

The MAST Journal

Racism and Shadow Side

Mother Austin Carroll and the Sisters of Mercy in the South: Context for the Establishment of Black Schools

Mary Hermenia Muldrey, R.S.M.

Mary Austin Carroll's Hunger for Justice

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Ritual on the History of Racism in Community

Fourth Institute Chapter, Laredo, 2005

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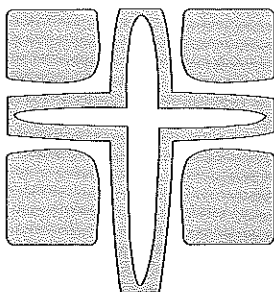
Some Definitions for Discussing Racism

Shelly P. Harrell, Ph.D.

Discussion Questions

Shelly P. Harrell, Ph.D. and Stephanie Pearson, Ph.D.

The Journal of the
Mercy Association in
Scripture and Theology



Vol. 16, No. 1
2006

Dear Sisters, Associates, Companions, and Friends of Mercy,

Racism, as a form of our collective shadow, is edgy and difficult to initiate in the midst of a congregation of women living in a post-civil rights era. It immediately raises the defense from individuals, "But I am not a racist, so what is the point? I've never burned crosses on anyone's lawn or uttered racial slurs, or known anyone who did. Hasn't this matter of treating everyone fairly already been settled? Aren't there federal and state laws forbidding racial discrimination in education, housing, and the workplace?" Then there is the reluctance reflex, where someone says, when the question gets too close for comfort, "We shouldn't be focused so much on ourselves, but on those who are most in need."

Racism is distinguished from "multi-culturalism" where the emphasis may be on welcoming ethno-linguistic diversity and accommodating geographic and cultural perspectives that enrich our society and our Institute. Within a social culture where consensus is prized and pursued, we nevertheless catch some hints of a quiet insistence that "all is not well with all who are here."

A commitment to address racism involves looking at our own history, but it remains unfinished business from the Institute Direction Statement of the last administration. This is illustrated in the "Ritual on the History of Racism in the Community," which was led by outgoing Institute President Marie Chin, and outgoing Councilor Maria Luisa Vera. I am grateful to Cora Marie Billings, a participant at the Chapter in Laredo in summer of 2005, for retrieving this text. Racism is an undercurrent in our social history. We need to arouse not merely the concern of responsibly minded individuals, but give time and attention and experiment with strategies for dealing with these dynamics collaboratively. This project exceeds the power of any one individual to launch or implement it.

Despite the need for a collective raising of consciousness, individuals still can take powerful initiatives and set long-term patterns for right relations between races and ethnic groups. Hermenia Muldrey, native of New Orleans, writes of that graced, pioneer educator and published author, Mary Austin Carroll, who opened schools for black children in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama in the Reconstruction Era after the Civil War. She modeled a spirit of fairness, justice, and concern to educate the poor, no matter their color, their class, or their gender. Published here is a paper delivered by Sister Hermenia in 1991, and another, "Carroll's Hunger for Justice," written in the last months despite the author's broken arm.

But Mary Austin Carroll, despite her sense of justice, her success in getting support for her black schools, and her skill in avoiding "collisions" between racial groups, could not alone revise habits of racial intolerance in the American mentality decades after her death. Priscilla Moreno offers a reflection as a member of the Alliance of Sisters of Mercy of Color in the United States, a network within the Institute that is twelve years old. Priscilla Moreno notes that the guidelines for entrance into the Sisters of Mercy today may be intimidating for women of color. She suggests a question with an uncertain answer, "Am I willing to invite a woman from my culture to be a part of Mercy?"

Cora Marie Billings gives a short, moving tribute to Coretta Scott King, wife of Martin Luther King, the American civil rights leader. The memory of her personal relationship with Coretta King invokes the power of minority women to mentor and encourage one another to "keep on keeping on."

One form of racism manifests itself as a sense of distinction at being "the best" in comparison with other groups. It shows up as preference for the company of others like myself, who grew up with me, went to my high school, ate what I ate, and know what I know. As a high school teacher, I used to try to break up such "cliques." At its extreme, cliques are a form of tribalism. We have witnessed in the last decade the murderous extremes such tribalism can take—between tribes, or between faith groups.

Carol Rittner's compelling essay deals with racism as tribal violence targeting women. "Rape, Religion, and Genocide: Racially Motivated Violence against Women" calls attention to the racially driven, genocidal rape of women as a weapon of war in both the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Despite John Paul II's deploring of the political violence in both countries, Carol Rittner could not find any official statement from the Vatican or by any member of the hierarchy condemning the perpetrators or the acts themselves of these vicious rapes of thousands of women.

Victoria Vondenberger and this writer collaborate in offering a dialogue on how scripture, society, and church deal with racism. What issues are raised by scripture and civil law, and what inspiration and direction come from canon law and church teaching to raise consciousness about the dignity of every person?

Sophie McGrath, member of the Mercy International Research Commission, prepared a study called "Our Shadow," which she presented for the Chapter of the Sisters of Mercy of Parramatta, Australia, in 1998. There were five chapters in the original paper. Printed in this issue of *The MAST Journal* is chapter 1: "The Dublin Foundation Community, Bonding Elements and Shadow." It relies on historical data in Mary Sullivan's *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy* (Four Courts Press, 1995) and analyzes not only the strengths, but the shadow side of the Baggot Street foundation community. For example, the author deals with the discontent, lack of ascetical balance, personality clashes, and managerial weaknesses of the foundress. This breakthrough approach to Mercy history—admitting there is a dark side—also provides a timely theoretical frame and model for dealing with the uncomfortable reality of racism in Mercy congregational history. Sophie McGrath used this model to the bonding and shadow elements in three moments of Parramatta history: from 1888–1950, from Vatican II to the 1980s, and in the period of the 1990s.

Finally, this writer's files yielded a packet of materials called "Multicultural Challenges: Journeying with a Stranger," from a day-long workshop on racism presented to the Sisters of Mercy in Burlingame in April, 1994. The chair of the planning committee was Helen Marie Santillan of the Burlingame region. These materials, compiled by two clinical psychologists, provide Definitions for Discussing Racism and Discussion Questions.

Yours,

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.



THE MAST JOURNAL, begun in 1990, is published three times a year by the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology. Members of the Editorial Board are Sisters Eloise Rosenblatt, Editor (Burlingame), Mary Sullivan (Rochester), Patricia Talone (Merion), Mary Daly (Connecticut), Carol Rittner (Dallas), Kathleen McAlpin (Merion), Aline Paris (Vermont), and Maureen Crossen (Pittsburgh). Subscriptions correspondence to Marilee Howard, R.S.M., Managing Editor, at 8300 Colesville Rd., #300, Silver Spring, MD 20910, e-mail mhoward@sistersofmercy.org. Manuscript submissions to Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., at 1600 Petersen Ave. #40, San Jose, CA 95129, e-mail erosen1121@cs.com. Layout, design, and printing by BIBAL Press, an imprint of D. & F. Scott Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 821653, North Richland Hills, TX 76182. Back issues at \$5.00 may be ordered from BIBAL Press at (888) 788-2280, sales@dfscott.com or www.dfscott.com.

Mother Austin Carroll and the Sisters of Mercy in the South Context for the Establishment of Black Schools*

Mary Hermenia Muldrey, R.S.M.

Austin Carroll's Background and Scholarship

Exactly one hundred years ago, by 1891, an Irish Sister of Mercy serving in New Orleans had authored sixteen books and twenty-four articles. This nun, publishing in professional journals, was the historian known as Mother Austin Carroll.¹ Many of her articles appeared in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review* of Philadelphia. They ran sporadically from 1876, the year of the journal's inception, to 1909, the year of the author's death. During the same time period, Mother Austin had twice as many selections in the Jesuit journal, *The Irish Monthly* of Dublin.²

The majority of Austin Carroll's articles presented her research on Colonial Louisiana under the rule of France and Spain. Her studies concerned such varied aspects as education, parish history, several prominent leaders and peculiar customs, or perhaps, prominent customs and peculiar leaders. Austin also wrote about the Ursulines—the first religious women to serve within the current boundaries of the United States. A series of Austin's articles covered the work of Sisters of Mercy in Central and South American and in the towns along the Gulf Coast, where the Mercies staffed schools from Florida to the Acadian area of Southwest Louisiana.

One needs a glimpse of the Irish background of Mother Austin before taking note of the Irish influences in her work in the United States. In 1835, Margaret—later to be Mother Austin—was the fourth child of nine born to William and Margaret Carroll. The family home was situated in the southern tip of Tipperary in the town of Clonmel. This thriving center of trade and transportation was, at that time, the largest inland town in Ireland. There Margaret had every advantage available to a Catholic of the rising shopkeeper or merchant class.

Land poor by English law, but highly prosperous through their business ventures, Margaret's

parents set definite family priorities. Faith came first on the Isle of Saints and it certainly did so in this devout family. Second only to their Church, education was held almost as sacred by the literate Carrolls. Their next point was the practical application of Christ's teaching, really, living gospel values. William and his wife taught their children by both example and personal involvement to seek out the destitute and alleviate their needs.

Last in this listing, but certainly not the least in their hearts, was an intense love of their homeland. Through several generations, the Carroll clan believed that true patriotism demanded not just a knowledge of Ireland's history, but also a hunger to see justice shown its people. To Margaret, as Sister Austin, this hunger for justice would encompass all the dispossessed she was to meet. But all four parental priorities—faith, education, practical charity, and patriotism—were to remain lasting influences upon her life, along with her courageous character, liberal views, and affinity for friends.

