymond Lessard, a member of the 24-member international Anglican-Roman Catholic unity talks.

But, as far as I know, there has been no general outcry from Roman Catholic bishops, nor from Roman Catholic theologians or laity against these Anglican developments. One has a suspicion that if conservative Roman Catholics could not be found to oppose the ordination of women, some Anglicans would invent them.

There are several startling assumptions that lie behind this right-wing "ecumenical argument". First of all, the assumption seems to be that church unity lies in relations between the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury — a kind of mutual appreciation club between patriarchs. Unity is seen as an alliance, or even a merger, between heads of corporations. Thus it does not seem startling to these "ecumenists" to imagine a Rome-Canterbury alliance based on insulting and disregarding the full humanity and Christian status of the majority of both churches — namely, the women.

It is hardly imaginable that these right-wing Anglican ecumenists would regard

principles they hold dear — such as forfeiting the right of clergy to marry or accepting the Vatican I decrees of the Pope's infallibility and universal jurisdiction — as expendable for the cause of unity with Rome. Yet, with a reactionary papacy sternly upholding celibacy for Roman Catholic priests and intervening throughout the world in episcopal appointments to shore up centralized control, it is unlikely there would be much give by the papacy on these issues in any final negotiations.

The occasional acceptance of an already married Anglican priest into communion with Rome does not fundamentally change the Vatican's principle of priestly celibacy as normative. But the issues of infallibility and universal jurisdiction are really the key ones. Anglicans delude themselves if they think the present Pope plans to surrender these claims.

Rather than a false optimism that unity is around the corner between Anglicans and Rome, impeded only by uppity women, it would be more helpful if Anglican ecumenical theologians would reflect on what communion and church unity is all about. Is church unity primarily institutional corporate mergers, with the ideal goal being one centralized global organization? Or is not church unity and communion fundamentally spiritual, an experience of being one in the Spirit that long preceded in Christian thought any hierarchy above the level of the local communities?

Does not true unity in the Spirit need to respect cultural differences and even a certain diversity in theological and liturgical traditions, as well as a plurality of self-governing historical churches? The historical plurality of the churches needs

to be viewed not only as a scandal, but also as a gift. The richness of understanding in the cultural expression of the Christian message cannot be found in one tradition alone. It is this dialogue within the variety of traditions that gives us insights into the fuller and truer catholicity of the church.

Moreover, a certain plurality of churches may be important to preserve genuine Christian freedom. Does anyone really want one universal papal ecclesiastical empire? Would it not be more helpful for the welfare of the Roman Catholic Church if Anglicans spent more time defending their own tradition of communion between autocephalous churches, rather than muting a critique of the papal model of church unity based on global monarchical centralization?

Many other strange assumptions underlie the right-wing Anglican "ecumenical argument" against women's ordination. For example, it is taken for granted that ecumenical relations between Anglicans and the rest of world Protestantism is irrelevant. Apparently only ecumenism with Rome and Constantinople counts. They yearn to get into the "old boys' club" of patriarchs. The fact that 500 million Christians — almost a third of world Christianity — are Protestants, and Anglicans are part of that growing body of churches that ordain women, is ignored.

The patriarchal ecumenists, in fact, have a strange habit of speaking as though there were not already between 15 and 135 years of experience with ordained women in many Christian churches. Even among "priestly churches" that claim unbroken apostolic succession of bishops from the Middle Ages, we have the example of the Swed-

Dr. Rosemary Radford Ruether, noted feminist author and theologian, teaches at Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill.

ish Lutheran Church, which has ordained women since 1958. Instead, women's ordination is constantly spoken of as though it were an untested, impending disaster.

Another odd assumption, and one which Anglican patriarchal ecumenists share with the Pope, is that Christian practices which have gone on for most of the historical memory of the church must therefore be infallible. The church as a historical institution is not recognized as an expression of sinful and fallible human beings capable of significant wrong-doing in long-established practices.

This assumption of indefectibility in long-established practices is hardly in accord with what we would have to acknowledge in many other areas. For example, beginning with the New Testament (rooted in the Old) and carried on by a major line of theologians, canon law and church practice until the mid-19th century, slavery was justified as a morally acceptable expression of the divine will for human relations. Can anyone today doubt that such a long-established tradition was sinfully erroneous?

Religious and racial animosity toward Jews has been accepted among Christians for an even longer period. Significant questioning of these views only began after the Holocaust of 1942-45. Yet can anyone question that this long-established practice of anti-semitism was sinfully erroneous?

The history of sexism in the church parallels these forms of discrimination. Like them, sexism has only begun to be condemned by the modern recognition of the full personhood and equal dignity of all human beings. Is it not likely that the exclusion of women from ordination reflects a similar history of error for which the churches have only begun to repent?

Authentic inter-communion between divided churches must be based on truth and justice, not on the flattering sense of

belonging to one of the oldest exclusive male clubs. Such decisions to enter into communion should spring from prophetic renewal among these churches of the vision of the Church as a community of redemption.

Anglicans could best serve this cause of prophetic renewal by affirming that repentance from sexism is an integral expression of this Christian vision, not an expendable accommodation to contemporary society. They should make clear that the recent shift to women's ordination among growing numbers of churches reflects this rediscovery of the original vision of the church as a community of equals, rather than lamenting that this might disqualify them for membership in the patriarchal club.

A formidable number of Roman Catholics see the ordination of women as a necessary development that must take place in their church in order to move forward in the Vatican II vision of the Church as People of God. An impressive share of the pastoral ministry in the Roman Catholic Church is, in fact, being done by women, precisely because of the untenability of an all-male, celibate

clergy.

