Unveiled Grace:
Transformational Catholic Lay Women As Leaders in 20th Century America

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Preface

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>History of the Catholic Church in America</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>The Catholic Church and Women</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>Lay Women in the American Catholic Church</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>Towards a Definition of Leadership</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>Dorothy Day</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>Peggy Roach</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>Transformational Leadership</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selected Bibliography
ABSTRACT

Using the Rost model of ‘transformational leadership,” this work examines the role of women as agents of social change. Discussing leadership within such a context, using Peggy Roach and Dorothy Day as examples, I will compare and contrast the roles for the women who serve within the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church and those who serve in supporting organizations. Through an exploration of not only individual stories but also papal encyclicals, the Catholic Catechism and Catholic social teaching, I hope to shed light on the unique role Catholic women have as leaders of social change within their society.
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*My wonderful Macintosh laptop* – everybody should have one

I dedicate this to my aunt, Annette Henneberry
My own personal reflections may surface throughout the paper, so it's important for me to provide a little context to this whole idea. To complete my degree, North Central required me to take a Leadership, Ethics and Values course, and I chose ‘Seminar on Leadership Theory.’ A fascinating class, it allowed me to explore both the traditional and nontraditional understanding of leadership, and for my final project, I was required to interview a leader. I chose a woman in a formal leadership position at North Central. I found myself engrossed in the project, and before long, the questions were getting bigger and harder to answer, which led me to this rather unusual topic. Researching Dorothy Day and Peggy Roach has been a joy and a privilege and I hope that I have done their lives and work justice.

Although for much of my childhood I attended nondenominational and Pentecostal Protestant Christian churches, I remain a committed Catholic. This diversity of experience within the Christian church has provided me the opportunity to examine the Catholic Church in many ways as an ‘outsider on the inside,’ and I hope that I will be able to offer a picture of the Catholic tradition which will be multifaceted. Growing up in a house with four girls, naturally, we talked a lot about the roles and responsibilities of being a woman of God, particularly within the Catholic Church. Even as I am searching the Church for examples of women who have been leaders in a non-traditional way, I remain a fairly orthodox Catholic. My own personal brand of feminism also provides another element of the perspective from which I am writing. Being a Catholic American woman, who is already serving the Church’s mission, I obviously am writing from within my own experience as well. My hope is that I will be able to offer a thorough, scholarly examination of the women in leadership within and alongside the Church who are serving the poor.
“The attempt, in obedience, to follow Christ, does not consist in engaging in propaganda, nor even in stirring people up, but in being a living mystery. It means to live in such a way that one’s life would not make sense if God did not exist.”

~ Cardinal Suhard

(often quoted by Dorothy Day)

“One cannot be a saint and live the gospel we preach without spending oneself to provide everyone with the housing, employment, goods, leisure, education, etc., without which life is no longer meaningful.”

~ Cardinal Suhard

(found on a small card in Peggy Roach’s personal files)

“Without the saints, George Bernanos said fifty years ago, the church is only dead stones: Without them, the very grace lying within the church’s institutional and sacramental forms remains fallow. Despite the unparalleled upheaval of our times, grace has not remained hidden. We have seen its appealing power.”

~ Patrick Jordan
I. Introduction

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:14

There is a moment in every leader's life when she or he has to decide to step up to the challenge, when it is time to declare to those present the intention to do what no one else has been willing to do. This passage of scripture is the moment when Jesus of Nazareth chooses his role as a leader of his people. While it is almost cliché to discuss Jesus as a leader, his actions provided an example for millions upon millions of people who would eventually attempt to follow in his footsteps by standing up to the injustices around them. This type of leadership—strikingly different from more popular models—can rightly be called 'transforming.' Joseph Rost, in his book Leadership for the 21st Century, defines leadership this way: "Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes based on mutual purposes." He calls this 'transformational' leadership, in that due to its dynamic process, it will transform not only those involved in what he terms the 'leadership relationship' (the leaders and followers), but also the societies and organizations in which they participate.

There are countless examples of leadership which could be reexamined through this model, but for this paper I have chosen the Roman Catholic Church, specifically in America. The Roman Catholic Church remains one of the largest organized religions in the world, boasting

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nearly 1.1 billion members. As such, in its two thousand year history, the Church is rife with examples of leadership. I have chosen here to focus in particular on the Catholic women in America who have led in transforming their societies. Examining first the context in which they lived, my goal is to show, through using a different lens (i.e. Rost’s definition), we can see leadership in a new way through the examples of the women who have challenged our ideas of what it really means to live as a person of faith, and indeed as a person, in the world. I could spend an entire thesis just mentioning the names of the powerful Catholic women who have been leaders, but I’ve chosen two women to highlight: Dorothy Day and Margaret “Peggy” Roach. Both were deeply instrumental in challenging those around them to action that resulted in a genuine transformation. I will explore their stories in more detail later in this thesis; however, a short introduction seems appropriate, since many of my readers might not be as familiar with either woman.

Dorothy Day is arguably the more famous of the two. Born in New York City in 1897, Dorothy spent her childhood in San Francisco, where she experienced a powerful earthquake, the aftermath of which impacted her greatly. Her family then moved to Chicago, where she discovered a great love for the poor, becoming both a socialist and an anarchist. She spent the next part of her life attending university, and then becoming not only a writer, but also a single mother. In 1927 she became Catholic and in 1932 she met Peter Maurin, who was her inspiration for the fusion of her Catholicism and her love for the poor. Together they founded The Catholic Worker, a newspaper that became a movement. It was a radical response to the Sermon on the Mount, and challenged the Catholic Church in America in a powerful way. If today you hear some Catholics in America called peace activists or see Catholic churches opening their doors to

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feed the poor, it is in part because of Dorothy Day’s ability to “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.”

Peggy Roach is not as famous as Dorothy Day, but her impact on the life of the Catholic Church in the U.S. is evident. Born in 1927, the year that Dorothy Day became Catholic, Peggy came of age in the 1960’s, coming from a close-knit, loving family into a world of chaos. She spent that decade working for civil rights, being an instrumental part of the March on Washington in August 1963, during which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his “I Have A Dream” speech. She was also involved in “Wednesdays in Mississippi,” interracial groups of society women who went to the “deep South” to be a “ministry of presence” to the black communities there. She moved on to the Contract Buyers League (CBL), where she was actively promoting the rights of black homeowners. Eventually she teamed up with Monsignor Jack Egan, and they spent the next thirty-five years together, building networks of people who were working for justice and bringing life to the “inner city.” She had a profound influence on a great number of people who were inspired by her example.

Both Dorothy Day and Peggy Roach had a unique sense of how a sacramental life lived in communion with God and the Church is inextricably linked with working for justice and peace in the world. For lack of a better term, “sacramentalizing the ordinary” seems appropriate. Another way to phrase is the way Dorothy Day did: “the sacrament of the present moment.”³ This means that the everyday, the mundane, can become holy. A sacrament is a visible sign of the invisible grace of God. A sacramental life, then, is one lived constantly in the awareness of God. This awareness, should directly affect other’s lives for the better. Both Dorothy and Peggy’s constant dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church’s care of the poor and marginalized

was evident in their writing and work, yet their lives spent working with the Church are a testament to their love for it. This is an unusual combination for most Catholics in the Church today, particularly in America, and one that provides, as St. Paul says, a “stumbling block” to many fellow believers. Often those working for justice are so dissatisfied with the Church that they have given up on traditional liturgy and orthodoxy altogether. Those who find meaning in orthodoxy are often not challenged to be aware of societal injustices. Dorothy and Peggy, then, stand as a testament to a broader vision of what it means to be a faithful Catholic in a modern world. Their witness is most powerful, I believe, because they are laywomen.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that I will not be exploring two major issues: the religious sisters as leaders and the question of the ordination of women. The former is an issue that I feel has an already existing body of scholarly research, and the latter is an issue of concern to so many who discuss it eloquently elsewhere, that I honestly feel I would not have anything new to add to either dialogue. Instead I would like to focus on the laywomen, such as Dorothy Day and Peggy Roach, who have shaped the Church; most particularly because the research is not exhaustive and I feel that this would be a humble contribution to the discussion of women in leadership.

