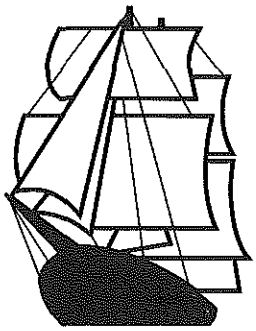
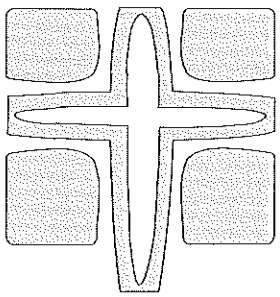


The MAST Journal

Mercy Advocacy and Public Voice

The Journal of the
Mercy Association in
Scripture and Theology



Vol. 11, No. 2
2001

December, 2001

Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends of Mercy,

The tragedy of September 11 generated full-page ads in the *New York Times* from brokerage houses, banks, insurance companies, airlines, foreign embassies, and the city of Berlin. These public voices memorialized the heroism of public servants, building employees, and passengers as "strangers who died for each other." Companies devastated by Trade Center deaths promised to stand by the bereaved in time of their greatest need. "Let us all be stronger than any loss." The Red Cross offered to help anyone who suffered traumatic numbness, fear, survivor guilt, memory loss, depression, crying, and feelings of powerlessness. The United Jewish Federation opened its website for volunteers to donate assistance, or "to access help for yourself or a loved one." In the face of "what people are capable of: hate, destruction and wanton disregard for human life," Cigna affirmed the deep virtues of "strength, caring, courage and a profound commitment to human life."

Others who voiced their views publicly were not as focused on consoling the bereaved, hauling debris, or rescuing business operations. Spared the shock of losing family members, financial investments or jobs, they became political analysts. They tallied the reasons why the U.S. is hated abroad and rehearsed the mind-set of persons whose language they do not speak. Some offered anti-globalization economic statistics as relevant to the morning hijackers ploughed airplanes full of passengers into buildings, incinerating thousands. Some explanations broached the fanaticists' own rationale: America got what it deserved. The U.S. should learn its lesson and reexamine those foreign policies disagreeable to the terrorists, and to a Saudi willing to donate ten million dollars to New York's recovery fund.

Dialogue-minded Christians in the U.S. expressed their duty to seek knowledge about Islam and to protect Muslim neighbors from racial stereotyping. Fearful spokesmen for Islam discredited Osama bin Laden's attack as a perversion of their faith. Salman Rushdie critiqued extremist and regressive Islamists for their resistance to modernity. Authorities on Islamic culture complicated the notion of a graspable, "essential Islam," by pointing out tribal rivalries among Sunni, Shiites, and Saudis, with their generations of internecine conflict over commerce with the infidel, oil-dependent West. As persons assigned to domestic space, women wearing the burka did not report an opinion of their own.

A Catholic bishop from Nigeria took the mike at the annual meeting of the Canon Law Society of America in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He warned that Christians' rush to dialogue might be a misreading of what Muslims themselves, at least in his nation, were presently seeking. A layman proposed that theologians in the U.S. be guided primarily by respect for the existence of the other religious group, not their own urgency to press for a conversation in which they themselves were not well prepared.

Judith Shulevitz in the *New York Times* focused the inter-faith project: "[R]eligious leaders have evaded the problem that faces religious intellectuals of all faiths, not just Muslims, in an era of fundamentalism: how to accept responsibility for violence committed in the name of religion."

Emily Allan, in fifth grade, wrote in the aftermath of Sept. 11: "My parents whisked me off to Palmyra, New Jersey, on a train. My grandmother lives there. I went to a school in Pennsylvania for two days and then came back here when the smoke got better. There is a river near my grandmother's house. I walked to the river with an empty basket. I put all the beauty into that basket and now, when I feel confused I just remember that beauty."

This issue develops the theme of Mercy's public voice, not only what is said in public, but the foundation for that discourse. Appreciation is due to Carol Rittner, R.S.M., for assembling an international roster of contributors.

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.
Editor, The MAST Journal

Globalization
Turning Point for Humanity, Challenge for Mercy

Karen Donahue, R.S.M.

On December 21, 1968, three astronauts blasted off from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, USA on a mission that would include the first lunar orbit. While most of the excitement that surrounded this event focused on its importance as a prelude to a lunar landing (which actually took place about seven months later), the real significance of Apollo 8 probably lies elsewhere. On Christmas Eve, the Apollo astronauts beamed back the first photos of Earth taken from space. From a distance of more than 300,000 miles, Earth appeared as an object of incredible beauty suspended in the blackness of space, like a magnificent jewel resting on velvet. For the first time, inhabitants of Earth saw their common home as a whole.

It has been more than thirty years since the Apollo 8 mission demonstrated dramatically the reality that we are indeed one world. There are no national borders visible from space. Jet aircraft makes it possible to reach almost any locale on Earth in a matter of hours, and advances in communications technology allow instantaneous contact across thousands of miles. Few would deny that the world is not growing smaller.

The signs are everywhere. Some are subtle. Others are more overt. On a stroll through the produce section of just about any supermarket, one encounters a number of fruits and vegetables considered to be exotic not too long ago. "Seasonal" produce is also a thing of the past as stores stock "summer fruits" even in the dead of winter. Check the labels on the clothes hanging in most closets and a virtual United Nations emerges—Pakistan, Honduras, Nepal, Guatemala, China, Bangladesh, the Philippines. Some apparel items were assembled in country A with components produced in country B. Purchase a small household appliance or a telephone and chances are that it was manufactured far from the point of sale. Visitors to remote regions of the world are often surprised to find, in addition to the ubiquitous McDonalds, chains such as K-Mart, Wal-Mart and Pizza Hut.

As it is now possible to produce products anywhere in the world for sale anywhere on Earth, the planet is rapidly becoming a single global market. However, efforts to facilitate this process of economic integration are raising critical questions that impact the lives of the entire human family and the ability of Earth itself to sustain life. In December, 1999, 50,000 persons from all over the world converged on Seattle, USA during the World Trade Organization's Third Ministerial Meeting to express opposition to a new round of trade negotiations.

This event, which took WTO officials and many governments by surprise, signaled a growing awareness of the negative impact of globalization on the lives of ordinary citizens throughout the world. Since that time, demonstrations have become a regular feature of international gatherings including the annual meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the World Economic Forum, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings, and, most recently, the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, Canada.

What is Globalization?

What is globalization anyway? Basically, it is a process of international economic integration and coordination with the goal of promoting the unfettered flow of goods, services and capital around the world.[1] However, this is only part of the story. Nicaraguan economist Xabier Gorostiaga, S.J., describes the character, velocity and extent of the changes that have taken place over the past twenty-five years as "a change of epochs" rather than an epoch of change. He notes that the period has been dominated by a world-wide conservative revolution that presents the homogenous globalization of the world

market as an inevitable development. This model is based on privatization, competition, and the liberalization of economies under the tutelage of the Bretton Woods Institutions.[2]

Other writers observe that globalization constitutes the most fundamental and far-reaching redesign of the world's political and economic arrangements since the Industrial Revolution. Nevertheless, the profound implications of these changes have received little public scrutiny and there has been minimal public debate around these issues. Neither elected officials, educational institutions, nor the mass media have paid much attention to these developments, made an effort to explain the underlying philosophies, or uncover the operative value systems.[3]

The growth of the transnational corporation has led to a shift in the balance of power between the TNC and the nation-state.

The rise of the transnational corporation (TNC) is one of the factors that has contributed most significantly to the process of globalization. While many of today's TNCs began as small family businesses serving a local market, over the years they have expanded both economically and geographically and now rival nation-states in size and influence. Of the world's one hundred largest economic entities, fifty-one are corporations and forty-nine are nation-states.[4]

The combined sales of the top 200 TNCs are larger than the combined economies of all the world's countries minus the top ten (USA, Japan, Germany, France, UK, Italy, China, Brazil, Canada and Spain). In 1999, 195 of the top 200 corporations were based in Europe, Japan or the USA. The top 200 account for 27.5 percent of global economic activity, but employ only 0.78 percent of the world's work force.[5]

The growth of the transnational corporation has led to a shift in the balance of power between the TNC and the nation-state. Oil companies such as Exxon Mobil or Royal Dutch Shell are often much larger than some of the countries in which they do business. For example, Royal Dutch Shell's 1999 sales of $105.3 billion are almost three times the Gross National Product (the total of all the goods and services a nation produces and pays for) of Nigeria which was just $36.3 billion. Exxon Mobil's 1999 sales of $163.8 billion are about double the GNP of Venezuela, which was $82 billion in 1998. Only about thirty-four of the world's 195 nations have GNPs larger than $100 billion.[6]

Even in the developed countries of Europe and North America, TNCs are in a position to influence policy through their trade organizations and political action committees. For example, the eighty-two U.S.-based companies on the top 200 list made contributions totaling more than $33 million to the 2000 U.S. presidential and congressional election campaigns. Information on the political activity of firms based in other parts of the world is very difficult to obtain.[7]

The Changing Role of Government

The free market economic model that has come to the fore over the past twenty years envisions a limited role for government. This change has been one of the most striking features of globalization. During her eleven years (1979–90) as prime minister, Margaret Thatcher emasculated Britain's strong unions and dismantled much of the post-World War II welfare state in an effort to foster competition and growth. In the United States, Ronald Reagan inaugurated "supply-side" economics with a large tax cut for the wealthy and other deregulatory measures. Reagan also dealt a severe blow to organized labor when he fired the air traffic controllers early in his first term.

For developing countries, debt has served as a vehicle to bring about major changes in the role of government. Indebted countries seeking new loans or loans to pay off old ones, must implement a set of provisions which have come to be known as a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). Governments must balance their budgets and reduce inflation. Cuts are usually made in education, health care, and subsidies for food, fuel, and transportation—programs that serve the basic needs of the poorest segments of the population.

As the jurisdiction of national governments shrinks, new actors such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World

Trade Organization, and some older ones like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are taking on unprecedented power to intervene in the affairs of nation-states.

NAFTA's controversial Chapter 11 allows corporations to sue national governments if government actions negatively impact a firm's profits, even its potential profits. These government actions include laws crafted to protect health, safety, worker rights, and the environment. A number of cases have already been brought before NAFTA dispute resolution panels. The proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) will extend NAFTA's Chapter 11 provisions to the entire Western Hemisphere.[8]

The Underlying Philosophy of Neoliberalism

A set of principles, some would even say an ideology, underlies the current free market model that is being implemented around the world. These include the primacy of economic growth, the need for free trade to stimulate that growth; the unrestricted "free market"; the absence of government regulation and voracious consumerism "combined with an aggressive advocacy of a uniform worldwide development model that faithfully reflects the western corporate vision and serves corporate interests."[9] Taken together these principles are often grouped under the rubric of neoliberalism, a term widely used in much of the world to refer to the free market or free enterprise system.

In their statement, "For Life and Against Neoliberalism," the Jesuit provincials of Latin America describe neoliberalism as "a radical concept of capitalism that tends to absolutize the market, converting it into the means, method and end of all intelligent and rational human behavior."[10] According to this concept, people's needs, the behavior of societies and government policies are all subordinated to the market, which tolerates no type of regulation.

It is important to realize that it is the absolutizing of the market, and not the market mechanism itself, which is at the heart of the current neoliberal paradigm, and it is this factor which is so troubling. Human beings cannot be reduced to the market, the state or any other power or institution that wants to impose itself as a totalizing element.[11] A healthy market encourages diversity, individual initiative, creativity, and productive effort. However, markets can only foster these qualities when participants honor the market's essential conditions and respect their ethical obligations to one another.[12]

In many ways, neoliberalism is a return to the laissez faire system of an earlier era with its emphasis on competition and survival of the fittest and the belief that the unfettered market should be allowed to direct the fate of human beings and the environment. Writer Susan George, in an address delivered in Bangkok several years ago, outlined the rise of neoliberalism in the late twentieth century.[13] She observed that the ideas that constitute today's core neoliberal doctrine had their origins in the work of Austrian philosopher and economist Friedrich Hayek and his students, including Milton Friedman, at the University of Chicago.

NAFTA's controversial Chapter 11 allows corporations to sue national governments if government actions negatively impact a firm's profits, even its potential profits.

These ideas were able to achieve such prominence because the neoliberals and their funders grasped the importance of cultural hegemony and invested heavily in intellectual infrastructure. A huge international network of foundations, institutes, research centers, publications, scholars, writers, and public relations specialists keep the neoliberal agenda before government officials and the public. "If you can occupy people's heads, their hands and their hearts will follow."[14] Just days after Ronald Reagan took office, the director of the Heritage Foundation arrived at the White House with the *Mandate for Leadership*, a 1000-page document of policy advice, much of which became law.[15]

Globalization on the Ground

Proponents of neoliberal globalization claim that is not only the best way, but the only way to bring about economic growth, defined as an increase in the

Gross National Product (GNP). This type of growth is especially important for developing countries if they ever hope to overcome poverty. Poor countries must increase their exports so that they can earn foreign exchange to purchase the technology needed to improve their infrastructure. Then they will be able to attract the investment that creates jobs for the people. It seems very clear-cut on paper. However, the reality is quite different.

Global income disparity continues to increase. In 1960, the richest twenty percent of the world's people had thirty times the income of the poorest twenty percent. By 1997, they had seventy-four times the income of the poorest twenty percent.[16] Another striking phenomena is the growth in the number of billionaires, even at a time when the number of poor people in the world is increasing. Between 1987 and 1994, the number of billionaires in Mexico increased by 146 percent. Nevertheless, in December, 1994, Mexico experienced a financial crisis and a few weeks later, the indigenous people of Chiapas rose up in revolt against the neglect and exclusion they experience at the hands of the Mexican government.[17]

Indigenous peoples are at special risk when a seed is patented. Knowledge gleaned over generations of careful observation and plant breeding can be lost when a transnational corporation applies for a patent.