Roman Catholic theologians and Scripture scholars have made clear that the recent Vatican declarations against women's ordination cannot be sustained, theologically or scripturally. Karl Rahner, the leading 20th-century Roman Catholic theologian, even called the Vatican Declaration of 1976 against women's ordination a "heretical" document. An "ecumenical" alliance of Canterbury and Rome that sold out these reform movements would not be regarded as helpful by these Roman Catholics. Rather, it would be seen as an insult and a barrier to the authentic future of the Roman Catholic church and genuine ecumenism.

Therefore I suggest that Anglicans pluck up their courage to play the role of a prophetic avant-garde. By ordaining women to the priesthood — and now the episcopacy — they are helping to lead the way to that true reform, renewal and unity that can only come from the Christian churches being faithful to the gospel message of equality in Christ, and no longer modeling their ministry on the patriarchal family and society. **TW**

Episcopal bishops lay hands on head of Barbara Harris.

John Tlumacki/*The Boston Globe*



On gender, education, ideology

by J. Antonio Ramos

The recent election and historic consecration of Barbara C. Harris as Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts and first woman to be named a bishop in the Anglican Communion, has surfaced a series of issues which I believe should be debated openly and publicly in the Episcopal Church and ecumenically. The unwarranted and regrettable personal attacks against her should not obscure the important theological implications of her ordination to the priesthood and subsequent consecration. In spite of divergent positions and the emotional factors involved, it is important to address these implications since they relate to the ministry and mission of the Episcopal Church, the Anglican Communion and the wider Catholic and Evangelical community. I will focus primarily on three:

- 1) The gender issue,
- 2) The so-called "second-class" education issue, and
- 3) Political and ideological issues.

But first, let me share some preliminary thoughts about the ecumenical dimensions and the unique contribution of the Episcopal Church in that arena.

At stake is not just the validity of Barbara Harris' orders to priesthood and episcopacy, but the validity of such orders for any woman, not only in the Episcopal Church but in the wider Anglican Communion and the Catholic tradition which we uphold and have historically maintained. What is involved is no

less than the doctrines of Creation and of God's redemptive action in history through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

At this time the Episcopal Church is moving ahead on the issue of women's ordination to the priesthood and the episcopate, in spite of the controversy and pain these decisions cause. The church's action is making a lasting contribution to understanding what constitutes the fullness of orders for both men and women, and to reconsidering other related issues, such as expanding the concept of a triune God, and of Christ's own royal priesthood.

As we tackle these important theological questions, undoubtedly we need to take seriously the past and our catholic heritage and traditions. However, we also need to remind ourselves constantly that we are a servant community in a journey towards God's kingdom. In that journey we are confronted with the struggle of women for dignity, equality, justice and their rightful place in society and in the church, just as Peter and Paul were confronted with the issue of the mission and ministry of the church in the gentile world. Or as Martin Luther King was confronted with issues of color and race in his time.

When I review the events of the last 15 years — the turmoil of Philadelphia in 1974, the intense meeting of the House of Bishops in Chicago, the emotionally-charged 1976 General Convention, and the historic election and consecration of Barbara Harris — I wonder if we are not once again confronted with a situation parallel to that of Peter and Paul and Martin Luther King?

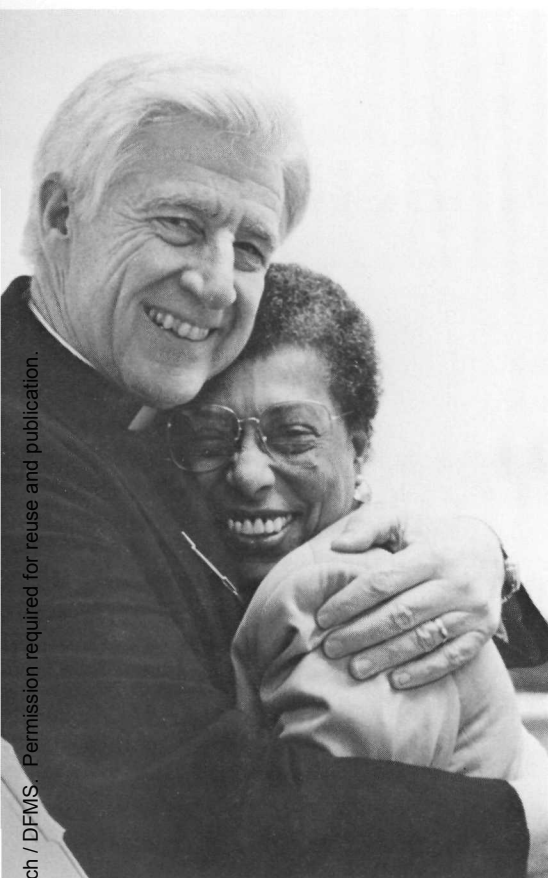
1) The gender issue

I have come to the conclusion that to insist that the validity of the priesthood and episcopacy is contingent on a person's gender is *heretical* thinking, just as it was *heretical* in the first centuries of the church when the Donatists claimed that the validity of orders conferred or sacraments celebrated were contingent on the moral dignity of the person conferring or celebrating.

The Episcopal Church has already pronounced itself unequivocally on the doctrinal question of gender. After the 1974 Philadelphia ordinations, the church Court of Inquiry appointed to examine charges brought against the four consecrating bishops present ruled that the issue involved was a *doctrinal* one, which the House of Bishops had to resolve. At the Special Meeting in Chicago, on the basis of the report submitted by a panel of theologians, the House of Bishops ruled that the Philadelphia ordinations were "valid but irregular." Then the 1976 General Convention, acting as it has done since 1789 to resolve matters of discipline, doctrine and worship in the Episcopal Church, voted to open all orders to women. Finally, when the Diocese of Massachusetts democratically elected Barbara Harris, the appropriate consents were given and the consecration was held in accordance with ancient catholic traditions prescribed in the Prayer Book.

