From the Editor | September 15, 2023



Dear Sisters, Associates, Companions and Friends of Mercy,

The inspiration for this issue of *The MAST Journal*, "Synod and Synodality," was inspired by the opening of the Synod by Pope Francis almost three years ago. As this issue goes to press, the Synod on Synodality is being held at the Vatican, after a world-wide listening process. Some called this moment Vatican III. If Vatican II was a convocation of bishops, the Synod is a convocation of the laity. The wave of questions breaks: What's working? What's not working? What's urgent to face? What are the dreams for change in the Church? Consultations were held in parishes and within organizations. These reports were forwarded to participants' respective dioceses. Then dioceses created summaries that were forwarded to their national Bishop's conferences. In turn, these national summaries were collated by geographical regions,

then sent to Rome.

This issue of the Journal returns to the original phase, to recapture the record of the first voices of Catholics in parishes, religious communities, lay organizations, and assisted living residences—laywomen, laymen, religious women and men. The intention is to demonstrate that the simple voice of individual Catholics has created the agenda for the Vatican Synod. The Synod agenda, to our great relief, faithfully echoes the voice of the faithful, whose concerns are embedded in these original reports.

The framing of these reports, composed in 2021 and 2022, is provided in two opening articles. Doris Gottemoeller's "Reading the *Instrumentum Laboris* through the Lens of Mercy" describes the parallel between two ecclesial events running at the same time: the Synod itself, and the Chapter process of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas in the summer of 2023. The Chapter's interests run alongside the Synod's themes of communion, mission and participation.

Sharon Kerrigan, in "A Vision for a New Church," sets the Synod in the context of the Covid pandemic which itself is part of a continuum of pandemics. She outlines some of the internal conflicts between conservatives and liberals of the Church after Vatican II, and identifies main Synod concerns, including disputes around abortion, ordination of women, reception of the Eucharist by divorced and remarried Catholics, and openness to inclusion and welcome of the LGBTQ community.

Charlotte Tomaino, PhD, passes along a Synod Report composed by an editor and member of the Maryknoll Evolutionary Consciousness Community on the East Coast of the U.S. The Report is distinguished as a well-crafted essay, integrating the discussion process of Evolutionary Consciousness members with their prayerful reflection and hopeful vision for change in the Church.

Elizabeth Julian in New Zealand contributes her own contribution to a diocesan post-report evaluation. She acknowledges the themes treated in the diocesan summary, but regrets that there wasn't more attention paid to the theme of mission and the voice of indigenous peoples.

Eloise Rosenblatt provides reports of two synod discussion groups she facilitated. One was a group of laywomen called "Pete's Pals," who have met together weekly for 40 years in the Bay Area, California, accompanying each other through life's joys and

crises. The other was a group of women in the South Bay area of California, all with long records of involvement and service in parish life. They meet for lunch at one another's houses, and are intelligently critical and hopeful about the Church.

Jim Marshall, a layman, retired public school science teacher and life-long catechist, conducted several synod discussions in his home parish, Sacred Heart Church. His essay captures major themes and individual voices; it was one of the original reports integrated into the general summary by the Diocese of San Jose, California. Another challenging, multi-meeting process, was carefully summarized by **Avis Clendenen** and **Teresa Maltby**, based on afternoon and evening meetings at Mercy Circle, a retirement residence in Chicago. The voices include both Sisters of Mercy and laypersons.

We read about conversations taking place at the Synod on Synodality in Rome in October 2023, among bishops, clergy, lay delegates, and women religious, after such a long preparatory process. It should be a reassurance to readers of this issue that individual voices have been heard. Those who expressed their hopes and dreams at modest meetings in parish halls and around dining room tables, will surely see echoed in these early, original summaries the movement of the Spirit. What they complained about last year and earnestly hoped for was carried forward as representative of the universal church's concerns.

As a concluding note with this issue, the Editorial Board of *The MAST Journal* is happy to announce that plans are in progress to make a transition of the *Journal* to online publication. This means the *Journal* will soon be made available to all Sisters of Mercy and our constituencies electronically, without the need for a subscription. For the last 30 years, readership of the *Journal* has been limited to subscribers who received a hard-copy by mail. Access to PDF's of all back issues has been available on the *Journal*'s website www.mercyrsm.org, and as a link on the website of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. However, we are anticipating a re-design, re-visioning, and broader outreach of the *Journal* to readers and writers, and much wider distribution of the *Journal* electronically. As newscasters say, "Stay tuned to this station."

Yours,



Eloise Rosenblatt, RSM

Editor, *The MAST Journal*