Missioned from Ireland to the United States

The first of four Carroll daughters to join Catherine McAuley's Mercy Institute, Margaret entered the Cork convent in 1853. Although the Mercy foundress, Catherine McAuley, had died a decade earlier, some of her first companions still served in Cork

The first of four Carroll daughters to join Catherine McAuley's Mercy Institute, Margaret entered the Cork convent in 1853.

and taught the young Sisters. Even as a novice, Austin appreciated the depth of understanding that these friends of Catherine McAuley had for her aims and ideals. Austin professed her religious vows and, three months later, was one of several Mercies missioned to the United States in 1856.

There Austin Carroll first taught in the Northeast, but was soon appointed as one more Irish missionary to swell the Mercy tide sweeping across the continent. The original mercy community in Dublin had sent their first foundation to America to Newfoundland in 1842 and a second group to New York City in 1846. In the 1850s New York shared its Mercies with Midwestern St. Louis.³ In the 1860s, St. Louis sent a contingent down the Mississippi River to establish a Mercy foundation in New Orleans.⁴ It was a big sweep—Big Apple to Big Easy.

These Irish Catholic instincts led Mother Austin to establish another dozen black schools after Biloxi in the 1870s and 1880s. Each of these was financed primarily through Austin Carroll's literary publications.

Irish Mercies, whose experience included social work in both Dublin and New York, were assigned to the Deep South with Mother Austin Carroll. Several of this first group were to die within a year or two in the annual onslaught of yellow fever, but Austin recovered from her bout to serve almost fifty years in the area bordering the Gulf of Mexico. Throughout that age of segregation, Austin's hunger for justice pushed her to work against the odds to make education available for black children. When she wrote Bishop William Elder of Natchez of her plan to establish a black school in Biloxi on the Gulf Coast, he answered that he had to funds for that endeavor.⁵

Mother Austin explained that she had the finances, but sought his approval of the work. She

wished to open the school as an act of gratitude to God for the many blessings bestowed upon the Mercy community in New Orleans. The depth of her faith is seen in her complete dependence on God's providence. She established the institutions, Austin stated, and God provided the means. Typical of her letters is this excerpt, which probably shocked the rather staid bishop:

Like most of my countrypeople, I do the thing first and reflect after . . . God is bound to help me when the work is one of incessant labor and anxiety, and is undertaken solely for His sake. If I opened a dancing school or a saloon, I could not look for help from God, But He must help what is done solely for His honor. People tell me differently. I listen—but follow the instincts of my Faith all the same.⁶

Establishment of Black Schools

These Irish Catholic instincts led Mother Austin to establish another dozen black schools after Biloxi in the 1870s and 1880s.⁷ Each of these was financed primarily through Austin Carroll's literary publications. The Church, like the people of the post-war South, had no money. However, bishops like Perche of New Orleans and Quinlan and O'Sullivan of Mobile were generous with encouragement. Several others accepted Austin's efforts with reluctance, as did some of the pastors who feared the loss of parishioners. Even many black parents had to be coaxed to allow their children to quit the task that contributed to the sustenance of the family. Irish charm had to win over parish laity and neighbors, as Austin promised that there would be "no collision," as she termed a racial incident.

In order to keep that promise, Austin won the cooperation of the children of all shades and colors. Then to make school entertaining enough to maintain the regular attendance of these pupils new to classrooms, Austin employed their innate musical talent. Rhythm and song, from Irish jigs to Negro spirituals, were used in brief interludes between basic subjects. The children had fun while challenged to learn new songs and to contribute their own. The youngsters enjoyed alternating the rhythmic sessions with lessons. Their teachers saw that the successes in music increased the confidence and the rate of learning in their pupils.

Some of Austin's black schools had other unusual aspects. In several, the first language of the students was not English. In St. Martinville in Aca-

dian Louisiana, it was "Cadjun French." In Belize in British Honduras, it was often Spanish or one of several Indian dialects. Austin's was the only school available to Biloxi blacks for a dozen years, for it was close to 1890 when the first public school for blacks was established.⁸ Within the area of the Redemptorist parishes, three attempts to open a black school failed. Father Nicholas Berchem established the first on September 14, 1874. But, a week later, the frame structure was burned to the ground one night.⁹ The next attempts lasted a bit longer before they, also, were destroyed by arsonists.

Living and working in the volatile area called the "Irish Channel" were German and Irish immigrants adamantly opposed to their black neighbors. This stemmed from the competition for jobs in their struggle for economic survival, for New Orleans was in that period of financial destruction termed the Reconstruction. Within the decade, however, Austin was able to establish another black school in the Irish Channel. Two points that she learned when Father Berchem's schools went up in smoke were probably responsible for the permanence of her 1883 school in Saint Michael's Parish. First, the location of the black school was adjacent to the convent. Further, Austin and her Sisters had worked hard to raise the level of acceptance in the immediate area.

A problem situation caused by the blacks themselves arose in Pensacola, Florida. There, Austin learned in 1877 that only separate schools could provide education for both the light blacks and the dark blacks. Because of her work earlier with the black sodality of Notre Dame de Bon Secours Parish, where she taught in the French school, Austin had witnessed the self-imposed segregation of light and dark blacks in such events as processions. The mulattoes had an admirable loyalty to their French language and customs, but were firmly convinced that separation was the only way to preserve their heritage. In order to bring education to mulattoes, Austin staffed three schools in Pensacola—black, white and mulatto.

In this, as in many other instances, Austin revealed her special Irish sensitivity for the feelings of others. Her breadth of understanding gave her a marked respect for people of all ages, colors and classes. This concern showed in her manner of giving food to the poor, medicine to the sick, or reading

materials to the imprisoned. Convinced that it was better to give the unemployed work rather than charity, Austin often had improvements made in one of the convents simply to furnish a needy workman with a job. She considered the self-respect of each individual of prime importance.

This trait from her family heritage was most obvious, perhaps, in Austin's ministry to the New Orleans paperboys and street waifs. These youngsters were tremendously proud of their independence and enjoyed the way Austin addressed them as "junior members of the press." Many of the boys attended the night school that she established for them to attend only as a favor to her. Knowing their special aversion to charity and depending upon others, Austin charged the boys a nickel a night for a bed in the Newsboys' Home. "Paying their way" preserved their pride and enabled them to avail themselves of both shelter and night school. A number of these street-smart newsboys continued their education, worked as reporters, and even became local civic leaders.

Much of Austin's energy flowed into projects

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that benefited women. On behalf of those in prison, Austin won a number of concessions from the sheriff. One such favor was the transfer of the women to a building separate from that of the men. Her next request met failure repeatedly, however, as Austin sought matrons rather than male guards for the women. Supposedly, the obstacle was cost. So Austin had local papers publish the offer of the Sisters of Mercy to serve as matrons gratis until the

budget improved.¹⁰ With the publicity, the change was made immediately—a change effected through Austin's pen and the power of the press.

In assisting young women to increase their job skills, Mother Austin followed the aim of Catherine McAuley. That plan, first actualized in the House of Mercy in Dublin, was to help women by providing them with the training needed to make the best use of their abilities. Yet this idea of placing emphasis upon personal effort in order to better job skills, salaries, and standards of living was not certainly pleasing to Americans—or, so Austin concluded when she saw how rapidly donations arrived to liquidate the debt of the industrial school and job placement center.

In each of Austin's fields of activity, she and her friends were themselves fine examples of the kind of success that women could achieve.

Raising Funds, Cultivating Supporters, Relations with Other Writers

Besides the traditional American fairs and raffles as fund-raisers, Austin also used such Irish events as the annual "Charity Lecture." With the Irish and the Irish-American parishioners in New Orleans, this was almost as popular and grand a social occasion as its prototype in Dublin. On one occasion, Austin explained in a letter to one of her friends the intricacies needed for a successful lecture.¹¹ The priority was a popular speaker with a topic that touched on the heritage of the audience. Other essentials were widespread publicity and advance ticket sales. Even the New Orleans rains could not lessen the financial success when the church or parish hall had been sold out in advance.

Mother Austin seemed to have an Irish outlook even in her financial ventures. Although she bought property and renovated buildings rather frequently for her various institutions, she never had to pay any interest on a loan. Among her

numerous New Orleans friends, there were always several able to lend her a few hundred dollars for a year or two. That finely attuned business sense of the Carroll merchant clan kept her from incurring more debt than she could readily handle in the allotted time. It was common knowledge in business circles that Austin often returned a loan earlier than the promised date, never later.

Austin's lady friends seemed especially pleased to assist with a loan when the project was to benefit women. Perhaps Austin's conviction that women could accomplish whatever they wished was contagious. In any case, Austin put no limits on the capabilities of women if they were willing to give time to the necessary study and preparation.

In each of Austin's fields of activity, she and her friends were themselves fine examples of the kind of success that women could achieve. One of Austin's generous compatriots, Margaret Gaffney Haughery, became a New Orleans legend for both her business success and her charity to local orphans. Margaret's bakery always charged Austin minimum prices for the maximum quantities purchased. Margaret knew that the bread was for the sick and the poor. This great-hearted pair, one a widow and the other a nun, used their business acumen to benefit the needy people of God.

Several women prominent in the literary pursuits of editor, author, or publisher were also friends of Austin Carroll. Among the earliest of these was the widow of James Sadlier. She was the manager in 1866, when the family firm published Austin's life of the Mercy foundress, Catherine McAuley. This book was as much a financial bonanza for Mrs. Sadlier as for Austin's social programs like the black schools. Republished a dozen times, it was literary success even though some Irish Mercies groaned over its frankness. That very quality may have caused American Mercies, like laity everywhere, to enjoy it. Austin explained to one of the Irish groaners, "No one ever wrote so as to please everyone. The passages that give umbrage to some are those which give greatest delight to others."¹² because of the depth of research and detail, Austin's biography of Catherine McAuley was used in Rome in the historical studies that are a part of the process of canonization.

