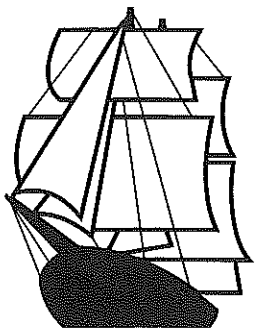
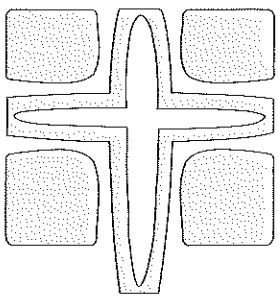


The MAST Journal

Coworkers and Members

The Journal of the
Mercy Association in
Scripture and Theology



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2002

October, 2002

Dear Sisters, Associates, and Friends of Mercy,

I am thinking about "otherness" and how to imagine it as a desirable invitation, rather than a manifestation that evokes fear, resistance, or retreat. It is such a common reaction to dislike "otherness" that democratic societies have enacted laws against discrimination. The majority may not subject "other" persons to less favorable treatment because of their gender, national origin, color, disability, religion, age, and the like. However, laws against discriminatory behavior toward persons don't solve the more fundamental spiritual question of how to reconcile oneself with "otherness" and "outside-ness" in relation to the groups in which we are members.

A child's life begins with making the distinction between itself and its mother, the "I" and the "Not-I." A perpetual tension in any social group is the relationship among persons within it, and between the defined society and other groups. Immigrants to the U.S. feel torn between their identity defined by history with their country of origin and their adaptation to the new American culture. During Vatican II, dramatically different philosophical approaches for defining the relationship between church and world resulted in two separate documents. *Lumen Gentium* saw the church as a fortress against secular culture and a light to nations in the post-WW II period. *Gaudium et Spes* saw the church's incarnational relationship with culture itself a cause of joy and hope. Secular culture and history provided the church a manifestation of the Holy Spirit's activity.

This tension between the goodness or godlessness of secular culture, its compatibility with our values or deviation from them, is also embodied in Scripture. John's gospel speaks of "the world" as inimical to God and the interests of believers in Jesus. Jesus will save his followers from "the world." By contrast, Luke's Jesus is incarnated within the history of Israel, its political culture and its geography. In Acts, Luke's Holy Spirit moves with the disciples on mission to cities of hope that comprise "the ends of the earth."

Since the vitality of an academic institution as well as a religious community depends on negotiating such tensions, it's important to ask, "What time is it?" in the historical life of the group. In accounting for the existence of two seemingly incompatible postures, an accommodation must involve the long view of the institution's place in time. Will identity and mission be compromised if, at this time, adaptations are made to the culture "outside"? Shall the focus of the group be to look outside toward what is unlike itself, or attempt to draw the attention of the "other" toward itself? Does the institution or the community see the culture which surrounds it as enemy or friend at the present time—as challenger to its identity or contributor to its welfare? To what extent must the group "close ranks" to protect its future or assimilate to assure its continuity?

As an academic, I deeply respect laity and Sisters associated with Mercy's institutions of higher education. I know what labor and dedication this commitment exacts. I also acknowledge that the problematic outlined here is one administrators and professors constantly negotiate. This wisdom is a blessing bestowed by coworkers on members.

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.

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

Twixt the Saddle and the Ground
Mercy Sought and Mercy Found[1]

Daniel P. Sheridan, Ph.D.

To all of you with whom I have collaborated these last fourteen months, and I believe for the good of the college, I would like to say thank you. The comments and reflections I now offer I present in the spirit of a conversation that we began last year. It is not often that one is given a platform from which to state one's views, least of all for two years in a row. I hope this address is a challenge to all of us to move Saint Joseph's College of Maine forward. As part of a conversation, I offer my views as tentative, open to your questions, ideas, judgments, and objections. I also offer these reflections as part of our conversations concerning reform of the core curriculum of the four-year college with special attention to science. Like last year, I reflected on three aspects of our mission and heritage: (1) our college's Catholic dimensions, (2) the theme of mercy and the cultivation of reflective sensibility, and (3) liberal education at a Catholic liberal arts college. In this order each builds one on the other.

Catholic Dimensions

George Will has stated that every church, temple, or synagogue in the country should have a sign outside that states, "If we are right, it matters." Consistent with the philosophical principle of falsifiability, it should also state, "If we are wrong, it matters." The principle is analogous in higher education, especially for a college sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, and related to the Roman Catholic communion of faith,[2] that is, to the Church broadly understood.[3] If we are right, or wrong, it matters. If Saint Joseph's College is to be a liberal arts college, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, rooted in, and faithful to, the teachings of Jesus Christ and the doctrines and heritage of the Roman Catholic Church, and if, at some profound creedal depth, those teachings, doctrines, and heritage were discovered to be false, then it would certainly matter for ourselves and for our students. As persons of integrity and honor, we should immediately correct what is wrong and emphasize what is right (if we could agree). Certainly, it would be time to stop calling Saint Joseph's College "Catholic." But I do not believe that this is such a time or that we have such reasons.

I hope that we are not in the situation of that Potomac religion first described by Senator Eugene McCarthy where only two kinds of religion are tolerated: strong beliefs vaguely expressed and vague beliefs strongly asserted. Why would we say that Saint Joseph's College is rooted in, and faithful to, the teachings of Jesus Christ and the doctrines and heritage of the Roman Catholic Church? Is that a vague belief strongly asserted? Or a strong belief vaguely expressed? Do we say it merely to keep the Sisters, or conservative members of the Board of Overseers, happy? Do we agree with it because we need this job? Some commentators and observers judge that many Catholic colleges and universities are well on the road toward secularization, that is, disengagement from their religious inspiration, both because of vague beliefs strongly expressed and of strong beliefs vaguely asserted. Many mission statements are more vague than that of Saint Joseph's College (but they are emphatically asserted!). The issue is not whether the beliefs are strongly asserted, but whether they are strongly believed or not.

If we are right, or wrong, it matters.

As I reflected at this time last year, "catholicity is neither the effect of the denomination of being so named, nor of external perception, nor of public relations, nor of sponsorship, nor even of intention. A college that is really Catholic, *reapse catholica*, is one that does something . . . it matters what we do *ad gaudium de veritate*, for the sheer joy from the truth." I am not talking about what some people may say, unconsciously equivocating, when they state that Saint Joseph's College is "catholic with a lower case c." I believe that there is a renaissance under way in Catholic higher education. That renaissance will be hastened if we attend to the ways in which we are really Catholic, that is, by attending to the truth with reflective intelligence. Again quoting from last year, "The function of the adjective 'Catholic,' as in 'really Catholic [*reapse catholica*],' should be to declare that our college is sponsored by a religious community in order to be the best college possible for our time and place."

I believe that there is a renaissance under way in Catholic higher education. That renaissance will be hastened if we attend to the ways in which we are really Catholic.

Lest all of this is a merely rhetorical, gratuitous assertion that may be gratuitously denied, or the strong expression of something weakly believed, I wish to reflect some more on this term "Catholic." "Catholic" is derived from the Greek words, *kata*, through, and *holos*, whole. Joined together, they signify "through the whole," suggesting a coherence of both totality and pervasiveness. The early Latin translation of *katholikos* was *universalis*, "turning on a single point." Thus "Catholic" is sometimes translated into English as "universal." This translation, mediated through the Latin, loses a great deal of the nuance of *katholikos*. Thus I translate "Catholic," for my context here, as "coherently pervasive through the whole." But the whole of what? Given the first article of the creed as "one God, creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible," the whole here intended is the whole of reality, sometimes known as the universe. Thus a Catholic college should be open to the whole of the reality of the universe in space and in time, at home in all of creation and God's history with the world. Certainly since the writing of the Jesuit, Teilhard de Chardin, some sixty years ago (1999 is the sixtieth anniversary of his completion of *The Human Phenomenon*), we now understand the first article of the creed not only spatially, but also temporally. Thus we might now formulate the creed as "one God, creator of this universe and of another, of all material and spiritual realities, from the beginning, through the present, and for all temporal passage as long as that may be." Catholicity, "through-the-whole-ness," would then be reflective attention to the coherence, co-inherence, and pervasiveness of the real in its totality. The Catholic intellectual tradition, at its best, gives reflective attention and reasoned intelligence to the coherence and pervasiveness of the whole of reality, as conceived by past philosophers and theologians, by contemporary scientists and philosophers, and by those who philosophically, theologically, and scientifically reflect on the future of the real.[4]

The creed also adds a further dimension to our concern for "through-the-whole-ness" in its second article, "and we believe in one Lord Jesus Christ . . . for our sake, he suffered, died, was buried . . . rose again." Christ, the believed center of world and of salvation, has already come to the borders of creation and of history toward which catholicity strives. The assertion that "Christ died for our sins" is clearly counter-cultural. In an age of apparently mindless optimism, it asserts that there is a universal flawedness among humans of cosmic proportions that needs a solution from beyond the human that enters into and among humankind. The assertion has significance for science that is at least potentially verifiable or falsifiable. If the assertion that "Christ died for our sins" is true, it matters educationally; at the same time that its possible falseness, also truly matters.

Therefore, any suggestion that there is a necessary, or actual, conflict between science and Catholic faith is not based on the creed. Catholics should be the most open to science of all. The events of this summer in Kansas regarding the teaching of evolu-

tion and so-called creation science should cause us to be ever alert. Some 23 percent of the American population does not accept evolution as a demonstrated explanation of the empirical evidence; a further third has serious doubts. These populations include people educated at the college level, perhaps some at Catholic colleges. These same polls happily reveal that the Catholic portion of the population is more likely to accept the evidence for evolution. Consistent with good science, and with the educated sensibility of the Catholic faith as enunciated in the first two articles of the creed, we must be alert to ensure that our graduates are properly educated in science. To do otherwise is to betray the Catholic dimensions of our mission, i.e., its catholicity or through-the-whole-ness.

Mercy and the Cultivation of Reflective Sensibility

I have always been haunted by a novel I began to read back in high school, *The Weeping Cross.* I never finished the novel. It was too challenging to my underdeveloped sensibility, and I have never run across it since, but I remember these lines from it [originally from a nineteenth century translation of Dante's *Purgatorio*].

