
One of the most penetrating questions in the study of religion asks how to capture the spontaneous creative energy that shapes religious expression into structured religious ways of life. That is, to what degree does human agency or the sacred actions of people play in shaping and transforming religious experiences into rites, rituals, and traditions. Part of the answer lies in how this religious agency and charisma is institutionalized into the core of a belief system. Therefore, imagine a sacred tradition without a historical grounding and context, where patterns of traditions have not been established, and what presents itself is a faith tradition framed by the moment that believers invent and create through practice.

It is this question, and the potentially new way of understanding religion, that is at the core of Catholicism in the American West: A Rosary of Hidden Voices. Comprised of an introduction and six chapters, this volume examines the dynamics of gender, class, and race through the lives and agency of religiously motivated Roman Catholic men and women, whose traditions and experiences emerge from the landscape of the American West. With an emphasis on region, this book juxtaposes the master narrative and large tradition of American Roman Catholicism east of the Mississippi against Catholicism in the West, establishing a paradigm shift. Historical research methods that accent the power of personal faith in the diverse western region are acknowledged in contrast to apologetic and filiopietistic studies that typify the early church histories east of the Mississippi.

Challenging the early Catholic historical scholarship of Peter Guilday and John Tracy Ellis and highlighting the more recent scholarship of Jay P. Dolan, Robert Orsi, John T. McGreevy, and Leslie Woodcock Tentler, Catholicism in the American West offers scholars of American Roman Catholicism a new way to understand sacred tradition in an unscripted and undefined space. Such a contribution promises to become important to the future of American Catholic studies. Through thoughtful essays focusing on Roman Catholic nuns, survival and persistence, laywomen, political action, and racial politics, the methods and perspectives used to capture the personal and ordinary lives of everyday people in this region represent the leading contribution of this volume.

This book opens new scholarly vistas. It calls upon scholars of American Catholicism to incorporate new methodologies into their research and to discover and identify the unique contributions situated in the historical experiences of American Catholics of the West.

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The First to Cry Down Injustice: Western Jews and Japanese Removal During WWII. By Ellen M. Eisenberg. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008. xxxi + 179 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. $65.00, cloth; $24.95, paper.)

As victims of centuries of discrimination, Jews have historically been among the first to protest instances of civil rights violations directed at other groups. Yet during World War II, with some notable exceptions, Jews in the American West were uncharacteristically silent about the removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans. In her carefully researched study, Ellen M. Eisenberg offers a sober and admirably balanced account of the