Another friend of Austin's was Kate Barry, serving with the Catholic Publishing Society, which

handled the production of the Mercy Annals. These collections of chronicles, presented with Austin's openness and interspersed with her delightful humor, were popular wherever Mercies worked in America, England, Ireland, or Australia.

Influence on other Authors

The second volume, incidentally, described the first service of the Mercies as nurses on any battlefield.¹³ Two Sisters lost their lives in the Crimea, nursing along with Florence Nightingale. The Crimean War was set in the Middle East, where a coalition of English, French, and Turkish troops drove a force of Russian soldiers off the Crimean peninsula. Here on the northern shore of the Black Sea, the Sisters of Mercy served from 1853 to 1856, during this long and disorderly conflict.

This Crimean incident is mentioned as a sample of the historical material that can be found in the chronicles of many religious congregations, not just in the Mercy Annals. Kate Barry was so impressed with Austin's volumes that she journeyed to Ireland in the 1890s, pursued her own research, and published her impressions of Catherine McAuley and the Mercy Institute that dared to mission its Sisters to serve on the battlefields.¹⁴

Incidentally, here in Oxford, Mississippi, it is impossible not to mention that a heroic group of Mercies from Vicksburg worked here as nurses. Throughout the Civil War, they served as part of a Confederate Army medical team. One of the Sisters, Mary Ignatius Sumner, kept a record of their repeated transfers with their front-line wounded to safer locations.¹⁵ From Oxford, they moved southward to Jackson, then eastward in several stages to Shelby Springs, Alabama, their last stop.

Austin's final stop was also in Alabama. Long before her death in Mobile, however, she enjoyed correspondence and friendship with Katherine Conway of Rochester, New York. This American career woman shared more closely than anyone else Austin's enthusiastic convictions about the intellectual abilities of women. Conway's literary career embraced both authorship and staff positions on the *Boston Pilot*. Even serving on this Catholic weekly, Conway suffered discrimination and financial injus-

Kate Barry was so impressed with Austin's volumes that she journeyed to Ireland in the 1890s, pursued her own research, and published her impressions of Catherine McAuley and the Mercy Institute that dared to mission its Sisters to serve on the battlefields.

tice because she was woman. From her view, in fact, she saw advantages in acting independently as religious women in active congregations.

Conway noted that Sisters all over America served as capable directors of schools, hospitals, and other institutions.¹⁶ Less correctly, she thought that these Sisters were acting with total independence. In any case, Conway believed that an even greater challenge for women was the administrative talent required to govern a community large enough to maintain branch convents across the Gulf States and in Central America. This was the challenge for the New Orleans superior, but Austin had no monopoly on the market and alternated the job with other Sisters. Conway was acquainted with similarly talented women in many religious congregations that served in America.

The gifted Mercies known to Austin were those from whom she gathered information for the published annals. Many of the Sisters changed from correspondents to concerned acquaintances, then gradually, to close friends. They shared news of Irish and U.S. activities and methods of teacher-training for young Sisters. Many of these Mercy leaders considered Austin the most knowledgeable about the Mercy Rule and their most gifted administrator. Family and country had both contributed to the breadth of mind and depth of character of Austin Carroll. American experience, of course, added new dimensions.

Conflicts with Male "Ecclesiastical Superiors"

Like other Mercies who were instructed as religious in the original convents of Ireland, Austin received the broad views of the foundress from Sisters whom Catherine herself had taught. Austin and the other Cork novices learned that customs and schedules could be arranged to suit each location, no matter how diverse the situation. Yet, it was impressed upon the young Sisters that the Rule must be strictly maintained, that it was not the bishop or his representative, but the Sister superior who appointed the Sisters to staff the various schools and institutions, and that the Mercy community determined whether or not it should accept a new applicant.

The Irish Mercies seemed to have given much more weight to these points in the last century than American Sisters. Perhaps, the homeland was a consideration. Bishop Elder of Natchez, for instance, transferred Sisters and changed assignments of the American-born Mercies in Vicksburg on occasion.¹⁷ After he became archbishop of Cincinnati, however, the Irish-born Mercies there objected to such interference in community ministries.

Superiors from any country could and did meet problems that revolved around the position of "ecclesiastical superior." This title was given to the priest appointed by the bishop of a large diocese for each group of religious women. The priest could be a help to the Sisters in diocesan transactions. On the other hand, if he thought his duty was to take on the role of the Sister superior by changing the rule or making individual assignments, he caused untold confusion. One Irish Mercy notes

The priest could be a help to the Sisters in diocesan transactions. On the other hand, if he thought his duty was to take on the role of the Sister superior by changing the rule or making individual assignments, he caused untold confusion.

that unless the Sisters were careful, their ecclesiastical superior would become Reverend Mother as well as Reverend Father.¹⁸

Mother Austin tried to solve several problems caused by priests accustomed to being ecclesiastical superiors of a German congregation of Sisters, who had to get the priests' consent to walk one block to buy a pot or pan. Just imagine the surprise of these priests to see Mercies, without asking permission, walk the Irish Channel to visit the sick poor or take the streetcars across town to visit the imprisoned. When reprimanded, Austin explained that the Mercies were following their Rome-approved rule. The priest decided to change the rule.¹⁹ Instead, Austin asked the archbishop to change the priests. This worked to the advantage of the Sisters, but resulted in several angry German priests.

Fortunately for the Sisters, they and Austin had already enjoyed fifteen years of wonderful rapport with two archbishops. The first was the great missionary bishop of Texas, Jean Marie Odin, who had invited the Mercies to New Orleans in the 1860s. His successor, Archbishop Napoleon Perche, had used the power of the press to overcome Masonic trustees and take the cathedral back from their control.

Personal Cost to Austin Carroll of Establishing Black Schools in Belize

Several years before his death, the elderly Perche had asked for an auxiliary bishop who could reduce the diocesan debt. Bishop Francis Leray of Natchitoches was named Administrator of Temporalities, and problems were apparent immediately. If Perche approved a plan, Leray negated it, and vice versa. Leray's views of his powers differed from those of the archbishop. People were confused as to which bishop had responsibility for what.

Earlier, Perche had approved the Mercy decision to staff girls' schools in Belize at the request of the Jesuits who were teaching boys there. By the time that the Mercies had completed their preparations, Archbishop Perche was away collecting funds. In his absence, Leray forbade any funding of the Belize mission by the Mercies of New Orleans and said that any Sister who went could not return as there was to be no branch convent. Under these conditions, no foreign mission could survive and

news that Mercies could not staff the schools for the girls was sent to Belize.²⁰

That decision was not final, for Father Salvatore dePietro, later to serve as the bishop in Belize, wrote to Rome. There he won approval for the earlier plan already approved by Perche. Thus, with Rome's blessing, Austin and the missionaries left for Belize in January 1883.²¹ It was no blind decision. The educational needs of the black and Indian girls of Belize simply outweighed the anger of Leray.

Unfortunately however, Perche died within that year, and Leray had automatic succession. There Mercies and their leader were all to suffer, for Leray notified Rome that Austin refused to obey him. He did not add that she had obeyed Rome instead, nor that she had the permission of her archbishop to establish the mission in Belize.

If Leray had mentioned the date of this alleged disobedience or that he referred to the mission in Central America, Rome could have learned the truth. Honesty was not present, however, and Roman accepted Leray's accusation without question. Mother Austin was publicly condemned and humiliated by Leray.²²

Austin Carroll's Sisters saw her resignation and peace. Only in letters to her spiritual director did Austin reveal her deep hurt:

I have come of a race in which honesty and integrity were heirlooms . . . It seems to me that I have not been justly dealt with . . . Our adversaries were powerful and we were in no wise a match for them . . . I try not to allow my mind to be embittered at what has been done to me, which I embrace as my portion of the cross . . . Perhaps, time may heal the wound.²³

Perhaps it did, for Austin lived another twenty years. She was sustained through her trials by a deep Irish faith that looked upon the cross as a symbol that her work was God's own. Until the end of her life Austin's optimistic spirit was upheld not only by her honest and courageous character, but also by her personal love for Christ and the affectionate concern of the Mercies and hundreds of other friends.