II. History of the Catholic Church in America

This discussion should begin with some historical perspective of the relationship of the Catholic Church to ‘secular’ or civil society. Of course, the scope of this paper does not allow for a complete discussion of that, but it would be beneficial to describe briefly the relationship of the Catholic Church to American society. Founded in 1776 as a republic committed to the high ideals of the Enlightenment, the United States of America has always been an idea – namely, that
every single person has the right to life and to a life of their own choosing. The idea certainly
was steeped in the tradition of Christian humanism. To combine such humanism with the
Puritanism of the early settlers, and the cultural heritage of each new wave of immigrants into a
working civil society has been a challenge, to say the least.

Americans of European ancestry pride themselves as much on their “rugged
individualism” as on their “Protestant work ethic.” This work ethic comes as much from the
early German and English settlers’ cultural traditions as from Protestant, Calvinist Christianity,
yet both point to the influence of religion in the shaping of America. Still today, for the majority
of Americans, being religious in America means being Protestant; being Catholic in America has
never been as culturally acceptable, and until recently, practically “un-American.” When Saint
Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American saint, decided to convert to Catholicism in the 1800’s,
her family disowned her. Hers is just one example of the many who endured acute persecution to
build the Catholic Church in America. A more recent example is John F. Kennedy – the question
of whether he would be more loyal to the pope than to the American people was a real one. A
church of immigrants, the Catholic Church in America, has never held the kind of political
power that the Church in Europe once did. However, as America has changed, so has the power
of the Church, and this was due primarily to the Second Vatican Council (hereafter referred to as
Vatican II), which forever changed the way that the Church functioned – globally as well as
locally. The council convened from 1962 to 1965 and it was a time when the laity (those not in
the clergy) were recognized as contributing members to, and leaders in, the Church. More will be
discussed about the power of this idea later in the paper, but suffice it to say that one of the

5 Kriermich, Marvin. Catholic Social Teaching and Movements. Connecticut: Twenty-Third
interesting aspects of both Dorothy Day's and Peggy Roach's lives is that they were lived out without the Church's recognition of the necessity of the work they were doing, until Vatican II.

Vatican II, however, even as it opened up the doors of the Church a great deal, did not change everything. Non-white Catholics have often not heard their voices as clearly as their white brothers and sisters, and it must be said that part of both Dorothy and Peggy's power was their position as "insiders." In addition to the discrimination that Catholic immigrants initially received at the turn of the twentieth century, the American Catholic Church has often been party to its own share of discrimination against others. During the next few pages, there will be stories of those Catholics who spoke out against injustice, but we must not forget that the Catholic hierarchy has been historically part of the racism (and sometimes xenophobia) which scars our country. The Church is not blameless when it comes to its treatment of women either.

In the midst of this, however, there remains an understanding for many American Catholics that to be truly Catholic means to be truly American. What, in fact, it means to be 'truly American' is a theme that continues to be fascinating to me. There is a level of cultural complexity surrounding such a statement that often never gets fully explored. However, it is the best in our 'national consciousness' and the best within the Catholic tradition that has raised up leaders who have shaped our society for the better, challenging us all to be 'signs of contradiction.'

III. The Catholic Church and Women

With such a heading, it is a reminder that this is a subject as fraught with pain as filled with joy. However, it is an eminently important one, as it provides much of the theological and cultural context in which both Dorothy and Peggy lived. There are a myriad of ways to explore
such a topic, whether as a feminist theologian or biblical scholar, but the simplest way to begin seems to be to ask the question: *What are the roles, rights and responsibilities of women who choose to be Catholic, as outlined in the Catholic Catechism?* The reason for this is that:

This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition. Its principal sources are the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the Church's Magisterium. It is intended to serve "as a point of reference for the catechisms or compendia that are composed in the various countries."6

Thus it is a central source for research — the latest version was published in 1997 under John Paul II. Another reason to begin with the Catechism and move forward is because of the legacy of both Peggy and Dorothy. Each was a woman of strong convictions and proactive response, grounded and centered in faithfulness not only to Christ but also to the Church. Thus it is fitting that we examine the Church that they knew in order to begin defining what it meant for each of them to be a woman serving in the Church.

There is no discussion of women within the Catholic Church without discussing Mary. Mary, the Mother of God, *(Theotokos)*, who finds her fulfillment in a total gift of herself to God. She, as a woman, is presented as the ultimate example of what it means to be a woman. Virgin and mother, she is the epitome of virtue for any woman who is either. Considered the "new Eve", she "undoes" the evil that Eve brought into the world through her original sin.7 Of course, it is Eve, not Adam, who committed the original sin — she was the one who, as a woman, brought evil into the world. Alongside Eve, there is Mary Magdalene, often portrayed in theological exegesis as a whore. They, in addition to Mary, leave two options for women to be viewed within western

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7 *Ibid*, paragraph 726.
society, a legacy of sexism: "Madonna" or "whore," a phenomenon to which sociologists attest. This is, in no small part, due to the images of women in our society which come from the Church, whether Magdalene or Madonna. However, it is important to look beyond stereotypical images. The Catechism offers a deeper look at the Creation story in the book of Genesis.

So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."8

According to the Catechism, "Man and woman have been created, which is to say, willed by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman."9 What is distinctly Catholic here is primarily that human existence is a reality that is good, yet marred by sin. This statement makes it clear that a woman, being made in the image of God, has dignity as a human person.

This dignity is wholly understood only within the context of how a person relates to the human community around them: "Man and woman were made "for each other" - not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be "helpmate" to the other, for they are equal as persons..."10 This complementary nature finds its ultimate fulfillment in marriage: "In marriage God unites them in such a way that, by forming "one flesh"."11 Indeed, marriage is discussed at great length within the Catechism, and for a woman to be called wife and mother, it is considered to be a high calling

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10 Ibid, paragraph 372.
11 Ibid, paragraph 373.
indeed. The Church sees a family as the “first teacher” – it is within the family that human beings learn how to function in the world, for good or ill. The necessity of good families cannot be overstated throughout the text. However, along with all of the often flowery and mystical descriptions of marriage, chastity within marriage is a requirement. Both polygamy and adultery are forbidden expressly, while a general rule of a life of virtue is required.

Marriage, however, is not the only option presented to a woman. There is also the possibility of living a ‘professed religious life,’” that is, as a nun:

Christ is the center of all Christian life. The bond with him takes precedence over all other bonds, familial or social. From the very beginning of the Church there have been men and women who have renounced the great good of marriage to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, to be intent on the things of the Lord, to seek to please him, and to go out to meet the Bridegroom who is coming. Christ himself has invited certain persons to follow him in this way of life, of which he remains the model: "For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.”¹² (CCC 1618)

This option of celibacy is one also greatly revered within the Catholic tradition although not discussed at length within the Catechism. At certain points in the Church’s history, there have been men and women who actually left their families to found religious orders because that was considered the “higher calling.” While this type of imbalance doesn’t exist any longer, there is a long tradition of giving greater honor to those who serve the Church in this way. Currently, within the United States alone, there are hundreds of religious orders that have almost as many types of work as one could imagine, everything from teaching to caring for the poor. The special

role of nuns within the Church has definitely changed since Vatican II, but they remain as a “sign of contradiction” to the world around them.

