

Women in leadership: 'He has been true to his commitments'

By Hermine LEES
Staff Writer

In August of 1987, on the feast of the Assumption of Mary, Archbishop Roger Mahony wrote a historic Pastoral Letter on the Role of Women in the Church that heralded his recognition of women's achievements in and for the church. It was titled: "Just as the Women Said..."

Referring to the Gospel of Luke, the archbishop noted, "All too often in our Christian history men have been slow to listen to what women have been saying." He further emphasized the need of all in the archdiocese to listen to the joys and hopes, as well as the sorrows and disappointments, of women in the local church.

"As Church," he noted, "we need to strive to be creative in finding new ways to acknowledge the active role of women ... and to appreciate their gifts."

The Pastoral Letter cited several issues of concern but also offered helpful changes and directives. "Women must increasingly be placed in policy-formation and decision-making levels with the Church," the archbishop affirmed.

His prophetic words resulted in the appointments of women whose long service in their respective roles speaks volumes of not only their particular gifts and abilities, but of Cardinal Mahony's appreciation thereof.

At the top

"Leadership," St. Joseph of Carondelet Sister Cecilia Louise Moore said in 2003,

"must be a cohesive force so that all contributing agents work together, not against each other."

Certainly, as a former president of Mount St. Mary's College, Sister Moore was well-respected for her own leadership skills. It was one reason Archbishop (soon-to-be Cardinal) Mahony appointed her as Secretariat Director for Educational and Formational Services in 1991, later as vice chancellor, and in 1997 as the first religious woman chancellor for the archdiocese. She served six years, until poor health required her to step down; she died in 2004.

"The cardinal has been true to his commitments," she once told *The Tidings*. "There are an increasing number of women in places of influence where competence is respected. He encourages, enables and facilitates in a collaborative style and is prompt and well organized. Women have a gift," she added "that can do a lot for the church."

At her funeral in 2004, Cardinal Mahony called her "a person of such remarkable stature that one hardly knows where to begin to describe her many gifts and talents. She respected and valued every person with whom she carried out her various ministries, and her loving and kind temperament helped resolve so many tensions in difficult situations."

Sister Moore was succeeded as chancellor in 2003 by Sister of Charity Mary Elizabeth Galt, like Sister Moore a veteran educator and administrator who had previously served as associate superintendent of elementary schools, and who has served on U.S. Bishops' and California Catholic Con-



Formerly president of Mount St. Mary's College, Sister Cecilia Louise Moore was the first woman to serve as chancellor of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

ference committees.

It was Sister Galt, as chancellor, who signed and notarized the documents of the archdiocesan Synod in September 2003 that set in motion the implementation of strategies to address priorities of the lo-

cal Church — priorities established over a three-year process of consultation and discernment headed by Franciscan Sister Marilyn Vollmer.

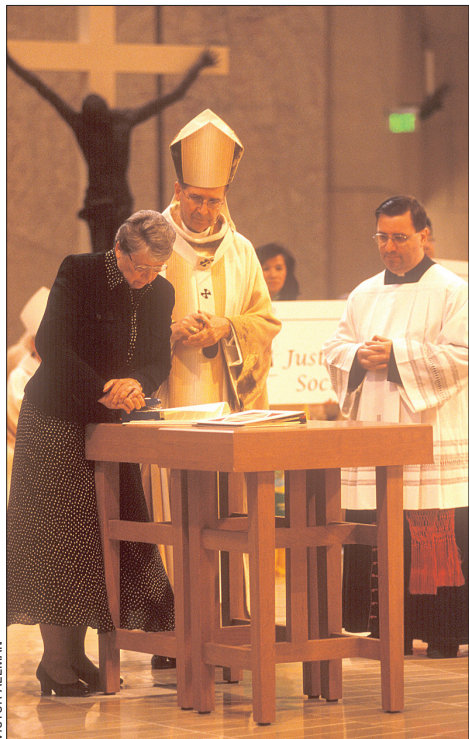
Developer extraordinaire

"My appointment as director of Special Services by the cardinal," Sister of Mercy Mary Jean Meier once said in an interview, "was a recognition, acceptance and affirmation of me as an individual. He is extremely open to recommendations and gives me great freedom to make decisions."

Creating that position shortly after his appointment as archbishop was the beginning of an extraordinary chain of events. The office became the creative instrument in developing fund-raising programs in many ways and for many needs — and the office director was well suited for the task.

Sister Meier helped to begin the Catholic Education Foundation (in 1987), to fund Catholic school scholarships for children in need, and the annual Cardinal's Awards Dinner (in 1990), to support worthy institutions and projects. She also fostered the development of the Cardinal Timothy Manning House of Prayer for Priests. And she was deeply involved behind the scenes in the drive to build the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

Of her working relationship with the cardinal, she asserted that "he has no difficulty in accepting a woman's viewpoint and perspective. He welcomes information, listens and regularly acts on it." In addition, she



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As director of Special Services, Sister Mary Jean Meier was the driving force behind the establishment of the Catholic Education Foundation and the Cardinal's Awards Dinner.