Notes

- * Editor's Note: This article is the text of Herminia Muldrey's address originally given on April 5, 1991, at the annual meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association, held in Oxford, Mississippi at the University of Mississippi.
- 1 The article presents briefly several topics treated at length with abundant documentation in the author's *Abounding Mercy: Mother Austin Carroll. New Orleans: Habersham, 1988.*
- 2 Ibid. See the Carroll bibliography, pp. 441-6.
- 3 Archives of the Sisters of Mercy (hereafter abbreviated as ASM), Baggot Street, Dublin; Carsyfort, Blackrock; St. John's Newfoundland; Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.; St. Joseph Convent of Mercy, St. Louis.
- 4 ASM, New Orleans. March 28, 1869.
- 5 Archives of the Diocese of Jackson (hereafter abbreviated as ADJ), Carroll to Elder, June 14, 1878.
- 6 ADJ, Carroll to Elder, Dec. 10, 1878.
- 7 Locations of black schools established by M. Austin Carroll: Biloxi, Miss.; Pensacola, Fla. (2); Warrington, Fla.; St. Martinville, La.; Belize, British Honduras [country is now called Belize] (3); Colored School of St. Michael's Parish, New Orleans; Birmingham, Ala.; and Mississippi City, Miss. [now called St. James Parish in Gulfport, Miss.].
- 8 Julia Cook Guise, *Growth of the Biloxi Public School System*. Biloxi: 1979, p. 6.
- 9 *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Sept. 23, 1874.
- 10 *New Orleans Morning Star*, Jan. 2, 1881.
- 11 Archives of Archdiocese of Omaha, Carroll to O'Connor, Nov. 4, 1875.
- 12 ASM, Windham, New Hampshire, Carroll to O'Brien, Feb. 20, 1886.
- 13 Mary Austin Carroll, *Leaves from the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy*. N.Y.: Catholic Pub. Society Col, 1883. Vol. 2, Chap. 13-21.
- 14 Kate Madeleine Barry. *Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy*. Dublin: Fallon, 1896.
- 15 ASM, Vicksburg, Unpublished ms. "Journal of Sister Mary Ignatius Sumner."
- 16 Katherine E. Conway, "A Great Sister of Mercy," *Boston Pilot*, July 14, 1906.
- 17 ADJ, Elder to Cogan, June 20, 1878.
- 18 ASM, Dublin, O'Connor to Marmion, Nov. 1848.
- 19 AUND, N.O. Papers, Giesen, to Leray, May 5, 1884.
- 20 ASM, New Orleans and Belize.
- 21 Archives Propaganda Fide, dePietro to Leo XIII, Sept. 6, 1993; and dePietro to Simeoni, Nov. 24, 1883.
- 22 Muldrey, *Abounding in Mercy*. Chapter 10 treats topic in detail with ample notes.
- 23 Archives of the Irish College, Rome, Carroll to Kirby, Jan. 29, 1886.



Mary Austin Carroll's Hunger for Justice

Mary Hermenia Muldrey, R.S.M.

Mary Austin Carroll's dynamic hunger for justice is what started the Mercy foundation in New Orleans on the continuing road to good relationships with each minority and disadvantaged group in the area. In her *Leaves from the Annals*, Carroll first mentioned teaching blacks while on the riverboat headed down the Mississippi river to New Orleans. Besides teaching four white children who were relatives of the boat's Captain, she instructed the twelve-year-old daughter of the laundress, and prepared her to make her Confirmation and First Holy Communion when she reached the parish that they attended in the city. She also taught several of the Negro cabin boys and deck hands.¹

As soon as the Sisters of Mercy arrived and met with Archbishop Jean Marie Odin to receive his blessing on their works of mercy, they began visitation of the sick. The first patient visited by the Irish Mercies was a very old woman who was

born in Ireland, but the second patient visited and aided was a Negro woman.² This pattern of visiting white or black continued just as did the "sick calls" to residents who were French, Spanish, Irish, German, or Italian New Orleanians, who chose their church parish by their nationality.

In their first assignment to the French Church within the Redemptorist parish area of Notre Dame de Bon Secours, the Mercies learned that black Catholics attended French parishes where they were welcomed with the use of an entire section of pews from the altar rail to the back of the church. The blacks also had their own "Sodality of the Holy Family" in each of the parishes they attended. Though the Sisters had seen segregation in St. Louis, they were surprised to find that in a sodality procession, neither a dark nor a light black would walk together as partners. The blacks thus had their own customs of self-segregation even as they processed into the church.

In any German or Irish parish church, blacks were allowed to use only the last pew in the back of the church, and major antagonisms existed. The pastor of Notre Dame, Fr. Nicholas Bercham, was collecting money to open a school for his black students, and the Mercies helped the project by encouraging their students to ask their parents to buy lots of raffle tickets. The pastor had enough success to buy a nice corner home in which he could open the black school. However, in the violent time inaccurately called Reconstruction, the school lasted one week, and then was burned down at night.³

Since two later attempts saw the same result, Austin Carroll delayed a few years before she established one of her own black schools near St. Alphonsus in the neighboring parish of St. Michael.

Carroll's Establishment of Black Schools

Throughout this age of segregation of races and nationalities, Carroll's hunger for justice impelled her to work against the odds to make education available for black children. Carroll established her first black school in 1875 in Biloxi on the Gulf Coast. Like most others, it was

Throughout this age of segregation of races and nationalities, Carroll's hunger for justice impelled her to work against the odds to make education available for black children.

named for St. Joseph because he was such a staunch supporter when the Sisters needed funds. Preliminary work convinced the bishop, pastor, and the parents of black children that it would work without costing them any money or lowering the Sunday collection. That Carroll could pay all costs and that the children who attended would benefit the rest of their lives from what they learned were primary reasons for the school. The venture was small. At the beginning, there were only preparations for First Communion and Confirmation. The school soon expanded to include the three R's and was settled in a house adjacent to the convent.

Carroll expanded to a large rented building in 1878. The next two black schools Carroll staffed were in Pensacola, where Bishop Quinlan asked for a Mercy teacher for St. Michael Parish. The white school there and a black school had been staffed earlier by other religious communities.⁴ The pastor was delighted that Carroll accepted both. When she learned that the light blacks refused to attend the black school lest they lose their French culture and language, she opened a third school for them.⁵ These two black schools continued from September 1877 until 1918. The U.S. Naval Base in Warrington asked for both white and black schools in January, 1878. Again, Carroll had enough Sisters to staff the schools with fine teachers.⁶

In St. Martinville on the Bayou Teche, Carroll's fifth black school was opened in March, 1881. Pere Jan provided

the Sisters with a fine house for their convent. Next door was another home, which became the school for girls in both elementary and high school. Just across the street was the house Carroll rented for the black school. The boys' school was not opened until the following September, since finding a site had caused a delay. Carroll called this branch with its three schools her Mercy Jubilee House and Schools because 1881 was the fiftieth year since Catherine McAuley's vows and the foundation of the Mercy Community. That black school soon became her largest. The rented house was replaced in several years with a fine new school costing \$600.00.⁷ When desegregation was established in the 1960s, the Mercy schools were the first to make joining the pupils of the black and white schools a success.

schools for boys and for girls commuted daily from the motherhouse convent. So, all the teachers were delighted when the house was blessed as a convent in 1883, and the pastor brought the Blessed Sacrament into their newly painted chapel. October also noted that Carroll had a small building for the sixth black school moved into the convent yard. She and her teachers did not believe that any Irish Channel residents would "torch" the black school if that would also burn the convent. Black mothers had to be coaxed to allow their children to quit some small tasks that contributed to the sustenance of the family. Irish charm had to win over parish laity and close neighbors, as Carroll promised there would be "no collision," as she termed a racial incident. In order to keep that bargain, Carroll won the full

Carroll had a small building for the sixth black school moved into the convent yard. She and her teachers did not believe that any Irish Channel residents would "torch" the black school if that would also burn the convent.

Carroll's Success in the Post-Civil War Reconstruction Era

St. Michael Parish School in New Orleans was only eight city blocks from the Convent of Mercy in St. Alphonsus Parish. From September 1880, until October 1883, the teachers staffing the two St. Michael parish

cooperation of the pupils of all shades and colors. Peace reigned, black pupils increased, and a large new black school was erected just a few years later.⁸

Belize in British Columbia had two schools at first, and neither was racially segregated. The Carroll drive to open schools in Belize was to give the girls the opportunity for a Cath-

Against the backdrop of fire, turmoil, and destruction at that time called "Reconstruction," Carroll's black schools escaped burning by racists.

olic education. The Jesuit priests already had fine schools available for the boys. Carroll put no limits on the abilities of women and worked hard to establish a college for them in New Orleans. Approved by educational accreditation from London, the Belize mission schools grew to four as more Mercies went to serve in Central America.⁹

Carroll's black schools meanwhile continued to increase in the Mobile, Alabama diocese also, with an eleventh black school opened in Birmingham and a small one as the twelfth in Mississippi City.¹⁰

Thus, against the backdrop of fire, turmoil, and destruction at that time called "Reconstruction," Carroll's black schools escaped burning by racists. She had a silver tongue to calm extremists and a silver lining to her purse. She financed her minority schools by the proceeds of her pen. Perhaps the Carroll-trained Mercies did not have the silver lining in their purses, but through the years they continued to visit the sick poor, black or white, women or men, and any nationality at all.

The Civil Rights Era

In the Acadian town of Jeanerette, I had the privilege of being the partner to an

elderly Mercy who was familiar with every needy black and white family and abode in the town. In her, I saw the magnificent spirit of Catherine and Austin Carroll, a spirit still alive in the 1950s. This elderly Mercy incarnated the truth that Mercies were not an elitist group, but followers of Catherine who knew she put the poor first.

It was easy to see how much the residents appreciated the numerous Mercies who had visited them through the years, especially for bringing baskets of bread and dried foods like rice and beans or grits to tide them over until the next paycheck. The teachers in some schools gathered good used clothing for students in poor areas. Annual clothing drives assisted the needy regularly. Blacks were received as students and tutored in the years of desegregation in all Mercy staffed schools.

Prior to this time, I had worked with students, trying to foster the value of accepting all God's people. Some cooperated and showed understanding, while others held back. However, the spirit of Mercy in teachers themselves in the high schools was to give aid to black students as they had need, to assist them in keeping up with their classmates and to see that they graduated. Dedication to

the education of all students was fostered and blessed with the compassion of our early leaders, Catherine and Austin Carroll.

During the years of Mercies teaching in black schools, girls with religious vocations typically joined the Sisters of the Holy Family. Today that is one of the largest religious communities in this area. The congregational archivist assisted me in compiling a long list of their Sisters who had been taught by the Mercies in the various schools mentioned above. Today, the cause for the canonization of their foundress has been activated.