The only other option for a woman is to remain chaste as a single person. It is not considered, according to the Church, a “negative absence,” rather a positive one. In the absence of one, entirely intimate relationship, there is the freedom to serve Jesus and the Church more effectively. “An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit.” This, in fact, is what the example of Dorothy and Peggy point us to: without marriage to engage their energies, they put themselves at the service of the Lord and His Church. It is in this matter of chastity that women (and men) struggle most often with the Church’s teaching. In the modern world, it is laughable to remain a virgin on purpose. The issue of chastity, of course, brings up all of the things that are forbidden to women and men as followers of Christ: fornication, adultery, prostitution or even cohabitation without marriage. It also brings up the fact that if a Catholic who happens to be gay or lesbian wishes to remain faithful to the Church; they must choose to remain chaste. The teachings surrounding sexuality have been as the apostles put it, “hard teachings,” and they remain a source of frustration for many in the Church. In the mystical, metaphysical sense, as a seamless whole, the idea of sexuality present in the Church is rather beautiful. However, living that out within the modern world often proves very difficult, and the “average” Catholic in the United States is not overly concerned with the intricacies of such teachings and learns instead the “do’s and don’ts,” finding them hard to live by.

In summary, then, the answer from the Church of how women can live as Christians is: 1) chastely, 2) either as married person, single person or a religious sister, and 3) “in communion

13 The Bible. New American Version. 1 Corinthians 7:34.
with" men as their "helpmeets." This is the word that Peggy and Dorothy heard, and lived by, their entire lives. They understood the power of a life of obedience to Christ and the Church. Dorothy in particular, wrote extensively about why, she, anarchist that she was, chose to live in humble obedience to the teachings and authority of the institutionalized Church.

When I became a Catholic, it never occurred to me to question how much freedom I had or how much authority the Church had to limit that freedom.... I had reached the point where I wanted to obey...I do know that my nature is such that gratitude alone, gratitude for the faith, is enough to bind me in holy obedience to Holy Mother Church and her commands...My gratitude is such that I can only say, I believe, help Thou my unbelief. I believe and obey.  

This is a powerful example of how to be an orthodox Catholic who is engaged with the world.

IV. Lay Women in the American Catholic Church

Along with exploring women in the Church in general, it is important to make a note about why Dorothy and Peggy’s witness is more powerful because they were lay people. Leadership, transformational or otherwise, within the Catholic Church comes with its own set of problems, particularly for women. As an institution, the Church has existed for two thousand years, and thus has its own idiosyncrasies and failings. One of those major failings is the sexism which permeates the entire structure, sometimes by individual experiences of discrimination, but more often as a default of having an entirely male, hierarchical structure of formal leadership. For example, women are not priests, deacons or pastors, and so are not as visible in leadership as male clergy. However, there is an exception to this “invisibility,” for women religious often take

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the opportunity to lead in formal leadership positions. This is by virtue of the fact that these sisters do not “threaten” the predominately male power structure. As university presidents, hospital administrators and academic experts, women religious have been allowed different measures of freedom to explore possibilities for formal leadership. Observing the work of these sisters, men in hierarchical authority have been challenged to reconsider how women in general can serve the Church as leaders.

It is vitally important to mention religious sisters when looking at the role of laywomen, primarily because of the shift in roles for religious and laypeople alike, stemming from Vatican II. In his book *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements*, Marvin Kriermich notes “The Second Vatican Council was an event and a process that redefined the Roman Catholic Church’s self-identity and its relationship with contemporary societies.”¹⁵ One of the main things that Vatican II produced was a reorganizing of many religious orders. Many priests and nuns decided to leave professed religious life, reevaluating whether their calling was long-term. In addition, those who sought to enter a convent, monastery or seminary discovered increased rigor in entrance requirements (*i.e.*, life experiences of work or college required before entrance). It was considered a mass exodus, from which the Church in America, in particular, is still suffering. Many priests were pastors, and many nuns were teachers or nurses or religious education directors in parishes. There was a genuine “vacuum” of leadership, and Catholics in the pew were not quite sure how to step up yet.

Prior to Vatican II, women religious in particular were at the forefront as leaders of schools and parishes. Unfortunately, however, many during that time, women as well as men were living in a ‘Catholic culture’ which offered the idea of a religious life as one highly

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respected and secure, and this led many people to take vows that did not bring them complete 
happiness or fulfillment. Therefore, as a result of Vatican II, many left the Church in search of 
lives that were of their own choosing, not proscribed by the authority of their orders. Of course, 
the rise of feminism in the 1960’s played no small part in the reshaping of religious life in 
America.

For many orders, reform was needed and necessary, but over time, American culture has 
made religious life for a new generation increasingly unattractive. Many young women, raised in 
a culture of the feminist principles of autonomy and self-actualization find the submission of self 
to a larger mission of serving the Church “unfulfilling.” Women today are products of a Catholic 
Church which has become increasingly unable to effectively challenge a secular culture which is 
too heavily focused on the needs of the individual. Since Vatican II, the Church has become 
more about how whether Catholics in the pew feel good about themselves, rather than about how 
they are serving others.

This certainly was not the spirit of Vatican II. In fact, it was intended to do just the 
opposite — call everyday Catholics to greater holiness in daily life. I have up to this point used 
the word “lay” often, and a more specific definition of it seems appropriate:

"The term 'laity' is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders 
and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful, who by 
Baptism are incorporated into Christ and integrated into the People of God, have their own part to 
play in the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the World."¹⁶

Lay people were involved only in a minimal way in the liturgy and life of the Church, and 
Vatican II brought a re-defining of how the Church itself would function as the laity took a more 
active role:

"The initiative of lay Christians is necessary especially when the matter involves discovering or inventing the means for permeating social, political, and economic realities with the demands of Christian doctrine and life. This initiative is a normal element of the life of the Church: Lay believers are in the front line of Church life; for them the Church is the animating principle of human society."

It is important to know that this understanding of the role of the laity in the Church is something that didn’t really exist, for the most part, in the way that local churches actually functioned until after Vatican II. This was partially the reason that Dorothy Day worked so much outside of the realm of the institutional church. Catholics in America didn’t quite understand that they could and should be a part of any larger work in or through the Church. Catholicism was going to a mass in Latin once a week. When the Second Vatican Council told all Catholics that it was their duty to be active builders of the kingdom of God, it was a genuine paradigm shift; now, the work of God was woven into the very fabric of daily life – a sacramentality of the ordinary. For Dorothy Day, an older woman by now, as well as for Peggy, much younger, it was an encouraging and refreshing as well as challenging word. When asked whether Vatican II was a paradigm shift for Peggy and others at the time, Helen Roach, her sister, responded immediately: “Yes! Of course! We believed, as our mothers did, that what the priest said was right, and because you were “just” a layperson, you didn’t know any better. However, our mothers were smart enough to raise us so that when the priest was wrong and they were right, they would tell us to not listen to Father about such and such.” Being raised in such an environment certainly allowed Peggy the freedom to both work within the Church and be dissatisfied with it at times.

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17 Ibid, paragraph 899.
18 Personal Interview, Helen Roach, 4/25/07.
Along with this renewal of the role of the laity within the Church came a renewal of the relationship of the Church in the world. This is where the "social teaching" of the Church comes into play, and the challenge begins. Already before Vatican II there had been encyclicals which had outlined the problems of inequality facing those who lived in the modern world. At the turn of the century, the Church began to understand that the issues facing the industrial world were very different than those facing the medieval world. The question of "good work" in increasingly dehumanized work places, the question of a "just, living wage," the question of "equal pay for equal work," the question of quality education and health care for those who are marginalized in society, were not considered "Catholic" problems until recently.