Much of the wealth generated in today's economy is speculative in that is has little or nothing to do with the production of goods and services. Money often flows into a country to take advantage of favorable interest rates or investment opportunities. Since the free flow of capital is one of the pillars of the neoliberal creed, countries are discouraged from doing anything that might impede the smooth entry or exit of money. This situation contributed to the Asian financial disaster of 1997-98. The IMF responded to the crisis and imposed measures that only made the situation worse. As a result millions of people in Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea lost their jobs and fell below the poverty level.[18] Fallout from the crisis eventually reached as far away as Russia and Brazil.

Privatization is another characteristic of neoliberal globalization that is impacting the lives of people around the world. While structural adjustment programs have led to the privatization of health care, education, and other previously government-funded social services, efforts are now underway to privatize prisons, municipal water works, and even the postal service. These moves allow transnational corporations to acquire valuable assets at bargain prices and transfer wealth from the community to private hands. Riots shook Cochabamba, Bolivia last year after the local water company, Aguas del Tunari, was privatized and prices increased sharply. Aguas del Tunari is now owned by a consortium in which a British firm holds a controlling interest.[19]

As market priorities become institutionalized in bodies such as the World Trade Organization, there is a push to turn public goods into commodities. The Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the negotiations that brought the WTO into being, included strengthened intellectual property rights that extend patent protection to new areas. It is now possible to patent living organisms and the products and processes of living beings. Microorganisms, seeds, and genes are becoming private property through the patent process.

Indigenous peoples are at special risk when a seed is patented. Knowledge gleaned over generations of careful observation and plant breeding can be lost when a transnational corporation applies for a patent. Local farmers will be required to pay a royalty to transnational seed companies for the use of seeds that were formerly a part of their common heritage. They will also not be allowed to save seeds for the next season's planting or exchange seeds with their neighbors.

The recent controversy over the cost and availability of anti-retroviral drugs to treat HIV/AIDS in Africa is another dimension of the intellectual property debate. Transnational pharmaceutical giants have been reluctant to allow the governments of African nations ravaged by HIV/AIDS to obtain cheap generic versions of their top selling AIDS drugs through compulsory licensing or parallel

imports, even though both of these provisions are in keeping with WTO trade rules.

What is Our Response to Globalization?

Probably the major challenge facing people of faith as they grapple with the reality of neoliberal globalization is the search for alternative models of development that are respectful, inclusive, and sustainable in light of Earth's limited resources. Xabier Gorostiaga, notes that the greatest problem with the neoliberal system is its ability to paralyze and destroy any attempt to create an alternative.[20] He calls for solutions that come from within and below, but realizes that they need a framework, spaces, and rules of the game that can foster the appearance of a new economic and judicial world order.

Such a model will demand that the common good becomes the central objective of politics and the economy.[21] The neoliberal tenet of limited government, whose only role is the facilitation of private enterprise, must be challenged. Far from being aberrations, the programs of the welfare state addressed many of the needs that Pope John XXIII, in his 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, identified as basic human rights–food, clothing, shelter, rest, health care, and the necessary social services (*Pacem in Terris* #11). These needs still exist and we need to find new ways to meet them.

While neoliberal globalization has generated unimaginable wealth for some, the majority of the human family has been excluded. The neoliberal paradigm, with its emphasis on the free play of market forces, stands in stark contrast to the message of Jesus and Catherine McAuley. Jesus said that whatever we do to the least among us, we do to him, and that we would be judged on how we responded to the needs of persons who are sick, hungry, thirsty, homeless, or imprisoned. Catherine took Jesus' words seriously when she founded our community to minister to the basic needs of persons who were marginalized by the economic forces of her day.

In his 1960 book, *The Constitution of Liberty*, Friedrich Hayek characterizes a free society as one in which a person's value and remuneration "depend not on capacity in the abstract but on success in turning it into concrete service which is useful to others who can reciprocate."[22] He concedes that it is possible to feel compassion and concern for those who are close to us, but denies that we can have these same feelings about the millions of suffering people in the world who we do not know. He says, "However moved we may be by accounts of their misery, we cannot make abstract knowledge of the numbers of suffering people guide our everyday action."[23]

The neoliberal tenet of limited government, whose only role is the facilitation of private enterprise, must be challenged.

Hayek's writings provide the philosophical underpinning for the neoliberal model that is being implemented around the world today. According to this philosophy, individuals must be free to compete in the marketplace—turning their gifts and talents into concrete services for those who can purchase them. What about those who do not have skills that others want to buy? While unfettered market forces have the capacity to turn just about everything, even persons, into commodities, those with nothing to sell are excluded. There is no place for them in the scheme of things. It is this radical exclusion that characterizes neoliberal globalization today.

In their 1994 book, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order*, Richard Barnett and John Cavanagh said, "The surplus of gifted, skilled, undervalued and unwanted human beings is the Achilles Heel of this emerging global system. The problem is starkly simple: an astonishingly large and increasing number of people are not needed or wanted to make the goods or to provide the services that the paying customers of the world can afford. The gathering pressures of global competition to cut costs threaten the vast majority of the eight billion human beings expected to be living on earth in the first quarter of the next century with the prospect that they will be neither producers nor consumers."[24]

Globalization presents a special challenge for persons animated by the example of Jesus, who always sought those who were marginalized, excluded, and vulnerable, and the example of Catherine

McAuley, who could not turn away from the misery she saw around her. Like Catherine, the cries of poor and suffering people, no matter how distant, must guide our everyday actions.

What is the public voice of Mercy in the debate over globalization? Do we see it as an inevitable process to which we must learn to accommodate? Do we prepare our students, particularly at the secondary and collegiate levels, to be successful within the current neoliberal paradigm? How can we prepare them to be to be agents of transformation? How willing are we to question the underlying values of neoliberalism, knowing that this could well open us to criticism and ridicule? Do we really believe that health care is a basic human right? Have our institutional ministries taken on the trappings of the business world?

There are no easy, comfortable answers to these questions. We struggle to face the painful truth that we are among the minority of the human family that reaps the fruits of globalization. The magnitude of the changes that will be needed to reverse the process of neoliberal globalization and set out on a course that is respectful, inclusive, and sustainable seem insurmountable. It is difficult to believe that tiny steps taken by individuals and small groups will have any impact. Nevertheless, we must stay in the struggle. Catherine McAuley's passion for those who are poor, sick, and uneducated demands nothing less of us.

Notes

1 *Women's Lives in a Changing World* (Albuquerque: Interhemispheric Resource Center, 1995): 2.
2 Xabier Gorostiaga, "Geocultural Development," paper presented to the Conference Desafíos éticos para el siglo XXI, Santiago, 1995.
3 Jerry Mander, "Facing the Rising Tide," in *The Case Against the Global Economy: And for a Turn toward the Local*," eds. Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996), p. 3.
4 Sara Anderson and John Cavanagh, *Top 200: The Rise of Corporate Global Power* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 2000): 3.
5 Ibid., p 5.
6 World Bank, *2000 World Bank Atlas* (Washington: World Bank, 2000): 42-43.
7 Anderson, *Top 200*, p. 4.
8 Maude Barlow, "The Free Trade Area of the Americas and the Threat to Social Programs, Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice in Canada and the Americas," online posting, 25 April 2001, Public Citizen, http://www.tradewatch.org/FTAA/FTAABackground.htm
9 Mander, *Facing the Rising Tide*, p. 5.
10 Society of Jesus, "For Life and Against Neoliberalism": Statement of the Jesuit Provincials of Latin America issued in Mexico City (November 14, 1996) *Envio 16* (1997): 50.
11 Ibid., p. 50.
12 David C. Korten, *The Post-Corporate World: Life After Capitalism* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999): 151-152.
13 Susan George, "A Short History of Neoliberalism: Twenty Years of Elite Economics and Emerging Opportunities for Structural Change," Conference on Economic Sovereignty in a Globalizing World, Bangkok, 24-26 March, 1999.
14 Ibid.
15 Susan George, "Winning the War of Ideas: Lessons from the Gramscian Right," *Dissent* (Summer, 1997).
16 United Nations, Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1999* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 36.
17 Gorostiaga, "Geocultural Development," op. cit.
18 Walden Bello, "The End of the East-Asian Miracle," *APC Focus* 12 (1998): 1.
19 Reid R. Frazier, "The Price of Water," *Latin America Press* 32 (2001): 4.
20 Gorostiaga, Geocultural Development," op.cit.
21 Society of Jesus, "For Life and Against Neoliberalism," p. 50
22 Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960): 81.
23 Ibid., p. 85.
24 Richard Barnet and John Cavanagh, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

To Speak the Truth about the World in Which I Live

Jean Evans, R.S.M

> I am a writer and I have always conceived of my mission as the duty to speak the truth about the world in which I live, to speak of its horrors and its miseries . . . And as a dramatist, I even believe that it is up to the viewer to find his own solution; such is the guarantee of his truth. My own obligation is not to propose anything definite.[1]

These are the words of playwright and president of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel. Imprisoned under the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia during the 1970s, Havel remained committed to speak the truth and to create a society where truth could be spoken openly. As one of the Charterists of '77, Havel called for the rebirth of the public space where Czech citizens could engage in dialogue and debate about their society. More importantly, Havel saw the creation of a public forum as an opportunity for people to express themselves and retell the story of their own lost dignity. Czechs would once again be able to savor the truth that they had come to forget over the years of Communist domination.[2]

However, in order for this social dialogue to take place, two enemies would have to be overcome: fear and lethargy. Citizens in newly democratized societies are often afraid to speak. They may be paralyzed by vivid memories of reprisals—of imprisonment, torture and/or the deaths of family members and friends. Lethargy, the other enemy to be overcome, derives from the sense of fatalism and helplessness that pervades the populace of repressed societies. At the same time, lethargy and its companion, apathy, also develop in societies that are, as scripture passage puts it, "choked by this world's riches" (Mark 4:19).

Public Discourse Is a Quest for Truth, But Whose Truth Is It?

Essentially, public discourse is about truth. It is about expressing a perception of truth. It may aim at clarifying or correcting erroneous notions; it may offer a critique of social practice or mores. It may call for social change. What is it that shapes a perception of truth in a society or culture? Lonergan employs the term "horizon."[4] It represents quite well the idea of a vast expanse—all that the eye can see—the sum total of what is visible. It is one's horizons or fields of vision that shape and contextualize an understanding of truth. Such perceptions or worldviews vary according to the range of a person's experience, social background and milieu, education and personal development. So, what is expressed in public discourse is the result of one's field of vision and experience. Hence we can say that public discourse is as much about opinion and viewpoint as it is about truth. Michael

Public discourse is as much about opinion and viewpoint as it is about truth.

Vaclav Havel's experience and that of the Czech people are in some way parallel to the experience of many people within South Africa, and his dedication to speaking the truth of what he sees is akin to the underlying motivation for Sisters of Mercy to engage in public debate. With this as a background, we shall make some general comments about public discourse including some examples that relate to African experience. Then we will discuss issues that are of concern in South Africa. Finally, we shall conclude by offering a view from the "margin."[3]

Polanyi expresses it another way when he says:

> As long as one lives and thinks within the pattern of a given paradigm, that paradigm provides one with a plausibility structure according to which all reality is interpreted. The paradigm may be a particular scientific worldview, or a religion, or an ideology; in each case the conceptual framework has almost all-embracing interpretive powers.

What is significant in Polanyi's remarks is his description of the power that a paradigm gives to people. Life is understood only in the light of this paradigm. At the same time this conceptual framework may be seriously flawed. For example, during their colonial administration in the Ruanda-Urundi region on the Great Lakes, Belgian officials educated and gave responsibility for administrative tasks to the minority Tutsi tribe. Why not to the majority Hutus? The answer is that the Belgians considered the Tutsis intellectually superior to the Hutus. The Tutsis, a tall Nilotic people, with fine features and bone structure, resembled Europeans.[5]

A worldview may not be true. It may be, in fact, "a Big Lie. Still, it remains 'irresistibly persuasive,' since it sweeps away all existing criteria of validity and resets them in its own support."[6] This was the case in South Africa from the time of colonial settlement by both the Dutch in the sixteenth century and British from the 1820s. Like the Belgians, the Dutch, British, and other European settlers held a worldview that was profoundly distorted by the myth of white supremacy.

Another example of a "big lie" is the Enlightenment myth of progress and its corollary of unlimited potential for growth. David Williams writes that the desire for continual growth and expansion is an almost unquestioned part of the modern western worldview, expressed in technological progress and particularly in economic policy. Yet, he maintains that this attitude must be questioned by Christianity in the light of God's self-limitation in creation and of Christ's self-emptying in the incarnation and redemption. Christians, wishing to imitate the way in which God relates to the world, and in particular with the redeemed, should have this attitude of self-limitation personally and on a social level, manifested through restricted use of resources and restrictions on population growth.[7] Williams's critique brings us to one of the purposes of public discourse within a Christian context: to challenge a prevailing worldview by testing it against the truth of the gospel. Simply put, we are called to expose the lie.[8]

One of the purposes of public discourse within a Christian context is to challenge a prevailing worldview by testing it against the truth of the gospel.

To summarize, then, public discourse is an engagement of people with truth. However, there are limits to the perception of truth. These include experience and frame of reference. History has shown many examples where an uncritical acceptance of a myth or worldview has caused a catastrophe in the human family. Those who engage in public debate are called to make a rigorous examination of what they propose and to take responsibility for what shapes their perception and expression of the truth.