Notes

- 1 Carroll, M. Austin, *Leaves from the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy*, vol. 4, pp. 364–5.
- 2 Ibid., p. 279.
- 3 *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Sept. 23, 1874.
- 4 M. Herminia Muldney, *Abounding in Mercy: M. Austin Carroll*, p. 190.
- 5 Carroll, *Annals*, vol. 4, pp. 424–5.
- 6 Ibid., p. 426.
- 7 Mercy Archives, Convent of Mercy Chronicals of St. Martinville, Louisiana.
- 8 Mercy Archives, St. Michael's Chronicals, St. Michael Parish, New Orleans.
- 9 Mercy Archives, Belize Chronicals, Providence, Rhode Island.
- 10 Mercy Archives, Convent of Mercy Chronicals, Mobile, Alabama.

Ritual on the History of Racism in Community

Laredo, Texas, Institute Chapter, July 21, 2005

Introduction:

Reading from 1999 Action Plan, § 9 Multiculturalism and the Elimination of Racism.

We Sisters of Mercy admit, own and ask forgiveness for our racism as individuals and as Institute. Accordingly, we will identify and participate in existing programs and organizations within and outside the Institute that are designed to examine and challenge the attitudes and behaviors of cultural domination and racism within us and our ministries. We will facilitate members' participation in cultures distinct from their own. We will provide for adequate preparation and follow-up in order to process the learning from these experiences.

Greeting:

Let our prayer rise before you,
God of all peoples and nations.
May your grace fill the world.
Sanctify the work of our hands
Bring forth the reign of your justice and mercy

Doxology:

Glory to you, God of all peoples.
To Jesus, healer and friend,
To the Spirit dwelling within,
Praise be yours forever. Amen

Reading:

(Adapted from *Christianity and Culture* by Rev. Virgilio P. Elizondo)

The world today is characterized by a paradox: on the one hand there is a growing realization of the basic equality of all people, an awareness of the need for unity and of the fundamental desire of all for universal solidarity, and a growing respect for cultural differences. Opposed to these elements are the forces of division and antagonism, which

seem to be increasing in strength day by day. People find themselves closer and closer to each other, whether in China, Europe, Latin America, or the United States, and yet we are aware that human communication is becoming more difficult.

While personal unity becomes more of an intense yearning of ours and while global unity becomes more urgent if humanity is to survive, limitations—especially those of a depersonalized technology and the unequal distribution of the power and wealth of the world—are increasingly an obstacle to the integral development of modern humanity. We are consciously seeking community and love, and yet it appears that we are afraid of the radical demands of authentic love, the only road to building the basic human communities that we humans need and want.

Pause

Response:

"We are consciously seeking community and love, and yet it appears that we are afraid of the radical demands of authentic love, the only road to building the basic communities that we human beings need and want."

Readings

A series of vignettes are read with a brief pause between each one:

1929 Letter from Mother General to the Mother Provincial in Webster Groves, Missouri

I wish to bring to your attention an important matter which regards the Mobile Community: Yesterday, Sister M.D. received a letter from the former Mobile motherhouse stating that a Miss D. from Mobile has been accepted to the St. Louis novitiate. I am sure you do not know that this young lady is a Creole, and everyone in Mobile knows it.

Her grandmother was of pure negro blood and black in color. She was a student in the Providence Infirmary Training School, and at the time of her graduation the feeling was so intense that she could not be given her diploma in public. I hope she is not already in the novitiate, because I could not allow her to remain.

1946 Letter from Rev. O. to Mother Provincial in New York

In order to foster vocations to the religious life, I am seeking information concerning the requirement of various orders. Would you be good enough to let me know at what age young girls may apply for admission into your order, and what kind of work the order undertakes? . . . Is the order Catholic enough to accept colored vocations? I am in a colored parish and am immediately concerned with this information.

Letter from Vicar General to Mother Provincial

I see nothing for you to do but to tell Father O. that we do not accept colored applicants. Some of the postulants that have been admitted to the novitiates in Providence and Scranton are dark-skinned but they are not mulattoes.

Letter from Mother Provincial to Sister M.T.

I am not now in a position to state whether or not our Institute will accept colored girls in the novitiates. However, I am today referring this matter to Mother General, and will advise you at the earliest possible date. I know Mother General and the members of the General Council have deep sympathy for the negro, and they feel, as we do, that God will bless us for any effort we put forth to relieve them of their many unfair handicaps.

However, the question of admitting them to the novitiate of an Order, even one whose shield is Mercy, would necessitate careful consideration as to present and future effects.

1950 Letter from Mother General to Mother Provincial in Chicago

I received your letter and the one you enclosed from Rev. J. Q. Unless you feel confident that you could use Miss M. and that she would fit into the community I would hesitate to encourage her. There are other communities that accept Chinese and she would probably feel more at home in a community where there would be others of the same nationality.

1953 Letter from Mother General to the Mother Provincial in Cincinnati, Ohio

In reply to Father's question as to whether or not our Institute has a policy on the acceptance or rejection of candidates who are otherwise qualified but who are wholly or partly of Negro blood, you may tell him: "We have in our missions in the tropics some Sisters of Negro blood and we have recently accepted into our novitiate in the northern part of the country girls from the tropics who are partly of Negro blood. We have not as yet admitted an American girl of Negro blood into any of our novitiates, but we have no policy prohibiting the acceptance of such a girl."

Response:

"We are consciously seeking community and love, and yet it appears that we are afraid of the radical demands of authentic love, the only road to building the basic communities that we human beings need and want."

Invitation: Prayer responses at tables

Song: *Kyrie Eleison* by Proulx

Closing Prayer:

Solsticio de Verano/Summer Solstice by Sheila Stevenson, R.S.M.

Luz de Cristo / Light of Christ



Thoughts on Racism

Sister P. Moreno, R.S.M.

Sister Maria Luisa Vera, R.S.M., wrote an article in *The MAST Journal*, "Colored Vocations: Women of Color in Religious Life."¹ As follow-up, I would like to voice my ideas on the topic of racism. I offer this reflection about my concerns, and where I sense we are as a community today with the issue.

I remember the statement that outgoing Institute President Sister Marie Chin, R.S.M., made at the Fourth Institute Chapter in Laredo in 2005. She said that at this moment the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas was not ready to ask for forgiveness for our racism as individuals and as an Institute.

When regional communities were asked to go to their archives and find any information they might have on racism, it was remarkable what surfaced and what was read to the Chapter participants. It became clear to me at that moment that we have only made baby steps when it comes to understanding and accepting differences among us.

I am a woman of color, a minority in this religious congregation. I'm a former vocation minister and now serving in community leadership. The topic of racism continues to raise concerns for me personally, especially as a member of the

Alliance of the Sisters of Mercy of Color in the United States.²

There have been times I have reflected on why we need to have the Alliance of the Sisters of Mercy of Color in existence here in the United States. How wonderful it would be if we didn't have our issues with multiculturalism and racism. How different life would be. But in reality we haven't reached that moment of time. So, when I ask myself why I attend our yearly gathering of the Alliance, I realize there is something that happens inside me. There is a warm feeling. I feel myself smiling and once again I know why. The Alliance has been a place to be with women who are from minority ethnic groups who all share the spirit of Mercy together. It's a place to be "at home" with other women. It is a place to be re-energized.

As a former vocation minister, I often had to face a question: Why we were not attracting more women of color? During those five years in vocation ministry, I began to get some glimpses about why. We make religious life an "elite status" when we place guidelines that sometimes seem so beyond the reach of many women, especially women of color. With guidelines and expectations that we have now, I wonder how many of us in religious life today would enter if we had to go through the same process. Probably not many would. We eliminate many women when we believe that the guidelines we create are the right ones. We need to be more flexible and be willing to take risks.

It would be wonderful if we had more Sisters of color to do vocation ministry, but it should not be left up to the women of

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It is hard to hear Sisters outside the Alliance say that they have read the book on multiculturalism or racism, attended the workshop, seen the movie or talked about the issues, so now they understand what it is and can move on with life. Actually, we have a long way to go.

color to invite women of color to the community. The invitation should come from any one of us in community who considers herself a Sister of Mercy. Let's not pass the buck to someone else because we might feel we are not able to do it. We can't allow fear to paralyze us.

The Alliance of Sisters of Mercy has been in existence for eleven years. We have had several speakers come and help us understand our own prejudices and racism within ourselves. The many times that the group has been together we have shared our stories. We have laughed, cried, shared our pains and joys, and we have mourned the losses of members of our Alliance. But we thank God for what has taken place as we move forward on our journey in Mercy.

As I write this, I know that this particular group has been working for several years on coming to understand who we are, and we continue to learn new things about ourselves. It is hard to hear Sisters outside the Alliance say that they have read the book on multiculturalism or racism, attended the workshop, seen the movie or talked about the issues,

so now they understand what it is and can move on with life. Actually, we have a long way to go.

At our next gathering of the Alliance, several questions will be posed to the group, "Am I happy being a Sister of Mercy?" "Am I willing to invite a woman from my culture to be a part of Mercy?" "Why or Why not?"

I once shared with a Sister how difficult and exhausting it was for me to keep sharing my story and the experience of my culture with the community, and not feeling that I was being heard. Her response was that I needed to keep voicing my experience to the community. I then asked her, "How much is enough? How many times do I have to put myself through the pain so that others don't forget?"