> *"Twixt the saddle and the ground.*
> *Mercy sought and mercy found."*

In these remembered lines, I sense a profound Christian and Catholic sensibility, and they occasion for me a further reflection on our higher education tradition of mercy, "the compassionate mind/heart," that performs the educational works of mercy which are college teaching, scholarship, and service. However, the "mercy sought and mercy found" is not a work or an activity of mercy. Instead it is a passivity of mercy, of being the object of the compassionate mind/heart of a universal savior. If Christ died for our sins, and for everyone's sins without exception, and if that death is universally efficacious, then the compassionate mind/heart of Christ, the mercy of Christ, is pervasive throughout the same whole of reality, the same universe that I mentioned above in regard to the first and second articles of the creed and in regard to the catholicity of our "really Catholic" colleges. Just as the compassionate mind/heart of Christ is a pervasive dimension of our universe, so too is a commensurate human sinfulness that calls the mercy forth. I think that our mind/hearts of darkness continuously rediscover Joseph Conrad's "The horror! The Horror!"[5] As dwellers in darkness, we are all in need of mercy and we ought not merely speak within our tradition of higher education as if mercy were something we can dispense. I am reminded of the Confucian prince who had a sign on his wall that said, "Look upon the people as if they were wounded." Let us look upon ourselves and upon our students as if we were wounded. And after all are we not? Is it not true that the amazing grace saved a "wretch" like me? There is the traditional Christian doctrine of the "fall," but I am speaking here of a different "fall," that of the "fall" "twixt the saddle and the ground" into the merciful mind/heart of Christ that defines and permeates the universe.

As dwellers in darkness, we are all in need of mercy and we ought not merely speak within our tradition of higher education as if mercy were something we can dispense.

Last year I stated, "Higher education is not an unambiguously good or honest enterprise . . . The educated person is more capable of evil than is an uneducated person . . . The history of the twentieth century offers evidence for this conclusion." In my judgment, a more tragic vision of the human enterprise as a real dimension of the universe should be incorporated into our college teaching, and into our understanding of our mission as a Catholic liberal arts college.

Liberal Education at a Catholic Liberal Arts College

Critics often suggest that the liberal education offered at a liberal arts college is in a state of decline, if not about to disappear; and this not only for

Catholic liberal arts colleges. Numerically, it is true that through time a great diversity in the forms of institutions of higher learning has evolved in the United States, coupled with a greater portion of the potential student population in those diverse institutions. Liberal arts colleges, perhaps slightly fewer in number, form a smaller portion of a much larger diverse field. While this diversity is itself a major strength of American higher education, it is also the case that institutions like Saint Joseph's College are probably the best they have ever been, qualitatively as institutions of higher learning in the tradition of liberal education. While the other institutions emphasize professional and career preparation, or research, or remedial education, or vocational training, the liberal arts college maintains an emphasis on learning for its own sake. A liberal education enhances the intellectual character of the students in order to form within our society a critical mass of persons who have been informed by the cultural traditions of the past, and who creatively adapt and build up those traditions into the future.

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Liberal education, of course, is not synonymous with liberal arts colleges as such, but those colleges are the most significant locus of liberal education in our society. It is no easy task to describe liberal education. Historical investigation reveals a profound tension within the tradition of liberal education, for instance, between Plato and Socrates, between philosophy and rhetoric, between medieval *veritas* and Renaissance *virtus*. In modern times, science, the social sciences, and history with their inductive methods are added into the tense mix. Nevertheless the tension is educationally creative and productive.

With Cardinal Newman, I usually think of myself as an intellectualist in educational philosophy. The direct object of a liberal education is the critical cultivation of persons' minds and intellects so that they are capable of independent, critical, and self-reflective thinking. The indirect object of a liberal education is the critical formation of "virtuous" persons who are motivated to contribute to the transformation of society toward the good. However, strange things happen when these two are inverted, that is, when in education an indirect object is treated as if it were a direct object. If I had to choose, I would choose philosophy, *veritas*, the social sciences, and history, precisely for their value in cultivating a mind capable of living a critically examined life. Thank goodness, the choice is not necessary because, indirectly, I believe that persons so educated are enabled to contribute to the good of the human community. Thus the value of both *veritas* and *virtus* is preserved in a creative balance with *scientia*.

But let me relate this reflection on liberal education to my earlier reflections on catholicity and on mercy. Those of us responsible for liberal education at a Catholic liberal arts college rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, and in the heritage and doctrines of the Catholic Church, need to make that heritage our task with an emphasis on the future. The intellectual dimensions of through-the-whole-ness with an emphasis on the unity of knowledge, catholicity in action, need to be cultivated and nurtured. Unity of knowledge is achieved by carefully distinguishing between the various forms of knowledge discovered by our different disciplines: science is not religion, philosophy is not theology, history is not sociology, psychology is not the study of literature, and so on. Each discipline must be preserved in its own order of knowledge and only then the quest for unity, but there must be a humble quest for unity.

I have read four books this summer. The first was *The Degrees of Knowledge: Distinguish in Order to Unite* by Jacques Maritain. Written in 1932 as a scholastic response to the revolutionary scientific insights of Einstein and Heisenberg, it is one of the

great classics of Catholic intellect and philosophy in this century. It seeks order in knowledge through carefully distinguishing the degrees or levels of knowledge.[6] At one time the philosophical tradition of Maritain formed the basis for a distinctive form of liberal education at Catholic colleges. We neglect works like this at our own risk. But the kind of Catholic college founded on such a philosophy faded in the 1960s, and although Catholic colleges are much improved over the past thirty years, they have never recovered a unifying principle like that provided by scholastic philosophy.[7]

The second book was *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* by Edward O. Wilson, the Harvard entomologist. I was very impressed by Wilson's effort to unite knowledge and the disciplines not around philosophy, but through reduction to the knowledge discovered through science. It is a tour de force. I especially value the emphasis on the sciences and the degrees of knowledge achieved. Thus I am providing all of the faculty with a copy. The third book was *Rocks of Age: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* by Stephen Jay Gould, again a Harvard paleontologist. Instead of unifying the forms of knowledge, Gould attempts to keep science and religion each in its own order. He rightly points out that especially among educated religious leaders such as the Catholic Popes Pius XII and John Paul II the proper autonomy between the two orders of knowledge is maintained, even if the broad public is uninformed about this. John Paul II hosts a convocation of astronomers and cosmologists every other summer, and he encourages the acceptance of the evidence for evolution. Our science professors here at Saint Joseph's College can find affirmation in Gould's writing. The concluding book is *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* by Charles Taylor, another Catholic philosopher. I appreciate Taylor's realistic assessment of the many intellectual dead ends of modernity, including a critique of E. O. Wilson's reductionism. But Taylor's work is not just a jeremiad about the disappointments of modernity. Instead, he states that

> the intention of this work is one of retrieval, an attempt to uncover buried goods through rearticulation—and thereby to make these sources again empower, to bring air back into the half-collapsed lungs of the spirit . . . And perhaps I am merely overreacting to a narrowness of the academy which has little effect on the world outside . . . [but] if the highest ideals are the most potentially destructive, then maybe the prudent path is the safest, and we shouldn't unconditionally rejoice at the indiscriminate retrieval of empowering goods . . . [because] the highest spiritual aspirations must lead to mutilation or destruction. But if I may make one last unsupported assertion, I want to say that I don't accept this as our inevitable lot. The dilemma of mutilation is in a sense our greatest spiritual challenge, not an iron fate . . . There is a large element of hope. It is a hope that I see implicit in the Judeo-Christian theism (however terrible the record of its adherents in history), and in its central promise of a divine affirmation of the human, more total than humans can ever attain unaided.[8]

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This is a good note with which to conclude these reflections on catholicity, mercy, and Catholic liberal education. It is the message of "Twixt the saddle and the ground, mercy sought and mercy found." My hope is that our entire college community is falling, and has not yet reached the ground. Thus, there is still time to seek and find.

Notes

1 This was an address to the faculty of Saint Joseph's College of Maine on September 3, 1999.

2 I say "Church broadly understood" because the relationship is not primarily to the hierarchy. We know from Vatican II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, and the Revised Code of Canon Law that there is a deeper relationship between a Catholic college or university than that merely to the hierarchy from whose permission, however, we may formally use the word "Catholic."

3 See David J. O'Brien, *From the Heart of the American Church: Catholic Higher Education and American Culture,* p.158: "In the past, including the recent past, as William Leahy argues persuasively, Catholic colleges and universities failed to achieve intellectual distinction in part because of the pervasive localism of Catholic institutional and clerical life and the resulting subordination of academic to pastoral considerations that came with the dominant role of the founding religious groups. Separate incorporation, with its remarkable trust in lay leadership, represented an instinctive realization that the path to excellence required formal and structural affirmation of those elements of life that exist apart from and independent of the formal Church."

4 See *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* in John Langan, S.J., ed., *Catholic Universities in Church and Society: A Dialogue on Ex Corde Ecclesiae,* p. 235: "A Catholic university, therefore, is a place of research, where scholars *scrutinize reality* with the methods proper to each academic discipline, and so contribute to the treasury of human knowledge. Each individual discipline is studied in a systematic manner; moreover, the various disciplines are brought into dialogue for their mutual enhancement. In addition to assisting men and women in their continuing quest for the truth, this research provides an effective witness, especially necessary today, to the Church's belief in the intrinsic value of knowledge and research."

5 "Since I peeped over the edge myself, I understand better the meaning of the stare, that could not see the flame of the candle, but was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in darkness. He had summed up—he had judged. 'The horror!' . . . And perhaps in this is the whole difference; perhaps all the wisdom, and all the truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible . . . Better his cry—much better. It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory!"

6 "To scatter and to confuse are both inimical to the nature of the mind. 'No one,' says Tauler, 'understands true distinction better than they who have entered into unity.' So too, no one knows unity who does not also know distinction. Every attempt at metaphysical synthesis, especially when it deals with the complex riches of knowledge and of the mind, must distinguish in order to unite." Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*: *Distinguish To Unite,* p. ix.

7 See Philip Gleason, *Contending With Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century.*

8 Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity,* p. 520–521.

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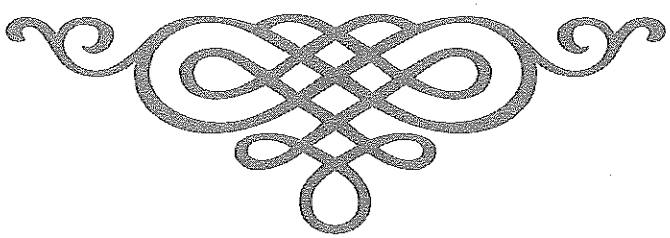

Between the Ambo and the Podium

Michael E. O'Keeffe, Ph.D.