Public Discourse Is the Mark of an Open Society

Despite limitations and possible distortions of viewpoint, public discourse is a necessary and beneficial interaction of free people. It is the mark of an open and free society. "No democracy if press is gagged." Recent headlines in the South African daily, *The Sowetan*, decry the political situation in Zimbabwe, our neighbor to the north. With a history of decades of media control, South African journalists are keenly aware of the importance of a free press. It is an indicator of a society's basic health. Nathalie Hyde-Clarke writes, "The recent hostility against members of the press in Zimbabwe is indicative of a growing trend in Africa. More and more frequently, African leaders are questioning the role of the media in public policy debates." Hostility from govern-

ment and the imprisonment of journalists, the destruction of newspaper offices and equipment has taken place in Zimbabwe, creating an atmosphere of fear and suspicion.[9] In our own case in South Africa before 1994, that same kind of repression created fear. It also spawned a general apathy and lethargy among many people that expressed itself in an attitude of "What can we do?" Here the two enemies of Havel's free society showed themselves in full array—fear and lethargy.

While public discourse concerns itself with governmental practices, it also engages with the business community. Public debate on the responsibility of first world pharmaceutical companies with respect to anti-HIV/AIDS drugs is a good example. The recent Jubilee 2000 campaign to scrap the apartheid debt and the hearings of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission have also been important moments of public discourse. In the latter case, a South African society was called to listen to itself and in the spirit of Havel's remarks, to taste the truth that it had long since forgotten. Certainly, the experience of the TRC has been a bitter one, yet it was a very necessary first step toward establishing a new non-racial society by acknowledging the truth of our past.

Public debate heightens awareness of the issues affecting a society. In our own case, an R 43 billion [about $5.3 billion] arms procurement deal with several European firms has caused a tremendous stir and prompted investigation into alleged kickbacks offered to parliament members. This is all the more offensive due to the South African government's delay in paying reparations to human rights victims of the apartheid regime from the funds amassed for the Truth and Reconciliation Reparations Committee. The priorities of the national budget are of profound concern to human rights groups like Black Sash or representatives of the mainstream churches who, seeing the increasing poverty in this country, and large expenditures for armaments, have called for a "people's budget."[10]

Public discourse may be at its best when it prompts a society to engage with itself—perhaps with its past or its tragedies—in order to gain a new sense of identity and purpose or to recover its lost dignity.[11] In addition to calling a society to self-reflection, public debate may have the value of heightening awareness about issues affecting a society. Finally, in the absence of fear, apathy or self-interest, public discourse has the power to focus attention on the common good, and specifically on the needs of the poor.

What Are the Issues of Concern in South Africa Now?

Recently, eighty religious women gathered in Johannesburg for a weekend symposium on "Spirituality and Culture" sponsored by the Dominican Sisters of King Williams Town.[12] The expressed purposes of the symposium were to explore diversity and culture in the light of spirituality, to deepen our appreciation of one another's cultures, to find ways of living our new understanding of diversity in communities and ministries, to experience a way of honoring and reconciling differences, to celebrate our diversity and unity, and to seek ways to become a transformative presence within our society/communities/families. The group was composed of women from six different religious congregations, associates and friends who ranged in age from twenty-five to eighty. We were white and black South Africans, Germans, Swiss, Irish, Scottish, Dutch, British, Indonesian. We hailed from Australia, Argentina, and America. Three major areas of concern that emerged as a result of discussion at the conference related to

Public discourse may be at its best when it prompts a society to engage with itself—perhaps with its past or its tragedies—in order to gain a new sense of identity and purpose or to recover its lost dignity.

culture and spirituality, globalization and poverty, and rampant materialism and corrosion of moral values.

We want a new society where all cultures are affirmed and celebrated.

Seven years after our historic election of 1994, we find ourselves in a new phase of existence. Yet, as a society, we bear within ourselves a sense of confusion not unlike that of Africans whose countries gained independence in the 1960s. Our confusion comes in the wake of our transition to a non-racial, non-sexist democratic government and in the discomfort that comes with the shifting of governance structures and power bases.

In the hasty and unplanned transition from colonial rule to democracy that took place in the early 1960s, many Africans experienced a tremendous sense of displacement and confusion. They were sent abroad to study and some returned to their countries of origin to educate, administer, and transform their society with the help of western development aid. Nigerian poet Gabriel Okara captures this reality in his poem, "Piano and Drums."[13]

When at break of day at a riverside
I hear jungle drums telegraphing
the mystic rhythm, urgent, raw
like bleeding flesh, speaking of
primal youth and the beginning,
I see the panther ready to pounce,
the leopard snarling about to leap
and the hunters crouch with spears poised;

And my blood ripples, turns torrent,
topples the years and at once I'm
in my mother's laps a suckling;
at once I'm walking simple
paths with no innovations,
rugged, fashioned with the naked
warmth of hurrying feet and groping
hearts
in green leaves and wild flowers pulsing.

Then I hear a wailing piano
solo speaking of complex ways
in tear-furrowed concerto;
of far away lands
and new horizons with
coaxing diminuendo, counterpoint,
crescendo. But lost in the labyrinth
of its complexities, it ends in the middle
of a phrase at a daggerpoint.

And I lost in the morning mist
of an age at a riverside keep
wandering in the mystic rhythm
of jungle drums and the concerto

In a society that still remains divided by economic, if not social apartheid, we long to know who we are and how we can move from the injustices and wounds of our apartheid past to a new awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity and giftedness.[14] Black South Africans did not have to travel abroad to feel the dislocation of culture. For most people, the daily commute from the township to the city has provided that experience.

One of the first steps to a new acceptance among us is the recognition of values inherent in the many cultures that form South African culture.[15] Donal Dorr writes: "The Spirit is at work among peoples, traditions, and in cultures long before the good news of Jesus reaches them . . . in some respects these cultures are much closer to the Christian ideal than the cultures of the West."[16] The task at hand is to affirm the values that have been unknown or misunderstood. Among these values in African culture are the importance of hospitality, of recognizing the presence of others by greeting them, of listening to the person, of looking on the needs of my brothers, sisters, cousins, or neighbors as my own.[17] "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu." "A person is a person with people," so goes the Zulu saying. It carries with it the sense of identity that is not based on individualism, but on a communal relationship.

At the same time, the acceptance of certain values cannot cloud the fact that some customs gravely limit the freedom of people. For example, the patriarchy in many African families often contributes to the oppression of women and to sexual abuse. It is necessary to look critically at the values of each culture and to find what will enhance rather than diminish the life of the people.[18] In this regard, Palmes speaks of the necessary dialogue between faith and culture:

In the dialogue between faith and culture, the seed of faith penetrates the story of the culture and develops with its own strength and vitality. And at its time, the culture contributes its own vital characteristics and particular values. Ultimately, the gospel is made the motive and inspiration of the culture and becomes a critical and creative force that transforms and protects the culture.[19]

To recognize the seeds of the gospel, to affirm them, to respect and honor the diversity of cultures and to bring the values

which these cultures express into dialogue with the gospel's message of liberation: these are the challenges that are put to us in South Africa now.

Globalization Is another Word for Colonization.

A second major area of concern is globalization. Today globalization has brought increasing complexity to societal relationships within and across national borders. Its influence is pervasive, extending technology to very remote areas in the world.[20] Indian social scientist, Arjun Appadurai, "attributes the emergence of this global culture to five interlinked dimensions of cultural flow which are moving across national boundaries. He calls the five dimensions ethnoscape, mediascape, technoscape, finanscape, and ideoscape."[21] The intricate web of relationships affects every aspect of social life. For example, related to globalization is the issue of privatizing state assets. "Privatization is becoming more and more a reality in South Africa and throughout the world. It is usually disguised under different names like outsourcing, concessioning, or restructuring," writes Immaculata Devine, R.S.M.[22] In Johannesburg, unions for local municipal workers are protesting the privatization of services because of the numerous job losses that will result.

A visit of U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell to Johannesburg's University of the Witwatersrand was somewhat "marred" by demonstrators against the privatization of state assets.

Along with privatization, two other consequences of globalization are exploitation of workers and a general worsening of the plight of the poor, with growing unemployment and homelessness.

Along with privatization, two other consequences of globalization are exploitation of workers and a general worsening of the plight of the poor, with growing unemployment and homelessness. It is this latter consequence that Mercies in South Africa find most disconcerting.[23] Foreign investment has not improved the conditions of the majority of South Africans. It is the volatility of the world markets, the fluctuating price of oil, the strength of the U.S. dollar against the South African rand that determine the price of gasoline, the cost of sugar and bread, bus fares, and wages. This country's economic destiny is controlled by the whims of Wall Street and the Federal Reserve Bank.

Causing even further dismay among many people in South Africa is the control exercised by such U.S. firms as Monsanto over food production:

> The agrochemical firm Monsanto is poised to acquire the rights to a genetic engineering technique that renders a crop's seeds sterile, insuring that farmers are dependent on Monsanto for new seed every year. Farming in the Third World could be crippled if these genes contaminate other local crops that the poor depend on. Half of the world's farmers depend on their own saved seed for each year's harvest.[24]

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference issued a press statement in November 2000 supporting the campaign that calls for a five-year freeze on genetically modified organisms.[25] Nevertheless, Earthlife Africa reports that "genetically modified crops have been planted in Gauteng; tomatoes at Roodeplaat Dam and maize in Carltonville, without the regulatory environmental impact assessments being done."[26] Kenya has planted GM potatoes and in South Africa there are well over 100,000 hectares of GM crops being cultivated.[27] Soon, South Africa and many other African nations will control neither their economies nor their food production. Is this not another insidious form of colonization?[28]

"Secular Progress Does Not Ensure the Development of Moral Values."

The third area of concern—materialism and corrosion of moral values—also arises as a natural consequence of globalization. The image of the ideal life style that is portrayed in Western media has created both a need and an expectation in people that is eroding the moral fabric of South African society. As David Tacey writes, "Secular

progress has not ensured the development of moral values. Cultural values have shifted from disciplined obedience to the pursuit of pleasure."[29] This pursuit of pleasure is one of the causes of crime, corruption in government, and the breakdown of families. The recently inaugurated mayor of Tshwane (Pretoria Metropolitan Region), Fr. Smangeliso Mkhatshwa, has called for a moral regeneration of the Tshwane region.

The Anglican bishops of Southern Africa have expressed their concern at the way new gambling legislation has allowed the opening of numerous casinos within the country. In the same way, the national lottery, Lotto, has become another means by which the poor are mislead into gambling away their meager wages and pensions. Churches are calling for a renewed moral vision, but the power of the media and what it offers is too alluring. Even the threat of AIDS does not seem to deter young people from drug use, casual sex, or nights in rave clubs. Sexual promiscuity arising out of an abandonment of traditional cultural values for those of the West, has been a key factor in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and of AIDS in particular. We face increasing numbers of AIDS related deaths in each of our ministries. We can only hope that the lethargy of our society will not prevent people from seeing these deaths as a call to return to the deepest and truest values of their cultures.

The concerns mentioned here—the recognition and celebration of cultural diversity, globalization and its consequences, materialism and the erosion of moral values—are areas in which some South Africans are already engaging in public discourse. Where we can, it is necessary to address the issue of transformation of our society through a reengagement with spirituality. Such an engagement can assist people to rediscover the core and transformative values of their cultures:

The values that transform society are found in relation with the Other, God. Spirituality is a public issue: it is the source of public morality because it flows from the source of all love.

The values that transform society are found in relation with the Other, God. Spirituality is a public issue: it is the source of public morality because it flows from the source of all love. No government can legislate the transformation of energies and desires in order to civilize society.[30]

The other task is to continue speaking the truth about the world in which we live, to continue to expose the lies and empty promises of free trade and prosperity, and to hold up before the world the plight of numberless poor, their miseries and their sorrows.

Conclusion: A View from the Margin

Introducing a collection of essays on biblical interpretation in the third world, R. S. Sugirtharajah explains the aim of his book, *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. He wants to "perceive the margin, as the Indian feminist and deconstructionist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has done—as a place pulsating with critical activity, a place alive with argument and controversy and a place of creative discourse."[31] From a practical point of view, marginal notes fulfil an important function in clarifying and guiding. They help in the interpretation of what lies at the heart of a text. Using the margin as a metaphor for the experience of peoples outside the so-called developed world, Sugirtharajah is able to free the term margin and its extension, marginalization from connotations which conjure up images of human misery only, and to re-vision it as a vital center in itself with a distinctive contribution to make.

As a locus of critical reflection, the margin offers society considerably more than it takes. Indeed, it offers a perception that society can get from nowhere else. And, as is true of the marginal notes in biblical texts, the margin has the potential to offer

an interpretation of what lies at the heart of a culture or society. Marginal voices need not be construed therefore, as merely oppositional or peripheral. They offer a complementary understanding and perception. Their critique is essential to the fuller understanding of the text of a society's life and of its own inner richness.

Christians have responded to being marginalized by society in various ways: by accommodating, reversing the direction of conformation, or retreating from the world. The gospel is always about differences disturbing every culture and challenging Christians to accept, transform, or replace various aspects of a given culture from within. The insertion of Christian difference disrupts the equilibrium of a cultural identity, but without this disruption, there can be no Christian faith.[32]

As we Sisters of Mercy discuss ways of voicing our concerns and engaging in public discourse, let us be clear about whose truth we speak. Let the content of our public discourse be shaped through an interaction between the "center and the margins." That is, enter into a dialogue between the voices of the northern hemisphere and those of the south. Finally, where it is possible, let us honor our cultural diversity and encourage the voices of the margins to speak for themselves.

Notes

1 "Je suis écrivain et j'ai toujours conçu ma mission comme le devoir de dire la vérité sur le monde dans lequel je vis, de parler de ses horreurs et de ses misères . . . En tant que dramaturge, je crois même que c'est au spectateur de trouver sa propre solution; telle est la garantie de sa vérité; mon devoir à moi n'est pas de lui proposer quoi que ce soit de definitive." Vaclav Havel in Bruno Ronfard, *La patience de la verité*. (Desclee: Paris, 1994). 42 (With thanks to Francis Sheehy, R.S.M. for assistance with translation).