With due respect to those who continue to insist that women cannot be conferred with, nor in turn confer, valid orders, and therefore cannot confer any valid sacraments (i.e. Baptism, Holy Eu-

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Jim Solheim

David E. Johnson, Bishop of Massachusetts, welcomes Barbara C. Harris, his new suffragan, with a hug.

charist) to others, in my estimation, these persons pursue the Donatist route.

Today we do not find ourselves in the ecumenical situation of the first centuries when the church was one. However, if that were the case, I would be among the first to welcome a universal council to rule on the issue of gender as a prerequisite to qualify for orders.

2) The education issue

I was born in a remote, poor rural area of Puerto Rico. Although my family was one of the "better-offs" in that community, we lived in a simple wooden house, two to three (often five to six) to a bed. In those days the Episcopal Church in Puerto Rico made it a priority to minister to rural people. There was a small

church where I grew up, which from early childhood became the center of my life. At the age of 10 I wanted to follow in the footsteps of the Episcopal priest serving there, who had never been to university or seminary.

The then-Bishop of Puerto Rico, the Rt. Rev. A. Ervine Swift, made it his goal to develop indigenous ministry and work himself out of a job, which he subsequently did. Under his sponsorship I went to a private high school near San Juan to learn English, then to college in Wisconsin and finally to seminary in Cambridge, Mass. I enjoyed the best possible education in preparation for the ministry — little did I know I would end up a bishop at 31.

There are others in the Third World and among the poor in the United States who have had the privilege of such an education — but we are a very small minority. There are many more who, like Barbara Harris, have had to make it through their own efforts and against all odds. They are self-made people whose wisdom and knowledge quite often exceed that obtained in the classrooms of the universities and seminaries of this world. Their theology is born out of their daily and constant encounter with the Word of God in their struggles.

Right now there are a number of bishops in the Episcopal Church who are the product of such a "second-class" education. If university and seminary education were required, what would become of the church in the Third World and in the poor communities of more affluent societies, where such education is for the elite only? In many of these situations alternative forms have emerged for ministry development, which do as good a job and frequently are even more relevant and contextual than those of our recognized institutions. Ultimately the "second-class" concept applied to Barbara Harris and the millions she represents is fostered by those who still believe that nothing good can come out of

the "lower classes" and, in a world increasingly populated by the poor and people of color, continue to hold fast to an "aristocratic" view of the church and its orders.

3) Political and ideological issues

In baptism, we promise loyalty to Jesus Christ. In the Episcopal church, when we are ordained to any of its orders we promise to be "loyal to the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ." At no time are we required to pledge allegiance to the flag of where we happened to be ordained and where we will exercise our ministry. Those who accuse Barbara Harris of "social activism" and question anyone who espouses the cause of the poor and oppressed are trying to pose as being above political bias, when in fact their positions are highly political and ideologically based. In my opinion, they give higher allegiance to the claims of Caesar than to God's, who, as recorded in the Bible, had compassion for the oppressed, prophetically denounced injustice and announced the rule of justice. Jesus of Nazareth, in his life and ministry, in his words and deeds, was biased towards the poor, the outcast, the foreigner, women and the "least ones." If yearly we observe and celebrate the lives of saints, confessors and martyrs, and are constantly reminded of the persecuted Christians of all ages, it is because these men and women decided to pattern their lives upon giving to "Caesar what is of Caesar and to God what belongs to God." Jesus did so and was put to death by the religious and political Caesars of his days. In my view there is no political or ideological neutrality, for even silence in a given situation is an option with political consequences. The fundamental question we constantly face as a community of the faithful, especially in a world of growing poverty and disparity, of social and economic barriers, prejudice and racism, is whether our ultimate loyalty is to God or to some other gods.

TW

The ECPC/WITNESS connection

by Robert L. DeWitt

It was more than a coincidence that when elected suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts, Barbara Harris was serving as Executive Director of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, which publishes THE WITNESS magazine. This journal has more than a 70-year history of pressing for change in the church by bearing testimony to prophetic movements. After a lapse following the death of its long-time editor, the Rev. William Spofford, THE WITNESS resumed publication in 1974. That first issue was devoted to a report on the ordination of the first women priests in the Episcopal Church — the “Philadelphia Eleven.” Fifteen years later that historic event has been completed by its logical sequence, the consecration of a woman bishop.

It is difficult fully to grasp just how significant an event that consecration was. As our minds grope for parallels, the controversy in the days of the Apostles over the admission of gentiles comes to mind. Had it not been for that crucial policy decision, the church might well have remained a sub-group within Judaism. There are no “ifs” in history, but one cannot but wonder. Similarly, what would be the future for a church which, in the first century having admitted gentiles to membership, refused in

the 20th century to admit women to episcopal as well as to priestly orders? Would it gradually become a relic, comparable to the remaining “male only” business/social clubs? Those associations flourished with considerable vigor for quite some years, but are now increasingly seen as throwbacks, vestiges of a wrong-headed exclusiveness. Is the Church at large headed down that one-way path again? It may be that we will have to wait for the Church of Rome to provide the answer to that question. And perhaps not too long a wait, at that.

It is also appropriate that during her years with the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, Bishop Harris had been writing a monthly column for THE WITNESS entitled “A Luta Continua” (“The Struggle Continues”). It serves not only as an apt designation for her life to date, but also as a fit chapter heading for the experiences about to unfold before her.