As Sister Maria Luisa wrote in her MAST article, the theme of our 1999 gathering was "Understanding Our Differences." At this particular gathering we said to one another that we would challenge racism in our communities and places of ministry. We would continue to learn about our own culture and share our learnings with our Sisters. We would learn more about diversity.

We would challenge the Mercy community to look at all cultures of color in the U.S.A. I still believe that this is what we continue to strive to do to serve the community, but most importantly, we do it as expression of our own integrity and dignity.

To conclude, let me share some quotes that have been used at our gatherings:

"No one has the right to define anyone else."

"We must be the change we want to see."—Gandhi

"Real peace is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice." —Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Bow with anybody but bow to no one."—Caroleen Sanders

"If you only take one side of me, you alienate me."—Sister Marie Chin, RSM



Notes

- 1 Maria Luisa Vera, R.S.M., "Colored Vocations: Women of Color in Religious Life," *The MAST Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2004): 41–44, 52.
- 2 The first formal gathering of the Alliance of Sisters of Mercy of Color in the United States took place in 1996, and was the outgrowth of informal conversations among smaller groups after the creation of the Institute in 1991. See Vera, "Colored Vocations," p. 43.

Reflections on Mrs. Coretta Scott King

Cora Marie Billings, R.S.M.

As I celebrate the National Day of Prayer for the African American Family on February 5, 2006, I mourn the loss of another valiant woman. It was my great fortune, when I was on the Board of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, to interact with Mrs. Coretta Scott King. On the mantle piece in my office, I have a picture of the two of us embracing. I recall that those moments in her presence helped to give me strength and courage to "keep on keeping on" and to continue to use every means possible to eradicate racism.

My other personal contacts with Coretta were when she came to Richmond on several occasions. I was able to tell her of the impact of her husband's life on me. Since the death of my father on January

15, 1978, Martin's birthday always takes on an even deeper meaning and source of inspiration for me.

It is very evident that strong family values and the concept of the extended family were a part of the daily lives in the King family. Mrs. King wrote in 1983, "Above all, he brought a new and higher dimension of human dignity to black people's lives," and we know that she continued to preach and promote Martin's legacy and heritage.

As the Nation and the Diocese celebrate on February 5, the theme, "God's ever present help keeps us keeping on," I will try to continue the heritage given by such a valiant woman as Coretta Scott King. I will go from here with courage, strength, and love.



Rape, Religion, and Genocide

Racially-Motivated Violence against Women

Carol Rittner, R.S.M.

"Rape is . . . always an intrinsically evil act."
Catechism of the Catholic Church,
§ 2356

". . . the entire community should . . . help [women] transform the act of violence into an act of love and acceptance."

From the text of a letter sent by Pope John Paul II to Archbishop Vinko Puljic of Sarajevo, 2 February 1993

I would like to frame my comments with an excerpt from a speech given by Albert Camus in 1948 to a group of Roman Catholic monks at the Dominican Monastery of Latour-Maubourg in France: When it comes to evil, he said, "What the world expects of Christians is that Christians should speak out, loud and clear, and that they should voice their condemnation in such a way that never the slightest doubt, could rise in the heart of the simplest man. That they

should get away from abstraction and confront the blood-stained face history has taken on today."¹ True, he was talking about World War II, and the Holocaust, and I want to talk about rape as a weapon of genocide, murderous racism, in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the 1990s. However, I find Camus's words disturbingly relevant, which is probably why they keep echoing in me. Let me try to explain. In doing so, I want to begin with some comments about war and genocide in the twentieth century. Then, I want to say something about rape as a weapon of genocide, which is a policy of racially-motivated mass murder. And, finally, I want to offer some observations on the response of Pope John Paul II and the Roman Catholic Church to women who have been raped in genocidal situations, forcibly impregnated and/or infected with the AIDS virus by *genocidaires*, as well, highlight what the pope and

the Church have had to say to the men who have perpetrated these horrific deeds.

War and Genocide in the Twentieth Century

Many commentators would agree that the last years of the twentieth century have been difficult ones for humankind. They have been particularly savage for women and children. Since the end of World War II, more than 250 major wars have resulted in 23 million casualties,² 90 percent of whom were civilian war casualties, with 75 percent of those casualties being women and children.³ A century ago, male soldiers accounted for 90 percent of war casualties. In our day, "the incidence of civilians killed and wounded has risen dramatically, from 5 per cent to over 90 per cent of all casualties."⁴ Some people believe that dramatic change can be linked to the concept of "total war" which made its entrance onto the world stage during World War I.⁵ Others think the dramatic increase in civilian deaths is linked to an upsurge in conflicts between ethnic groups, where wholesale and deliberate violence is inflicted on entire populations, and any method or means of warfare, legal or

A century ago, male soldiers accounted for 90 percent of war casualties. In our day, "the incidence of civilians killed and wounded has risen dramatically, from 5 per cent to over 90 per cent of all casualties."

illegal, no matter how horrific, is sanctioned by the combatants.

In former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda during the 1990s, women were victims of unbelievably horrific atrocities. In both countries, women's bodies were used as "envelopes" by one group of men to send messages to another group of men perceived as "the enemy."⁶ "A European Community fact-finding team estimated that more than 20,000 Muslim women were raped [by Serb forces, both military and para-military, regular and irregular] during the war in Bosnia."⁷ The Bosnian Ministry of the Interior estimated the number of rape victims—including both Serbian and Croatian women—at 50,000.⁸ While it is true that in both places and during both conflicts men were brutalized and murdered, beaten, starved, tortured, and sexually assaulted, sometimes raped, castrated,⁹ even forced to sexually assault their own mothers and sisters and daughters, I do not think one can argue that men were sexually assaulted and brutalized as part of a planned, systematic strategy to destroy "the enemy." But one can make that argument when it comes to women and their sexual brutalization.¹⁰

In Rwanda, during the 1994 genocide, thousands of women—mostly Tutsi, but also Hutu women considered by the extremist Hutu government to be friendly toward Tutsis or politically moderate Hutus—were brutalized, raped, and murdered. According to reports compiled by UNIFEM and the World Bank, thousands and thousands of women were systematically raped.¹¹ Some observers believe

In cultures that see a woman as the property of a man, as was the case in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, both solidly patriarchal societies, an attack on women was an attack on men.

that every woman and adolescent girl who survived the genocide in Rwanda was raped. In both countries—former Yugoslavia and Rwanda—women were infected with HIV/AIDS and murdered by having their unborn babies ripped from their wombs. They were sexually tortured, mutilated, deliberately impregnated, denied access to medical assistance and abortions, and forced to bear unwanted children forcibly conceived through rape. All these acts of violence were motivated by racism of one tribe against another.

Rape as a Weapon of Genocide

At the core of sexual violence are the inequities of gender relations in society. These inequities depend on people's perceptions of male and female roles in society and the social structures around these perceptions. In cultures that see a woman as the property of a man, as was the case in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, both solidly patriarchal societies, an attack on women was an attack on men. The widespread use of rape in those countries reflects the unique terror it holds for women, the unique power it gives the rapist over his victim, and the unique contempt

it displays for its victims. In both countries, rape was not an accident of war, or an incidental adjunct to armed conflict. It was a deliberate strategy, organized and systematic, of one social group against another. It was employed by *genocidaires* to threaten, destabilize, and ultimately destroy a specific ethnic group. Rape served many functions: to terrorize civilian communities, to enforce hostile occupations, to take revenge against an enemy, and to ethnically cleanse an area or territory. According to Alexandra Stiglmayer, a man rapes:

because he wants to engage in violence. He rapes because he wants to demonstrate his power. He rapes because he is the victor. He rapes because he wants to humiliate and annihilate the enemy. He rapes because the woman is herself the enemy whom he wishes to humiliate and annihilate. He rapes because he despises women. He rapes to prove his virility. He rapes because the acquisition of the female body means a piece of territory conquered. He rapes to take out on someone else the humiliation he has suffered in the war. He rapes to work off his fears. He rapes because it's really only some "fun" with the guys. He rapes because war, a man's business, has awakened his aggressiveness, and he directs it

at those who play a subordinate role in the world of war.¹²

In both former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, women were raped because they were part of the unwanted "ethnic other." Women were raped because the aggressor wanted to interrupt the ethno-continuity of his enemy's ethnic group¹³ and in that way, destroy the enemy.

**What happened in Bosnia was not just
"out-of-control" male sexual mayhem. It was
deliberate, focused, intentional. Serb
militiamen were given orders to rape
Bosnian women.**

In former Yugoslavia, vicious though they were, Serbs were not the only ones who raped during the conflict there in the early 1990s. Croats and Bosnians raped too, but the Serbs set the pattern in 1992, organizing their strategy to create a Greater Serbia by laying siege to cities, towns and villages, by ethnically cleansing whole areas, by setting up concentration camps, and by practicing systematic rape as a tool of government policy.¹⁴ What happened there was not just "out-of-control" male sexual mayhem. It was deliberate, focused, intentional. Serb militiamen were given orders to rape Bosnian women.¹⁵

As for Rwanda during the 1994 genocide, rape was the rule, its absence the exception. While there are certainly cases of Hutu women being raped by members of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) army, the RPF did not use it as a deliberate strategy to destroy

the enemy. But rape was a deliberate strategy used by the Hutu extremist militias against their Tutsi enemy. In Rwanda, between April and July 1994, thousands of Tutsi women were sexually violated in the most sadistic and brutal manner imaginable by Hutu *interhawame*. Many women were killed after being raped and sodomized. Others, held in a kind

own merits under international law. Today, we know that it can be.¹⁸ The nations of the world, through the United Nations (UN) and the international criminal tribunals the UN established to punish the perpetrators of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, have taken a stand and spoken: Those who use rape as a weapon of war, as a means of "ethnic cleansing," as a weapon of genocide will be found, prosecuted, and if convicted, punished.