Constantly in dialogue with the Church, both Dorothy and Peggy were well familiar with the encyclicals of the Church on these questions. Dorothy and Peter's work with the Catholic Worker was a response to the encyclical Rerum Novarum. Pope Leo XIII wrote this encyclical to address "the condition of the worker," and it was published in 1891. The final draft was mainly the work of Cardinal Camillo Mazzella. Its central themes were: 1) the suffering of workers (that the Church needed to see it and respond); 2) property of workers (they had a right to some property); 3) role of the state (while the church could provide direct aid, the state needed to make reforms); 4) necessity of a living wage; 5) right to organize (unions were not 'ungodly'); 6) collaboration rather than class struggle; and 7) role of the church. While these may seem unimportant to the casual observer, in fact this encyclical would save countless workers from leaving the Church in America during the last part of the nineteenth century. It also inspired the laity to respond. Although Dorothy and Peter were actively involved in the "street apostolate" and found only a few willing to give up their lives in such a manner, the Catholic Worker at its
peak had a circulation of 150,000 – there were many who were beginning to understand the connection between their faith and their response to the poor.

While Peggy surely knew *Rerum Novarum*, the works with which she would have been surely more familiar were the documents of Vatican II: *Gaudium Et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World) and *Lumen Gentium* (On The Role Of The Laity In The Church). She knew them so well that she had quotes from them attached to her desk, and was constantly inviting others into dialogue about them. These documents of Vatican II have ushered in a new understanding which is reflected in the Catechism: “Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority.”

This justice is what Peggy spent her life working for – she was never completely satisfied that the work was complete, but was content to pass the work on to a younger generation when it was time.

Both Dorothy and Peggy, their orthodox theology always influencing their radical action, stand as an example of what Catholic women can offer to the Church and the world. Pope John Paul II called it the “genius of women” and wrote on at length in his encyclical *Mulieris Dignitatem*:

Necessary emphasis should be placed on the “*genius of women,*” not only by considering great and famous women of the past or present but also those *ordinary* women who reveal the gift of their womanhood by placing themselves at the service of others in their everyday lives. For in giving themselves to others each day, women fulfill their deepest vocation. Perhaps more than men, women *acknowledge the person*, because they see persons with their hearts. They see them independently of various ideological or political systems. They see others in their greatness and

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limitations; they try to go out to them and help them. In this way the basic plan of the Creator
takes flesh in the history of humanity and there is constantly revealed, in the variety of vocations,
that beauty – not merely physical, but above all, spiritual – which God bestowed from the very
beginning on all, and in a particular way on women.20 (italics not my own)

Responding with concrete action to the suffering of the world has most often been “women’s
work,” and neither Dorothy nor Peggy ever found shame in such a description of what they did.
They allowed themselves to be a powerful witness, and “sign of contradiction” as Christians
first, women second, and it would be a disservice to them both to rewrite history to the point of
changing their perspective about women in the Church. Peggy said, in a magazine article she
wrote in 1983:

Too often women trying to project a vital and vibrant feminine mystique have been
undercut by strident—and myopic—proponents of a feminist cause. This has been true,
unfortunately, in the Church as well as in society. For me the hallmark of Catholic women is that
they are persons who reach far beyond the circle of their families and friends to enrich the quality
of life of their neighbors here and across the world. They are women who put their vision and
their values, their competence and their skills at the service of others.21

V. Towards A Definition of Leadership

Peggy’s quote seems a fitting introduction to a discussion of leadership. In his book,
Leadership for the 21st Century, Joseph Rost examines the academic discipline of ‘leadership
studies’ for a single, unifying definition of the idea of ‘leadership.’ He bemoans the fact that such
a definition does not, in fact, exist within the discipline, which makes it almost impossible to

20 John Paul II. “On the Dignity and Vocation of Women (Mulieris Dignitatem).” Vatican Online Papal
build up a body of knowledge. In an extensive work, Rost conducted a literature review of the existing body of information on leadership from the 1950's to the early 1990's (when the book was published). Although he finds different definitions in different decades, the main theme he discovered was that leadership is essentially good management. Considering that the majority of scholarship in leadership studies has occurred in the twentieth century, in primarily western nations, this is no surprise. One does not have to search very far to find examples of the subtle way in which 'leadership' and 'good management' are used interchangeably. One reason for this is that like leadership, the study of it is highly contextual. There are sociologists, historians, management experts, and social scientists that examine everything from their particular discipline. As such, behavior-oriented scholars needing something with which to quantify leadership look to management styles with pleasure.

One main example of this is the 'leadership as excellence' theory which essentially says that improving organizational effectiveness and efficiency is the goal of all leadership. In Bass and Avolio's book *Improving Organizational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership*, they make it clear that better management is their goal. The book uses examples of men (still the default audience) can 'transform an organization,' and there is no mention of a definition beyond a business model.

Equally frustrating are the many competing leadership theories: for example, the 'great man/woman' leadership theory of the early part of the twentieth century. A leader, in this instance, rises up in the midst of turbulent times to bring a new vision of the future, virtually unaided by followers. Think here of Franklin D. Roosevelt or Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the way history has written their stories. Compare this with an 'authoritarian vs. democratic' theory, which has different forms but essentially states that leadership is embedded in your personality.
“Authoritarian” leaders look to authority with a mixture of fear and awe, wishing to emulate that kind of power. When these leaders then take power, they become ruthless in keeping it by enforcing rules and regulations and a strict hierarchical structure. “Democratic” leaders, however, are those less concerned with raw power, and create structures that lead toward collaboration and cooperation. They can be strict, but not in the same way an authoritarian leader can. Some variations of this model include a “laissez faire” leader who simply allows things to happen as they will, only stepping in if absolutely necessary. Add to this list the “situational/contextual” theory of leadership, which says that leadership is so dependent on the context in which it occurs that no one definition is even possible.

Thus, the reader searching for one definition of leadership finds many, which often conflict with one another and the majority of which are discussed in the context of organizational effectiveness with men as the default audience. There is little room for a person such as Dorothy Day or especially Peggy Roach to even be described as a leader, simply because there is very little in either of their lives that can be quantified. Both Dorothy and Peggy held formal leadership positions only briefly and with a peculiar lack of a need for status or power. Joseph Rost’s definition then sounds even more appealing because it speaks to a much broader experience of leadership.

Rost makes the claim that we have moved beyond the industrial model for society, due to the transition that society is undergoing, and this requires a new way of leading. Writing in 1991, as Europe was flush with the victory over communism, Rost’s idea rings true and is echoed in Thomas Friedman’s more recent book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*: we live in an age of ‘globalization’ in which the walls have come down, both literally and figuratively, and as we
discover new barriers, we require new ways of communicating with each other. This, of course, drastically changes the way people think about leadership.

While Rost's book alone did not provide an entire paradigm for a new school of thought about leadership, it did spark discussion among scholars. In fact, it was not Joseph Rost that originated the concept of 'transformational' leadership, but rather James MacGregor Burns, in his seminal work, titled simply *Leadership*. He offers a transactional/transforming model—'transactional' leaders are those who exchange one thing for another (i.e. jobs for votes), while 'transforming' leaders search for the deeper needs of their followers and seek to morally elevate them: "That people can be lifted *into* their better selves is the secret of transforming leadership and the moral and practical theme of this book." The 'transformation,' then, is a moral one, concerned with the 'end values' of liberty and justice, which will require a new vocabulary.

Burns is writing in 1978, when "leadership studies" as such did not really exist, and he is one of the first to begin the discussion of the constructs needed for an academic school of thought on the matter.

Rost's definition is original: "Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes based on mutual purposes." Rost's model also allows us to reexamine history and ask ourselves if we have not found women as leaders simply because our definitions weren't bold or broad enough. The same is true of the Church: through the confusion of a host of ills, there have been women present, transforming the Church, and we will find them if we look in the right place.