The double jeopardy of being Black and female is well-known. Barbara Harris did not, like the goddess Athena, spring fully armed from the brow of Jove, equipped for the struggles of life. Like all of us, and more than most of us, she has had to make her way by increments, facing obstacles and confronting difficulties not of her own making. When her abilities and interests took her into the world of business, a world she came to know well and to negotiate successfully, she never forgot who she was, and Whose she was. This was because she was situated squarely in the life of

the Black Church, which nourished, taught and sustained her over the years. Biblical imagery, theology, liturgy and gospel hymns have been her lifelong bread and meat. She is a daughter of the church, raised in the bosom of that family. Of course, it goes without saying that she is not perfect. Neither were Peter or Paul. Nor is any one of us. Regardless, it is this human clay out of which God, for lack of better material, makes laypersons, priests, bishops and occasionally, saints. This time, for the first time, it pleased God to make a bishop of a Black woman; and we marvel at God’s audacity.

It is audacious to run counter to two millennia of church history, to ignore the “infallible” protestations of the Pope, to risk conflict and even schism within the Anglican family of churches. Audacious, that is, until we recall whose Church this is. If, indeed, it be the Church of God, and if God is indeed God, we may wonder and marvel, but should not question the authenticity of what a sovereign God does with God’s own.

More audacious, it would seem, would be the expectation on God’s part that a woman, that any person, can be expected to cope adequately with the testings and harassments awaiting Bishop Harris in both the near and long range future. At her consecration service it was made clear that she can expect non-acceptance from some quarters. Individuals, parishes, other bishops, other branches of Anglicanism — each will in some measure participate in “shunning” her — the

The Rt. Rev. Robert L. DeWitt, former Bishop of Pennsylvania, was one of the consecrators in the 1974 “Philadelphia 11” ordinations. Former editor of THE WITNESS, he is a member of the magazine’s editorial board.

most virulent kind of excommunication.

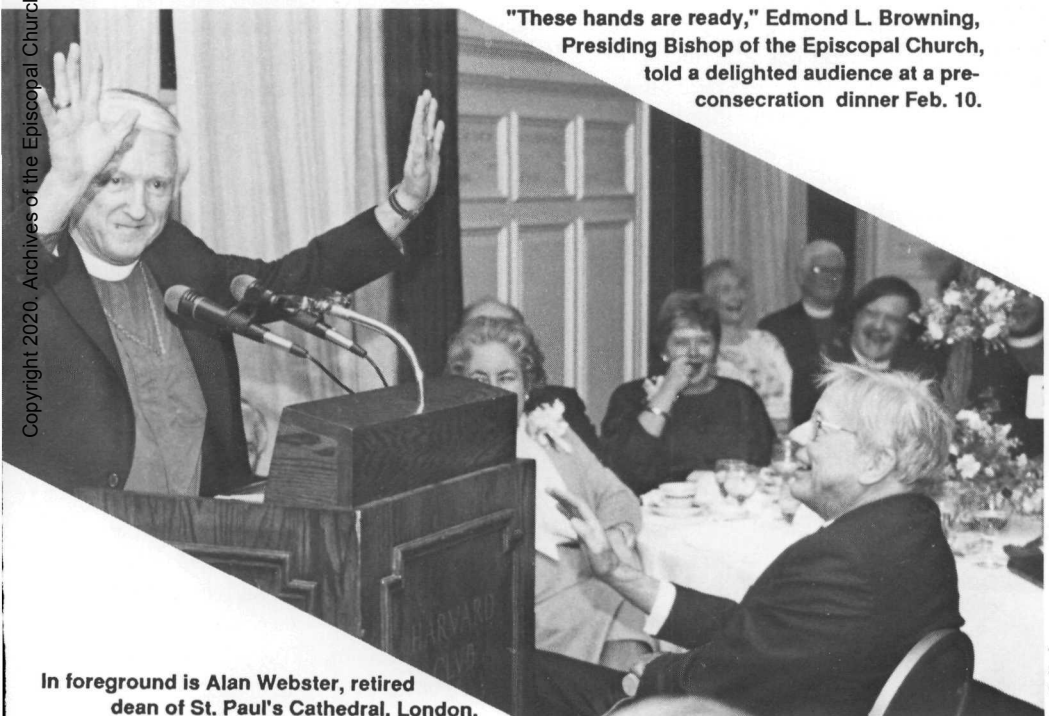
Did God consider all that, as the Diocese of Massachusetts responded to the Spirit and designated her to be a bishop in the Church of God? To this one can only respond that an all-wise God surely knows what is going on, and is competent to deal with it. Bishop Harris, as we have said, did not "spring fully armed from the brow of Jove"; but available to her is the whole armor of God. And that armor — truth, integrity, the Gospel, faith, salvation, the word of God — consists of resources familiar to the household of faith in which Bishop Harris was reared.

The most reassuring thing about the hazards and the threats which Bishop Harris' consecration has elicited is the Episcopal Church's calm, unhurried decision about her election. Although the election has been front page news around the world, the probability if not inevitability of a woman being elected a bishop is not news. It has been a familiar prospect in the Episcopal Church since

the first 11 women were priested in 1974. Since then, approximately 1200 women have become priests, any one of them potentially electable as a bishop. In recent years a number of women priests have been nominated in episcopal elections. Further, women priests are serving a wide spectrum of ministries and are dispersed across the country. They have become an accepted part of the fabric of the Episcopal Church.