2 Ibid., p. 69.

3 The "margin" is a term with several senses. Its relevance to the topic will be explained later in this essay.

4 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*. (London: Darton Longman & Todd. 1971): 235

5 Michael Polanyi in David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis, 1991): 360.

6 What is now Rwanda was formerly a German colony, but according to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles (1919) the administration was handed over to the Belgian government, just as Tanganyika was given over to England; and South West Africa (Namibia) mandated to South Africa's trusteeship.

Tutsis migrated down from the Nile Valley about three hundred years ago. Early missioners in the Great Lakes region, identified the Tutsis as descendents of Ham (J. F. Bouniol, *The White Fathers and Their Missions*, London: Sands and Co. 1929, p. 231). "The attraction of the Hamitic hypothesis for colonial administrators was that physical attributes were linked to mental capabilities; Hamites were seen to be 'born rulers'" (in Ian and Jane Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*, New York: Africana Pub. Co. 1977, p. 2). Gérard Prunier's book, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) is a particularly valuable resource on the genocide.

7 David T. Williams, "Against the Tide: Christian Self-limitation," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 70:3 (1998): 247-259.

8 This is the key element in the Ignatian rules of discernment, according to Liz Elbert, O.P.

9 Nathalie Hyde-Clarke, "No democracy if press is gagged," *Sowetan* (Feb. 22, 2001): 15.

10 Activists complained about the government's tardiness in payouts to human rights victims of the apartheid regime. "Twenty-two thousand victims have been waiting two years for payouts" from the Truth and Reconciliation Reparations Committee. "The government has R43 billion for armaments, but not R 3 billion for TRC reparations," said Betty Davenport of the Black Sash, reported in *The Star*, "Protesters roar their 'alternative' version (of the budget) outside Parliament," Feb. 22, 2001, p. 1.

11 The recent spate of killings in American high schools has been an important factor in shaping opinions in the on-going debate about gun control.

12 "Spirituality and Culture Symposium" May 25-27, 2001, Dominican Convent School, Belgravia, Johannesburg. Main presenters were members of the on-going formation team: Jordana, O.P., Trish Fresan, O.P., Tshifhiwe Mundhedzi, O.P., Terry Sacco. A resource used in preparation for the meeting was "Mission as Inculturation," from Donal Dorr's *Mission in Today's World* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2000), pp. 91-104.

13 Gabriel Okara, "Piano and Drums" in *Wind at Dawn*, eds.

S. Smyth and V. Swancina (Johannesburg: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987), p. 35.

14 Francisco Taborda, S.J., speaks of the situation in Latin America resulting from the "social apartheid." The damage of this model of economic exclusion is seen in the multitudes of abandoned children and adolescents on the streets. *Evangelizacion para El Tercer Milenio* (Bogotá: CLAR, 1994), p. 135.

15 Symposium presenters, Trish Fresan, O.P. and Tshifhiwe Mundhedzi, O.P.

16 Donal Dorr, *Mission in Today's World*, p. 91.

17 The Zulu greeting, "Sawubona," literally means "I see you" (Tshifhiwe Mundhedzi, O.P.).

18 A case in point is the practice in South Africa related to funerals. To a westerner— European, North American or white South African—the elaborately arranged funeral rites, the expense of the coffins and the money spent on catering for hundreds and sometimes thousands of relations and friends, seem ridiculous. The expenses are out of proportion to the people's means. Often one wonders why the money wasn't spent on making the deceased person's last days more comfortable instead of spending the money on the funeral. "Why do they care more about the dead than the living?" There is a tyranny in the cultural practices related to death. It is a "must" to attend relatives and neighbors' funerals. Not to do so is a breach of social etiquette, custom, and "tsetso" or tradition. Such a breach could incur the ancestors' wrath and result in misfortune for the person who doesn't have a good reason for being absent. Relatives are expected to help pay funeral expenses for next of kin and what we would call cousins. This impacts negatively on people's ability to save money. But for the people who have a belief in the power and influence of their deceased ancestors, attending to the prescriptions of custom and tradition are essential. Therefore, no expense should be spared, if possible. Otherwise, the ancestors will be insulted and a person who does not obey will fall on bad times.

19 Carlos Palmes, S.J. *Nueva Espiritualidad de la Vida Religiosa en America* (Bogotá : CLAR, 1996), p. 173 (translation by J. Evans).

20 Cellphones are everywhere in South Africa, particularly in informal shack settlements where there are no land lines.

21 The various "scapes" are defined as follows:
1. "ethnoscape" means the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live—tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and persons;
2. "technoscape" means the flow of mechanical and informational technology across "previously impervious boundaries", through multi-national corporations;
3. "finanscape" means the rapid flow of money through currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculation;
4. "mediascape" means the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information through such media as newspapers, magazines, TV, and films, [we could add the internet];
5. "ideoscape" means the flow of ideas, terms and images often organized around such key words as freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty and, these days, democracy (1990-6-11) in R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Voices from the Margin*, p. 471.

22 *South African Province Justice Newsletter*, "In His Days Justice Shall Flourish," Vol. 3, No. 2, (May-Sept. 2000): 2.

23 Western aid programs operated out of the Enlightenment view that progress is inevitable and the notion that the transfer of technology is all that the developing world needs in order to prosper. Unfortunately, the experience of the 1980s showed us that "development was not, as Paul VI had hoped, a new word for peace, but another word for exploitation" (Bosch, op. cit. 357). Anyone who has read Poisonwood Bible will have enjoyed and been dismayed at the truth about development and evangelization that the novel portrays.

24 Ephrem Tresoldi, "Genetically Modified Organisms : Playing with Creation," in *Worldwide* 11:4 (April/May 2001): 15-22.

25 Ibid.

26 See Melanie Feris, "SA goes against the anti-GM grain," *The Star*, May 3, 2001 (on the web). "GM food freeze call 'a threat to Africa,'" *Cape Argus*, July 25, 2000 (on the World Wide Web).

27 See Vandana Shiva, *Biopiracy* (Devon, England: Green Books, 1998), p. 82 where she gives clear evidence how globalization of the patent is robbing indigenous peoples of their own rights to plant life and causing irreversible destruction to cultural diversity.

29 David Tacey, "Spirituality and the Common Good," *South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies* 20 (March 1998): 3-6.

30 Ibid.

31 Sugirtharahah, op.cit., 2.

32 Miroslav Volf, "When Gospel and Culture Intersect: Notes on the Nature of Christian Difference," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 22:3 (July 1998): 196-207.

Serving the Homeless at St. Catherine's in Edinburgh, Scotland

Kathleen M. Murphy, R.S.M

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
For he has anointed me,
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And to the blind new sight,
To set the down trodden free,
To proclaim the Lord's year of favor. (Luke 4:18-19).

Through this text, incorporating the words of Isaiah, Jesus first entered into public discourse with his Jewish audience. Luke too, used it to introduce Jesus and his "first messianic declaration," to his gentile community.[1] The mission of Jesus was inaugurated by the Holy Spirit and was centered in mercy, that virtue which transcends all boundaries, and lifts people up in wholeness to their original dignity as sons and daughters of God. Its focus was the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, and the rejected. It was to overcome all social, religious, political, and racial boundaries. Through it, Luke was calling his readers to action and service in unconditional love in a way that would make the presence of the God of Mercy obvious in a life-giving way in the world.[2]

Catherine McAuley's Focus on Mercy

This same Mercy motivation caused Catherine McAuley and her first Mercy companions to respond to the Holy Spirit when, in 1827, having entered into public discourse with all relevant authorities in her day, she opened her first House of Mercy in Baggot Street, Dublin.

She was so committed to rendering mercy to the poor that in 1832 she wrote the objectives of the Rule for her new congregation:

> "In undertaking the arduous but very meritorious duty of instructing the poor, the Sisters whom God has graciously pleased to call to this state of perfection, shall animate their zeal and fervour by the example of their Divine Master Jesus Christ, who testified on all occasions a tender love for the poor and declared that He would consider as done to Himself whatever should be done unto them."[3]

The demand for her mercy ministry and that of her followers in succeeding years was such that within fifteen years of the original foundation, the work had spread through Ireland, England, Scotland, the United States of America, and Australia. Within fifty years of its official recognition by Rome, the Mercy Congregation had outnumbered all other religious congregations in the Church. It is this ever-growing need for mercy that inspires and fires us Sisters in Edinburgh today. In joyful service, we continue to live out this vision and to promote this key gospel value in ways most appropriate to the social and spiritual needs of our time.[4]

It has been through the hard work, dedication, prayer, and involvement of the Sisters in public discourse at every level that has gradually influenced governments to adopt many of the services which the Sisters once provided

Catherine McAuley and her first associates who later became Sisters offered their mercy ministry to the poor, sick, and marginalized. Since then, many social, economic, scientific, and religious developments have taken place. Nowhere has progress been more noticeable than in Ireland, England, Wales,

and Scotland. Their governments have developed their own social service systems and an economy which is the envy of many European nations, as well as some of the most successful and renowned education systems in the western world.

It has been through the hard work, dedication, prayer, and involvement of the Sisters in public discourse at every level that has gradually influenced governments to adopt many of the services which the Sisters once provided, as is right. These new providers have, with the support of the Sisters, built on their foundations and tried to imitate their ethos. Governmental services have had considerable success at surface and economic levels, but failed abysmally in incorporating a religious ethos and holistic philosophy. Such services have not typically addressed the need for inner healing felt by the poor, marginalized, and the ensnared.

The Homeless Project

Recognition of this gap has led Sisters to reflect afresh on Jesus' messianic declaration in the light of these new social and spiritual needs in our day. Our findings have led us to reinterpret our charism in order to reincarnate it in a way that is relevant in the third millennium. In doing this, we have been conscious that we must ensure that we continue to make the Kingdom a living reality in a world where materialism has replaced faith and where many people, having lost hope, are overcome by despair.

> "Our primary concern is to reveal to the people we care for and those with whom we work, the reality of God's compassionate love."[5]

Under the inspiration and leadership of Sister Aelred, we have converted our spacious convent into St. Catherine's Mercy Centre, Edinburgh, Scotland, the focus of which is our Homeless Project.

Motivated by this desire, we decided, in 1993, to seek ways of placing our resources at the service of the poor, ensnared, marginalized, and the local Church. We were conscious too, of the shortcomings in government provision and policy towards those who have inadequate coping skills. Consequently, under the inspiration and leadership of Sister Aelred, we have converted our spacious convent into St. Catherine's Mercy Centre, Edinburgh, Scotland, the focus of which is our Homeless Project.

The project facilitates the needs of the socially inadequate homeless poor, those suffering from depression, stress, and the many forms of addiction which have taken a grip on today's broken pilgrims (Matt 25:35-36). Daily, we welcome between one hundred and fifty to two hundred people as our guests to breakfast and evening meal (Matt 22:10). These people come from all walks of life and range in age from sixteen to eighty plus. In recent months, we have noticed an increasing number of young, homeless families. Availing themselves of our services, they find hope and vision in a city where, despite government intervention, many persons are feel crushed, passed over, and forced to the margins. Each has his or her own story, as well as a welcoming and listening ear, a comforting look, a cheerful face, good meals, the availability of a wash, fresh clothes, and a safe space in which to refuel spiritually, physically, and emotionally before returning to the street (Luke 7:22).

> "There are things the poor prize more highly than gold, tho' they cost the donor nothing; among these are the kind word, the gentle, compassionate look, and the patient hearing of their sorrows."[6]

Testimony of the Guests

In keeping with Jesus' interpretation of mercy, our Mercy Centre transcends all racial, social, religious, and political boundaries. Religion is never an issue. We recognize that we are working at the level of pre-evangelization and evangelization as we nourish spirits with welcoming love, and lighten journeys through simple human affirmation and re-reassurance. Personnel and resources are freely available to those guests and pilgrims who desire catechesis and sacramental preparation. One of the guests of St. Catherine's, Kevin, twenty-four, spoke as follows to

a newspaper reporter about the holistic support that he received in his darkest hour:

> I went to St Catherine's for food, but when I got there the Sisters gave me a wonderful welcome. I told them what had happened to James [James was Kevin's friend and he had committed suicide the previous day], and how I felt about it. After they gave me a meal, Sister Aelred took me into a separate room and prayed with me. It helped me to get through that night—and the next. I went back every day and gradually the Sisters helped me to see that suicide was not the way out.[7]

Another of our guests, Joe, fifty, in speaking to HRH The Prince of Wales during his visit to St. Catherine's Mercy Centre in May, 2000, said:

> When I came to St Catherine's, it was just to get something to eat. I had been told you sat at a table and someone served you. I was terrified at first. I haven't sat at a table for such a long time and I felt out of place, but when I looked around I immediately felt at home.[8]

Joe commented on the fact that guests at St. Catherine's are served their meals, restaurant style. This is a special service that no government agency could afford to provide. It is one that we could not provide either if, following the example of Catherine, we were not joined by a wonderfully generous and caring team of Mercy associates and young volunteers from the Edinburgh University. These young academics hail from a variety of creeds, social groups, and continents. They are moved by the desperate circumstances of less fortunate people and inspired by the quality of mercy which the Sisters and our associates extend to them. In turn, we are inspired and sustained by their generosity, holistic caring, and desire to understand our vision. They seek training in how to "waste time with people," and in the interpersonal skills which are required in this special ministry.[9]

The fact that the Homeless Project has gripped them and, in several cases motivated them, to make a commitment to the congregation as Mercy associates, or to seek instruction in order to join the Church, touches us in a powerful way. It tells us that our reinterpretation of our charism is a genuine response to the Holy Spirit's inspiration and an authentic rebirthing of mercy in the third millennium. All of this strengthens us in our belief that there is a great future for Mercy, and that "... all will be well, and all manner of things will be well."[10] We believe that whatever route these young people take in life after graduation, the evangelizing experience which they encountered at Mercy Centre and the response which they made to it during their time at university will serve them and all with whom they come in contact throughout their lives.