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VI. Dorothy Day

One such woman is Dorothy Day, who was born in 1897 in New York City.24 She had two older brothers, one younger sister and one younger brother, whom she loved dearly. She was about eight years old when the San Francisco earthquake of 1905 destroyed the city. In her autobiography, The Long Loneliness, she describes how the terrible noise and shaking were something she initially connected with God.25 It was after the earthquake, when she saw how tragedy had brought forth a caring community, that she saw something she would long for the rest of her life. Shortly after that, her family moved to Chicago, where her father found work as a journalist. It was here in Chicago that she began to notice not only the beauty of living in the city, but the inequality and desperate poverty of many around her: "...the very fact that The Jungle was about Chicago where I lived, whose streets I walked, made me feel that from then on my life was to be linked to theirs, their interests were to be mine; I had received a call, a vocation, a direction to my life."26 This love for the poor would continue to blossom, and she found a solution first with socialism, then with Catholicism.

It was during her time as a young student at the University of Illinois from 1914 to 1916, where she was introduced to socialist ideas. It led her to join the Socialist Party, and in 1916 she headed to New York to work as a journalist for The Call, a socialist newspaper. After that, she spent time working for several other socialist newspapers, and even tried nursing for a year. However, in her heart of hearts she was a journalist and so in 1919 she left working as a nurse and became a wandering, freelance writer. She describes it as a time of sensuality, and she had many friends who were socialists, anarchists and communists. She herself discovered anarchy as

26 Ibid, p 36.
a worthwhile model, and it would greatly influence her for the rest of her life. It was during this time that she met her common-law husband, and gave birth to their daughter, Tamar Theresa. It was as a result of Tamar that Dorothy decided to enter the Catholic Church in 1927. She wanted structure and morality for her daughter where Dorothy herself had been lacking in it. In 1932, Dorothy met Peter Maurin, and together they founded the Catholic Worker movement. She describes it this way: “I feel that I have done nothing well, but I have done what I could…. Five years after I became a Catholic, I met Peter Maurin and his story must play a great part in this work because he was my master and I was his disciple; he gave me a “way of life and instruction” and to explain what has become of “The Catholic Worker Movement” in the Church throughout the world, I must write of him.”

They began with *The Catholic Worker*, a newspaper with stories of the poor and how to respond to their needs. Peter’s ideas of a “green revolution” which involved houses of hospitality for the urban poor, self-sustaining farms where workers and intellectuals worked alongside each other, and community living were ones that Dorothy helped bring to life.

The audience of *The Catholic Worker* soon reached 150,000, and with it came those interested in being part of the vision that Dorothy and Peter described, so the St. Joseph House of Hospitality opened in New York. Countless other houses modeled on the one in New York opened across the country, and eventually around the world. This proved to be very unpopular with the local clergy. It made good, pious Catholics who simply gave their money to the poor too uncomfortable – did they really have to go live with the poor in order to genuinely follow God’s commands? Dorothy’s response: “If we feed the poor, we are called saints. If we ask why they are poor, we are called communists. We do both, and we are neither saints nor communists.”

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response became more theologically profound as she spent her life working with the poor. She discovered the ‘sacrament of the ordinary,’ which would shape her entire work and life.

Peter died in 1949, a theological genius yet unrealized. Dorothy, however, lived to be very old, and spent her life advocating not just for the poor but for all those without a voice, including minorities and migrant workers. She was an ardent pacifist until the day she died, and inspired many activists who protested the Vietnam War and nuclear weapons. She died in 1980 in New York City in a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality, considered a living saint by many.

It is hard to encapsulate a life such as Dorothy Day’s in such a short space. One thing is certain – she changed forever the way that thousands of ordinary Catholics saw the poor. A prolific writer, she wrote countless articles for *The Catholic Worker* and other Catholic publications, as well as her own books. Although she was never entirely comfortable working with the Catholic hierarchy, her vision for living as a Christian in the world was so influential that she is currently being considered for the canonization process by the Vatican. Ironically, this is something she would never have wanted. Dorothy was, until the day she died, an anarchist and an agitator, and about as far from sainthood as the next person. Her example of a life lived in love for the poor, given focus by Peter Maurin’s brilliant vision for the future, is something that causes plenty of Christians today to be a more than a little uncomfortable. She was never satisfied with the Church the way it was, and here in the *Long Loneliness* that is evident:

I loved the Church for Christ made visible. Not for itself, because it was so often a scandal to me. Romano Guardini said the Church is the Cross on which Christ was crucified; one could not separate Christ from His Cross, and one must live in a permanent state of dissatisfaction with the Church. The scandal of businesslike priests, of collective wealth, the lack of a sense of responsibility for the poor, the worker, the Negro, the Mexican, the Filipino, and even the
oppression of these, and the consenting to the oppression of them by our industrial capitalist order – these made me feel often that priests were more like Cain than Abel. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” they seemed to say in respect to the social order. There was plenty of charity but too little justice. With all the knowledge I have gained these twenty-one years I have been a Catholic, I could write many a story of priests who were poor, chaste and obedient, who gave their lives daily for their fellows, but I am writing of how I felt at the time of my baptism.28

She would spend her life in this permanent state of dissatisfaction and it would prove fruitful for the whole Church, although lonely for her.

VII. Peggy Roach

When one looks at the Church, often those leading in a formal position are the men in clerical collars. When looking at the Catholic Church, especially in Chicago, in light of urban ministry, bringing a voice to those who have none, there are several bishops and priests who come up, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and Monsignor John Egan being among them. This last man is the one on whom I want to focus – Msgr. Egan, affectionately called ‘Jack’ by everyone who knew him, would spend every minute of his life (literally) in the service of the poor in Chicago. His secretary, teammate and second-in-command, Peggy Roach, single her entire life, like Dorothy Day, spent her life working to bring about a more just world.

Born in Chicago just before the Great Depression as the middle child to James E. and Cecile Duffy Roach, she had three sisters and one brother, and they all remained close throughout their lives. She attended St. Scholastica High School, and became involved in Chicago Inter-Student Catholic Action (CISCA), where she learned for the first time about the “race problem.” Living in a segregated society, she had very little contact with non-white people.

her age, although she became very interested in learning more about black communities. It was during Peggy’s high school years that the United States entered World War II, and she graduated in 1945.

After high school she went to Mundelein College, where she was active in student affairs. Graduating in 1949 with a journalism degree, she credits her teachers with instilling in her a sense of purpose. She quotes one of her favorite teachers, Sister Madelena, as inspiring her with this quote: “I read in the Book that He who was the Christ went about doing good. It is disconcerting to me that I am so easily content with just going about.” Peggie would spend the next couple of years traveling from job to job, with four jobs in five years.

In 1954, she became the Executive Secretary for the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women (ACCW) and found her niche. One day, she had an encounter that she describes this way:

The door to my small office at the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women burst open.

A priest, who had just concluded a meeting in the adjoining conference room, introduced himself:

“My name’s Egan. May I use your phone?” He was Father John Egan, director of the Cana Conference, the diocesan marriage preparation and enrichment program. Little did I know that introduction would have such an impact on my life in the years to come. In fact, this would be the same Msgr. John Egan with whom she would spend most of her career.

During the time that she spent at ACCW, she was introduced to the Marillac House, which served a poor black community. Her education began in earnest, as Sr. Mary William, the director there, convinced her to become a ‘Big Sister’ to two young black girls. She was also introduced to the John A. Ryan Forum, which was a group of Catholics who would get together

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30 Ibid. p. 8.
every month to hear about social problems and how the Church was responding to them long before Vatican II. After a brief interlude as Alumnae Director at Mundelein College, Peggy became the administrative assistant at the Chicago Catholic Interracial Council in 1961. Her duties included planning the fundraising dinners, which raised the majority of the funds needed for the organization. A short time later in 1962, she was offered a job with the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) in Washington, D.C.