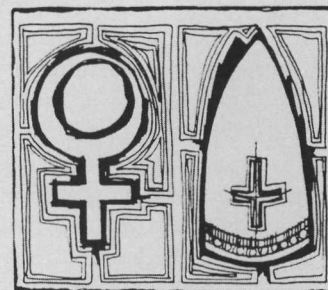
Those who continue to question the legitimacy of what has been a very deliberate, slow-paced process seem to loom larger in press accounts than they are in actual numbers and significance. Presiding Bishop Ed Browning, in speaking to a group of participants and officiants on the eve of the consecration service, referred to the painstaking process of consultation he had conducted, both before and after Bishop Harris' election. He concluded by saying, as he raised his arms, "These hands are ready!" The Episcopal Church is responding resoundingly: "Amen!" **TV**

"These hands are ready," Edmond L. Browning, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, told a delighted audience at a pre-consecration dinner Feb. 10.



In foreground is Alan Webster, retired dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

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Jim Solheim

Helping to carry the load

by Carter Heyward

The consecration of Barbara Clementine Harris was a magnificent moment in the history of the church. But its significance does not lie primarily in the fact that Anglicans have at last a chief sacramental pastor who is not a “prince,” “father,” or “old boy.” After all, the radical break in the male-stream of Anglicanism’s ecclesiastical and sacramental authority occurred not in the consecration of its first woman bishop two months ago but rather in the ordination of a woman, Li Tim-Oi, to the priesthood in China 45 years ago.

Some of the fuss over Bishop Harris’ emergence can be understood only in the context of the lament of a remnant faithful to the highly symbolic tradition of preserving all-male sacramental leadership in salvation history. These are the folks for whom the sacred is mediated through the presence of male genitalia. Whether from the perspective of those who hold this titillating view of redemption or of the approximately 1500 women priests around the world, there’s really nothing to be said in response to this kinky theology except *yes* or *no*.

The arrival of the first Anglican woman bishop (and of those women bishops who will follow) provides outstanding opportunity for the phallogocentric theologians to speak their piece on behalf of a god who gives men and boys a special, sacred thing that women and girls don’t have. Happily, the debate about whether this “special thing” is necessary to salvation has been over for

more than a decade now in the Episcopal Church. We still hear it rumbling around the Church of England, the church in Australia, elsewhere in the Anglican Communion, and of course among the Romans and Orthodox. But to have it dragged back up in the Episcopal Church, in relation to Barbara and the rest of us, has been both predictable and boring. To this worn-out plea on behalf of phallogocentric power, thousands of us said *no* in 1974, and *no* again in 1975. Coming right along, the Episcopal Church said *no* in 1976, and *no* again in the 1989 consecration of its first woman bishop.

But that’s not all that happened in the election and consecration of Bishop Harris. In calling her, we asked not only for a woman, but moreover for one whose African-American roots in slavery, suffering, Black culture and the struggle for liberation have made her who she is. Indeed, many of us in Massachusetts wanted a woman bishop of color because we realized it’s high time to begin healing the painful rupture between the perceived interests of White women and people of color in the Episcopal Church and in the larger society. Those involved in promoting the election of Barbara Harris knew that the choice of a Black woman could be an immensely empowering symbol for Black Episcopalians and for other people of color in the church as well as for White women, in our attempts to struggle together against racism, sexism, and other structures of oppression in the world and church.

About a year before Barbara’s nomination, the Massachusetts chapter of the Episcopal Women’s Caucus had prepared educational materials on women and the episcopate and in January 1988,

the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge had sponsored a continuing education program on women bishops. It was at this conference that Mary Glasspool, rector of St. Luke’s and St. Margaret’s parish in Allston, first asked Barbara about the possibility of allowing her name to be placed in nomination for suffragan bishop. In subsequent months, Mary Glasspool, working in concert with such Black leaders in the church as Canon Missioner Ed Rodman, managed to pull together a ragtag coalition of Episcopalians of color, White feminist priests and laywomen, and progressive White men to work on Barbara’s behalf.

Within a couple of weeks prior to the election, it had become clear to a number of us, including Barbara, that there was at least a real possibility that she would be elected, and that we in Massachusetts would indeed have become a channel through which God is revealing something to us about the sacred power in the lives of historically marginalized women.

Yet even more happened in the choice of Barbara Harris. In her, we consecrated not only a Black woman, but one who embodies a good bit of what is most despised and trivialized within the Anglo culture that has shaped our spiritual tradition. For one thing, Barbara has not been educated in the halls of “educated men,” but rather in the course of living life among her people. In choosing such a person, we voiced a firm *no* to those arrogant dimensions of our religious heritage which demean an intelligence cultivated by living with an ear close to sacred ground.

The media was quick to point out that Barbara Harris is also divorced (as was her closest competitor in the episcopal

The Rev. Carter Heyward, ordained as one of the “Philadelphia 11” in 1974, is Professor of Theology at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. A contributing editor to *THE WITNESS*, she has published numerous books and articles on feminist theology.



David Zadic

Mary Glasspool, center, who nominated Barbara Harris rejoices with women caucus members Rosanna Kazanjian, left, and Halley Wilcox after Harris is declared winner in Boston election.

election, as well as her predecessor as Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts — both of them White, Anglo males). As Paul Washington suggested in his remarkable sermon at the consecration, here is a woman who “knows not a man.” Put otherwise, Barbara Harris carries, legally and sacramentally, the full weight of being her own person in a sexist and heterosexist world and church.

Of course many will assume that she is a lesbian, because what after all, is a “lesbian” if not a woman who doesn’t need to be attached to a man in order to be fully herself? Bishop Harris represents all women, lesbian and heterosexual, who will not be patronized by heterosexist assumptions about who or what is a “real” woman. In making her our bishop, we said *no* to the anti-erotic tradition which punishes us for daring to live beyond sex-role expectations into the fullness of our capacities to love one another as sisters and brothers, friends and lovers and partners, whether single, divorced, married, celibate, sexually active, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual.