> Many people, both Catholic and non-Catholic were moved by the generous service being so unostentatiously given, to lift the burdens of the suffering poor and they gladly gave their time and money to help support it.[11]

Guests at St. Catherine's are served their meals, restaurant style. This is a special service that no government agency could afford to provide.

Sister Aelred and her team are constantly seeking new ways of raising awareness of the needs of our special guests. She is a regular speaker in churches and at high profile social gatherings all over the city and beyond. She has enlisted the friendship of the Lord and Lady Provost and the Irish Consul and his wife, each of whom runs a fund-raising event on an annual basis for the centre. It was her skills in public discourse that brought HRH the Prince of Wales to the Center in the summer of 2000. This gave it a national platform. That, together with Sister's unique ability to dialogue with local counselors, members of parliament, and the press, guarantees that the profile of the Homeless Project and the plight of the poor and marginalized are high in the city.

The quality of the Sisters' ministry is admired and respected, and the consciences of those in government who allocate funds and personnel to the various social services and care in the community departments are at least challenged. Ministers and councilors are invited to consider the most appropriate use of these resources and to reflect on the real as opposed to the perceived reasons for homelessness, dysfunction, and addiction. The gap between the poor and the rich is ever widening and

the world's resources are unfairly given to persons who already have enough and not shared with those who lack them.

Ministry of the Table

> "The spirit of mercy that Mother McAuley has handed down to her Sisters is essentially scriptural in its foundations."[12]

The importance of the scriptural theme of table fellowship is obvious at St Catherine's Mercy Centre in the way guests are received at the main door, welcomed into the house, guided to a table, served with a meal and entertained in conversation by volunteers while they eat (Luke 9:15). We place so much importance on conversation, listening, and affirming that we have at all times a team made available to sit with, listen to, and converse with our guests.

The importance of the scriptural theme of table fellowship is obvious at St Catherine's Mercy Centre in the way guests are received at the main door, welcomed into the house, guided to a table, served with a meal and entertained in conversation by volunteers while they eat.

Peter, a teacher and head of department in a big comprehensive school, felt obliged to give up his post because of stress, which then led to depression. He turned to alcohol for comfort. After the team at St. Catherine's had helped to restore his dignity and re-house him, he said, "My cupboard is full, and I feel on top of the world. But these people are my friends."[13] Peter, once a captive of his misfortune and consequent addiction, has received mercy and been restored to wholeness.

"The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy . . ."[14] Conscious of this, the Sisters, associates and volunteers are happy to become involved in youth education programs. The Homeless Project provides a setting where children and teenagers are educated in skills of caring, sharing, and relating with the homeless, victims of addiction, and those who have learning difficulties. In training younger persons to do this work, the centre staff is making a positive contribution to breaking down prejudices, preventing discrimination, and leading the next generation to intimacy not only with their neighbors but with their Creator whose mercy reaches from age to age (Luke 1:50).

Volunteers Embody the Ministry

Many of the guests who frequent St. Catherine's Mercy Centre regain their self-confidence to make a fresh start. They are supported in finding housing and employment and mentored while they get back a sense of stability and establish positive relationships in the civic community. A number join the centre as volunteers and they make a unique contribution to it not only through their work, but because they are living examples of what can be achieved once the basic infrastructure is in place and the right pastoral help is available. These role models are amongst the centre's most valuable resources as they are able to speak from experience, lend a listening ear to those who are still on the margins, and bring hope to those who feel overwhelmed by despair. "Today, we live in a world that suffers from lack of hope—a world full of fear and despair," wrote Catherine more than one hundred and seventy-five years ago.[15] Things have not changed as much we might think. St. Catherine's Centre is proof that hope springs anew through the virtuous of each generation.

However, not everyone who enters St. Catherine's lives to record a success story. Each year, a number of people of all ages die from their addiction or their plight on the streets. These too, have a special place in the minds and hearts of staff and guests in the centre. One of the wonderful characteristics of the centre's guests is the care they have for one another. Guests and staff look out for persons who may miss a visit without having advised anyone of their absence. In some cases, a search finds that the person has been

found dead on the street or in a hospital. Sister Aelred is particularly sensitive in such cases and does everything in her power to ensure that families are contacted and counseled. Families who are successfully traced are invited to St. Catherine's to visit the haven where a loved one found solace in their most desperate hours. They are supported by the knowledge that a family member was buried with dignity (John 10:14-16).

Remembering the Homeless

In order to remind those who minister in St. Catherine's that the primary value is the sacredness of life, Sister Aelred keeps Homeless Sunday each year as a day of celebration. A special invitation is extended to all Sisters, associates of Mercy, volunteers, guests and the families of the dead to take part in a liturgy at the convent chapel and a social afterwards. Attention is focused on those whose pilgrimage ended on the streets, and to remember the homeless who, through no fault of their own, continue to live there. During the liturgy, a candle, symbolizing Jesus, Light of the World, is lit to commemorate the life of each person who has died (John 8:12). Afterwards, stories are shared, bread is broken and guests and staff leave feeling renewed, refreshed, and affirmed.

> "Her aim was not to dominate but to serve. She did not bear arms in the name of king or country. Rather, she carried the weapons of faith, hope, and charity: and if she did serve a king, Christ was the King she served . . . Her wish was to bring Christ to those she served . . . and she had her own currency: prayer."[16]

Mercy as Unrecognized Currency

Service in mercy is our central inspiration in working with the homeless. Spiritually, we find inspiration in the first messianic declaration of Jesus, translating it in a gentle, caring and pastoral manner to our guests. We believe that example is the greatest teacher, that all public servants who see the success of our work will hopefully feel called to imitate it. In our public discourse, we do not adopt an aggressive marketing strategy on public platforms, council chambers, or in the media. Having reinterpreted our charism in a way that meets the needs of persons today, we work with public bodies and agencies in a spirit of service as a mercy community inspired by a vision rooted in the gospel. We recognize that we live in an age when the pound, the dollar, and the euro are plentiful, and where mercy and prayer, though in great demand, are often unrecognized currency. Ours is the privilege of taking Jesus' first messianic declaration forward in faith, hope, and love so that all may experience the Lord's year of favor (Luke 4:19).

Notes

1 John Paul II. Encyclical Letter: *Dives in Misericordia* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1980), p. 11. All biblical quotations are taken from The Jerusalem Bible (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1967).
2 Ibid, p. 13.
3 *Original Rule and Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy* (Dublin: Brown and Nolan, 1869), p. 2
4 Mercy Sisters, London. *A Little Book of Practical Sayings of Our Reverend Foundress, Mother Mary Catherine McAuley* (London: Burn and Oates, 1968), p. 14.
5 Sisters of Mercy, London. *Approved Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy of the Union of Great Britain*, 1983, p. 20.
6 Mercy Sisters of St Louis. *Familiar Instructions of Rev Mother McAuley* (St. Louis: Vincentian Press, 1927), p. 138
7 *The Evening News* (Edinburgh), December 27, 1997.
8 *The Press and Journal* (Edinburgh), April 13, 2001.
9 Mercy Sisters, *Sayings of Catherine McAuley*. (Dublin: International Centre, 1990), p. 2.
10 Julian of Norwich. *Daily Readings* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980), p. 40
11 Mary Carmel Bourke, *A Woman Sings of Mercy* (Sydney: Dwyer, 1987), pp. 6-7. See also Mary C. Sullivan, *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy* (Dublin: Four Courts Press,1995).
12 *A Woman Sings of Mercy*, p. 41.
13 *The Evening Mail*, December 23, 1997.
14 *Dives in Misericordia*, p. 65.
15 Mercy Sisters, Bantry. *Catherine's Words: Maxims and Counsels* (Brentwood: Mercy Sisters,1900), p. 41.
16 Mary Angela Bolster, *My Song is of Mercy and Justice* (Cork: Tower Books), p. 78.

Refugees
At the Heart of All is the Life We Share

Margaret Moore, R.S.M.

What is the character of the public discourse when expressed by Australian Mercies in relation to the plight of asylum seekers, refugees, and internally displaced people overseas and in Australia? I write from the perspective of our work with refugees through Mercy Refugee Service.

Somewhere a mother awaits
Her husband, her son
In the chains of an oppressor
Or waits for those who never come
And still endures we know not how...
Somewhere a woman gives the world an artist
A child who sings and dances, dreams.
To know our sorrow
Is to know our joy –
Somewhere a mother will rejoice.[1]

> My name is Srey Pot, which means "the girl who was born on Wednesday." I am fourteen years and the sixth of eight brothers and sisters. I was born in a refugee camp along the Thai-Cambodia border. Two of my elder brothers died during the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, another "disappeared," and a landmine killed another.
>
> We survived thanks to donations of rice and the help of humanitarian organisations. I was too young to remember any of this, my elder sisters told me about our life then . . .
>
> I love dancing and I belong to a young dance troupe, we learned to dance in the refugee camp; my favourite Cambodian dance is "Peace," in which I dance as a dove of peace. I also like the "Ban Landmines" dance, in this one I dance as a butterfly captured by a landmine. I dream and look to the future with the hope that real peace will one day come for all of us.[2]

Background to Mercy Refugee Service

In 1983, I was in Melbourne at our congregation center and I took a phone call from a doctor at the Australian Red Cross asking for nurses, teachers and others who would assist in the refugee camps in Thailand and Malaysia. I took his request to a council meeting of our congregation and a decision was made to look for people to go to the camps. At the same time, Mercy Sisters from other parts of Australia were also responding to this need to assist the refugees fleeing war and internal conflict in parts of South east Asia. Thousands of these refugees came to be known as the "boat people." Others managed to escape overland into neighboring countries.

Mercy Refugee Service was formally established one year later in 1984 and continues to be part of the relief and development cross-cultural ministries of the Sisters of Mercy Australia and of Mercy Works, Inc.

Why did the Mercies respond to this issue? There was a call that came, and we felt drawn to respond and to assist the refugees who were most in need at that time. Among us, we had the skills for accompanying refugees. The work was down-to-earth and relational. As religious, we were available to go since we were not tied to family or a particular place.

At the present time, Mercy Sisters from Australia continue to respond to refugee needs overseas in partnership with the Jesuit Refugee Service. Currently

At the present time, Mercy Sisters from Australia continue to respond to refugee needs overseas in partnership with the Jesuit Refugee Service. Currently there are Sisters of Mercy in East Timor, Cambodia, Thailand, and Uganda.

there are Sisters of Mercy in East Timor, Cambodia, Thailand, and Uganda. All are working with families that were internally displaced, with returned refugees, or with those still waiting in camps until conflicts within their country are resolved and it is safe for them to return.

One of the effects of global communication is that we have never been more aware of the tragic events and injustices elsewhere in the world. At the heart of mercy is the desire to respond practically to human need and suffering. Compassion lies at the heart of what it means to be human.

I think that a particular characteristic of the Mercies is the way we speak from our experience. We are with the refugees at the most vulnerable time of loss, trauma, and insecurity as they flee wars, internal conflicts, persecution, and political unrest—often caused by repressive regimes. Our learning comes from our presence with the refugees and internally displaced people and from our way of accompanying them. This way is the way of compassionate, face-to-face service. This translates as wiping away tears, cleansing wounds, and sitting with a child who is learning to read and write. We may know the political reasons for the tears or the wounds, but we are physically present with the persons who are weeping, wounded, and deprived of education. This bodily accompanying is what costs us. Living close to the refugees, we take in their world, we share their insecurities, their dangers, and their privations. Our Mercy charism draws us to be with those who are suffering.

Personal Stories that Have Sharpened Our Sense of Mercy

I include here some glimpses into the personal experiences and the insights that have helped reclaim and sharpen the sense of mercy for Mercy Refugee Service field workers who have now returned to Australia. Twelve women from our Mercy congregations around Australia gathered in Sydney for a Mercy Refugee Service weekend. The women brought stories that spanned many places of work overseas—Angola, Ethiopia, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Nepal, East Timor, Kenya, and Uganda.

Our learning comes from our presence with the refugees and internally displaced people and from our way of accompanying them. This way is the way of compassionate, face-to-face service.

These stories do not convey all the color, joys, pains, struggles, courage, or faith experiences that have been part of these journeys into some of the most volatile parts of our world. However, they suggest something of the character that gives a human face and brings integrity to any public discourse that Sisters of Mercy have about the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. The following are summaries of stories told by Sisters at the gathering in Sydney in April, 2001.

I Found a Voice to Speak Up

When I got to the camp, I found an atmosphere of fear and distrust. If I was to be accepted I had to earn the trust of these refugees.

My main work was with the "unaccompanied minors," 126 of them ranging from age seven to eighteen years. At first it was difficult to build up any kind of rapport, and I could tell by most of the faces that they were quite unsure whether to trust me or not. I decided to wait. I listened and cared in a very low-key respectful manner, and waited.

After several weeks, perhaps even months, I noticed the change. My interpreter began remarking that the children were saying things like, "She speaks so gently to us. Why is she so gentle?" It was then that I knew that my waiting had paid off and in this new trust I had the opportunity to encourage these young ones in their life in the camp and beyond. Gentleness can be strength. People want to be listened to and respected in their vulnerability. I found that harshness achieves nothing of true value. My hesitant

trusting had turned into passionate compassion and I found my voice to speak up with confidence for the voiceless unaccompanied children, much to the anger of the camp authorities."[3]

Her Pain Was Carried in Her Body

In the camp, a woman with glazed eyes walked into my small office where I was working with unaccompanied minors. Her two daughters had been taken captive by pirates and were never heard of again. This mother now had constant headaches and couldn't function normally. Her husband on the other hand was very efficient. He couldn't express his pain. Hers was right through her body.[5]

In the camp, a woman with glazed eyes walked into my small office where I was working with unaccompanied minors. Her two daughters had been taken captive by pirates and were never heard of again.