With John F. Kennedy in office, everyone’s hopes were high that real change would come for those who were struggling for their basic civil rights. On January 14, 1963, Peggy returned to Chicago as a delegate from the NCCW to the first National Conference on Religion and Race. Part of this initial group who helped to gather those religious leaders who saw racism as a moral evil, she was at the forefront of the civil rights battle as it began. She was also instrumental in making sure that this conference even happened, as will be discussed later. The guest list included a list of some of the most well-respected clergy, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish, in the country, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As she puts it: “It was an historic moment. I could feel it. I thought - we can change the world!” She brought this excitement back to the NCCW with a packet of information about the Conference, facts about poverty, crime and racism, and suggestions for furthering the educational process, which she titled: “Race - Challenge to Justice and Love.”

As Peggy continued to work with the NCCW, she continued to work with organizations promoting full civil rights for all of America’s citizens. One of these was the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), which “promoted the need for a comprehensive civil rights legislation and was influential in determining the contents of a civil rights bill.” As usual in

Washington politics, the bill became stuck in the process of figuring out the details. So the LCCR planned a march on Washington, D.C. to pressure Congress into signing the bill. They planned it for August 28, 1963 and spread the word, hoping for a large and peaceful crowd. They were pleasantly surprised by the turnout: the march was 250,000 strong. It was this same march at which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. An inspiring moment to say the least, it was a time full of great hopes, but those hopes were dashed when three short months later, John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and everything took a back seat to mourning for the president. In February of 1964, the Civil Rights Act was finally passed and signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson. As Peggy wept for joy, she received a gift from a friend, Msgr. Frank Hurley, who had been invited to the signing ceremony: one of the pens Lyndon Johnson had used to sign the bill. He said: "you really worked on this effort, I think you deserve this pen." She carried it around for almost ten years, treasuring it as a small gift of thanks.

Peggy’s work with the NCCW continued even after the disappearance and murder of three young civil rights activists in June of 1964: Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Mickey Schwerner. Shortly after their disappearance, she was a part of "Wednesdays in Mississippi." Over the course of that summer, a team of Northern women, involved in five national women’s organizations, would fly into Jackson, Mississippi. They would spend time working with Freedom Schools, and get to know the women and men who lived with segregation and discrimination every day. The efforts continued, as Peggy headed down to Selma with a delegation from the Chicago Catholic Interracial Council. She spent her time learning, and made the first march, but they were turned back by the police. It was two weeks later when the
successful Selma march of 25,000 people to Montgomery resulted in the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

As a faithful Catholic living during Vatican II, Peggy was inspired by the following words in its opening document: "The joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men (and women) of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts." This was what encouraged her to continue the work she had already begun. She started working with Matt Ahmann at the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice (NCCIJ), with whom she had collaborated for the National Conference on Race and Religion two years earlier. It was also at this time that she again made contact with Father Egan. He was the pastor at Presentation Parish in Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago. Peggy volunteered to help him handle his correspondence, so she would spend the week working with Matt Ahmann, and the weekend completing tasks for Father Egan. When Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, the grief, confusion and riots that ensued only heightened Peggy’s resolve to bring justice where she could. One of the doors which working with Father Egan opened up was getting to know his parishioners and their needs. This led to the formation of the Contract Buyer’s League (CBL) by the people in the community who were experiencing discriminatory rates on their mortgages. This was Peggy’s introduction to community organizing, when she became secretary for the CBL in 1968, and continued the fight for her brothers and sisters to receive their full rights.

When Father Egan was invited to take a sabbatical time at Notre Dame, he asked Peggy to come along as his secretary to continue the work for the poor that he had begun in Chicago. So

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the two of them continued the partnership which would last for the next several decades. They were a part of the Institute for Urban Studies, and were instrumental in forming the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry (CCUM). It was designed to bring together the priests and laypeople who were working in what the Church had, up to that point, considered the “political” work of social action within their parishes. Their initial conference was ninety-two priests (with a few women religious), and with the release of *Justice in the World* from the Bishop’s Synod in 1971, came a justification of their work: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.” Two hundred fifty people attended the next CCUM conference, over a third of whom were women, and in 1972, it became an annual event.

In 1976, Father Egan was asked to become the Assistant to the President and Director of Notre Dame’s Center for Pastoral and Social Ministry. Here at Notre Dame, in the center of the active, institutionalized church, Peggy was doing her best to help Father Egan provide resources for those who wanted to work within and through the Church to bring about change.

After a few years at Notre Dame, they came back to work with the Archdiocese of Chicago and head the Office of Human Relations and Ecumenism. At their farewell dinner, Father Hesburgh remarked: “I have found Jack and Peggy the most symbiotic team I have ever encountered.” This was really their secret – they worked as a team, never caring who got the credit. Their work was not centered on abstract principles, but rather on how to most effectively bring the love of God to all those they encountered.

Jack passed away in 2001, spending his last breath working for justice, and Peggy remained, until the day he died, his faithful friend and teammate. It is interesting that Peggy spends most of her small book of memoirs, *Reflections on a Journey*, writing about the other
people that she worked with, and very little about herself. Her thoughts on working with Jack Egan: “I feel that all that went before prepared me for this 35-year journey with Father Egan and the work we did together. We believed in the same principles of social justice founded on the dignity of the human person. We shared concerns for the People of God and their quest for justice.”

Peggy herself passed away April 20, 2006 as a result of cancer, leaving a legacy of countless lives touched by her influence.

VIII. Transformational Leadership

Dorothy Day and Peggy Roach are unique women, and now that we have explored their lives, and the context in which they lived, we can explore more fully how they were transformational leaders. As discussed previously, ‘transformational’ leadership offers a new paradigm. It is a broad definition containing several important elements: first, a model focused on relationships in which leaders are as influenced by followers as much as they influence followers; second, dynamic, active people “doing leadership;” third, real, substantial change is intended; and fourth, instead of goals, mutual purposes. Both Dorothy Day and Peggy Roach led in such a way that easily finds a place in such a description of leadership. How they did so will be discussed shortly. However, it is important here to say a word about ethics.

According to Joanne Ciulla, editor of Ethics, the Heart of Leadership, “Leadership is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good. Ethics, then, lie at the heart of leadership.” Indeed, whenever any person is leading, how they lead and where they are leading others, are pertinent questions. In fact, it changes the entire definition of a particular relationship as ‘leadership’. For instance,

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one can say that someone is an ‘effective’ leader, but that may simply mean that they have convinced other people to follow them. Hitler is such an example. He convinced an entire country of the need for a new vision of German culture and history, while simultaneously building a new economy. No leader is ever in a historical or cultural vacuum, and, in a certain sense, Adolf Hitler, it can be said, “transformed” Germany, as an “effective leader.” It is clear that the transformation scarred an entire nation and produced almost unbelievable atrocities. However, transformation is not always for the better, and it should be carefully noted that the German people chose their leader. How willingly they did so, based on the institutionalized terror of the Nazi state, is an entirely different question, and perhaps this is where the model breaks down.

This brings us back to the difference between an “effective” leader and an “ethical” one. Using the word “ethical” in quotation marks is done primarily because there isn’t space to explore fully the extent of the meaning of that word. In an “ethical” leadership relationship, the followers freely choose, without coercion, to follow someone wholeheartedly. They are not physically or psychologically manipulated, and they are active agents in the relationship. One such example of an “ethical” leader is demonstrated in John F. Kennedy’s famous quote: “ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” I have not studied Kennedy enough as a leader to say whether I find him a complete example, but perhaps his legacy comes from the power of such a statement. Americans do not remember that Kennedy brought us through a war, or was particularly humble, or wrought an overnight transformation of American society for the better, but rather that he asked his fellow Americans to join him in his work of reshaping the American vision. This is a powerful effect, and I would argue that as
"ethical," indeed, as "transformational" leaders, both Dorothy Day and Peggy Roach had such a powerful effect on their world in their own time.

