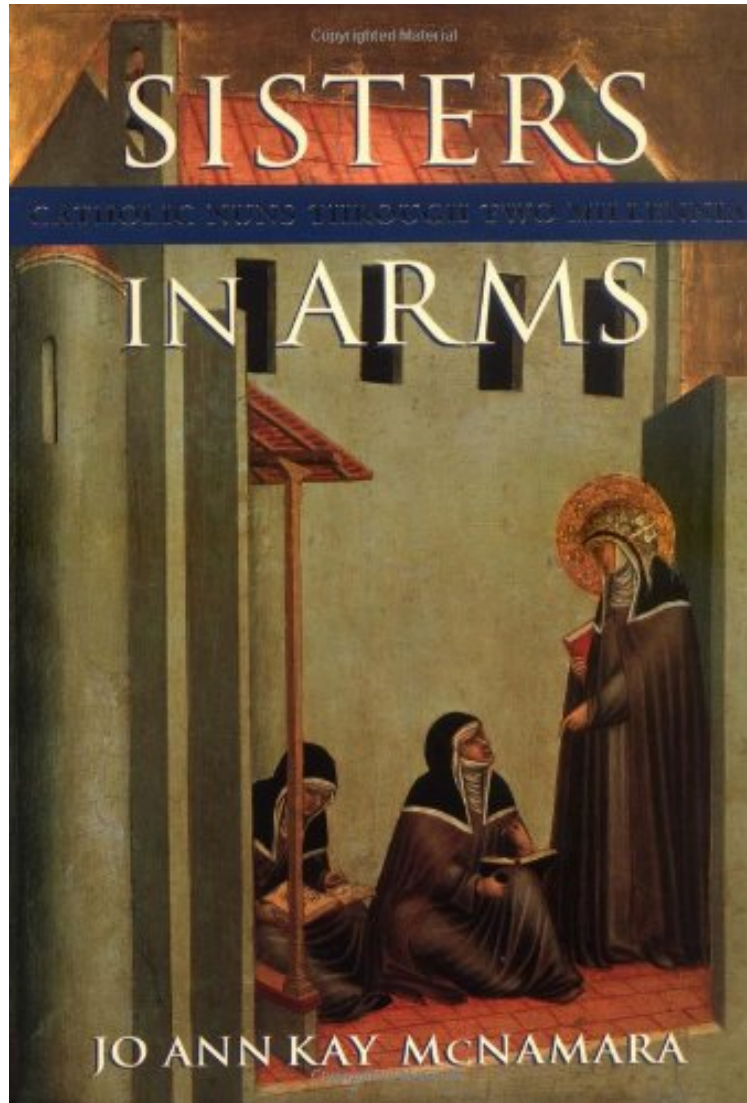


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Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia

Jo Ann Kay McNamara

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Jo Ann Kay McNamara : Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good Introduction to Convent Life By Faustina1 This is a highly detailed and intelligent account of lives in convents from the beginnings of Christianity until the present. It gives important information about the role of Church politics in determining the restrictions on the nuns, and gives plenty of detail of their daily lives. The reader can get a clear picture of what life was like for the women who either chose

convent life in the past or had it chosen for them. My only complaint is that it is so vast and contains so much information that it is hard to keep track of its various threads. A few charts or summaries would help. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful Prose By S. Herlihy McNamara is just as fine a writer as she is a professor. I was honored to study under her and enjoyed every single moment of her class. Her book is just as she is -- sharp, insightful, witty, and great company. She helps bring a potentially dry subject to wonderful life. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. More detail that you want to know By rcyoungs It is 700 page book. A good editing job would have reduced it to 300 pages and made a much easier read. Convents were much more complicated than I realized. They play a substantial role in social and economic development, especially for women. I am surprised that observation is not more widely known and explored by historians.

Spanning two thousand years of Christian religious women's quest for spiritual and vocational fulfillment, *Sisters in Arms* is the first definitive history of Catholic nuns in the Western world. Unfolding century by century, this epic drama encompasses every period from the dawn of Christianity to the present. History has until recently minimized the role of nuns over the centuries. In this volume, their rich lives, their work, and their importance to the Church are finally acknowledged. Jo Ann Kay McNamara introduces us to women scholars, mystics, artists, political activists, healers, and teachers--individuals whose religious vocation enabled them to pursue goals beyond traditional gender roles. They range from Thecla, the legendary companion of Paul, who baptized herself in preparation for facing the lions in the Roman arena, to Hildegard of Bingen, whose visions unlocked her extraordinary talents for music, medicine, and moral teaching in the twelfth century. They also include Sister Mary Theresa Kane, who stood before the pope--and an American television audience--in 1979 and urged him to consider the ordination of women. By entering the convent, McNamara shows, nuns gained a community that allowed them to evolve spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally; but the convent was never a perfect refuge. Women's struggles continued against the male church hierarchy, the broader lay community, and the larger cultural and historical forces of change. The history of nuns is an important part of the larger story of western women whose gender provoked resistance to their claims to autonomy and power. As we enter the third millennium, this groundbreaking work pays fitting tribute to the sisters who have labored with prayer and service for two thousand years, who have struggled to achieve greater recognition and authority, and who have forged opportunities for all women while holding true to the teachings of the Gospel.

.com In this compelling analysis of women who have given their lives to religion since the advent of Christ, Jo Ann Kay McNamara challenges that although the church was the first institution to accept women, "the Catholic clergy remains the last womanless place." McNamara maintains that despite reverence for vows of chastity, history has repeatedly shown that "uncontrolled virginity" is believed to be "as dangerous as uncontrolled sexuality." Nuns during the French Revolution were tried for treason for their "persistent chastity," and the rape of a nun has always symbolized a certain triumph over personal will. Despite numerous injustices, McNamara is careful to balance her book with an impressive list of accomplishments by these dedicated women. From Publishers Weekly While the Roman Catholic church has continued to oppose the ordination of women to the priesthood, the history of the church is filled with chronicles of women who have been instrumental in transmitting the religious teachings of the church as well as in performing acts of charity under the auspices of the church. Although women in the church were denied access to positions of religious authority traditionally held by men, many of these women gathered themselves into religious orders where they could express their devotion to God and church through teaching, missionary activity, social activism and prayer. McNamara traces the development of women's pursuit of spiritual fulfillment and religious vocation from the Apostolic Age through the Middle Ages to the modern world. Throughout this wide-ranging narrative, we are introduced to women like Paul's companion, Thecla, who baptised herself in preparation for her martyrdom, and Sister Mary Theresa Kane, who in 1979 publicly petitioned the pope to ordain women. McNamara's fascinating guide through the lives and work of Catholic nuns over the last two thousand years reveals both the successes and failures of these women who have played such significant roles in the history of the Catholic church. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal In a scholarly and sweeping review of early apostolic, medieval, and modern religious women in the Western world and the Catholic Church, medieval historian McNamara (Hunter Coll.) writes from a feminist perspective and as a secular humanist informed by Catholic education. The "nuns" in the subtitle include women who make simple vows (sisters) as well as those under solemn vows (cloistered nuns). McNamara focuses on events and primary-source accounts (many unavailable in English) both historical and legendary, of dramatic happenings in the lives of religious women who were too often little understood in their own age. With military metaphor, the author explores the social, political, and economic forces in the context of church and gender roles. No such broad-ranging history exists. McNamara points to historical roots and practices that can inform present-day hierarchical organization and advocates a more holistic approach in church ministry. Because of the breadth of content, maps and chronologies would have been helpful. Essential for church history and women's studies. ?Anna Donnelly, St. John's Univ. Lib., N.Y. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.