And still, we did even more than this in choosing Barbara Harris. In her, we tapped a prophet, a sister with a passion

for justice, to exercise spiritual authority among us. Bad enough that it’s a “she” and a Black “she” at that. Terrible that she doesn’t have the proper degrees or “know a man.” But she is also a prophet!

Not that she’s the first prophet in the episcopacy. Several of the men who consecrated her have been compelling prophetic figures in the contemporary church. But most male bishops have been elevated to the episcopate precisely because they weren’t controversial, or, sometimes, despite the fact that they were. Few men in the history of Anglicanism, and no women until Barbara Harris, have been chosen and made bishop *because* they are prophets. Yet that’s exactly why so many women priests and laywomen of all colors, Black Episcopalians, and justice-seeking White men in Massachusetts wanted Barbara as our bishop: because she stands with and for those who have been marginalized or outcast by the dominant forces in the world/church. This is the locus of her spiritual authority.

Like most men, many White women and some women of color as well would find themselves badly compromised by election to the episcopacy. It would be tempting to try, however much in vain,

to be acceptable to the old boys’ club, to make peace with oppression if that’s what it would take to keep peace in the “House” (and we can be sure it would).

The consecration of Bishop Harris signalled another possibility: What if, in the midst of the violent, distressing conditions being generated by the reactionary politics of Reagan-Bush, a small, but nonetheless revolutionary, turn is being made toward the realization of justice among us? What if we are beginning to move together, in ways yet barely perceptible, into a reversal of the nefarious social values which have so damaged us as a people for the last two decades? Could it be that the primary significance of Barbara Harris’ consecration is in its signaling a *potentially* radical shift in the prevailing norms of church and society? “Potentially” because neither one consecration, nor one woman bishop in herself, can produce such a shift.

Barbara Harris is a compassionate, intelligent, witty sister with strong political commitments rooted in the liberation tradition of Christian spirituality. Yet, in a very real, historic sense, *Bishop Harris* is, at this moment, primarily a *symbol*, which is a terribly difficult thing for a person to be. She and her consecration represent a global movement, a historical push toward that realm in which justice “rolls down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” We need to realize that, only insofar as we are moving with her, can she or we hope to see any actual, substantive shifting toward justice and empowerment.

In other words, the future of Bishop Harris, of what she can actually do, is up to us. We have empowered her to bless us by representing God’s own passion for justice. In so doing, may she empower us to bless one another as sisters, brothers, and friends of the Sacred Spirit. If we do this, rather than expecting one sister to carry our load for us, we will be bearers of blessing and joy to this friend and bishop, Barbara Harris. **TV**

Pentecost Again

*"The power behind you
is greater than the task
ahead of you."*

— The Rev. Audrey Bronson

"Could God die, I would die"

Rainbow light!
Mother-Father light!
It's Pentecost again!

Mother, Sister, Friend of those enslaved
and granddaughter and great-great-granddaughter —
but Grandmother to the free,
helper of the homeless, hopeless, helpless ones —
O Christ, be as a Mother to us . . .

"O God, there is something above, let it reach me"

"Today I have not forgotten you, Beloved.
Today I call Myself to you.
Today I send you one who knows
about prison, who knows about hunger,
who knows of hungry, broken lives
and who helps bind wounds and who marches on —
and who knows successes of sheer giftedness,
for My gifts still count!
Here, world, My gift to you, your new bishop,
Barbara Clementine Harris, *as she is*.
See her glowing mitre point to justice,
for the Struggle Continues!
And today she dances among you on fire,
but not alone — just another of My miracles.
Barbara, bring forth — but not alone.
Continue — but not alone.
Wear the mitred hat, the crown of fire,
and remember that My burden borne in love
is a beautiful burden. Barbara, begin —
but not alone. Fire spreads. It's Pentecost again.
Get ready, world. Be born with her,
a new people on this day.
For Shalom, My heart's desire, is coming through,
is coming down into My world.
Sweet World, begin.
It's Pentecost again!"

Consecration

This day was born in Eternity,
this day is a heavenly day.
Sweet, sweet Spirit, we pray
to be as open to You forever
as we are this day.

Right Reverend Bishop Barbara Clementine Harris —
African American, first female bishop among the Apostles
on whom we can lay our eyes and hands . . .
You embrace — in your mitred Pentecost crown of flame,
in your African bright garden, thunderstorm and lightning
symphonic fuchsia, purple and gold, in your true
green tree of life worshipping clothes — us.