Two interrelated experiences form the context for my reflections on being torn between the ambo and the podium. The first involves the liturgical life of the church, which in this case centers on the celebration of the Eucharist. The second is the academic life of the community, here experienced through the eyes of a professor of Catholic theology, who is given over to the task of helping students study the Catholic faith. It is the tension between these two sacred spaces that I wish to consider.

Perhaps an incident that sums up my experience of the church's liturgical life took place about a year ago, when I was attending a Sunday liturgy with a friend. Although neither of us expected anything special, once we arrived at church we knew something was up since the gathering in the back of the church was considerable and a normally diminutive choir had swelled to nearly three times its size. After taking our seats, the solemnity of the day immediately became apparent, since the long procession that entered the sanctuary revealed that this was "visitation Sunday," the one Sunday set aside for the local ordinary, who had deftly managed to gather all the priests from this parish into a single liturgy. So, after the normal greetings that would accompany five concelebrants, we settled in for the Gospel and what we presumed would be a challenging homily.

Image of the Good Shepherd

The Gospel turned out to be exceptionally appropriate: John's reflections on the Good Shepherd from chapter 10. Most of us know the story well. After curing a man blind from birth, Jesus is confronted by a group of Pharisees who have just rejected the testimony of the blind man and are now confronting Jesus with the claim that he is sinful because he has broken the law and cured on the Sabbath. After a brief exchange involving true insight, Jesus contrasted his own leadership with that of the Pharisees: the Pharisees are unfaithful shepherds who speak with the voices "of strangers." When they "see a wolf coming" they "leave the sheep and run away." In contrast, Jesus is the "Good Shepherd" who will lay down his life for the sheep. He speaks in a known voice, the voice of his Father, and by following him the sheep will be assured peaceful rest, green pasture, and "abundant life."

The bishop used John's Gospel as a springboard for discussing the role of the church and the responsibilities of its shepherds. Although he examined several facets of each, his central concern was the role of Catholic priests, who mirrored the ministry of Jesus by functioning as the way, the truth, and the life, and who did so speaking in the common voice of the church. In other words, another homily regarding church unity—on the need for all shepherds, from the supreme shepherd in Rome to the five shepherds gathered here, to act with one accord and speak with one voice. "Our liturgical celebrations are not a time to celebrate our individual faith journeys," the bishop claimed, "but an occasion to affirm the common faith of the church, universally held and consistently proclaimed."

His proclamation was well suited for the Gospel. One could easily make the case that if the church was going to function as the way, the truth, and the life, it would need to speak with one voice. Without singularity, the flock would scatter, chaos would reign, and the shared of the community would falter. The fear of new voices also seemed to follow. Listening to John and then the bishop, one could easily conclude that novel voices were a threat to the unity of the church. Such persons were "hired

Would the flock really scatter if the voices we heard on Sunday were unfamiliar—if they called for a new faith in a new time? Is being Catholic really the same for everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status? Can one voice really speak for all?

These are difficult questions, and although I agree that there are occasions when our Eucharistic liturgies celebrate diversity—and a number of initiatives in my Archdiocese of Chicago concerning race relations are exemplary in this regard—I still feel that such public proclamations of Catholic diversity are rare, particularly in liturgical settings. Here *lex orandi* brings a sense of uniformity to *lex credendi* that is hard to ignore. Catholics adhere to the same liturgical structures, pray the same prayers, and often sing the same songs Sunday after Sunday, year in and year out. Such overriding consistency is particularly apparent in the

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gathered here, including those who will be in my classrooms, find the academic study of Catholicism so daunting. They have been schooled to expect the familiar. They are tuned to the singular voice of the church.

Educated by a Different Voice

Then they enter the academy, where a recent discussion of James Cone's essay entitled "God is Black," excerpted from his *Black Theology of Liberation* (first published in 1970), is typical.[1]

The discussion of Cone's essay occurred in one of my favorite courses to teach entitled "Voices from the Margins: Third-World Perspectives on Catholicism." Contrary to John, this course is designed to introduce students to the unfamiliar voices of others, and to do so without associating them with false shepherds and hired hands. It focuses on the experiences and insights of non-Western persons and traditionally marginalized persons in the American church, ranging from the Igbo in nineteenth-century Nigeria to the ecofeminists and social activists of today.

Cone represents an important voice within this collection since he laid the foundation for much of what would become Black theology in the Catholic

pressed Blacks" and "against white oppressors" if the civil rights struggle was to be won. God was so aligned with the liberation of African-Americans that God should be imaged as Black:

> Living in a world of white oppressors, Blacks have no time for a neutral God. The brutalities are too great and the pain too severe and this means we must know where God is and what God is doing in the revolution. There is no use for a God who loves white oppressors *the same* as oppressed Blacks . . . What we need is the divine love as expressed in Black power, which is the power of Blacks to destroy their oppressors, here and now, by any means at their disposal. Unless God is participating in this holy activity, we must reject God's love.[2]

Certainly these are not easy words to hear, and at least initially, many of my students could not hear, particularly those who were active in parish communities. Why? Perhaps because they are so conditioned to hear the familiar voice of the church that they cannot hear a voice like Cone's. Their response to Cone's voice continues to echo in my ears: "I was raised Roman Catholic, and attended Catholic schools all my life, and I have never heard anyone criticizing images of God that depict God as white, or advocating an understanding of God where God would chose sides in a struggle for civil rights. Cone must be a malcontent. He does not speak the language of my Catholicism. I cannot accept this voice as my own." Their past exposure to Catholicism not only prevented them from hearing a new voice, but encouraged them to believe that their past exposure was sufficient. Being Catholic was not a dynamic, living reality, a rich collection of multiple voices all giving evidence to the *unfolding* mystery of God among us, but a static affair, circumscribed by a tradition and characterized by the familiar. It is no wonder that some assumed that an eighth-grade Catholic education would suffice for a lifetime of being Catholic!

Pondering these two experiences, I am more convinced than ever that there is a connection between the kinds of liturgical experiences my students have and their reluctance or inability to hear the new voices of other Catholic persons, which is the lifeblood of a course like "Voices from the Margins" and an integral part of nearly every course I teach. I think many of my students have absorbed the message of this homily all too well: Being Catholic is being faithful to a tradition and its *authorized* shepherds, and when they are exposed to new voices, or when they tentatively espouse views on moral, philosophical, and theological issues that run contrary to what they have heard from the "one voice" of the church, they immediately feel estranged from the church. Faced with a growing gap between their views and those they have repeatedly heard, many simply abandon the church, convinced that the Catholic faith is neither wide enough nor deep enough to encompass their "new" voice.

I am more convinced than ever that there is a connection between the kinds of liturgical experiences my students have and their reluctance or inability to hear the new voices of other Catholic persons

Professor as Both Apologist and Challenger

I stand as a professor caught in the middle, sometimes acting as an apologist for the church, trying to convince my students that they do not have to leave the church when they arrive at new insights, and other times pointing out the problems with specific beliefs or specific practices which might enable new voices to be heard and important changes to take place. More than once, I have been identified as the foreign voice who comes to "steal and kill and destroy" the flock, since I am the one who is exposing the tension between the academic and the ecclesial, and introducing students to the strange voices on the margins.

In the mid-point of these struggles, I often find some of the most laudable attempts by our shepherds to ensure that the one voice of the Catholic Church

is heard to be counterproductive to the very teaching of Catholic theology that I embrace. For example, although in some ways one can legitimately "close the debate" on something like the issue of women's ordination when one is preaching on a biblical text or giving guidance to what can and cannot be addressed from the pulpit, such an conclusion is deeply foreign to a classroom, where open conversations and the free exchange of ideas is the goal most professors seek.

Similarly, although it might make pastoral sense to assume that a particular theologian or a particular text is so threatening to the unity of an assembly that it ought not to be used while breaking bread or anointing with oil, such a move makes little sense in the academy, particularly when alternative voices, even if they are flawed, help to broaden the conversation and deepen understanding.

Finally, although it might make some sense from the pulpit to expect that theologians would speak in the same voice as their pastors, the legitimacy of such an expectation, particularly if it is understood as an attempt to narrow the conversation, is highly problematic, particularly when coupled with some of the more conservative interpretations of *Ex corde ecclesiae*. Indeed, if I were to teach in a manner that would reflect the concerns of those who seek to fashion a single voice for the church, my "conversation" in the classroom would be mute! I would utterly fail in my role as a teacher and as a member of a university community because I would stifle the quest for insight that will enable my students to become critical thinkers and important contributors in every area of their lives, including their ecclesial lives. Clearly, what this bishop did with John 10 is not what I do in the classroom, and to make it appear that the university is nothing but an extension of the bishop's teaching role is dangerously misleading.

If I were to teach in a manner that would reflect the concerns of those who seek to fashion a single voice for the church, my "conversation" in the classroom would be mute!

Ex Corde Ecclesiae and Diversity of Theological Voice

So, what am I to do in this struggle between the ambo and the podium, between homilists who proclaim the faith in a known voice and professors who lift up strange voices in an effort to see the faith anew? How do I justify introducing students to a critical understanding of their faith when it is so obvious that they receive little encouragement for doing so in the vast majority of liturgies they attend, and when I realize that to introduce the new voice will be disruptive, even if in the end I want them to be faithful members of their churches just as much as their shepherds do?

For starters, I think it is a dangerous move, supported by popular understandings of what it means to teach Catholic theology at a Catholic university, to claim that the voice of the professor should mirror the voice of our shepherds. This is precisely what is problematic about some interpretations of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, which wrongfully assume that the *mandatums* will now guarantee that a professor will reflect the mind and will of the local ordinary, and thus limit the conversation about what it means to be "truly" Catholic. Although I believe there are limits to diversity and that the church has a right to expect a faithful presentation of its teachings, I also think it is important to point out that professors of theology and pastors of churches operate in two different realms. The Eucharistic table is not the conference table and what we do when we break bread is not commensurate with what we do when we unpack the tradition.

