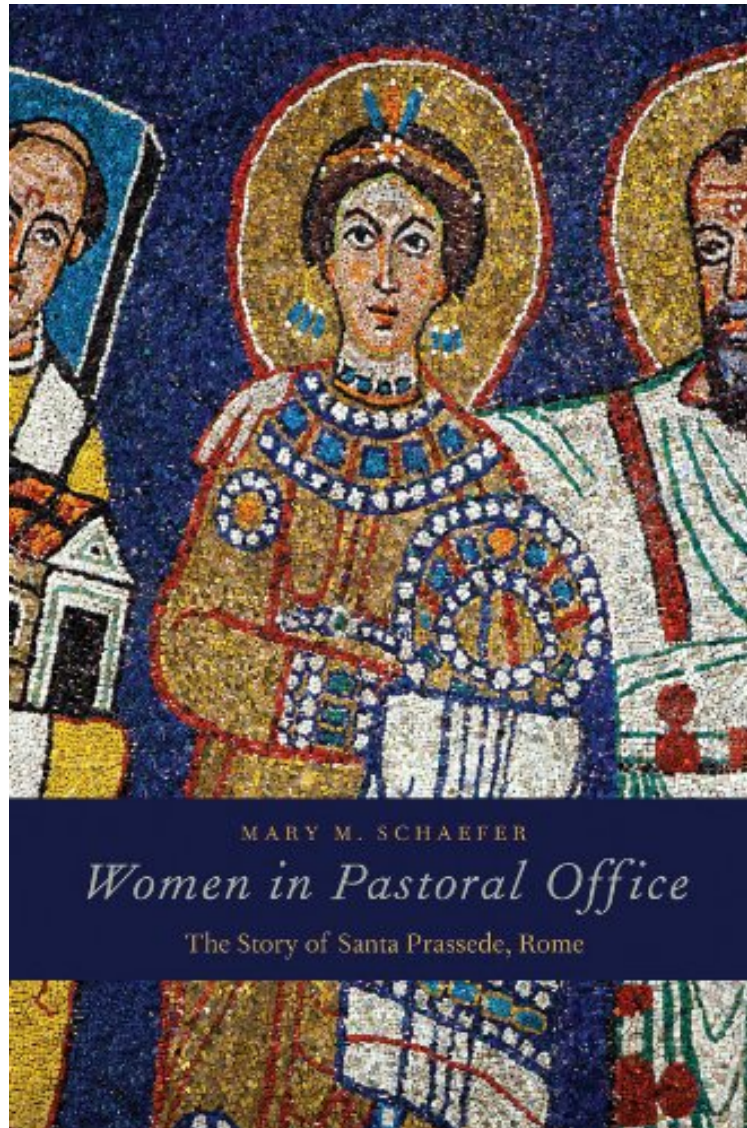


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Women in Pastoral Office: The Story of Santa Prassede, Rome

Mary M. Schaefer

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Mary M. Schaefer : Women in Pastoral Office: The Story of Santa Prassede, Rome before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Women in Pastoral Office: The Story of Santa Prassede, Rome:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I highly recommend it.By bgarciaThis is a result of Mary Schaefer's life research. I highly recommend it.6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Women in Early RC Church VindicatedBy Anne MoynihanMary M. Schaefer's life work " Women in Pastoral Office: The Story of Santa Prassede, Rome" by Oxford University Press has arrived at a perfect junction in the more recent studies of the role of women in

the Catholic Church. She has used many of the sources about women in the early Roman Church but added her own unique Art Historian/Theologian perspective and fresh findings, binding everything together like a quilt. Besides the ancient texts from places like the Vatican Library and beyond she draws on images, icons, frescoes, mosaics, statuary, sacred relief and stone work to point out what is essentially right there in front of our eyes and 'under our noses'. Authentic places and personages which authorities have overlooked for a long time, i.e., the visual truth of the significance of women in the establishment and growth of the Church. As a traveler, if you only go to one Church in Rome, make it Santa Prassede, a 'mini Vatican', which she uses as the central fact for her book. Tucked away, and easily missed, on a small narrow street just diagonally across from the famous Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, Santa Prassede tells a wondrous tale about the primacy of women in the Church. Santa Prassede's mosaics, the tiny chapel in the crypt, and the glorious small Zeno Chapel on the side, explained fully by Dr. Schaefer, will make the reader's education complete. The sister's church, St. Pudentiana down the Esquiline Hill not far away, sits on one of the oldest sites in Rome for a house church, and the author's knowledge of that church adds to this fascinating story of two sisters of 2nd- 3rd century Rome. Although intended mainly for students, scholars, theological universities, and those engaged in the debate about the equality of women in the Church, this book is for anyone who wants more 'herstory', versus history. Maybe there are readers who wish to study the roots of Christianity, or those who would like to 'know' about one of the many secrets Rome holds, or hearty readers who love architecture, art and what they really mean for humanity. Mary Schaefer's style and prose can be heavy at times being a world class scholar, but you can still feel the passion and the desire to reclaim a new "foundational myth." This book is going to hold an honored position for a long time and you will want to have your own copy to read at your own pace, to say nothing of the many other leads her copious footnotes offer to those directly engaged in the field.

Through a study of the church of Santa Prassede, Mary M. Schaefer offers a compelling examination of the "golden ages" for women active in ecclesial ministries, critically measuring feminist claims and providing evidence contrary to the official Roman position that women have never been ordained in the Catholic Church. The ninth-century church of Santa Prassede has been studied intensively in recent years, yet no scholar has yet recognized the significance of the balanced male and female imagery: both men and women disciples, Peter and Paul as family friends, Praxedes and her sister as house church leaders in the post-apostolic period assisted by bishop Pius I, and Pope Paschal's mother Theodora episcopa, for example. Praxedes' identification as "presbytera" by a Roman priest-historian in 1655 and by the Benedictine prior of the church in 1725 prompts analysis of women's ordination rites in churches of East and West. Santa Prassede preserves one of the largest intact programs of church decoration in Rome up to 1200. Schaefer investigates its scriptural and liturgical sources, and, in turn, reexamines its foundation myth. With the story of the church, Schaefer provides a detailed study of women in pastoral office (especially diaconas, presbyteras, and episcopal abbesses) from the first through twelfth centuries in the West. Women in Pastoral Office also shows how the liturgy as well as the vita of Praxedes and her sister Pudentiana (whose fourth century church is located down the hill) shaped this outstanding commission of the builder, Pope Paschal I (817-824).

"Schaefer's painstakingly researched work and exhaustive bibliography... remarkable..." --Worship" ...[A] wealth of historical and archeological study..." --Theological Studies About the Author Mary M. Schaefer is Professor (retired) of liturgy at the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, Nova Scotia.