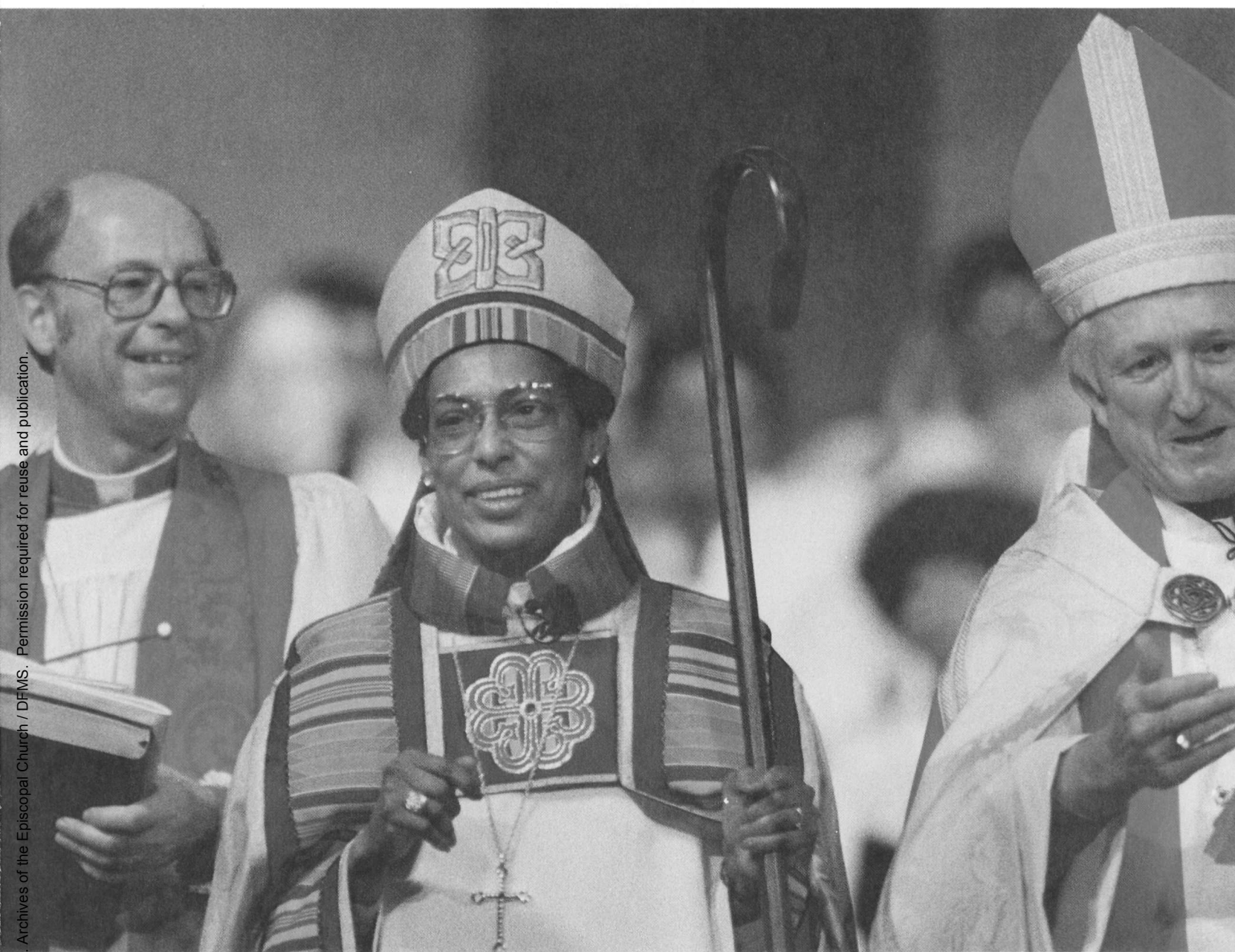
And our Mother from China, the Reverend Li Tim-Oi,
embraces you, and history resounds with a loud
supernova cataclysm of reviving rainbow joy
as the hands of God fold together around us
and we are held together in new wonder,
and our future pains and past pains
in this meeting moment are transformed
and our once and future wounds are bound
and in this moment is pure, pure gentleness and praise,
for the strong and tender outcasts have been brought home,
and the faces and hands of God that were rejected
are shining on us at last!

It's Pentecost again!

Alla Renée Bozarth
Boston, Feb. 11, 1989

The Rev. Alla Renée Bozarth is one of the "Philadelphia 11," the first women ordained in the Episcopal Church 15 years ago. Now director of Wisdom House in Sandy, Ore., she is author of several books, including poetry. The epigrams, "Could God die" and "O God, there is something above" are translated from the Ashanti symbols on Bishop Harris' vestments. This poem is part of a longer piece.

Maeda/The Boston Globe



She's number one — in the whole world

Following her consecration as Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts — and consequently as first woman to become a bishop in the worldwide Anglican Communion — the Rt. Rev. Barbara C. Harris faced the congregation Feb. 11 in Hynes auditorium (above).

Episcopal Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning, (right), said that the event was the most exciting he had experienced in his term of office, and as Harris turned to face 8500 cheering well-wishers, Brown-

ing whispered to her, "Go for it!"

The Rt. Rev. Allen Bartlett, Bishop of Harris' home Diocese of Pennsylvania, (left), said the Harris election represents "the fullness of ministry which the church corporately decided on in 1976. This is a sign of that wholeness."

Harris' colorful vestments were made of Italian silk and Ghanaian women's weave kente. Her mitre bears the Ashanti phrase, "Nyame Nwu Na M'awu" (Could God die, I would die), expressing God's

eternity and creation's dependence. Her stole bears "Nyame Bribi Wo Soro, Ma No Mmeka Me Nsa" (O God, there is something above, let it reach me). The cope morse and back of chasuble shows "Onyamedua" — God's tree, a forked post found in most courtyards or planted at the entrances of the chief's palace as a sign of the people's dependence on God. The front of the chasuble bears the Chi Rho, ancient symbol based on the first two letters of Christ in Greek.

'The ends of the world have met'

— Nan Peete

In 1988, the Rev. Nan Arrington Peete was one of two women priests invited to Lambeth to serve as consultants general by the Archbishop of Canterbury. In a conversation with THE WITNESS, she reflected on the consecration of her friend and colleague Barbara Harris. Peete participated in the service as a concelebrant. She currently serves as canon to the Ordinary in Atlanta, and is a member of the Board of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company.

Are there any flashbacks from your Lambeth trip that strike you as significant, related to the Feb. 11 event?