Second, I think we need to be much clearer about the context in which the teaching of Catholic theology takes place, which for me involves participation in a liberal arts education at a Catholic university, for it is precisely this context that makes speaking with a single voice problematic. For example, we

know that a liberal arts education is designed to help students become critical readers, acute thinkers, and informed writers. One of the best ways to accomplish this is to broaden the conversation beyond what that they have heretofore been exposed to. That is why disciplines like "Women Studies" and "Black Studies" are so vital, and why requirements such as a non-Western, Third-world course are imperative to the educational process.

Even if some students might not appreciate it, the diversity of our curriculums, and the breadth of the voices they encounter are the foundations of a liberal arts education. Indeed, the University of Michigan recently argued in the courts that racial and cultural diversity were essential to a broad educational experience, which is why the University of Michigan has a vested interest in attracting a racially, culturally, and economically diverse student body, even if that means having to weigh the applications of some students differently than those of others. It is the cacophony of multiple voices, rather than the simplicity of a single voice, that is the bedrock of academic life.

Moreover, the goal of a liberal arts education is to give our students a voice; to help them articulate clearly, consistently, and forcefully their experiences and their insights. How is this possible if, when we assemble for a theology course, we tell our students "this is the way it is," and then try and support this claim by artificially restricting the conversation to a community of people who have developed the doctrines and the proposed disciplines to begin with? How do we encourage their voice when the only voice they hear does not speak to or for them? Can we encourage the development of their voices when we limit the voices we hear? I do not think so.

Multiplicity of Voices—An Educational Requirement

In fact, I feel the best way to develop student voices is to expose them to the multiplicity of voices that exist, including the voice of the tradition and the voices of its critics, in the hope that they will join in the symphony. There is no discipline, particularly one devoted to mystery of God's life with us, which should not be critically examined, rigorously explored, and personally chosen, and the best way to achieve these goals is to deepen the conversation to include the voices of the strangers. Our aim is not to fashion intellectual clones—people who think and act as we do—but to inspire independent thinkers who will enrich our lives in the same way that we have been enriched by the creative voices of others.

Finally, I think teaching theology at Catholic colleges and universities requires professors to become more cognizant of the communities that sponsor and sustain them, since in the vast majority of cases, those that established, built, and sponsor Catholic colleges and universities are not the kind of persons who refused to think anew, or who were comfortable with the status quo. In fact most communities that established schools of higher education have struggled long and hard to be heard, to be invited to a table that was often wary of new ideas, insulated from novel practices, and closed to the very people who were establishing the schools, particularly if they were institutions devoted to women.

There is no discipline, particularly one devoted to mystery of God's life with us, which should not be critically examined, rigorously explored, and personally chosen, and the best way to achieve these goals is to deepen the conversation to include the voices of the strangers.

Our task as professors of theology is not to conflate the academic and the pastoral, but to hold in necessary tension the unity celebrated in liturgy with the diversity proclaimed in the classroom.

Catherine McAuley and Education of Women

In my own case, this means I have to be attentive to the spirit of the Sisters of Mercy, who have a long history of empowering the voices of voiceless people and raising the kind of concerns that were traditionally absent from the "one" voice of the church. Certainly, what to do about poor, uneducated women with children in Dublin in the 1820s was not a very popular homiletic topic! Indeed, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, Catherine McAuley, struggled against the wishes of her local bishop, who remained unsupportive of a small circle of lay women serving poor women and children. Although taking vows was not her original intention, Catherine shaped religious to her vision, and created an order of women who left the cloister walls to serve the sick and opened the cloister doors to receive women and children.

Later, when Francis Xavier Warde carried the vision of Catherine McAuley to Chicago and established Saint Xavier Academy for women in 1846, she did so against the voices of many who defined women's education as a misuse of time and energy. Undaunted, many of the programs and initiatives that the Sisters of Mercy have sponsored over the last 150 years have continued to be highly controversial, precisely because they sought to empower new voices and give expression to ideas and concerns that disrupted the status quo.

Against the advice of many and with the assistance of the Dominican Fathers, the Sisters of Mercy established a theological institute for women religious in 1946, which was one of the earliest efforts to grant advanced degrees in theology to women. When the institute later opened its doors to laypersons in 1957, once again it did so against the voices of many, who felt that laypersons, like women religious, were unfit for theological training. And even when Saint Xavier College moved from Catholic theology to religious studies, and sought to advance the post-Vatican II agenda by gathering a body of progressive theologians in Chicago for the John XXIII Symposium in 1966, they did so against the explicit wishes of their ordinary, and advocated a critical approach to Catholic education that stood well beyond the mainstream.[3] Tapping into this history, and knowing the way that the Sisters of Mercy have continually fostered an empowering Catholic theology that welcomes diversity, ambiguity, and change helps to justify the approach I now hold.

In the end, our task as professors of theology is not to conflate the academic and the pastoral, but to hold in necessary tension the unity celebrated in liturgy with the diversity proclaimed in the classroom. Perhaps a deeper understanding of *Ex corde ecclesiae* will challenge not merely institutions of higher education to be more faithful to the voices of our bishops, but shepherds to reconsider the value of multiple voices in the parishes. Maybe then the marginal voices will be heard, even from the ambo.

Notes

1 James H. Cone, "God is Black," in *Lift Every Voice. Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside,"* edited by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, revised edition (Maryknoll: New York, 1998).

2 Cone, 109.

3 Joy Clough, *First in Chicago: A History of Saint Xavier University*, Chicago: Saint Xavier University Press, 1997.

Education
Making Connections, Developing Compassion at Mt. Aloysius College

Joanne O'Brien, Ed.D.

It is an honor for me to be here today, September 11, 2002, to give this address at the beginning of the academic year on a very significant anniversary.[1] I am sure everyone can vividly recall what he or she was doing last year at this time. There are moments in our lives that take on great personal meaning because they are life-altering. They shift our focus from the mundane issues of life to the critical questions that face each one of us during our lifetimes. Sometimes these experiences are profoundly personal—the death of a loved one, a critical illness, a divorce; or, on a much more positive note, falling in love, having children, achieving a personal goal.

But at other times these life-altering experiences are collective in nature—they are experienced by a nation or by great numbers of people. For my parents' generation, it was the bombing of Pearl Harbor. For my generation, it was the assassination of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King, Jr. All of us here today will always remember what we were doing last year at this time. I hope the students will also recall this day in the future for a more positive reason. For the students who are beginning their college careers, this is also a momentous occasion. I hope it will be a more positive life-altering event.

Excitement and Hope

If you could go back in time and interview me at the beginning of my college career, I can guarantee that I would never have predicted who I have become and what I do today. As I began college, I was at best a student who completed all assignments on time without much care for the quality of the assignments.

I would like to go back even farther and describe to you my first day of kindergarten in 1955. I vividly remember walking up a staircase that led to the first floor of my elementary school. In my memory it ascends steeply and is about one hundred steps high. In reality there are about ten steps. At the top of the stairs stands an enormously tall woman in black robes, with her face the only exposed part of her body. I am clutching my mother's hand and crying. I reach the top of the stairs. I refuse to let go of my mother's hand, while the principal, the women in black, grabs me from my mother and enfolds me in her robes. I hear a voice say, "Please leave, Mrs. O'Brien! We will take care of Joanne." Hearing that, I let out a howl and kick the principal in the shins.

Of course the irony is that every September since that day I have entered a school building, for the most part willingly. This behavior can be interpreted either as my having masochistic tendencies or a change of heart. I assure you it is a change of heart and a passionate one at that. For with an equal intensity of apprehension and fear that I felt on my first day of school, there is now an equal intensity of excitement and hope at the beginning of every school year.

Stimulus in the Search for Meaning

I would like to talk about two things today: education in general and the anniversary we are commemorating. First, some comments about education.

G. K. Chesterton wrote "Every education teaches a philosophy; if not by dogma then by suggestion, by implication, by atmosphere. Every part of that education has a connection with every other part. If it does not all combine to convey some general view of life it is not education at all."[2]

I believe that "the most essential function of education is to stimulate, encourage, and support a person's search for meaning."[3] What general view of life will your education give you? Will it

help you answer the question, what am I doing here (in college)? Why am I here (on earth)? How do I find meaning in a world where some people are starving and at the same time other people are constantly going on diets because they can't lose weight? How do I find meaning when some people live in squalor and unsanitary conditions and other people buy million-dollar houses as second homes? How do I reconcile the awareness that some people are suicide bombers for causes we do not share, while others struggle valiantly to live, knowing they have a terminal illness? How do we make sense of these extremes?

Some people learn about the extremes by living them; some people struggle to understand the extremes as they experience them. You are about to begin a process of college study that will assist you in this process of finding meaning for the issues that confront all of us as human beings. Some of you may be the first person in your family to earn a college degree. Some of you may have been in the work force for years and are now able to attend college. Some of you are continuing your studies after graduating from high school. All of you will form a learning community. You will learn as much from interacting with one another and being open to each other's ideas, as you will from the material presented to you in these classrooms.

Learning needs community to be truly effective, and community is formed by the quality of the relationships that create it. We need to respect difference and be open to others' viewpoints. This can only be done when we trust that other people are willing to listen to our ideas and opinions without ridicule.

Synthesis of Faith with Learning: Resurrection

You are in a wonderful place to find out what life may really be about. The philosophy statement of Mt. Aloysius College describes our mission: that students be encouraged to synthesize faith with learning. In the Christian tradition, there are three essential beliefs: Resurrection, Trinity and Incarnation. There are parallels to all three in education and certainly in life. Education, a form of resurrection, constantly brings us new life in expanding our horizons, helping us to see things in new ways, to learn new perspectives, to increase our understanding of ourselves and others. In order to experience this renewal, we have to get rid of old ideas, prejudices, and assumptions that have formed us. It is difficult to let go of strongly held beliefs even when they are destructive to us and to others. The year ahead will be a time to examine the ideas you hold, to test if they resonate with your new experience of life, and to acquire new understanding of issues.

Trinity and Relationships

Trinity is essentially about relationships. The basic trust which forms relationship is shaped by a belief that we image God to one another and in some mysterious way, God's presence among us permeates all of us and binds us together. Education cannot take place without trust in one another, without trusting to some degree that the material being presented is valid and worthy of being taught and learned. In turn, the work I do represents my best efforts. Learning needs community to be truly effective, and community is formed by the quality of the relationships that create it. We need to respect difference and be open to others' viewpoints. This can only be done when we trust that other people are willing to listen to our ideas and opinions without ridicule. We need to accept the fact that not everyone will agree with us. How do I relate to the people in my classes and on campus? How do I accept them?