It is helpful here to explain that more fully through a few examples.

1) The relationship is based on influence (the relationship is multidirectional and noncoercive).

Both Dorothy and Peggy were, if nothing else, influential, though each had a decidedly different kind of influence. They were also continuously influenced by those whom they led. In describing Peggy’s kind of influence, it is not an understatement to say that there were many people who wouldn’t have continued doing the good work they were doing without her guiding influence. This is how Peggy described one such instance:

Matt Ahmann had a spectacular idea...to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1963 with a National Conference on Religion and Race in Chicago. Churches and synagogues throughout the country would send delegates to fashion a plan for improving race relations in the nation by addressing the problems of racial discrimination and prejudice in their own institutions and in their communities. One day, I found out Matt was giving up the idea... My response was utter dismay. It was the best idea to come down the pike in years, and I felt Matt could not abandon it...Immediately I went to his office to discuss it with him. We took an overall look at the conference plan, then worked backwards from the conference dates, detailed the tasks that needed to be accomplished, assigned those tasks, set deadlines, etc. I assured him the conference plan was workable, and that I would help as much as I could. He agreed to push on.35

This did become the National Conference on Religion and Race, mentioned earlier, which took place January 14, 1963. From the conference came a book of each delegate’s reflections, which she and Matt Ahmann edited, entitled The Church and the Urban Racial Crisis. In addition to

Matt Ahmann, there were many others for whom Peggy’s influence was great, chief among them, Jack Egan. One of her friends had this to say about her:

.... and Peggy, formed by family, parish and schools, and in Chicago’s rich lay apostolate, maturing in Washington with the National Council of Catholic Women, engaged with the racial crisis in NCCIJ and the Contract Buyers League, alert to the claims of the least among us, beyond the borders of the old church, drawn by grace to partnership with the priest-organizer (Father Egan), helping him to understand communities and movements new on the scene, doing the thousands tasks of networking which sustained the movement. Peggy, with a strategy to make a great idea happen, Peggy with her rolodex connecting them with everyone they had ever met, Peggy knowing everyone’s name and asking the right questions about family and health and loss and hope.36

Her influence was deeply felt, and because she created such a powerful network, those that she knew were able to bring to her attention the issues that needed to be solved. Later in her life, she was often the support of an organization as it was being founded, or the encouraging voice to those approaching burnout.

Dorothy was another case altogether. She had a very strong personality and Jim Eder, who worked with her in Chicago, tells it this way:

Well, you know she had an authoritarian manner/style/personality and a brilliant mind, coupled with an impatience for those who didn’t “get it” right away. This often put her into situations where she could be so overbearing that she could quickly reduce someone to tears. There was another Catholic Worker named Stanley, and it was literally his job to make fun of Dorothy every time he saw her beginning to get too oppressive. Then she’d say: “Uh oh,

Stanley's making fun of me, I guess I need to quit it." and then she'd change the way she was talking to the person.37

As this little story demonstrates, she was often as influenced by those who surrounded as she was influential. Her forceful personality, combined with her passion and vision, made a profound influence on everyone with whom she came into contact. Sometimes it was the force of her ideas through the paper, sometimes it was meeting her in person, but each person that chose to work with her chose to because she had challenged them in a way that they couldn’t refuse.

2) Leaders and followers are the people in this relationship (there are many and active followers and typically more than one leader).

Rost especially stressed here the idea of a “leadership relationship,” and lacking another word, reluctantly used ‘followers.’ Both leader and followers, however, are always “doing leadership” in that they are actively engaged in influencing each other.

Again, Peggy and Dorothy are very different in this respect. For Dorothy, it was always the Catholic Workers and the people associated with them that she was leading. In that sense, it is a fairly easily identifiable group of people. However, Dorothy definitely had different relationships with different people. Robert Ellsberg, editor of a collection of Dorothy’s works entitled By Little and By Little, says it this way:

On hand in most Catholic Worker houses was a similar cast of pilgrims, scholars and “holy fools,” the young and old, workers, loafers, and everything in between. It was a microcosm

37 Personal Interview, Jim Eder, 4/16/07.
of sorts, a family, as Dorothy would say, and an example of the possibility of a diverse group of individuals residing together in relative harmony, without the need for elaborate rules.  

Such an organic community does not require good management, but rather a mutuality of purpose and a guide who can push and prod as much as console and encourage. Dorothy was about as far from sainthood as the next person, but she was able to offer a diverse group of people a great deal.

Peggy, as Dorothy, was the leader of an ever-changing group of people, some large groups, some small. At many points, she was a leader of a specific group of people, such as with NCCW or later at NCCIJ. At other times, she was the steady support and organizer that kept a person or a whole project on track. Her friend, Monsignor Phillip Murnion describes it this way:

...No matter what people were discussing, what conference they were planning, what plot they were hatching, Peggy would wait out all the far-flung notions, occasionally insisting, “Give me a for-instance,” until people were ready to turn their thoughts into action. Then justice became a work and not an ideology, a verb and not just a noun.

This is a quiet kind of leadership, which is powerful because everyone is actively engaged.

Peggy was active as a ‘follower’ (by proactively organizing the details), and therefore active as a leader, calling forth the truest and best gifts of others. As she liked to say: “as long as the job got done, it didn’t matter who got the credit.” As much as Dorothy was an anarchist, Peggy was an organizer. Peggy’s gift was an incredible resource to the numerous good works with which she was engaged in during her life – she could literally help to sustain a work because she was able to create a network.

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3) **Leaders and followers intend real changes.**

That each of these women intended to change their world is beyond doubt, and they understood to begin “where they were, and as they could” (to paraphrase St. Ignatius) by working with the Catholic Church. Rost defines “real change” as: “Real means that the leaders and followers intend changes in people’s lives, attitudes, behaviors, and basic assumptions, as well as in the groups, organizations, societies and civilizations they are trying to lead.”

Dorothy wanted to see a total transformation within the Church – a radical response of love for the poor. She was also an ardent pacifist, and wanted nuclear weapons and war abolished. Peggy wanted a total transformation within the Church as well, but to the next level – that of bringing justice to those who had none. She was a lover of humanity and wanted each and every person to be treated as a first-class citizen. Justice was her work for many years, whether as a marcher in Selma, Alabama or as an organizer with CBL.

It is a spirit of “practical idealism” which characterizes both Dorothy and Peggy and the people they led. It was not enough for them to say that poverty or injustice exist, because the Gospels so obviously require a response of our very lives. Also, it is not only to the great and mighty that the call of God is given, but to each and every baptized Christian. As Mother Teresa said: “We can do no great things, only small things with great love.” It is a “sacramentality of the ordinary,” a way of understanding the everyday and the mundane as holy. A sacrament is defined in the Catechism as a “visible sign of the invisible grace of God.” Most specifically, these are the seven Sacraments of the Catholic faith through which a Catholic comes to a fuller knowledge of God. A sacramental life, however is one lived with an understanding that in the very actions of one’s life, namely serving the poor and working for justice, are so intricately

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linked with a deep and abiding relationship with God through the Sacraments that one’s actions toward one’s fellow human beings becomes a kind of sacrament. The witness of one’s life for Christ consists in the simple tasks of ordinary life. As such, one is working for nothing less than bringing about the kingdom of God on earth.

This is one of the key differences between Rost’s model and others. The “leadership as good management” model requires that this “real, substantive change” actually occur in order for effective leadership to occur. Rost, on the other hand, put his emphasis on the relationship and the process. In the very act of working toward such change, leadership has occurred. As such, he allows for a much larger framework when discussing what leadership is or is not—providing the ability to see real leaders, as opposed to those who are simply in formal leadership positions.