Responses of Pope John Paul II to Mass Rape in the Former Yugoslavia

Both Rwanda and former Yugoslavia are countries with significant Catholic populations. The combined Catholic population of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia is about 4.8 million men, women and children. The number of Catholics in Rwanda—once referred to as the "most Catholic country" in all of Africa—is approximately 3.7 million members (prior to the 1994 genocide, Catholics were 80 percent of the Christian population of Rwanda). With so many Catholics living in both these countries during the genocidal conflicts of the 1990s, did the Roman Catholic Church—through its bishops, archbishops, and cardinals, through the pope himself—have anything to say about rape, "unlawful sexual intercourse with a female without her consent,"¹⁹ or, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it, "the forcible violation of sexual intimacy of another person."²⁰

of sexual slavery for weeks, were allowed to survive so they could "die of sadness."¹⁶ Although exact figures will never be known, testimonies from survivors confirm that rape was extremely widespread. "Rape was a strategy," said Bernadette Muhimakazi, a Rwandan women's rights activist. The *genocidaires* "chose to rape. There were no mistakes. During the genocide, everything was organized."¹⁷

Until fairly recently, rape was lost in the barbarous mass of overall war crimes and crimes against humanity, even though the crime of rape has long existed under customary international law. Although the Hague Conventions, World War II prosecutions, and the Geneva Conventions all reinforced the prohibitions on rape and other sexual violence, no one knew whether rape in time of conflict could be prosecuted as a separate substantive crime standing on its

In all fairness, it must be said that during both these conflicts, the Roman Catholic Church was "out front" in its general condemnations of violence, war, and ethnic cleansing. Referring to the terrible conflict raging in the Balkans, Cardinal Bernard Law in America,²¹ Cardinal Kuharic in Zagreb,²² Archbishop Martino at the United Nations,²³ and Pope John Paul II himself²⁴ spoke out against the human misery in former Yugoslavia. It was, said the pope, "an absurd and cruel war," driven by the "glaring anachronism" of intolerant nationalism,²⁵ and the warring parties must find a way to stop it, to once again live together in fraternity and peace. In a joint statement with the Serbian Orthodox patriarch of Belgrade, Cardinal Kuharic said, "We especially express our horror at the perpetration of extremely immoral misdeeds, at the mistreatment of older and younger women and girls, which only monsters can perpetrate, no matter what name they give themselves."²⁶ Their statement is the only one I have read condemning sexual violence, but even in it, there seems an inability on the part of these church leaders to use the word "rape" and to clearly and unequivocally condemn it and the men who use it as part of their arsenal of war.

As for the women in former Yugoslavia who were raped, impregnated, denied medical attention, or access to abortions, who were compelled to give birth to "unwanted" children conceived in violence and nourished by hate, who were infected

with HIV/AIDS, or whose pregnancies—wanted or unwanted—were terminated as the result of savage beatings, what did the bishops and archbishops, the cardinals or the pope have to say to them? More importantly, what did the pope and his cardinals, archbishops and bishops have to say to the men in former Yugoslavia—or, Rwanda, for that matter—who committed these violent, degrading acts?

Pope John Paul II's message to these thousands of violated women—Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim—seems clear: Accept your situation . . . The pope's emphasis in this letter to Archbishop Puljic is on the life of the unborn child, not on the person of the forcibly impregnated woman, and certainly not on the rapist.

In late winter 1993, the Holy See released the text of a February 2, 1993 letter signed by Pope John Paul II to Archbishop Vinko Puljic of Sarajevo.²⁷ In it, the pope encouraged efforts at reconciliation, beginning with the family. He encouraged the Church to care for the victims of the reported widespread rape of women and girls and the innocent children conceived by these women and girls. He refers to "the situation of the mothers, wives and young women who have been subjected to violence because of an outburst of racial hatred or brutal lust." The pope wrote that,

. . . Pastors and all the faithful responsible for the family apostolate [should] sense an urgency in looking after the situation of the mothers, wives, young women who have been subjected to violence because of an outburst of racial hatred or brutal lust . . . Even in such a tragic situation [these women and girls] must be helped to distinguish between the act of deplorable violence which they have suffered from men who have lost all reason and conscience, and the reality of the

new beings who have been given life . . . In every case it should be emphasized most clearly that since the unborn child is in no way responsible for the disgraceful acts accomplished, he or she is *innocent* and therefore cannot be treated as the *aggressor*.

Pope John Paul II's message to these thousands of violated women—Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim—seems clear: Accept your situation. Bear the "innocent" child growing in your womb, as unwanted as that child may be. The pope's emphasis in this letter to Archbishop Puljic is on the life of the unborn child, not on the person of the forcibly impregnated woman, and cer-

tainly not on the rapist. The message to these women seems clear: Make the best of a bad situation, but whatever you do, remember the unborn child is innocent.

As for those men "who [had] lost all reason and conscience" and who were responsible for "the act[s] of deplorable violence," what message were they given? What did they hear? Be-

Official Church Response to Racism and Rape in Rwanda

What about in Rwanda? What was the Church's message, mediated through the bishops and archbishops, the cardinals and the pope himself, to the men and women of Rwanda during and after the 1994 genocide? Again, to be fair, the pope was loud and clear in his condemna-

to plead for an end to the violence and bloodshed, to the massacres and genocide.³⁰

All of this was admirable, particularly in light of the USA's, European Union's (EU), and UN's refusal to call what was happening in Rwanda during those horrific one hundred days "genocide." But, what did Pope John Paul II and the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church have to say to the thousands of women in Rwanda—the most "Catholic" of all countries in Africa—who were the victims of sexual violence and mass rape, who were pregnant with the babies of *genocidaires* who had raped them, or who were infected with the AIDs virus by these men, who like their counterparts in former Yugoslavia, had "lost all reason and conscience"? What did the Church have to say to the men in Rwanda who had raped and sexually mutilated these women? What did they say about rape itself, which according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is "always an intrinsically evil act"?³¹

Nowhere have I found a statement—verbal or written—made by Pope John Paul II, the cardinals, archbishops, or bishops of the Roman Catholic Church condemning mass rape during the racial genocide in Rwanda. I have found statements condemning conflict and mass murder, which I applaud, but I have not found statements, or a statement, condemning mass rape, forced impregnation, the infecting of women and girls with the AIDS virus, or the use of rape as a weapon of war or genocide. Nothing. I am not saying

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yond a general condemnation of violence and conflict—as necessary and important as that is, and was—nothing was said to these men. There were no strong words of admonition directed to men, whether Serb, Croat, or Bosnian, no words of outrage directed at men who used their sexual organs to inflict humiliation, death, and un-wanted pregnancy on women in the Balkans. Despite the fact that scores of thousands of women on all sides were raped, no message of condemnation was delivered to those criminals who demeaned, degraded, dehumanized, and delivered death to women caught in the maw of genocidal violence in former Yugoslavia. When it came to rape, the only message was that the unborn child was innocent.

tion of the conflict there. As early as April 10, 1994, four days after President Habyarimaria's plane was shot down and the genocide began, John Paul II spoke out: "I raise my voice to tell all of you [Hutu and Tutsi]: stop these acts of violence! Stop these tragedies! Stop the fratricidal massacres!"²⁸ A few weeks later, April 27, 1994, the pope deplored the "acts of cruelty and revenge, murder, the shedding of innocent blood, horror, and death everywhere."²⁹ On the 15th of May 1994, he loudly, clearly, and again publicly, said what was happening in Rwanda was "an out-and-out genocide . . . Enough bloodshed!" he said. And a few weeks later, at the end of June 1994, Pope John Paul II sent Cardinal Roger Etchegaray as his personal envoy to Rwanda

Why is it that these men of the Church can encourage women to bear the consequences of such horrific violation of their person, but cannot voice their condemnation of the violators?

such statements do not exist, only that I have not found them. They are not obvious to those who pay attention to official church statements.

I have found statements by churchmen condemning the use of "morning after pills" and abortion. I have found statements encouraging women who have been sexually violated as part of a deliberate, planned ethnic cleansing strategy to "transform the act of violence into an act of love and acceptance." But statements—or a statement—addressing, much less condemning, in clear, non-abstract, understandable language, mass rape as a weapon of war or genocide in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the 1990s—and dare I say, Kosovo, Congo, Sierra Leone, Darfur, anywhere in Africa or in the world—not a word. Why? Why is it that these men of the Church can encourage women to bear the consequences of such horrific violation of their person, but cannot voice their condemnation of the violators?