Incarnation

Incarnation is truly what education is about because the infinite has shattered the finite and all

things and people take on the potential of the infinite. There is never an end to what we can know or do or be. We are never complete; we are always in process. So it does not matter what major you choose here at Mt. Aloysius College. You are being challenged to see how what you study enlarges your worldview and enables you to see how all things point us to the reality of God with us. Ask yourselves constantly, "How does the material I am learning help me make sense of the world in which I live and help me understand the contribution I will make to the world? How is it connected to life?"

Compassion

Another theme in the philosophy statement that caught my attention: That college encourages students to develop competence with compassion. Not only does an education give us the knowledge and ability to perform some task or enter some specialized work, it asks us to consider how that work connects us to other people. If our education is to be a complete education, we need to become people who bring sensitivity and appreciation of others to whatever we do. How do we treat people? How do we relate to them?

If you constantly remind yourself that people come first and things come second, you will develop a sensitivity to others that will deeply enrich your lives. How we relate to other people is the most important part of living. Nothing else comes close. I believe that compassion is an essential human quality. It means the habit to feel for and appreciate another person's condition. Compassion, more formally defined, means to have a sympathetic consciousness of another person's distress, together with a desire to alleviate it.

Effect of September 11

I go back to September 11 of last year. I was meeting with someone in my office, which is about thirty miles from downtown Manhattan. I had a clear view of the towers and I often looked at them and thought about my brother because he worked in building 6 of the World Trade Center. During the meeting, I had my back to the window. When the meeting was over, I left my office, and my secretary told me that a plane had hit the World Trade Center. I turned and looked and could see the smoke. She also handed me a telephone message from my brother saying he was in his office and he was OK. I tried to call him, but the phones lines were out. I went to watch the TV in our office just in time to see the second plane hit the tower. As we continued to watch we heard about the Pentagon being hit and then about Flight 93 crashing in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, thirty-three miles from where we are gathered at Mt. Aloysius right now.

Like everyone else in the country, we asked ourselves what was happening. I remember that my first thought after seeing the towers hit was, "Who could teach people to do this?" That was my first reaction: Who were their teachers? I have such a profound regard for education that I cannot imagine using it to instruct people to do violence of any kind for any goal. As the day unfolded, I also thought of all the people who taught the rescue workers, and the people on Flight 93 who chose to act and try to stop the plane at great personal risk and with the full knowledge that their actions would cause their deaths.

If our education is to be a complete education, we need to become people who bring sensitivity and appreciation of others to whatever we do.

It is just a coincidence that Lee Homer, the copilot of Flight 93, was a graduate of two Catholic schools on Long Island, Sts. Cyril and Methodious School in Deer Park and St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School where I had once served as interim principal. As I get older, these coincidences multiply and I am continually reminded that it is truly a small world. There are numerous connections that give us a common ground for relating to each another.

I remember my feelings and reactions that day, how I did not know if my brother was alive or dead, how I was paralyzed in thinking that I had lost my brother. He survived. After three hours, I found out that my brother was alive. I went to a Mass we were having at the Cathedral in Rockville Centre and I

told my secretary that if my brother called to tell him two things: That I was praying for him because I did not know what else to do, and that I would never fight with him again in my life! When I got back to the office, she told me that my brother had called and that she had given him my message. She said he did not know how to respond to the fact I was praying for him, but when she told him I said I would never fight with him again in my life, he said, "Fat chance of that happening." Then I knew my brother was fine.

Faith as a Form of Knowing

In trying to understand the events of last year, I have been reminded of James Fowler's theory of faith development.[4] Fowler defines faith as a way of knowing and functioning on a daily basis. For example, we trust that people will follow traffic laws; we go through green lights hoping people will stop at the red ones.

Faith is the power, as these life-altering events occur, to readjust our vision of the world and to change our lenses or our frame of reference. We adjust our understanding of what it means to be human.

But as we develop, we go from one phase of knowing and trusting to the next, sometimes caused by those life-altering experiences I spoke about earlier. Some of them are very personal experiences, and some are collectives ones. But at times when we go from one stage of faith development to the next, and from one way of seeing and knowing reality, we lose our focus. Everything becomes confused. Fowler describes it as walking across a stage and someone opening a trap door and we begin to fall, not knowing when we are going to hit bottom. When we hit, it is painful; we need to reorient ourselves.

Another way of understanding this growth is to imagine we are seeing reality through a frame. When certain events occur, the frame falls apart. We have no reference point. We cannot gain perspective on what we are experiencing. Another image: If you have a single-lens reflex camera and you take off the lens, you cannot see anything until you put on another lens.

Faith is the power, as these life-altering events occur, to readjust our vision of the world and to change our lenses or our frame of reference. We adjust our understanding of what it means to be human. We often do this work with an intensity and awareness that we do not use in everyday living. If we brought this kind of intense looking to our lives everyday, we would be exhausted.

Seeing a Different Meaning

The events of last year affected all of us. We felt the shifting of our lenses and the change in how we see the world and how we see each other. Our beliefs in Resurrection, Trinity, and Incarnation are not separate from the events of last year. In fact, these beliefs help us make meaning and give us a new way of seeing. People survived a horrific event and continued to do their work. The event had an amazing effect on the way people related to one another and viewed one another, especially in the weeks immediately following September 11.

People were sensitive and aware. I needed to make calls about my credit card on September 12, 2001. As soon as I gave my address, the person on line asked me how I was and if everyone in my family was all right. He said all the people he knew in Denver were praying for the people in New York. My brother was driving on the New England thruway outside of Boston and people were honking horns and pointing to his New York license and giving him a thumb-up sign—certainly not the typical gesture given to a New York driver in Boston! When I saw in Fenway Park that signs were posted, "Boston Loves NY," I thought that was a sure sign of the Second Coming of Christ. People joined together in a common concern for one another—that was a lived reality.

As people comforted one another, there was certainly a sense that there was something greater than just the actual tragedy that had occurred. The

resiliency of the human spirit was evident. Even though the events were overwhelming, they gave me a deeper insight into the human condition and they gave me great hope. Even in the most difficult of situations, there is new life, there is strengthening of relationships and this is a signs of God's presence among us.

Starting College in Hope

Your being here today is a sign of great hope. Collectively as the entering class, and individually as students, you each seek to improve yourselves through formal education. Your presence indicates your hope for a successful future and also confidence in your abilities to accomplish your goals. Hold on to the hope that you can and will be successful.

As you begin your college careers, take the time to use the resources available to you to widen the frames through which you view reality. Develop your abilities and talents. Broaden your views. See yourselves and the world in which you live in larger, more inclusive, more encompassing ways. I hope your education will enable you to see new possibilities for yourselves. I hope the classrooms where you sit will be places that make you feel limitless. I hope your education transforms you, gives you skills to appreciate who you are, and motivates you to become the best person you can be.

If you do not already have a passion in life, I hope your work engages you in a lifelong pursuit of something valuable and worthwhile, some idea that deserves your attention and energy. I hope this idea hits you on the head and that you know it makes such sense, you will say, " This is what I want to be about. This is who I want to become." At the very least, I hope this idea sets you on a life-long journey and equips you for that journey with skills for finding meaning in your life and understanding of your world. When you recognize what talents and gifts you have, this idea will make you want to use those gifts in service of others, and to make the world a more peaceful and just place for everyone. Have a wonderful year.

Notes

1 Dr. O'Brien's Address was given at Mt. St. Aloysius College in Pennsylvania on September 11, 2002.

2 G. K. Chesterton, "The Revival of Philosophy: Why?" in *The Common Man*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1950), p. 167, quoted in John Haldane, *Catholic Education and Catholic Identity: The Contemporary Catholic School*, (London: Falmer Press, 1996): 126–136.

3 John H. Westerhoff, " The Teacher as Pilgrim," in *Teacher Renewal: Professional Issues, Personal Choices* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1987): 190–202.

4 James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. (San Francisco: Harper, 1995).

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The Holy Habit of Our Lives
Living Symbol

Maureen Crossen, R.S.M.

I'm not sure that I am a good respondent to Mary Gordon's article, "Women of God."[1] I have "had it" with images of nuns, comments and stories that are trite or give a shallow perception of nuns' lives. Worse than these are stories of guilt-ridden women who thought about a religious vocation, but found themselves "not worthy of it" in their estimation of themselves. Nevertheless, these women freely vent criticism of religious life when given the chance.

Recently, I had two experiences that distressed me. The first was my attendance at a peace group assembly that introduced itself as "open to everyone." Throughout the day participants were sensitive to different groups of people, with the exception of showing sensitivity to nuns. Participants felt free to express derogatory comments about the nuns who had taught them, for example.

The second experience was my participation on a panel discussing anti-racism. Other panelists stereotyped nuns and spoke in a highly critical way of them. When I tried to point out that stereotyping any group fostered the continuation of racism, I was silenced. What is striking is that neither the peace group nor the anti-racism discussion group could see their behavior as a form of prejudice against nuns. Just naming these two experiences helps the reader understand how I feel after being affected by negative talk about nuns for quite some time.

I found Mary Gordon's article to be more of the same—trite and stereotypical, including her comment "potent fantasies."[2] She focuses on a symbol of religious life, "the holy habit of religion." A good number of religious wore the habit for many years, but I never did because it was no longer customary dress when I entered.

Life-Habit as Potent Symbol

Gordon tells good stories of women to be admired, women whose daily lives now become "the holy habit of religion." The holy habit was a symbol of religious life. Even though it may not be worn by most women religious today in the U.S., it continues to be a strong symbol that evokes much emotion, memory and power. Any living and real symbol has power. As the philosopher Paul Ricoeur has said, a symbol has the power to give rise to thought. That is, the symbol draws us beyond the literal, beyond what is seen, into deeper meaning or mystery.

In a religious symbol, the deeper mystery should be the Mystery of God. In light of Vatican II, religious life took a turn toward a more incarnational understanding of itself. With the "universal call to holiness" and a return to the close ties between the baptismal call and the call of religious life, many sisters exchanged the religious garb for secular clothes.

But what has happened to the symbol? Indeed, many women religious seemed to have forgotten that they are "the holy habit of religion." We have either denied that we are symbols of the Mystery of God out of the garb, or allowed our lives to be mirrors for others to see their closeness to God as well.

