



# Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America

*Margaret M. McGuinness*

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**Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America** Margaret M. McGuinness

**Winner, 2014 Catholic Book Award in History presented by the Catholic Press Association**

For generations of American Catholics, the face of their church was, quite literally, a woman's face—the nursing sister in the hospital where they were born, the teaching sister in the school where they were educated, the caring sister who helped them through times of trouble. McGuinness recovers the compelling story of these sisters and puts them back at the center of American Catholic history."

—James M. O'Toole, Boston College

"Conveys the history of American women's religious life in its astonishing breadth and diversity.

McGuinness writes with the authority of a scholar and the ease of a storyteller. Her collective portrait of the women who have for so long represented the face of the American Catholic church will be useful to not only to historians of women and of religion in the United States, but also to general readers who wish to learn about the often hidden and far-ranging contributions vowed women have made to church and nation."

—Kathleen Sprows Cummings, University of Notre Dame

For many Americans, nuns and sisters are the face of the Catholic Church. Far more visible than priests, Catholic women religious teach at schools, found hospitals, offer food to the poor, and minister to those in need. Their work has shaped the American Catholic Church throughout its history. Yet despite their high profile, a concise history of American Catholic sisters and nuns has yet to be published. In *Called to Serve*, Margaret M. McGuinness provides the reader with an overview of the history of Catholic women religious in American life, from the colonial period to the present.

The early years of religious life in the United States found women religious in immigrant communities and on the frontier, teaching, nursing, and caring for marginalized groups. In the second half of the twentieth century, however, the role of women religious began to change. They have fewer members than ever, and their population is aging rapidly. And the method of their ministry is changing as well: rather than merely feeding and clothing the poor, religious sisters are now working to address the social structures that contribute to poverty, fighting what one nun calls "social sin." In the face of a changing world and shifting priorities, women religious must also struggle to strike a balance between the responsibilities of their faith and the limitations imposed upon them by their church.

Rigorously researched and engagingly written, *Called to Serve* offers a compelling portrait of Catholic women religious throughout American history.



Instructor's Guide

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