An Embodiment of Mercy

In East Timor last year, I was visiting a family of very poor people. I was with an East Timorese woman from Australia who was part of our team. In this family, there was a very sick little boy. He stared vacantly into space while we talked around him. In fact, all of the family looked as if they were starving, and after a few questions we discovered that they had hardly any food. We were a long way from Maliana so we asked a man who had rice who was living in this area if we could take some of the rice that he had for himself and give it to the family. We said we would replace it the next day. He refused. We finally returned to Maliana but our East Timorese team member didn't give up on the family. She sent someone back out on the long journey to the family with some of our rice. This East Timorous woman is for me an embodiment of mercy in so many ways."[4]

She Spoke of a Love that Had Come to Her Heart

In the camp a refugee woman called Susanna asked me to be her godmother. Susanna had been coming regularly to the Basic Christian community meetings. When asked why she wanted to be baptized, she replied that she had found God. On the day of her baptism, she was so happy. She spoke of a love that had come to her heart. A few months later, she became very ill. I visited her several times and the joy was still tangible even in her illness. On one occasion, she wanted to give me something as a gift, so she gave me her small straw broom. She gave out of her nothingness really. I felt so vulnerable that day and knew that I could only give her my presence. I was powerless to change her situation and yet within this I knew with clarity a compassion and love. When Susanna died, the other women called me to pray with them and to sit with them beside Susanna's body. It was a blessed time.

I Was Accused

The first camp that I worked in was on an island. I was accused (I believe wrongly) of breaking the rules of the camp and was sent to the head of the Task Force on the mainland. There I was talked at as well as down to by four men, accused by one man and questioned by others. The apologies I gave with much humility saved me from being expelled from the camp. However the anger and resentment I felt were intense. I found that I had to pray for weeks and weeks to be freed from these feelings. At last I began to understand injustice in these situations. I could begin to know something of the harsh experiences of the refugees who had suffered far greater injustices and for much longer periods of time.

She Has Eyes That Dance: Compassion Took the Place of Judging

Mebret wouldn't be more than forty. She has five children, all of them very bright. Her husband is not around, so her hands are like boards from hard manual work. Mebret had built her own house and teashop from straw and mud bricks. She has eyes

that dance and a face that lights up when she smiles a shy smile.

I learned that compassion takes the place of judging. These are changed times in a war-torn country. After being with a woman who is a prostitute, I found myself thinking that if I can't offer her the same financial assistance she has been earning to survive, I can't say, "Give up your lifestyle." I did educate her on how to protect herself. I could no longer judge.

On another occasion my response about a person who died and left no young children to be cared for was, "Thank God there are no children left." The neighbor's reaction was, "Isn't it a pity. There is no one to remember him!"

In this country I saw the symbols of hospitality speaking for themselves, mercy in sharing the ordinary, not the big splash. Neighbors meet in one another's houses for coffee and a chat. On special occasions to mark a special event, symbols like bread and wine, coffee with incense are brought.

They Had Little Choice and Few Possessions

Teachers from among the refugee population in the settlements would walk for days to be at their training workshops. Women who are refugees came carrying their babies on their backs. Every ounce of energy was put into their studies and training. I noticed so often that in relation to their belongings and food, everything was shared. They were always ready to share from the very little that they had. They lived completely for the day in terms of material goods. They had little choice and few possessions.

The Experiences in the Camp Continue to Define My Mercy Identity

I remember when I was working in the camp that I was at one point afraid of being overwhelmed by the suffering that I was holding. I did not know what to do with the pain. It was at that point (of feeling almost overwhelmed) that I became aware that I didn't have to do anything with the suffering. I didn't have to get rid of it or fix it up. Suffering was actually part of life there and as I entered more and more into the lives of the refugees I found that I was being loved and received by the refugees. In my accompanying them, I found mercy among the refugees. Those experiences in the camp continue to define my mercy identity.

We Speak from Where We Stand

A letter of 22 May 2001 from Denise Coghlan, R.S.M., an Australian Mercy who is in Cambodia, speaks of "where she stands with the refugees." Denise urged us to encourage our Government, which gives aid to Vietnam, to inform itself about this situation and to respond.

> We drove twelve hours to the site of the Montagnard asylum seekers in Mondulkiri province last Thursday. We found one hundred and fifty six refugees from Vietnam under blue plastic with two UNHCR workers. The group claim they have fled religious and land persecution in the Dac Lac region of Vietnam . . . The refugee group had been living in the forest . . . they are very afraid and some have not more than rice to eat.[6]

What Is the Urgent Public Debate that Is Facing Us Here?

In Australia we are being faced with the public debate and outcry that relates to our now restrictive immigration policies. Along with many other Church, community groups, and Mercies around the country, we are trying to advocate for more just and compassionate policies towards refugees and asylum seekers. Mercy networks are joining prayer vigils, protest marches, letter-writing campaigns, speaking to community groups. We are raising awareness of the need for our government to adopt refugee

Along with many other Church, community groups, and Mercies around the country, we are trying to advocate for more just and compassionate policies towards refugees and asylum seekers.

and asylum policies based on humanity and respect rather than control and intimidation.

There has been an unprecedented rise in public awareness both within Australia and internationally about "detention" as a key human rights issue. In Australia it is second only to indigenous issues. So how has this come about?

In the last two years Australia has seen over four thousand people arrive on our shores by boat from the Middle East. The vast majority from two countries: Iraq and Afghanistan. Unlike the majority who have come in the past, these have come in an unauthorized fashion and most have a high probability of being granted refugee status. They thus present the Government with a significant dilemma. Detention centers are filled to capacity, and security within them has been tightened. A number of these detention centers are in remote parts of Australia away from facilities. As social tensions mount, we are seeing almost every week stories about further problems.

Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,
A thousand windows and a thousand doors,
Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours.[7]

Mercy Refugee Service is now actively seeking ways to access and support the most vulnerable families who are being held in these remote places while they wait for a determination of their case. Women with children and unaccompanied minors are especially at risk as violence escalates. Access is difficult and there is reluctance on the part of the government to explore alternatives to the current detention policy. We are advocating that the government put in place ethically and legally sound policies that respect and uphold the dignity of people. They should be treated in the most humane manner possible while their claims to refugee status and permanent residency are being determined.

While Australia had roughly two thousand asylum seekers from Iraq last year, Europe had thirty-five thousand, and our total of 11,867 asylum applications pales when put alongside the fact that 452,000 applications (according to United Nations High Commission for Refugees figures) were lodged in Europe during the year 2000.[8]

The mass movements of people around our world seeking protection is indeed a global issue. Whatever advances are made in protecting refugees at the global level, Australia as a nation will still confront the policy challenges at a local level. Asylum seekers will continue to land on our shores and at our airports, and probably in increasing numbers. Their presence is unsettling, because it reminds us that Australia is not shielded from the world's upheavals. We cannot ignore issues of poverty, war, and persecution and environmental degradation because they happen overseas.

Asylum seekers remind us that this is a small world after all.[9]

In Australia we need to reignite a spirit that will allow us to be a compassionate and caring society. We need to find within that spark of passion that seeks to build generous communities of compassion. As Mercy women committed to stand with those most vulnerable, we have a special role in bringing that spirit to life in the hearts of those we work with and for in Australia and in society as a whole.

Notes

1 The title for this article is drawn from a publication edited by Rosslyn Von Der Borch, *The Life We Share: Reflections from the Mercy Refugee Service*. Australia, 1992.
2 Es'kia Mphahlele, South Africa, in *War Has Changed Our Life, Not Our Spirit: Experiences of Forcibly Displaced Women*. Jesuit Refugee Service. February 2001.
3 Ibid.
4 Mercy Refugee Service Weekend for Returned Field Workers, Sydney, March 2001.
5 Stories in this article are used with permission of participants who shared them.
6 JRS Core List: from Denise Coghlan, R.S.M., Cambodia. 22 May 2001.
7 Auden, W. H. 'Twelve Songs'
8 M. Piper, "Refugees in Australia: A Roller Coaster Year," *Human Rights Defender*, A Publication of the Australian Human Rights Centre, University of NSW March 2001
9 Peter Mares, *Borderline. Australia's Treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers*. University of NSW Press 2001

Northern Ireland During the Troubles
How Was It for Mercy?

Deirdre Mullan, R.S.M.

The conflict in Northern Ireland, of which the violence between 1969 until 1996 was the most prolonged and dramatic manifestation, has attracted a great volume of writing and research. A considerable proportion of this investigation has sought to uncover and explain the basis of the division between the two sections of the community, the Catholics and the Protestants, to somehow find "the real problem." As Seamus Dunn suggested in the preface of *Facets of the Conflict in Northern Ireland*, "It may be more realistic to conceptualize the situation as one of a society which actually faces a complicated set of interlocking problems."[1]

Part of the basis for seeing women in conflicted societies as less aggressive and more peace-loving than men may arise from their low visibility.

In this reading of Northern Ireland, some of the issues will persist for a long time, even if the current cease-fire holds. Since challenges remain, it is essential to try to obtain as clear an understanding as possible of the roles and attitudes of different social, economic and geographical sub-groups across Northern Ireland in order to begin to piece together the complex jigsaw of expectations, antagonisms, and alliances from which the new structures will emerge.

Have Mercy Sisters as a group of women impacted either positively or negatively the lives of the people of Ulster? Women in Northern Ireland cannot be categorized as if they were a single group. The attempt ignores the enormous diversity of their experiences, skills, and backgrounds. At the same time, women's experience, attitudes, and aspirations have frequently been neglected. The analysis of the situation has been based on data collected predominantly from men. Thus, attempts to present women's views of the Northern Ireland conflict do seem justified. Recent studies have begun to process women's voices, and there is continuing research initiated by women.

Women's Experience of National Conflict

One of the major tasks of research has been to examine women's experiences in the last thirty years and to reassess the models which have been used to describe and explain these experiences. Women in Northern Ireland have frequently been portrayed as more moderate in their views than men and as actual or potential peacemakers, in common with women in many other situations of violent conflict, including South Africa, Middle East, Bosnia, and Rwanda. Is this analysis true of the many Mercy women who have lived all of their lives through the most violent years of the troubles? Have they been peacemakers, or has the political and cultural environment through which they lived left unaffected their lives as religious women?

Part of the basis for seeing women in conflicted societies as less aggressive and more peace-loving than men may arise from their low visibility. This may well be a significant factor in Northern Ireland when an analysis of a thirty-year time span is based on political, economic, and social life. In these arenas, secular women have been less visible than men. This would be even more true of religious women. However, unlike many of their lay colleagues, religious women have been visible by their ministries in schools, colleges, and hospitals. Thus, the visibility factor of Mercy women may need a separate consideration.

To add another factor, any analysis of women's roles over the past thirty years must take account of

their traditional place in Irish society and the ways in which women have been used in iconography by both sections of the community to project a specific ideology. The Catholic tradition elevates the figure of the Blessed Mother, while the Protestant tradition focuses on biblical women who exemplify the good wife and mother. In the political sphere, Nationalist representations of the spirit of Ireland are invariably female, showing either the warrior maid of Celtic mythology or a poor, suffering old woman.

Turning from such models to the reality of what Mercy women have actually done in relation to peace-making and cross community building in Northern Ireland, a brief consideration of peace and peace-making may be helpful. The literature is vast. Feminist writers such as Betty Reardon have suggested that the usual definition of peace is "the absence of violence."[2] Reardon argues that a "concept of positive peace is more helpful" and that this implies "both the cessation of violence and the establishment of a secure society in which there is protection from future attack and an environment in which the basic needs of all members of the society must be met."[3]

Many Mercy schools were targeted and destroyed by arsonists. Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School in Belfast was destroyed at least six times. Sisters walked to school through barricades and tried to provide normalcy for children traumatized by the violence.

Mercy Sisters Impacted by the Struggle

The experience of Mercy women during the troubles has not been well documented. The Church in the public arena usually means "male clergy" although many Mercy women suffered personally during this time. For example, one Sister lost her twin sister in a bomb. The mother of another Sister lost both of her legs in a "no warning" bomb. One of the ten men who died on hunger strike, in an act of defiance to secure political status for prisoners, was the brother of a Mercy woman. Sisters in Derry dealt first hand with the families of the fourteen men shot dead by the British soldiers in what has become known as "Bloody Sunday." The Sisters in Enniskillen were among the first on the street to assist those killed in the bomb at the war memorial on Remembrance Day.

Many Mercy schools were targeted and destroyed by arsonists. Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School in Belfast was destroyed at least six times. Sisters walked to school through barricades and tried to provide normalcy for children traumatized by the violence. In addition, there was strain in community living with Sisters in the same house whose views represented both sides of the political divide. Among the "Nationalist" Mercy women, there have been protracted debates about feminism as a position which is disloyal to the Church. Some Unionist women could not support the strip search campaign since it was perceived as against the state government.

As Loughran has stated, "The issue of strip-searching was taken up mainly by Nationalist women and had clear human rights and more specifically women's rights implications. However, many women from the Unionist tradition supported strip-searching and saw it in the context of terrorist violence and that the problem was self inflicted."[4] Several Mercy women were involved as individuals in supporting the campaign against strip-searching but there was no congregational endorsement of this project.

Response to Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a major human rights issue and a key element in understanding structural, political violence. During the 1980s there was an increased awareness of the extent of domestic violence suffered by women. As in a number of other societies experiencing political violence, including South Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Latin America, the response to domestic violence in Northern Ireland was one of ambivalence or denial. As feminist writer Simona Sharoni commented about women's experience in the Arab/Israeli situation, "Sometimes in societies experiencing violent conflict at the community

level, in the domestic situation there is an acceptance of male violence against women, especially by men involved in paramilitary groups and in the security forces, labelling it as a response to stress."[5]

By the late 1980s women across Ireland were actively involved campaigning against domestic violence and refuge centers were established. While such initiatives may not fit the label of "peace making," in the usual sense, they do tackle central elements of gender specific structural violence. At least seven of these centers in Northern Ireland were set up by the Sisters of Mercy.