Chastity as Symbol

Theologian Mary Catherine Hilkert starts with Ricoeur but extends her thinking beyond his in her observation that the symbol gives rise to justice. Here celibacy enters the reflection. I prefer to use the term "celibate chastity" because chastity is the more shocking word. How is "chastity" reconciled with the behavior of persons who are healthy, committed, and focused in their sexual expression? I also prefer it because all of us, married or celibate, which means not married, are called to chastity

and to purity. There is another embarrassing word.

How does celibate chastity as a symbol give rise to justice? We can no longer be "little girls" in father church. We no longer expect mother superior to take care of our needs. We can no longer deny that our sexual bodies have emotions in exchange for a life of asexuality. Celibate chastity, lived in the Incarnation, means that we live just, mature relationships, ideally selfless, not self-centered.

Like any symbol, celibate chastity has two sides, one of challenge, one of danger. For example, the symbol of bread offers satisfaction to our hunger, but when bread is missing, hunger threatens us with starvation. Sexual relationships—any relationship—should point to God, the Mystery hidden in the symbol of our bodies, our holy habit of religion. The passion of our relationship with God is the Fire, the Flood, the Holy Darkness of our life. This is also the passion of our relationship with others.

Is It the End or Not Enough?

I'm not sure that Mary Gordon caught this lived experience of nuns, nor am I sure it could be expressed in a magazine like *The Atlantic*. She may have seen the effect of chastity and been caught off guard by it in the lives of the sisters she interviewed. Perhaps this is one reason she cried after she wrote the article, not because something was ending, not because neglected parts of her own life had surfaced, but because these women were in touch with God in a constant, unique way.[3]

In spite of their foibles, weaknesses, and limitations, they continued to yearn for God in a way that seems tangible to those who intuit that yearning. These nuns face a kind of death that is not the ending of a historical way of life, but death as lived in the power of the paschal mystery. This seems a death, not of religious life, but to a way of life that is not one's own, lived in the presence and mystery of God.

Women religious find, as Catherine McAuley said, "We have one solid comfort amidst this little tripping about—our hearts can always be in the same place—centered in God—for whom alone we go forward or stay back."

God in Ecumenical Discourse

My concern about Mary Gordon's article, as well as for most talk about religious life, is that there isn't enough attention to God, Jesus Christ, the Eucharist, and the Church as the substance of nuns' lives. These theological realities need to be talked about more.

In the post-modern era, God seems to have become "one among many." In the interest of politeness and sensitivity, we downplay God, One in Three. There is definitely a place for ecumenical relations and interfaith dialogue and prayer. But to consistently omit the subject of God is dangerous for theology and for sustaining a life of faith. We need to find a way to recognize the central focus of other religions without losing our rootedness as Christians in the God of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. An exciting question to ponder is Jesus' query to his own disciples, updated for our day: "Who do you say that I am in this post-modern, global world?" (Mark 8:27).

Live the Missed Mystery

Sexuality in our culture and society has become reduced to a literal expression as solely genital. This literalism threatens the power of the symbol of sexuality as leading us into the full awakening of who we are as the image and likeness of God, male and female, God who created us (Gen 1:27). We need to find a way to imagine what this full awakening means as women of God.

These are deep mysteries that Mary Gordon missed in her survey. Nevertheless, they are lived out in "the holy habit" of the lives of the women whose stories she tells.

Notes

1 Mary Gordon, "Women of God," *Atlantic Monthly* (January 2002): 58–91. This response was given at the fifteenth annual meeting of the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology in Philadelphia, June 10, 2002.
2 Ibid., 67.
3 Ibid., 91.

Discernment as Manna in the Desert

Patricia Galli, R.S.M.

A religious community expresses its spiritual identity in the way it makes decisions about its future. Discernment describes the ability to sift through all the data and decide where God's presence manifests itself. Discernment is much more profound than merely making a decision. Discernment leads to an awareness of God's activity within the community.

Scriptural Image of Exodus

A scriptural place of communal discernment might look like the experience of the Israelites in the desert. They had left the oppression of Egypt but were finding the travel through Sinai very difficult. Where could God's presence be found in this inhospitable place? The grumbling and complaining were the first signs of their felt need to be aware of God's presence. The fact that they were free from slavery allowed them the luxury of complaining. They were looking for a way to find God's presence, i.e. nourishment within this new communal experience.

God does not reply to the complaints by shaming them when they are confused, but instead provides miraculous food, manna for their needs. He even gives guidelines on how to collect and use this gift. The community still struggles with the process. They need to test the guidelines and gather their own information about the use of this gift. God allows the experimentation.

It was in the struggle and the complaining that the community discerned how to use the gift of manna. The gift and its subsequent use were always meant to be a communal experience to allow the Israelites to know that God was present to them, "... and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread, so that you may know that I, the Lord, am your God" (Exod 16:12). The data gathering and analysis, i.e. experimentation, allowed the people to settle into being a spiritual community.

In the post war years following the Holocaust, a rabbi was asked how the Jews could continue to believe in God after being so brutalized in the camps. The rabbi responded, "Because of our experience of Exodus." The Exodus experience was one of communal discernment. Communal discernment, because it involves many voices, can be a messy process. Asking questions of God and sifting through God's response through one another brings awareness of a new reality. Discernment is waking up as a community and sifting through the communal desert for the bread of the experience of God.

"Respectfully encouraging people to speak can bring about a balance in the conversational ecology that otherwise might not have occurred."[1] The community needed to discern whether or not they could accept the manna from God. They needed to be in dialogue with God and express their thoughts freely, because they had been set free. Exodus is more than just getting out of Egypt. Exodus is the ability to live as in community with respect for each other.

Discernment at a Personal Level Differs from Communal

We are familiar with the process of discernment when it concerns individual, personal decision making. We are not as conversant with discernment exercised at the communal level. How is

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communal discernment manifest? Integration of thought, feeling and bodily states is one effect. We are used to describing how this happens when a single person engages in a discernment process, but there are analogous signs of divine activity in the community understood as the body of the whole.

Prayer, an interactive reality, provides a context for discernment. In personal discernment, we bring our situation, our concerns, and our grumbling to God. We await the response. When we think we have received the response, we need then to decide if the response is from God. One of the criteria is expressed in Gal 5:22–23: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against these there is no law." These "fruits" appear as a unified whole, although some may appear stronger than others at a given time. "They are a unified growth, not a clutch of conflicting elements. And where there is conflict between elements, or where one is totally lacking" the response is not likely to be from God.[2]

At the individual level, I experience sadness at the death of someone I love. I begin to pray and dialogue with God about my sadness. As I begin to think of my friend with affection and gratitude I begin to feel peace mixed with the tears and know that she is no longer present to me in the way she was when living. The memories, feelings of loss, and physical tears express my sadness and also increase the love and kindness I knew in our relationship. Even in the sadness, joy begins to appear in the realization of the depth of the love between us.

An experience of sadness will look different in a family because a group of individuals represents the physical body. A family that loses a parent may express its sadness not only by tears but also by laughing at the wonderful stories and memories they have of Dad or by singing Dad's favorite song. What characterizes this as a communal experience of sadness is the simultaneous thought, "Dad was like this and I will miss him." This thought is accompanied by the physical response, of laughter (joy) in the group. At the same time, a feeling of absence prompts the telling of another story.

Our God is a relational God. This is what is expressed in our understanding of Trinity. When God interacts in our experience, there is freedom and an increased relational quality in the persons who participate in the experience. Our God is a caring God. The relationships that develop in a community that is attending to the experience of God will be compassionate and caring.

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Discernment in the Communal Setting

Just as there are criteria and guidelines for personal discernment, there are guidelines for communal discernment as well. Different language and behaviors characterize the communal process. One of the primary mechanisms for prayer in this setting is conversation.

Margaret Wheatley describes several behaviors necessary for good conversation.

- We acknowledge each other as equals.
- We try to stay curious about each other.
- We recognize that we need each other's help to become better listeners.
- We slow down so we have time to think and reflect.
- We remember that conversation is the natural way humans think together.
- We expect it to be messy at times.

Conversation which supports discernment is called dialogue. Dialogue is conversation in which people think together in relationship.[3] While silence characterizes much of the discernment process at the individual level, dialogue must be emphasized at the communal level. Data collection, analysis, reflection and action are the components of the discernment process at both individual and communal moments.

Reflection in silence and action are commonly given attention in communal discernment, but more attention should be given to data collection and analysis. The lack of data collection and analysis can cripple the group's decision making. Data collection and analysis involve listening without re-

sistance and exploring underlying causes, rules and assumptions to get to deeper questions and framing of problems.[4]

Dialogue in Communal Discernment

Religious communities use the term "communal discernment"in selection of leadership. The trend typically emphasizes prayer and quiet as the context for discussion. However, the practice downplays intellectual activity as the basis for discussion among members, decreases the ability to dialogue, and severely limits the outcome of a leadership selection process.

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A trend which neglects dialogue in communal discernment is parallel to the trend in personal discernment and prayer that focuses on emotion alone and downplays or disregards the intellect. A counsel given by spiritual writers to listen to one's heart in personal prayer can be overgeneralized as a directive to pay attention only to one's emotions. If I am "in my head" too much, then that is supposedly not a good place to be. The overvaluing of emotion at the expense of thoughtful analysis can interfere with an effective communal discernment process.

Without realizing the stereotyping, the higher valuation given to emotion and the lower appraisal given to analysis can lead women into a false dichotomy: To think too much is masculine and to emphasize feeling is a truer expression of the feminine. The traditional gender divisions can be reinforced. Women feel and don't think and men rely on thought but not feeling.

Women in a communal discernment process must resist the cultural bias that feeling, especially in prayer, is better than thinking. Listening to our thoughts (internal dialogue) is important in prayer and important in discernment. Thoughtful prayer is both intellectually focused and profoundly relational. Our deepest thoughts are often as unrecognized and unacknowledged as our deepest feelings.

Dialogue in discernment leads to the creation of new possibilities and opens choices. It involves listening to each other and to ourselves and paying attention to the responses within us as we listen. The use of dialogue supports participation, cooperation, flexibility, and mutual accountability in the process of discernment.

Notes

1 William Isaacs, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together* (New York: Random House), 130
2 William Barry and William Connolly, *The Practice of the Art of Spiritual Direction* (New York: Seabury Press, 1982), 110.
3 Isaacs, *Dialogue*, 19.
4 Ibid., 41.

Discerning Leaders
Who Drapes the Mantle, Who Seizes the Tiara?

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.