4) **Leaders and followers develop mutual purposes.**

Here also is a key difference with Rost’s model. He does not insist that one leader have one all-inclusive vision or specific goal that many and varied followers need to believe in or achieve. Rather, he offers a more holistic, realistic model. “Purposes are broader, more holistic or integrated...than goals.”

Here also is where Dorothy and Peggy were very different. In the case of the Catholic Worker, the use of this model almost falls apart because many of the people who came to the Catholic Worker had very different purposes than Dorothy. She was there to both feed the poor and educate her fellow Catholics through *The Catholic Worker.* Some people were attracted to the work solely because of the paper, others only to do the work of caring for the poor. While

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there were mutual and interconnected purposes, there was often conflict, especially when it came to pacifism. During World War II and Vietnam, Dorothy remained an adamant, vocal peace activist.

The Works of Mercy could not be separated from the Works of Peace. We were told to feed the hungry, while war destroyed crops and caused starvation. We were told to comfort the afflicted, while war brought misery and ruin. We were called to recognize Christ in the disguise of our neighbors. It was harder still to see Him behind the face of the one called “enemy.” This was true folly in the eyes of the world. But we were not told to love up to the point of reason, prudence, or personal safety – but to love unreasonably, foolishly, profligately, unto the Cross, unto death.43

Such folly often gathers together a group, but can just as easily set it asunder. In fact, that is what happened with the Catholic Worker. During the Vietnam War, the movement almost entirely disbanded, and would not have continued had there not been a strong commonality of purpose among enough people. It was never a matter of whether people were committed to the purposes and mission of the Catholic Worker, but rather how they individually thought that mission should be carried out.

Peggy was a slightly different case. She spent her life doing a variety of different work, although with a common theme. One thing I noticed as I studied her life was that she always (and only) responded to the needs of the community if she could do so in a constructive way. She herself describes the staying power of her work with Father Egan this way: “We were a good team because each of us respected and loved the other in the partnership. Support was always there. When one was weak, the other was strong, and the job would get done if it didn’t matter

who got the credit." This was Peggy's way of working with anybody, whether Father Egan or a national organization. Those who worked with her said that they were always happy to have Peggy on their side, and they knew she always would be, which gave them a tremendous power. Her focus was not on herself, or even the results, but rather on the process.

Examining Dorothy Day and Peggy Roach as transformational leaders, we see that Rost's model is a very different way of looking at leadership. It requires that we pay no attention to anything that may actually change as a result of leaders and followers "doing leadership." It is the very relationship itself and manner in which it proceeds that is definitive. "Leadership helps to transform people in organizations who engage themselves in the relationship that is leadership. In the process, organizations and societies may also be changed." Rost is careful to note that this transformation may not always be a moral, nor even a positive one. This is where he differs most essentially from Burns' model and it is what makes this particular model so convincing. It requires only that the process of leadership be ethical, and that the process not be defined by whatever results may occur.

Rost is not without his critics, and several of them note that fact that he did not, really could not, offer an entirely new paradigm of leadership as he had hoped. One critic, Joanne Ciulla, denied Rost's claim that because there is a lack of a unifying definition of leadership, there is a lack of a cohesive school of thought or paradigm for leadership studies. Ciulla reminds her readers that not one social science has a "definitive" definition for the work that they do, nonetheless, there is cohesion to the discipline. Another critic is quick to note that although Rost requires the leadership process to be "ethical," he systematically discards every single option for a system of ethics to fit his model. Burns' critique is, of course, that the final definition of a

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leader lacks any moral dimension, which he sees as essential to the idea of “transformational” leadership. However, despite these critiques, Rost definition remains a solid one, with the potential to recreate the idea of leadership anew in this post-industrial, age of globalization.

VIII. Conclusion

It may seem odd that in order to demonstrate a model of leadership for our “post-industrial world in the midst of globalization”, I have chosen to research two women who so obviously are not leaders in this time and place. However, my reasoning is simple: they were fighting a battle for the soul of the modern world, fighting against poverty and racism and injustice, and this is the battle we should still be in the midst of fighting. These are the women on whose shoulders I stand, in whatever way I serve the Church and the world. Peggy I chose because she was indeed one of those women who put herself at the service of others. Of her, her sister and best friend Helen says: “She was always giving her life away for others, a genuinely selfless person. You know, we don’t use that word very often anymore, but she really was selfless.”46 This is the kind of woman through which the Church has been transformed. Dorothy Day remains a challenge to me to live a more radical response to the Gospel and here seems a fitting place to insert this comment from Jim Eder, a fellow Catholic Worker, who worked with her:

At Dorothy’s memorial service in Chicago, a lot of people got up and said things about how wonderful she was, basically eulogizing her. I was asked, on the spot, to say something, because I knew her directly. Well, I got up and said the first thing that came to mind: “When you really got to know Dorothy, she was just another cranky old lady.” Well, of course, everyone was shocked! But in reality, this is what Dorothy would have wanted. She never wanted to be called a

46 Personal Interview, Helen Roach, 4/25/07.
‘saint’ because she said it got everyone else off the hook – if she was just an ordinary person, then her life was more of a challenge to other ordinary people who were called to live out the Gospel. This seems an appropriate closing thought because it leaves us with an uncomfortable feeling that we have not measured up – these were ordinary people. Indeed, both women spent their lives “comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable,” and if we, the comfortable, have been a little “afflicted” by their example, then they have done their work well.

As mentioned earlier, Joseph Rost defines leadership as: “Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes based on mutual purposes.” If leadership is truly that, then both Dorothy Day and Peggy Roach were leaders in the best sense, as I have shown here. Centered in the Sacraments, they gave their lives away with abandon through radical action on the behalf of those who had no voice. Working with the Church through the Second Vatican Council, they saw their beloved Church change a great deal, but they were always willing to continuing giving, “as they were and as they could.” They lived daily with the reality that their work would never be as recognized as the work of their brothers in clerical collars. They also lived with the reality of a broken and sinful Church, with which they were constantly dissatisfied, although they loved it dearly. They never chose professed religious life, and neither ever wanted to be a priest. However, there remains the question of whether they would have effected greater change either in the Church or the world, had they had the option to become priests. I would offer that their witness would have been less powerful.

Both Dorothy and Peggy were on the outside of the institutional hierarchy and therefore were free to say and do things their brothers in the clergy could and would not do and say – they were able to “afflict the comfortable” more effectively as laywomen.

47 Personal Interview, Jim Eder, 4/16/07.
Their gift as women to the Church I see as fourfold: first, being present; second, creating a network; third, holding ideas in tension; and fourth, humility. When I say "being present," I mean what Robert Ellsberg said:

There is a kind of extravagance that belongs to any proper act of charity. Tillich called it the "Holy Waste," a term Dorothy would have appreciated. One thinks of Dorothy Day along with those great women of the Gospels who often seemed to know, with an extra sense, lacking in the more self-conscious men, the significance of the event unfolding in their presence. There was the woman who wasted a large quantity of expensive oil anointing Christ's body beforehand for his burial, and the women at the foot of the Cross, and at the tomb... 49

This is an incredible gift for the Church and the world, and one which women in particular offer, primarily because they are more concerned with doing the actual work of God, and less concerned with status.

In addition, they seem more concerned with connecting people. Creating a network is what Peggy did best – getting to know people, and then connecting them with other people doing good work. This is the kind of networking highly praised in the business world precisely because people understand its power. Women, in my experience, seem to have an intuitive sense of this, and network rather naturally. By living in community with more people, women are often able to better listen to those around them, and be many things to many people. Holding things in tension means women, as Dorothy showed us, can be both obedient to the Church and a voice for change within it. Humility, Peggy reminds us, is something that is essential to getting things done. Humility requires setting aside your own agenda, and working with those around you. These four

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things seem, in my experience, particular gifts of women which can literally transform the
Church and the world.
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