



From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris

By Barbara B. Diefendorf

Oxford University Press. Paperback. Condition: New. 368 pages. Dimensions: 9.0in. x 6.0in. x 1.0in. From Penitence to Charity radically revises our understanding of women's place in the institutional and spiritual revival known as the Catholic Reformation. Focusing on Paris, where fifty new religious congregations for women were established in as many years, it examines women's active role as founders and patrons of religious communities, as spiritual leaders within these communities, and as organizers of innovative forms of charitable assistance to the poor. Rejecting the too common view that the Catholic Reformation was a male-dominated movement whose principal impact on women was to control and confine them, the book shows how pious women played an instrumental role, working alongside--and sometimes in advance of--male reformers. At the same time, it establishes a new understanding of the chronology and character of France's Catholic Reformation by locating the movement's origins in a penitential spirituality rooted in the agonies of religious war. It argues that a powerful desire to appease the wrath of God through acts of heroic asceticism born of the wars did not subside with peace but, rather, found new outlets in the creation of austere, contemplative convents. Admiration for saintly ascetics prompted new...

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