Various leadership styles exist within religious communities. The tension between a collaborative style versus the hierarchical model can be suggested by two contrasting images. "Draping the mantle" evokes a painting of Mary stretching out her cloak to shelter all people within its orbit. The shawl or mantle on the shoulders of a woman who accepts leadership expresses authority which is intimate, flexible, and adjustable, which keeps changing as her own movement does, yet the mantle has a distinct shape. The season itself also determines the sort of mantle or shawl that she assumes. It's an expression of the care she has for others. Leadership is first what she uses to cover, give warmth, and reassurance to others. More assertive and dramatic acts of leadership follow with the mantle as a reference point. It's hard to define what year it is by looking at a woman's mantle or shawl, because the garment is rather timeless, and women wear a version of a shawl in every culture and at every season of the year. A mantle can be folded and laid flat, almost disappearing.

By contrast, the tiara is a male, papal image that demands recognition. For centuries, the tiara was a symbol of religious power that signaled to secular princes, kings, and emperors, that God's might and Church power were greater than any earthly authority. Until the 1960s, one pope after another wore the same crown. At some moments in European history, it was a tug-of-war whether the secular ruler got his power from the pope, or whether the pope was granted power by the emperor. Paul VI, in the early 1960s, directed that the triple tiara be taken apart and its jewels sold to give money to the poor. Its image, however, lives in many paintings as a valuable showpiece, a helmetlike crown circled with gold and crusted with gems, accompanied by other hard metallic objects designating the wearer and holder as the supreme power, a force inherited from a single line of other divinely designated men. The pope who wore the tiara was a rule unto himself. He made laws and required observance of them. Tiara leadership, it is clear, is substantially different from mantle leadership.

Definition of Tasks Precedes Choice of Persons

When communities of women elect members, ideally they first articulate what leadership style they want. They look to their constitutions, their governance plan and they review what has already been done. Leadership style flows from identifying what tasks the community says should be done next by those elected. If the community is active, desirous of participating in governance, and honors the vision of its members, it is more likely to select leaders who will exercise office by draping the mantle.

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If community members are passive and non-participative, wanting to be told what to do, feeling that if they speak up they will "pay the price," or if they are weary and confused about their role in the congregation, they will more likely select a leader

who "seizes the tiara." Such a style of leadership will replicate what members are familiar with from decades past.

Thus, it is important that the "discernment process" focuses first, not on who is "willing to serve," but what is it that members truly want as directional tasks for the community as a whole. These are not vague statements of spiritual values or *ferverinos*, but things that need to be done, changes that cry out for enactment, needs that must be acknowledged. The highest authority in the community is not the president and council, but the chapter, which expresses the will and vision of the community as a whole.

A Retreat Election is Not Election for Leadership

Some qualifications should be stated. First, "discernment" is a word associated with Jesuit tradition about "discerning the spirits" in a retreat setting. It comes from Spain beginning in the mid-1500s. "Election" in the Spiritual Exercises does not refer to the selection of congregational superiors, but to an inner life choice the Jesuit retreatant makes on his own—not for anyone else, but himself—to follow Jesus.[1] The retreatant has total control over that choice. Ideally, he is being influenced not by external attractions of power or fame, or by improper motives of being better educated or more honored than his peers, but out of love and devotion to Jesus revealed in the Gospels. The retreatant ideally makes a magnanimous gift of self, dedicating his energies to the glory of God and service of Jesus the Lord above all else.[2]

At present, Sisters may be indiscriminately borrowing the language of personal retreat and applying it to the demanding task of thorough dialogue with candidates and consulting each other on fundamental values at stake in the vetting for community leaders.

The language commonly used for the process of democratically electing community leaders in Mercy is "discernment." This suggests a religious and theological context, an atmosphere of prayerful reflection, a mood of peaceful attention, and a desire to "let the Spirit move in our midst." This process has come to be facilitated by a person in the "director" role, in a conviction that this process is radically different in its spiritual focus from secular elections for political office.

This context—personal retreat, personal life commitment, and responsibility for that choice with accountability only to God—is hardly the same as a public process of democratic election for congregational superiors. The differences between the two events should be clarified. At present, Sisters may be indiscriminately borrowing the language of personal retreat and applying it to the demanding task of thorough dialogue with candidates and consulting each other on fundamental values at stake in the vetting for community leaders. A personal election during retreat and a congregational election for leaders are not equivalent. The detailing of what tasks must be part of a voting "election" may suffer fuzziness by being fused with a retreat context.

Promoting Participation, not Silence or Unquestioning Submission

Second, the concept of discernment comes from a history in which authority to determine integrity of the spiritual life was almost exclusively male, and exercised by clerics who were confessors and directors of women, i.e., in a ministerial, and hierarchical authority relationship to women who were not regarded as having personal authority, education, or theological expertise.

For discernment to operate as a context for women's egalitarian communities, there is need for intelligent awareness and consciousness raising. It is only in the last twenty-five years that women have become trained in

the art of retreat direction according to the Jesuit model. This is not a very long period of time to allow perspective . Has the Jesuit model of discernment been appropriated whole cloth without critique of its effect on women? How has "the discernment mode" undergone adaptation in the context of women's congregations?[3] Does the original or the adaptation benefit or retard the spiritual maturity of women right now?

One test of authentic discernment is probably the degree of enlightenment related to the degree of active participation by congregational members. If people are talking, and talking is leading to new awareness and clarity, that is a sign the process is working. If members are submissive, silent, retracted, and the questions are stereotypical and unimaginative, yielding few clues about what candidates think or how they have acted in the past (and will probably act in the future) the process is off track. The fault may lie in uncorrected expectations about what the discernment process in an election for leaders actually requires. The solution is certainly not for a facilitator to authoritatively take charge and "direct" the process like a teacher, novice director, or old-time superior. This defeats an authentic discernment process. The solution is for members to reclarify what the plan for local governance is, ask new questions of the candidates, and talk with each other. They should trust that honest expression of disagreements will create the occasion for explanations and will further dialogue and more informed choices by the membership.

The antidote to an authority-submission dynamic in an election for congregational leaders is confident, active participation by members, who express themselves in imaginative, responsible questions posed to candidates. The first job of a steering committee is to foster dialogue, and promote the fullest verbal participation possible. The steering committee should actively resist the silent tyranny of fear and compliance, nonverbal signals from community controllers, pressure to focus only on certain "good nun" candidates, and "to do it the way we did it before." The steering committee should exercise its authority to maintain an atmosphere of openness and expression, keeping inconvenient but important questions out in the open. Otherwise, old family dynamics can paralyze the community, and the energy required to resist the inertia can defeat hope and exploration of the congregation's future.

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Good Spirit v. Evil Spirit is not Peace v. Distress

Third, determining whether a movement has its origin in God can result in an over-simplification of spiritual grammar in which peace is linked to the good spirit and distress is linked to the evil one. Modern psychological theory points to the function of denial, a psychic strategy for maintaining predictability and peace at the expense of dealing with the inevitability of life changes. Correlatively, a feeling of upset or distress may not mean that the world is falling apart, or God's peace is being lost, but that the spirit is waking up as more of reality manifests itself to the senses and feelings.

The differentiation of spirits was based on Ignatius's perception of the male psyche in the context of his own experience as a man of court and the military. Acknowledging the claim of his inner spiritual life, he distinguished the impact his external behavior had on his feelings toward God, and the effect his

emotions had on his physical body. The surviving fragment of his diary records his tears and feelings of devotion at prayer and liturgy.[4] Mystics in the post-Reformation period, Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross engaged in a similar reflection on the relation of their inner life of prayer and its external expression, physically, emotionally, and intellectually.

Women in religious life have not had much discussion on the question of how the Holy Spirit might manifest itself differently in women than in men. The feminist movement which began in the 1970s arose to give expression to women's voice as personal, integrated, and distinct from men's. There is an analogous discourse within women's religious communities. It is aided by the impact of feminist scholarship on theology, ethics, and biblical studies. However, women's communities are still catching up with developments in secular fields of philosophy, psychology, politics, and law. The clericalism and resistance of Roman Catholic ecclesial structures to women's participation combine to retard this development.

Many Sisters have benefited from therapy, and, by extension, the community has benefited by accumulation of heightened awareness and wholeness available to the group. Self-knowledge benefits spirituality by its resistance to oversimplification in which the Holy Spirit is linked with peace, and evil spirit with distress.

The consequence of this analysis for congregational elections is important. An open discussion, with diverse views expressed over fundamental values, may upset members who think the evil spirit lurks because the process upsets them and robs them of emotional ease and a sense of security. The solution to the confusion of spirits is certainly not to silence the congregation and stop the open discussion, as though the Holy Spirit will be lost if Sisters disagree with each other over substantive issues.

A facilitator who tries to "control the group" by silencing it under the guise of "returning to the discernment mode," rather than promoting clarifying discussion, may simply be replicating the male model of a domination-submission dynamic from the church which has centuries of practice in silencing women.

The discernment mode is not a magic talisman assuring all who wrap themselves in it that the Holy Spirit will be manifested while they wear it, and other less benign spirits will be banished as long as there is no disagreement or confessions of confusion or inconvenient questions from women present.

Discernment by Behavior Interviewing

Even if Sisters enter into a discernment mode, there is no guarantee the results will be the work of the Spirit, just because everyone is silent, reflective, and prayerful. The discernment mode is not a magic talisman assuring all who wrap themselves in it that the Holy Spirit will be manifested while they wear it, and other less benign spirits will be banished as long as there is no disagreement or confessions of confusion or inconvenient questions from women present.

If a behavior interview process is conducted, there may be evidence of substantial and objective differences among candidates for office.[5] A behavior interview process allows new leadership candidates to emerge more clearly, possibly freed from years of social sidelining within community because the process of silent choosing avoided sustained conversations with a broad slate of candidates. Behavior interviewing is a method which can get beyond stereotypes and old associations, because candidates cannot give stereotyped answers.

The answers in a behavior interview are more likely to

illustrate differences in ability to articulate the vision and mission of the congregation, exercise spiritual leadership, abide by the Institute Constitutions, promote participation, exercise professional skills acquired over the years, adapt to new organizational demands, and guard that most precious of trusts, the mystery of God's call in the vows of her Sisters.