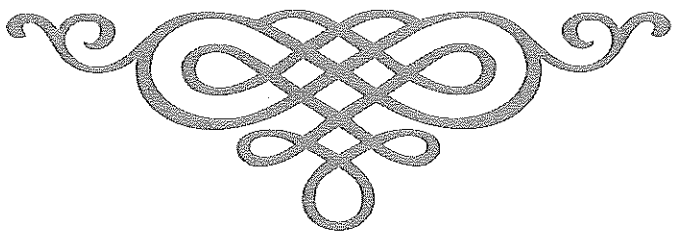
Cultural Violence

Another area in which Mercy women manifested a presence in the public arena was in education about cultural violence. Galtung sees cultural violence as manifesting itself in areas such as religion, language, arts, and ideology. In many deeply divided societies, differences in these spheres play a major role in sustaining antagonisms, motivating discrimination against the "other," and justifying or excusing violence. Analyzing the roots of the divisions in these areas has been a concern of researchers in Northern Ireland for more than thirty years. While the four main churches have gone some way to encourage understanding and tolerance, it was the work of Sister Carol Rittner, R.S.M., which many say was a catalyst for change in Northern Ireland. In 1994, she organized a conference "Beyond Hate—Living with Our Deepest Differences." This public conference challenged the people of Northern Ireland to move "beyond hate" and to begin the work of coexistence. It called for "a truce in the war over the past and for the dubious prize of being considered the most wronged victim. Instead of fueling resentment and revenge, memory must become the hope and pledge of the future."[6]

By way of conclusion, it is difficult to ascertain the level of influence Mercy women living in Northern Ireland have had. Many women responded to human need at the time and little has been documented or recorded. As one Mercy Sister said to me, "We did what we had to do in the face of so much pain." Some Mercy women may have made a notable contribution to the reduction of violence. It is also possible some actions may have served to reproduce the divided society we live in. The total experience of Mercy women over the past thirty years could provide an innovative way of looking at the political situation. How did these Sisters respond or not, and in what way they did may hold the key to peace making, not with a capital "P." Perhaps peace making is fundamentally responding with human kindness as needs may arise.

Notes

1 S. Dunn, "The Conflict as a Set of Problems," in S. Dunn, ed., *Facets of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (London: Macmillan/St. Martin's Press, 1995.
2 B. Reardon, *Sexism and the War System* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1992).
3 Ibid.
4 C. Loughran, Armagh and Feminist Strategy (London: Pluto Press, 1981).
5 S. Sharoni, Every Woman an Occupied Territory: The Politics of Militarism and Sexism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Journal of Gender Studies* 1:4 (1992): 447.
6 E. Deane and C. Rittner, *Beyond Hate: Living with Our Differences* (Yes Publications, Derry N. Ireland, 1994).



Faith Lives on Death Row

Camille D'Arienzo, R.S.M.

Editor's Note
by Carol Rittner, R.S.M.

What is the character of public discourse when expressed by Sisters of Mercy? How do we take on politically-charged issues in the public forum? Some of us do it through debates; others develop position papers or statements on specific topics or issues; and still others of us use our expertise as writers to publicize the stories of those we feel are being abused, demeaned, or dehumanized.

During the Spring of 2001, the Institute Justice Team (IJT) of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas issued a "Statement on the Death Penalty." In it they drew attention to the case of Timothy McVeigh, found guilty of "the cold-blooded killing of 168 persons, including a number of small children attending a daycare center located in the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City." It is a case, they said, that "boggles the mind by its sheer enormity. If anyone 'deserves' the death penalty," wrote the IJT, "it would certainly seem to be Timothy McVeigh." And yet, they continued, "Jesus calls us to another standard. He said, 'Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you.'" It is a challenge that Jesus never said would be easy.

According to the IJT, "The desire for vengeance [never restores] victims of violent crime to life. It only serves to increase the pain of those who have suffered loss and contributes to the spiral of violence within our society. State-sanctioned killing, even of someone like Timothy McVeigh, diminishes all of us and denies the reality that all life comes from God and returns to God.

"The death penalty," they wrote, "also closes off the possibility of responsibility, rehabilitation and restoration . . . To embrace the death penalty is to give up on the power of the Spirit." In their statement, the Institute Justice Team tried to remind all of us—Sisters of Mercy, our associates and coworkers, those involved in the legal, judicial, and penal professions, as well as the wider civic community, believers and non-believers alike—that "the power of God's grace can do infinitely more than we can ever ask or imagine." And they asked a questions that all of us should consider as we try to think through our position on this moral question that is so politically charged: "Is it beyond our capacity to believe that God's grace could touch the heart of a mass murderer like Timothy McVeigh?"

In the following essay, Camille D'Arienzo, R.S.M. (Brooklyn) addresses the public policy issue of the death penalty by telling the story of David Paul Hammer, a prisoner on death row in the federal prison at Terre Haute, Indiana (USA).

David Paul Hammer and I picked up our phones simultaneously, made eye contact through the bullet proof window that separated us and I asked, "Well, newest Catholic in Terre Haute, how does it feel to be part of our family?"

We were remembering the ceremony of the previous day, October 27, 2000, when Archbishop Daniel Buechlein, O.S.B. came from Indianapolis to the federal prison at Terre Haute to receive David into the Church, give him his first holy communion and confirm him and his fellow death row inmate, Jeffrey William Paul.

It was the first mass ever offered in the Death Row Unit. Sister of Providence, Sister Rita Clare Geradot, and I were seated at the side of the makeshift altar about three feet from the men in their separate cages. Bill Lang, supervisory chaplain, was with us, and Father Frank Roof concelebrated and provided music by way of a CD player.

"How does it feel, now that you've had some time to process yesterday's events?" I continued.

"Jeff and I were talking about that last night," David began. "He said that when he knelt down and the archbishop put his hands through the opening to anoint him, Jeff looked into his eyes. Never in his whole life did he feel such peace. That's the way I felt," David said, his eyes brimming with unshed tears.

Later, after permission was granted for photos with the archbishop and pastoral witnesses, Sister Rita Clare and I each briefly embraced each man as he was led in handcuffs back to his cell. Remembering that, David added, "Jeff said he was overwhelmed by the hug you gave him. It was the first, positive human contact he'd had in five years. You can't imagine what that meant to him."

David Paul Hammer, #24507-077, is under a death sentence which he is appealing. I am among those who encouraged him to seek clemency or a commutation.

I became David's primary spiritual advisor in December 1998, a few weeks before he was slated to die in Allenwood Prison in Pennsylvania. My companion in this ministry is Edward Doherty who used to be an active priest in the Brooklyn Diocese and who will always be "Father Ed" to David. We're in touch with David by mail or phone on a regular basis. Sister Rita Clare, who lives on the nearby campus of St. Mary of the Woods, has become part of our pastoral team, visiting David weekly. When David expressed his desire to become a Catholic, Sister Rita Clare became his primary instructor. She found him an amazingly quick learner.

"Who taught Jeff his prayers," I asked.

"I did," David answered, "I'd shout them out through the window and he'd repeat them. He's very intelligent," he remarked of the twenty-four-year-old man in the next cell. Solid walls separate the inmates on Death Row; however, a window that looks out onto a brick wall serves as the conduit for conversation.

David had attended mass before in some one of the prisons in which he'd spent twenty-three of his forty-two years on earth, "but it was nothing like this," he said, remembering a large meeting room without an altar cloth (red for the sacrament of Confirmation) and certainly without an archbishop as celebrant. With enormous tenderness, Archbishop Buechlein had assured the men that their confinement could not keep them from a larger world that is the context and reality of the Church.

The power of our ancient tradition and ritual impacted deeply on the caged men. Acceptance into a spiritual family founded on Jesus, who himself died a victim of capital punishment, held significance not equaled in any other setting.

"So you managed to get us a cake," David laughed. "I had a big piece for supper and another for breakfast," he admitted.

I'd written to the warden asking if I might bake and bring one to celebrate the occasion. My request was denied, of course, but the institution's chef created the most delicious giant chocolate sheet cake the men had ever tasted there. On its white frosting was inscribed "Congratulations." A cross was added to the decorations.

When David and I met the next day, I told him that he had, on his Confirmation Day, given the watching world a powerful example of Christian witness. By coincidence or providence, the *Terre Haute Tribune Star* had published part of an interview with him in which he expresses his reasons for filing a request for clemency from President Clinton. Above all, he cites his belief that not fighting against his execution would make it easier for the government to carry out the executions of other men on death row.

A few months back, Mr. Hammer had dismissed previous appeals and requested a speedy execution day. The prospect of life in prison without parole had become insufferable. Death certainly would be a release from the relentless isolation of Death Row, with confinement in a narrow cell. The scars on David's back, neck, and stomach reflect the dangers within the prison population. And who can measure the loneliness of men without normal, positive human contact for years on end? Add to that the remorse of having killed another human being, thereby inflicting an irreparable wound on those who love him, and there is a prescription for despair that only faith in God can alleviate.

David's remorse is genuine, as are his desire for forgiveness and his unaccepted expressions of apologies to the family of Andrew Marti. For reasons that remain unclear even to himself,

(Continued on page 33.)

Mercy and the Personal Challenge of Advocacy

Mary Roch Rocklage, R.S.M.

Many years ago, when I was just beginning my ministry in health care administration, I quickly recognized the obligation of leaders to effectively advocate in the public arena for needed reform of the health care system. Over the years, my involvement in public policy has become a regular part of my ministry.

But I've also come to realize that involvement in public discourse is not merely an obligation of those in leadership positions. Both as a servant of God and a vowed member of the Sisters of Mercy, it is doubly my responsibility to be a voice for those who are suffering or in need. The Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy call us to personal involvement not only through direct service but by influencing systemic change. Simply put, we can't be true to who we are, as followers of Christ and as a congregation, unless we are committed to advocating for change.

Advocacy is not easy. Taking a public stand on behalf of an issue—whether a person is seeking greater access to health care services, supporting changes in education or challenging welfare reform—can be a difficult and sometimes discouraging undertaking. The process of changing minds and strongly held convictions, much less changing laws and public policy, pose tremendous challenges. But the undertaking can also can be personally stretching and rewarding.

Rules of Effective Advocacy

My own experiences have taught me some basic truths about effective advocacy. While grounded in principles of human dignity and common sense, these are lessons that may be applied in almost any situation involving advocacy.

Credibility requires preparation. In our role as advocates, we must be knowledgeable enough about our cause to stand toe to toe with others who may have a differing point of view. Conviction without credibility is doomed to failure.

Be in the boat, but free enough to rock it. Personal involvement and passion around a particular issue sometimes makes it difficult to accept more than one approach to addressing the problem or concern. The best advocates, while devoted to their cause, are able to look objectively at the situation and are open to various perspectives and solutions for change.

Be truly radical, but not fanatical . . . Over the years, radical ideas have given birth to changes that have improved the lives of millions of people . . . But we must know the difference between radical thinking and fanatical behavior. The ends do not always justify the means.

Be truly radical, but not fanatical. American culture is steeped in independent thinking. Over the years, radical ideas have given birth to changes that have improved the lives of millions of people. Radical ways of thinking can lead people to think in new ways, to look for root causes of dysfunction and drive necessary change. But we must know the difference between radical thinking and fanatical behavior. The ends do not always justify the means.

Seek justice in ways that do not hurt others. The often quoted gospel passage tells us, "Be as wise as a serpent, but gentle as doves" (Matt 10:16).

This is fitting advice when advocating on behalf of issues, especially in situations that may be politically charged. Justice cannot be borne out of anger, and our efforts in public debate cannot be destructive of other people. We must always act with compassion, integrity, and respect.

Be able to speak in other than "faith language." Effective advocacy requires the ability to communicate with individuals who come from diverse backgrounds and have beliefs that may be radically different than our own. While we should never feel the need to leave our religious affiliation at the door, we must be able to articulate our position from points of view beyond those that are faith based.

Be committed for the long haul. Change does not happen overnight, and we must exercise patience and be committed to taking a stand for the long term.

Advocacy is a never-ending need. Catherine founded the Sisters of Mercy to address the injustices of her time. Today, the issues are different but the need for justice will always be present.

Over the years, I have frequently heard advocacy equated to lobbying. It is important to note that the two are not synonymous. Lobbying is an issues-oriented activity or technique in which persons involved in advocacy engage. Specifically, lobbying is an attempt to influence the voting of legislators, to urge the passage of a bill. It does not require the personal commitment or conviction of the person doing the lobbying; it is job, a task to be done.

Advocacy is far broader and far more personal. It is the embracing of a cause or issue, a conversion to a mission that makes a very real claim on the advocate. Without that conversion, advocacy cannot exist. Advocacy is the activity of altering structures, of changing the status quo. As such, it is deeply tied to mission, the purpose and "why" of our existence.

Integration of Advocacy and Mission: The Future

So how can we integrate true advocacy with our mission as a religious community? A wonderful book by Walter Brueggeman, *The Prophetic Imagination*, draws an interesting parallel between advocacy and prophecy. Brueggeman says, "Prophets are in a way future-tellers. They are concerned with the future as it infringes upon the present. Prophets are concerned with the most elemental changes in human society, and they understand a great deal about how change is effected."

