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Forum: Where Do We Stand?: A Tale of Two Stories

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In addition to this colorful history, I was privileged to be on the subcommittee of GC34 that drafted the document on Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society. Other participants in the subcommittee included delegates from Ireland, Zimbabwe, the Philippines, and Australia. The document gradually gained universal acceptance by the Congregation was certainly one of the "surprise documents," as Fr. Kolvenbach noted afterwards.

In the Northwest we Jesuits take these collaborative efforts with women as normal and natural—no big deal. As GC 34 notes, "Many women have helped to reshape our theological tradition in a way that has liberated both men and women." And religious and lay women directors among us are crucial for the flourishing of the Spiritual Exercises.

The greatest inequities for women come within the Church itself, which is still closed to significant, influential women in major leadership roles. This issue remains an abiding wound in the Body of Christ. As GC 34 also notes, "We [Jesuits] are conscious of the damage to the People of God brought about in some cultures by the alienation of women who no longer feel at home in the Church."

The 70 plus years since the arrival of the first women on our Jesuit campuses are a short span in the life of the Church, but, in the life of individual women and men, 70 years is a life-time, and I hope that a more inclusive, robustly welcoming Church will not take another lifetime. But I also know that building "cathedrals of hope" calls for patience and considerable courage to speak the truth forcefully and with the will conviction of a Fr. McGoldrick. ■

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A TALE OF TWO STORIES

Arthur Madigan, S.J.

One story about women in Jesuit higher education runs: "You (we, they) have come a long way. The battle for equality has been won. The playing field is level. Women can take care of themselves." Another story runs: "We (you, they) still have a long way to go. The gap between the rhetoric of equality and *de facto* inequalities is still too great."

I'm on the boards of LeMoyne and Scranton. The women executives, lawyers, and academics on those boards deserve and receive the full respect of their colleagues. At B.C. women are senior professors, department chairs, and recognized scholars. As employers go, the university is a good place for women who are trying to balance family and career. But the "border work" of women scholars who are subverting the boundaries between the disciplines is not always appreciated. And we have fewer women deans than we had five or ten years ago. (Why?)

We have gifted, high-performing women students. The word is that they are on average better qualified than our men. They come across as confident, expecting to be treated fairly and taken seriously. (Could that be a function of socio-economic class?) But some colleagues question how well B.C. builds the confidence

of its women students. And some of the brainy beauties who stride across campus suffer from the pressure to be perfect. As for the cooks, cleaners, and cashiers, I can't tell if anything has changed for them in the last ten years, or for the men on staff.

Are women's concerns receiving less attention today than ten years ago? People at B.C. are talking about justice for the poor, better race relations, respect for gays and lesbians, and what it will take to keep B.C. Catholic. Discussion of women's issues seems muted by comparison. But perhaps that's because we are talking more respectfully than we were ten years ago. People on different sides of the abortion debate, for instance, show more respect for each others' beliefs and motives.

Decree 14 is an impressive resource, but implementing it means facing practical questions: how do we link the promotion of B.C.'s Catholic identity with the advancement of women? and when will U.S. Jesuit schools organize a world-wide network of Jesuit institutions to promote justice, respect, and advancement for women throughout the world? ■

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CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM IN CHICAGO

Susan A. Ross

In the last ten years, Loyola University Chicago has survived a serious budget crisis, an enrollment crisis, two presidents, three chief academic officers, and countless other changes. But in 2005, we are (we hope) on the other side. The campus is transformed, new buildings are going up, enrollments are at record levels, new faculty are being hired again. And in the spring of 2005, President Michael J. Garanzini, S.J. established a Commission on the Status of Women, on which I serve. In many ways, I think, we are just beginning to respond to GC 34, ten years after it was issued.

Obviously, the difficulties that Loyola has experienced have meant that other issues (mostly financial) have taken priority. President Garanzini's predecessor had delegated two women from university ministry to explore possibilities for GC 34's implementation in 1995, but I had declined to be involved because I felt that the burden of responsibility fell on the Jesuits, not on women.