What is a "behavior interview"? It means that candidates are not asked questions that lend themselves to "Mercy-speak," to vague, politically correct answers, or spiritually exemplary responses. Candidates must give concrete examples, anecdotes from their personal life, congregational history and professional or ministerial experience, which illustrate how they have already handled challenges in the past. It's a more exact way to determine how persons "walk their talk."

It is the job of the steering committee to define a basic set of questions for behavior interviewing. These should be given to the whole congregation prior to the election process so they can sift their own experience and determine what values are most important to them, and what criteria they are defining as important for the leaders they will choose. The questions should also be given to candidates for office in advance so they can reflect on their experience and come prepared to respond. The steering committee also sets time limits on answering questions, so every candidate has equal opportunity.

During the discernment process, new questions may emerge, requiring candidates to be spontaneous. The questions create a baseline, and do not limit other questions that arise during the process. The steering committee must, however, set ground rules that respect Sisters' right to privacy, and set boundaries that protect the process from becoming voyeuristic or a rendition of a tell-all, emotionally invasive afternoon talk show, such as Montel Williams, Maury Povich, or Jerry Springer. The focus of an election is not a confessional exposure by candidates, but their candid, reflective presentation of their experiential qualifications for office, their values, and their thoughts.

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Sample Questions for Behavior Interviewing

A sample of basic questions might include variations on the following, as directed by the steering committee, and edited by the nominating committee. The 1991 Institute Constitutions §§70–78 provide the basis for substantive questions about which to query candidates for office.

1. What is your understanding of Institute Constitutions §74, in its description of personal authority according to church law, Institute Constitutions and the regional community government plan? What are the specifics of the regional community government plan, as you understand it? Talk about an experience in ministry or workplace of being in charge when you had to juggle three different sets of expectations? How did you resolve your multiple responsibilities to three kinds of authority to which you were accountable?
2. Talk to us about your understanding of "personal authority" in the Institute Constitutions. How do you see the personal authority of a regional president in the Institute Constitutions different from the authority of superiors prior to 1991? Without necessarily giving names, how did you experience "personal authority" of superiors in the past as either benevolent and effective, or the opposite?
3. Give a time when, according to responses you received, you knew you were exercising personal authority benevolently in the family, ministry, community, social setting; a time when you realized your exer-

cise of authority was contrary to your values. What was the signal of benevolence and what the sign you had departed from your values?

4. The Institute has a Reconciliation process. This is a kind of grievance procedure. It means a member can appeal a decision of a community decision maker, or a superior, and ask an independent review board for a reconsideration if the decision has been done in a way that's unfair to her. Tell us about an experience of using or trying to use a grievance process in your ministry setting or workplace, either your own, or someone you know. In reflecting on that experience, what makes grievance processes useful or useless?
5. Give an example of how you have worked in a community, workplace, political, or ministerial setting where there was an official policy you didn't think was effective, but it was the policy everyone was supposed to follow. What options were open to you, and why did you choose the option you did? Where do you see applications of this learning to your role in elected leadership?
6. Institute Constitutions §76 states: "Each regional and local community provides participative structure to afford its members the opportunity to influence the direction of their community and shape its policies and those of the Institute in promoting the common good and in facilitating the mission." Which participative structures have given you, personally, the most significant opportunities to make a personal contribution to community/Institute direction under the present leadership team? Which participative structures do you intend to provide for members if you are in elected leadership? Rather than boxes indicating lines of authority and responsibility, how do you graph "the relationships of people working toward certain goals"?[6]
7. The culture of religious life, prior to Vatican II in the mid-1960s produced dedicated women and flourishing ministries. Give examples of what you personally have retained of the pre-Vatican II spiritual legacy. What attitudes and behaviors associated with the "early days" have you worked to let go of and why?
8. Governance of a religious community involves spiritual leadership. What are two or three books that you have you read in the last couple of years that you would recommend to community members? What's the message of the book that you found important and how would it contribute to Sisters' intellectual and spiritual life?
9. Speak about an experience you had when you were in a conflict of interest situation, when the demands of a situation or other persons competed with what was in your personal best interest. If you acted to preserve your own interest, why? If you understood the demands of the situation or other persons to be "for the greater good," what was your reasoning process? How did you resolve this conflict of interest situation?
10. How do you determine the truth of a situation if one person tells you one thing and another tells you a different version? Describe a situation in which you had to sort out what the truth was. What were your criteria? How does friendship with a person affect what you decide is the "real story" or truth of the situation? What were your feelings? Was the "truth of the situation" in your example objective or subjective for you?
11. Talk about your feelings toward Church authority and your actual experience working with men who are in charge, at a parish, diocese, or church-sponsored institution or organization. Provide us examples of how you deal with hierarchically-inclined men.
12. Did you ever lose your job in a church-sponsored institution, get censured by church officials, or know a Sister who did? Describe your experience, or how you viewed the justice or injustice of that Sister's situation.

Conclusion

A Jesuit-oriented discernment process and its vocational election associated with a retreat must be distinguished from what takes place at an election for leaders in a women's religious community. The steering committee and voting members of chapter should first define what the congregational governance plan calls for, and lay out specific and foreseeable tasks

they wish to have implemented by community leaders. What is true in the business world is also a standard for a wisely-administered religious community: "Power is more decentralized, being dispersed 'from center to periphery.'"[7]

Here in Mercy, the Institute Constitutions are barely a decade old. There is a tendency, in retaining existing regional structures, that some members, and even some regions may balk at a style of governance that sacrifices the autonomy enjoyed prior to 1991. According to the Institute Constitutions, accountability of leaders and participation of members replaces a "seizing the tiara" model which disempowers and silences members. The regional president described in the 1991 Constitutions is very different in her style and expression of personal authority than the "old time superior" of the past who ruled according to her personal proclivities as though she were the delegate of the pope, privileged to make the rules, and untouchable in her decision making.

Care and attention must be given, therefore, to select leaders who will govern consciously, explicitly, and collaboratively, according to the Institute Constitutions. This document and its provisions should define the criteria for voting. The voting members, steering committee, and candidates should all review this document carefully.

If candidates cannot articulate what the Constitutions say, are vaguely falling back on "Mercy-speak," or cannot define what the differences are between "the old days" and the post-1991 era, they should not be called to leadership. If candidates are good religious, but are ambivalent about being part of the Institute or express distaste for it, they should not be called to leadership. If candidates are experts in their professional field, and have many gifts, but their style of leadership is to trust their instincts before they refer to the Institute Constitutions, they are not the ones to choose.

Finally, a behavior interview of candidates will provide objective data for voters: who seizes the tiara, who embraces the mantle? Questions that call for actual personal anecdotes, stories candidates tell about their own experience, will allow "old chestnut" candidates to be reviewed according to a newer discourse. Even better, behavior interviewing is likely to surface viable candidates who have gone unrecognized until now. It will give energy to the entire membership when it recognizes this new leadership pool of women, the vast number who prefer to wear a mantle rather than a tiara.

Notes

1 See, as one of many examples, John A. Veltri, S.J., "Discovering the Lord's Desires for Me," in *Orientations: A Collection of Helps for Prayer*, Vol. 1, (Guelph, Ontario, Canada: Loyola House, 1979), 103–04.

2 See David Stanley, S.J., "Contemplation for Obtaining Love" *in A Modern Scriptural Approach to the Spiritual Exercises* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1967), 316–324.

3 On the question of women's experience and the call for specific adaptation of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises to it, see Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, "Women and the Exercises: Sin, Standards and New Testament Texts," *The Way Supplement* 70 (Spring, 1991): 16–32 and "Women in the Passion and Resurrection Narratives," *The Way Supplement* 74 (Summer, 1992): 40–53.

4 See the treatment of Ignatius' tears by Philip Caraman, S.J., "Diary Notes" in *Ignatius Loyola: A Biography of the Founder of the Jesuits* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), 157–165.

5 An accessible description of "behavior interviewing," a term drawn from the business world, is provided by Arthur H. Bell, "How to Use Behavior-Based Structured Interviewing." The author is professor of management communication at the McLaren School of Business, University of San Francisco. Article is posted at http://www.workforce.com.

6 Betty Rosen, *How to Set and Achieve Goals: The Key to Successful Management* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981), 60. There are critiques of top-down management inspired by scriptural mandates, e.g. "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority" (Heb 13:17).

An alternative is to find in faith a resource for imagining an inclusive leadership style which values coadministrators as well as coworkers. See Shirley J. Roels, et. al. *Organization Man, Organization Woman: Calling, Leadership and Culture* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 47.

7 David A. Krueger, et. al., *The Business Corporation: Productive Justice* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 41.

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Discussion Questions

Crossen:

If you could correct a single stereotype of nuns in the popular media, what would that stereotype be? If it's not an article of clothing, what to you is the essence of "the holy habit of religion"?

Galli:

"The overvaluing of emotion at the expense of thoughtful analysis can interfere with an effective communal discernment process." What is the difference between "head" and "heart" information ? How do you make sure your group is making a judgment that includes both?

O'Brien:

"Education, a form of resurrection, constantly brings us new life in expanding our horizons, helping us to see things in new ways, to learn new perspectives, to increase our understanding of ourselves and others. In order to experience this renewal, we have to get rid of old ideas, prejudices, and assumptions that have formed us." What in your own education or religious formation would you like to be freed from because you realize it no longer serves a good purpose?

O'Keeffe:

How do you balance an approach to institutional commitments and religion that accounts for "two disparate worlds, one that advocates consistency, uniformity, and familiarity, and presents the Catholic faith in a univocal way, and another that opens up possibilities of relativity, complexity, diversity, and change"?

Rosenblatt:

"It is important that the discernment process focus first, not on who is 'willing to serve,' but what is it that members truly want as directional tasks for the community as a whole. These are not vague statements of spiritual values or *ferverinos*, but things that need to be done, changes that cry out for enactment, needs that must be acknowledged." Rather than deciding who should next be chair or president in your institution, what are the specific tasks that need doing and direction that should be taken?

Sheridan:

"The direct object of a liberal education is the critical cultivation of persons' minds and intellects so that they are capable of independent, critical, and self-reflective thinking. The indirect object of a liberal education is the critical formation of 'virtuous' persons who are motivated to contribute to the transformation of society toward the good." As you look back on your college education, how are those two objects of a liberal education reflected in who you have become? What other influences have shaped your mind and affected your resolution to bring about good in society?

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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 Philadelphia, at St. Raphaela Center, June 8–11, 2003 and the following year, June 10–13, 2004 in Auburn, CA.

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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.

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