The task of prophetic ministry, and likewise of advocacy, is to nurture, nourish, and evoke consciousness of different ways of considering and doing things. Effective advocacy entails these three distinct steps:

- Envisioning an alternative. We must first begin with a clear understanding of who are—as a religious community, as a people created in God's image, as a society. Then we must consider what kind of relationships, structures and support are needed for us to live to our fullest dignity and potential. Only in this way can we begin to envision another way of coming together, another structure, a whole different view. This moves us to the next step in advocacy:
- Challenging the status quo. Brueggeman defines the status quo as "the royal consciousness, those who are in authority, those who are in charge, those who are benefiting from the present structure." If we criticize or challenge the status quo, we can expect to be blocked by people who represent the royal consciousness. Challenging the status quo is risk-laden. In fact, many a prophet lost his life in this regard. This process is a taking down of what is presently in place—part by part, layer by layer—so that the envisioned future can be pursued. In doing so, we move to the third element of advocacy.
- Energizing persons and communities. By virtue of what is envisioned as an alternative—the promise of a new day and a new way of looking at things—we can create energy and enthusiasm within individuals and communities. We have eyes of faith to see. We are unbound, freed for justice and for compassion.

Ecclesial Dimension of Advocacy

Advocacy demands even more of a commitment from us as followers of Christ. In order to be able to envision an alternative future, we must know and

embrace our traditions as a Judeo-Christian people. We must understand the teachings of the Church, the values and principles that drive us. Only in light of who we are, in light of our traditions, in light of our understanding of God, can we envision an alternative future. Otherwise, instead of our faith being a cause of unity, it is a cause of division.

How will we know when we are truly serving as advocates of the Church? We will have some understanding, or an inkling that we are on the right track, when we pass what Fred Kammer, S.J., describes in *Doing Faith Justice*, as "the acid test"—a move from charity to justice. Kammer notes that although charity and justice are often viewed as a unit, they are, in fact, distinct from one another. "Charity primarily concerns person-to-person encounters. It shapes our individualized generosity to the nursing home resident or the homeless family. Justice, however, as used in contemporary Church teaching, focuses primarily on economic, social and political structures. Justice is about those arrangements, patterns, systems and way we do things together. Justice is the framework for love in the world beyond individual encounters. It is the enhancement of love."

To help, to teach, to heal, to dismantle what is presently an obstacle, to envision an alternate future, and to make whole through structural changes in society. To move from charity to justice—this is the charge and personal challenge of advocacy.

D'Arienzo: Faith Lives on Death Row

(Continued from page 30.)

David killed Andrew when he was his cellmate. He has confessed his sins and longs for a way to make restitution, insofar as he is able to do so. If the autobiography he is writing is published, he intends to direct the profits to a fund for abused children.

Archbishop Buechlein actively supports David's plea for clemency. In response to the Pope's request that bishops throughout the world bring the jubilee themes of forgiveness and reconciliation to people who are incarcerated, the archbishop visited Terre Haute on July 8, celebrating mass for the general population and meeting individually with some of the prisoners, among them David Paul Hammer. David, impressed by the archbishop's kindness, spontaneously addressed him: "Most Reverend, I am not a Catholic, but I am preparing to become one. I have been in prison for 22 and a half years. I have lived a sordid life. Until Catholic friends started praying for me, I didn't know that God could have mercy on a sinner like me. I pray every day for the family of Andrew Marti, whom I killed. When I'm ready, would you confirm me, too?"

And so it came to pass that on October 27, 2000, in the year of Jubilee, a sense of spiritual freedom came to prisoners, hope in a place of despair, along with music and chocolate cake and the face of God's love in those who embraced the mass with its salvific message, and the men and the moment.

THE MAST JOURNAL, begun in 1990, is published three times a year by the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology. Members of the E`ditorial Board are Sisters Eloise Rosenblatt, Editor (Burlingame), Doris Gottemoeller (Cincinnati), Mary Sullivan (Rochester), Patricia Talone (Merion), Mary Daly (Connecticut), Carol Rittner (Dallas), and Kathleen McAlpin (Merion). Subscriptions correspondence to Marilee Howard, R.S.M. (Auburn) at 740 41st Street, Sacramento, CA 95819, e-mail mhoward@chw.edu. Editorial correspondence to Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., at 1121 Starbird Circle #4, San Jose, CA 95117, e-mail erosen1121@cs.com. Layout, design, and printing by BIBAL Press, an imprint of D. & F. Scott Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 821653, North Richland Hills, TX 76182. Back issues at $5.00 may be ordered from BIBAL Press at (888) 788-2280 or sales@dfscott.com.

Contributors

Camille D'Arienzo, R.S.M., (Brooklyn) has a Ph.D. in communication and is professor emerita at Brooklyn College. She has served as president of the Brooklyn Regional Community and as president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). Since 1973, she has been a commentator for 1010 WINS Radio, as well as writer and public speaker. She is founder of Cherish Life Circle.

Karen M. Donahue, R.S.M., (Chicago) has been active in Mercy justice ministry for thirty years, most recently serving as issues coordinator for the Justice Team of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. She participated in the first International Mercy Justice Conference in Dublin in 1996 and was on the planning committee for a second conference held in September 2001. She hold a B.A. from St. Xavier College and an M.S. in biology from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana.

Jean Evans, R.S.M., is a Sister of Mercy working in South Africa since 1984. At the moment, she is principal of Mmakau Adult Basic Education and Training Centre in the village of Mmakau in the North West Province of South Africa. She is pursuing post-graduate studies in spirituality at the University of South Africa. Her other interest is retreat direction.

Margaret Moore, R.S.M., is a member of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia (Melbourne Congregation.) She is currently based at the institute centre in Sydney and is the national coordinator of Mercy Refugee Service. She has a background in teaching and adult education and training. She has a masters in pastoral theology from Loyola University, Chicago and holds a graduate certificate in spiritual direction from the Institute For Spiritual Leadership, Chicago.

Deirdre Mullan, R.S.M., is a member of the Sisters of Mercy, Derry, Northern Ireland. She completed her Ph.D. in gender studies at the University of Ulster, Coleraine, Northern Ireland. For more than twenty years, she was engaged in secondary education in Derry City, most recently at Thornhill Hill College, where she was chair of the Religious Education Department. From September 1999 until December 2000, Deirdre was assistant professor of social sciences at Mount Aloysius College, Cresson, PA (USA). She currently works at the Mercy NGO office at the United Nations in New York City.

Kathleen M. Murphy, R.S.M., is a Sister of Mercy of the Union of Great Britain. She holds a B.A. in history and education from London University, masters in religious education from Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington, and a doctorate in the ministry of religious. Her doctorate is from the Graduate Theological Foundation, Indiana with research at Boston College in Massachusetts, and Blackfriars Oxford. She is currently a member of the faculty at the Maryvale Institute, an international College of Catholic Theology in Birmingham, England.

Sister Mary Roch Rocklage, R.S.M. (St. Louis) is the chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Sisters of Mercy Health System, which sponsors health service programs in eight states. Prior to becoming chair of the board in July 1999, Sister Mary Roch served for thirteen years as Mercy Health System's first president and chief executive officer. She serves on the governing boards of numerous health systems and educational organizations and participates in many governmental, religious, and civic agencies, task forces, and committees for health planning. She is a member of the Domestic Policy Committee of the U.S. Catholic Conference, a fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives and serves on the governing board of the American Hospital Association and is its 2001 chair.

Discussion Questions

(D'Arienzo) How do you deal with the divide between the majority view of those in the U.S. who support the death penalty, and the minority, largely religious groups, who resist it by calling for either a moratorium or a roll-back of the law?

(Donahue) Some of the effects of globalization include "homogenization" of world culture, reducing diversity, and privatization of services which transfers public monies into private hands. In both cases, the poor are made less visible and more powerless. What are ways to resist these economic trends in everyday life?

(Evans) "What is expressed in public discourse is the result of one's field of vision and experience. Hence we can say that public discourse is as much about opinion and viewpoint as it is about truth . . . this conceptual framework may be seriously flawed." In taking a look at political and social commitments of activist groups to which you belong, how do you describe the framework governing their work? Does the work replicate or challenge reigning power structures? What personal history drives your own work for social change?

(Moore) Should a nation's refugee and immigration policy be driven by compassion over security, or by security over compassion? How should these competing values be resolved? What additional values should mediate the divide?

(Mullan) What are the resources in Mercy history, both spiritual and political, that provide direction to Mercy women who presently confront physical violence in schools, cities and gender relations?

(Murphy) In dealing with the homeless, what resources and what responses can a religious community bring that are qualitatively different from those of a government agency? Does this contrast hold true for other faith-based organizations responding to social ills?

(Rocklage) Advocacy is far broader and more personal than lobbying, since "advocacy is the activity of altering structures, of changing the status quo." What are effective ways you have found to deal with resistance to changing the status quo in your family, in community and in your place of ministry?

Information for New Subscribers and Current Readers

New Subscription: *The MAST Journal* is published three times a year by the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology. To subscribe, please fill out the coupon below or a copy of it. Make your check payable to *The MAST Journal* and send to Marilee Howard, R.S.M., MAST treasurer, 8300 Colesville Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Back Issues: If you are interested in obtaining a back issue of *The MAST Journal*, contact BIBAL Press at 888-788-2280 or sales@dfscott.com. Back issues are $5.00 each, but are often on sale.

Address Change: If your address is incorrect or if you have changed your mailing address, please send that information to Marilee Howard, R.S.M., MAST treasurer, 8300 Colesville Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Email: mhoward@sistersofmercy.org.

Issue Didn't Arrive: If your subscription is up to date and your issue of the journal did not arrive (and you know the issue has been published, the grapevine says!), then write to Marilee Howard, R.S.M., MAST treasurer, 8300 Colesville Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Email: mhoward@sistersofmercy.org.

Want to Write: If you have an idea for an article, or you have a talk or article you would like published in *The MAST Journal*, please send the article or inquiry to Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., MAST Office, 1121 Starbird Circle #4, San Jose, CA 95117. Please include a complete return mailing address on all correspondence or contact her by e-mail at erosen1121@cs.com.

I wish to subscribe to ***The MAST Journal*** **for:**

One year ——
($15.00 U.S.; $18.00 outside U.S.)

Two years ——
($25.00 U.S.; $30.00 outside U.S.)

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Please make payment by international money order, check drawn on U.S. bank, or U.S. currency.

MERCY ASSOCIATION IN SCRIPTURE AND THEOLOGY

MAST, the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology, met for the first time in June 1987 at Gwynedd-Mercy College in Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania. Called together by Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M. and Mary Ann Getty, twenty Mercy theologians and Scripture scholars from fourteen regional communities formally established the organization to provide a forum for dialogue and cooperation among Sisters of Mercy and associates. The stated purpose of the organization is to promote studies and research in Scripture, theology, and related fields; to support its members in scholarly pursuits through study, writing, teaching, and administration; and to provide a means for members to address current issues within the context of their related disciplines.

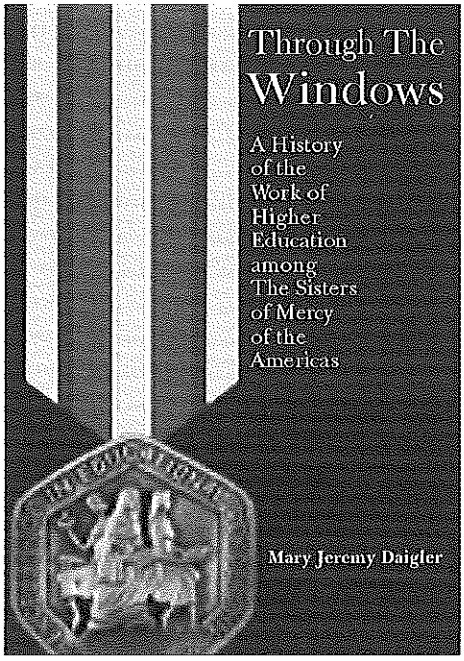
MAST has been meeting annually since then, usually in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and the organization now numbers fifty, with members living and working in Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America, as well as in the United States. Marie Michele Donnelly, R.S.M. currently serves as MAST's executive director. MAST will hold its annual meeting in tPhiladelphia, at St. Raphaela Center, June 9–11, 2002.

Members work on a variety of task forces related to their scholarly discipline. Present task forces include: Scripture, healthcare ethics, and spirituality. In addition, the members seek to be of service to the Institute by providing a forum for ongoing theological education.

Membership dues are $20 per year, payable to Marilee Howard, R.S.M., MAST treasurer, 8300 Colesville Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Email: mhoward@sistersofmercy.org.

If you would like to be on the mailing list, call or write: Marie Michele Donnelly, R.S.M., Executive Director, Gwynedd Mercy College, Gwynedd Valley, PA 19437, (215) 641-5521, email: mariemicheled@aol.com

Since 1991, *The MAST Journal* has been published three times a year. Members of the organization serve on the journal's editorial board on a rotating basis, and several members have taken responsibility over the years to edit individual issues. Maryanne Stevens, R.S.M., was the founding editor of the journal, and Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., currently serves in that capacity.



Through the Windows

A History of the Work of Higher Education Among the Sisters of Mercy of The Americas

By Mary Jeremy Daigler, R.S.M.

On the stage of history there hangs a concealing curtain before some 15,000 women who play and played immensely significant roles in the development of higher education In the United States. These women are members of the Sisters of Mercy, a Roman Catholic religious community that has founded and continues to sponsor the largest number of colleges and universities of any group of women - Catholic or other. In this work they also surpass all groups of men but one.

In addition to the community's commitment to sponsored institutions of higher learning, in the 1990s there were also 113 individual members working on 93 other campuses – both state and private. in the pages of this book, a corner of the curtain is lifted and an unaccustomed spotlight will illuminate the previously ignored work of this particular group of women in educating thousands of students at the baccalaureate and university levels.

"At Once, A History of Women's Education in America and Catholic Education in America."

ISBN 0-940866-92-7
276 pages, 18 photos
Trade paper $32.50

Available from:
The University of Scranton Press
St. Thomas Hall
Linden and Monroe Streets
Scranton, PA 18510-4660

570 941-4228
fax 570 941-4309

Order online:
www.scrantonpress.com

Marian Retreat Center
535 Sacramento Street
Auburn, CA 95603

No222n-Profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Auburn, CA
PERMIT NO. 183