Well, in July of last year the *London Times* ran a picture of Barbara greeting Li Tim-Oi. The caption read, "The Rev. Barbara Harris, who wants to be the first woman bishop, meets the Rev. Florence Li Tim-Oi, the first woman priest." What a wonderfully prophetic picture to open the Lambeth Conference! Then on Feb. 11, 1989, Li Tim-Oi came to participate in Barbara's consecration and I watched them exchange greetings during the Peace. For me, this meeting of these two women, so small in stature but so large in spiritual presence, was one of those once in a lifetime, moving moments. It took place quietly and in a simple embrace that brought tears to the eyes. The Word was made flesh.

Could you comment a bit further on how you see that incarnational theology informing the Harris consecration?

As Anglicans, we have an incarnational faith. It is a lived faith, not an intellectual exercise. The Word is made flesh and dwells among us. But how do we live this out? The question now becomes a reality, not just an intellectual discussion, such as had taken place prior to Barbara's consecration.

One of the ways that lived faith is expressed is in the prayer at the end of the Litany for Ordinations. The prayer reads,

"O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: look favorably on your whole church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by Him through whom all things are made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen." That prayer says let the whole world see and know that things which are cast down are being raised up. On Feb. 11 at Barbara's consecration and in 1944 when Li Tim-Oi was ordained, two women who had been cast down were raised up to stand tall in Christ. The ends of the world have met.

What other Lambeth issues are relevant here?

When I was at Lambeth the issue of women in the episcopate was discussed at great length. A resolution was passed that said we would agree to disagree and we would respect each other. Now, how do we live together? It takes on a different cast when there is a person involved. In reflecting on my experience, I think my presence at Lambeth and the presence of Margaret Wood, a priest from New Zealand, gave new meaning to

women priests. The Word made flesh tends to transcend some of the stereotypes and previous notions some have of what it means to be a priest.

Barbara's election and consecration have also prompted us to examine the traditions of the church. The church in the United States calls its bishops in a different way than the Church of England. Here, the clergy and laity elect their bishops. They call forth from their own body the person to be consecrated as opposed to appointing or selecting a bishop by committee, as in England. The laity have a very strong role in the church here, and maybe other places could learn from it.

Another issue that is going to get discussed is the unity of the Anglican Communion. This unity is based on our oneness in Christ and not on the gender of the disciples. We confuse, I think the understanding of uniformity and unity — there is a difference.

Finally, the resurrection has made the impossible possible. We rejoice because the possibilities and opportunities which we had once thought closed, God has now opened. Barbara's consecration has made it possible that everybody's gifts can be used to their fullest.

What other images from the consecration were poignant for you?

It's not often that one has an opportunity to participate and witness history being made. The spirit was electric, the enthu-

siasm overwhelming. As Barbara processed into the hall, the place just exploded. My first reaction was, this must have been how Jesus felt as He came riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. But there comes a moment when you realize that Jesus is going to be sentenced to death. It was very like the point in the service when two people got up to voice their objections to Barbara's consecration.

Then something dramatic happened. Barbara's mother, "Miss Bea," got up and went over to her daughter's side, across the aisle. Barbara told me later that her mother embraced her and told her, "Have no fear. God is on our side. Everything is going to be all right." It was one of those moments mother and daughter shared quietly as though no one else was there.

Of course the laying on of hands with the sea of episcopal red and white was a sight I will never forget. And another remarkable moment was that of the bishops standing around the platform holding up the bread and wine while Barbara was consecrating.

What did the congregation look like; that is, who turned out?

The great number of clergy and bishops present made a profound statement, but it was the tremendous turnout of lay people that reminded us once again that the church is approximately 95% laity. All the different people from various parts of the country representing different ethnic backgrounds, different cultures—it truly was a gathering of the Church catholic!

TV

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David Zadig



The new suffragan bishop introduces members of her family to the press, above, from left, Josephine White, her sister, and her mother, "Miss Bea." Not pictured is Sgt. Tommy Harris, who attended his sister's consecration in Air Force blues, beribboned with medals. David Johnson, Bishop of Massachusetts, looks on.

Harris family front row center

"Miss Bea," Barbara Harris' mother, moved from event to event during her daughter's consecration with such joie de vivre and ready wit that Massachusetts Bishop David Johnson said, "After meeting her my first thought was, 'maybe we've elected the wrong Harris.'"

When a shuttle bus arrived to take guests to a festive dinner at the Harvard Club the night before the consecration, Miss Bea, who is in her 80s, greeted the busload of people. Flourishing her cane, she said, "Mother Superior has arrived! Before this I was Mother Inferior," she laughed. Miss Bea still plays the organ at St. Augustine-of-Hippo Church in Norristown, Pa. "Barbara recruited me

when she was priest-in-charge, and I'm still playing. 'Bus' takes me," she said.

Francis "Bus" Moseley, a friend of the family for some 20 years, attends services at Philadelphia's Church of St. Andrew and St. Monica and then drives Miss Bea to Norristown. As warden, Mosley trained acolytes under Harris.

Of the consecration, Joey White, Barbara's sister, said, "Of course I'm elated and humbled by this great honor, but I didn't need her election to convince me that my sister is the greatest person in the world."

The Harris family has lived in the same home in Philadelphia for more than 70 years. Miss Bea and Joey are members of St. Luke's, Germantown.

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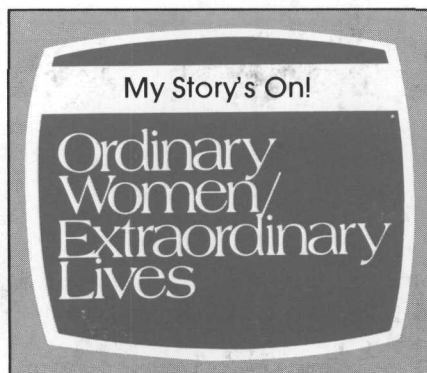
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