Expectation and Hope

What do I, as a woman, as a Roman Catholic Christian expect from Christ's Vicar on Earth,

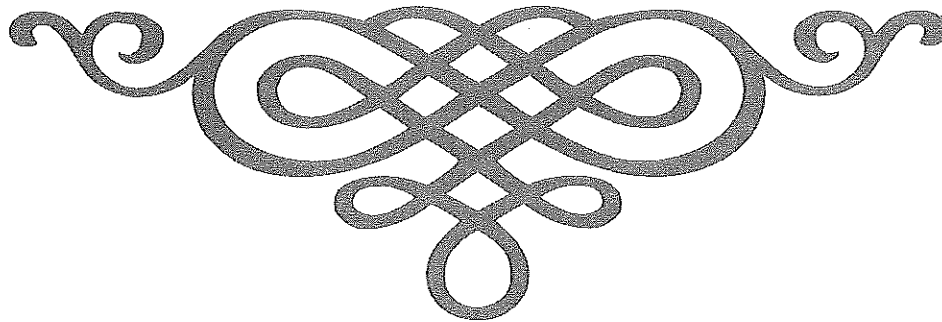
from his cardinals, archbishops, and bishops? To paraphrase Albert Camus, I expect, I wait for a voice from Rome to speak up, to condemn the evil of rape as a weapon of war and genocide, to condemn the men who use rape as an evil instrument and policy to achieve a political and strategic end. I wait for a voice from Rome to express compassion and understanding for these women and the agonizing dilemmas they face. I await, expect, hope for words of understanding, sympathy, empathy from the men of the Church to these violated women of the Church and our world who have been raped, impregnated, infected with HIV/AIDS, to these women who are dying or who have died as the result of genocidal rape. Thus far, however, the only words I hear are Albert Camus' words, spoken in 1948 to those monks at the Dominican Monastery of Latour-Maubourg in France, and I find that very troubling indeed.



Notes

- 1 Albert Camus, *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*. Trans. By Justin O'Brien. (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), 71.
- 2 World Revolution. *Overview of Global Issues: Peace, War, and Conflict* at <http://www.worldrevolution.org/projects/globalissueoverview/overview2/PeaceNew.htm>.
- 3 Save the Children. *War Against Women and Children Report*, page 9 at <http://www.savethechildren.org/publications/Intro.pdf>. *State of the World's Mothers 2003*.
- 4 Graça Machel, *The Impact of War on Children* (London: Hurst & Company, 2001), 1.
- 5 See further the BBC/PBS made for television series, *The Great War*, especially the segment, "Total War."
- 6 I can't remember where I first saw this metaphor used, but I think it may have been in the UNIFEM report.
- 7 Machel, *The Impact of War on Children*, 1.
- 8 Alexandra Stiglmayer, "The Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina" in *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, ed. by Alexandra Stiglmayer (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 85.
- 9 Brenda Fitzpatrick, ed., *Rape and Women in War* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1992), 11.
- 10 M. Cherif Bassiouni and Marcia McCormick make a distinction among *rape* ("vaginal, oral, or anal sexual intercourse without the consent of one of the people involved"), *sexual assault* ("a broader term which includes rape and other forced or coerced sexual acts, as well as mutilation of the genitals"), and *sexual violence* ("the most general term, used to describe any kind of violence carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality") in *Sexual Violence: An Invisible Weapon of War in Former Yugoslavia* (1996), 3.

- 11 As quoted in IRIN Web Special, *Our Bodies—Their Battle Ground: Gender-based Violence in Conflict Zones*. <http://www.irinnews.org/webspecials/GBV/print/p-fearap.asp>. See further, page 1.
- 12 Stiglmeier, "The Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina" in *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 84.
- 13 Henry R. Huttenbach, "Mass Rape and Gendercide: Gender Victimization as Aspects of Genocide in Bosnia," *The Genocide Forum*, 9 (May 1996): 5.
- 14 Stiglmeier, ed., *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, xi-xii.
- 15 Roy Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide: The First Inside Account of the Horrors of "Ethnic Cleansing" in Bosnia* (Rockport, MA: Element, 1993), 69.
- 16 *Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1996), 1.
- 17 Ibid, 41. *Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence During the Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath*, a Human Rights Watch report, provides grisly reading for those who can bear it.
- 18 David Sheffer, "Rape as a War Crime," 2–3. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/6518.doc>.
- 19 Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 81.
- 20 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Dubuque, IA: Brown-ROA, 1996), § 2356: 566.
- 21 *Origins*, 1992: 366.
- 22 Ibid: 366–367.
- 23 Archbishop Renato Martino, "The Plague of Ethnic Cleansing," *Origins* (1992): 367–368.
- 24 See further, "Crisis in Yugoslavia—Position and Action of the Holy See (1991–1992)."
- 25 Quoted in *Origins*, 1992: 366.
- 26 *Origins*, 1992: 367.
- 27 Pope John Paul II, 2 February 1993. The text of the letter in English is on the website of Priests for Life.
- 28 Pope John Paul II, Rome, 10 April 1994, as quoted in Carol Rittner, et al, eds. *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2004), 24.
- 29 Ibid, 77.
- 30 Ibid, 128.
- 31 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2356: 566.



Racial Discrimination

Perspectives of Canon and Civil Law

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M. and Victoria Vondenberger, R.S.M.

Racial discrimination and interracial hostility have been challenges to Christianity from its earliest days.

Racism has been a problem among Christians from the early days of the Church despite Jesus teaching his followers to love all people as themselves, a value echoed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (§ 1702) which proclaims that the divine image is present in every human person.

Luke describes the early community in Jerusalem as a model of unity, having "one heart and soul" and sharing all things in common" (Acts 4:32). Nevertheless, this same community had to face its less-than-ideal racial and ethnic divisions. Even at a time when the community was increasing and flourishing, "the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food" (Acts 6:1). The reason for one vulnerable group of widows not getting the same share of food as another group of widows was not their gender, but their ethnic identity, and the fact that they spoke Greek as their mother-tongue. The Christian minority in these early days were Greek-speaking Jews whose families came from the Diaspora, or lands outside Israel, and non-Jewish, Greek-speaking converts. The majority were natives of the land of Israel, "the Hebrews" whose mother tongue was a form of Aramaic, the same language spoken by Jesus of Nazareth and his first disciples. According to Luke, the unequal access to community resources was regarded as a serious problem by the twelve who belonged to the Hebrew, Aramaic-speaking majority.

The problem did not end in the early days of the Church of Jesus. On 5 February 2004, Pope John Paul II addressed a delegation of the American Jewish Committee in Rome about the Vatican II

document, Nostra Aetate, "As we now approach the fortieth anniversary of this historic document, there is regrettably a great need to repeat our utter condemnation of racism and anti-Semitism."

Evidence of discrimination, reported by minority women, triggered a reorganization of the governance structure of the entire community. In days when women could not represent themselves, "seven men of good standing," themselves members of the minority ethnic and linguistic group, were chosen to represent the Greek-speaking widows and insure that the minority would not be deprived of the resources available to the majority.

In its first compilation in 1917, the Code of Canon Law presumed a basic respect for all peoples clearly stated in other documents of the Church so individual rights were not listed. The 1983 Code introduced something new in Church law: a list of the rights/responsibilities of the People of God. The Latin word is "ius" which means both "right" and "responsibility," "privilege" and "duty." Members of the Church have always enjoyed natural rights/responsibilities from divine law, but now those are stated specifically in the Code of Canon Law so there can be no mistake that such rights/responsibilities belong to every human being. Canon 221 even says the Christian faithful have the right to vindicate and defend their rights. To be a loyal member of the Church, one must claim and exercise these rights not only for oneself but also for every human being.

Writing within fifteen or twenty years of the death of Jesus, Paul exhorts recently baptized Galatians to envision their relations with other Christians, not on the basis of ethnic, sexual, or class differences, but on the basis of family unity in Christ. "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no

longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:27-29).

The Code specifically mentions the right/responsibility of all people to be free and not coerced about choosing a state in life (canon 119), to be protected from harm to their reputations, and to protect individual privacy (canon 220; 208-231 list more rights/responsibilities). The only limitation on the rights of individuals presented in the Code is consideration of the common good (canon 223). As Sisters of Mercy, as women religious in the Church, we must do all we can to ensure respect for the human rights even for those we find it hard to accept or include among us.

We do not know whether in later years the mostly-Gentile Galatians found a sense of unity sufficient to overcome their internal tensions and discriminatory treatment of minorities within their midst. From the list in this short passage, we would say that the community was divided by differences of race, national origin, socioeconomic class, and religious background. This letter from Paul, however, was cherished, recopied and sent to other churches, even though it did not present the Galatians in the best light.

We Sisters of Mercy also have documents that do not put us in the best light. Racism is part of our history. Those present for the "Ritual on the History of Racism in Community" during the Chapter in Laredo (and those who read the text later) heard this clearly. Did not tears form in our hearts and souls as we owned our corporate prejudice in the past against a young Creole woman who may have had a vocation but was not welcome among us in 1929? My heart ached particularly that, in 1946, the year I was born, a priest wrote to ask one of our Provincials: "Is the order Catholic enough to accept colored vocations?" and the response was, "We do not accept colored applicants . . . some of the postulants . . . are dark-skinned but they are not mulattoes." In 1950, a Chinese postulant was not welcome. Can we allow ourselves to be drawn to deep conversion today because we painfully acknowledge

that racism is part of our history as Sisters of Mercy? Who are the Creole, the Mulatto and the Chinese for us today? Whom do we need to embrace and accept among us before we as can honestly sing "All Are Welcome in Mercy"?

The irony is that Christian communities who read the letter to the Galatians through subsequent centuries did not feel a mandate to translate their spiritual values of affirming unity through baptism into actual freedom of the enslaved from their slavery. Despite their faith, Christians' racial discrimination against different ethnic groups in their midst remained intact. Even President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1865 in the U.S. could not overcome racial animus of whites against blacks. Nor could passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution in 1865, 1868 and 1870 respectively, overcome racial discrimination against blacks, Chinese and other residents of color. One hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 still had to be implemented by federal courts sending in the National Guard to enforce desegregation, and hold back angry crowds as black children walked up steps to enter school classrooms that had been racially segregated for decades. Racial discrimination is not extinguished by the sacrament of baptism.

In the midst of re-imagining and reconfiguration we are asked to root ourselves in our basic document, the Constitutions. We call ourselves to (3) "respond to the cry of the poor" to "seek to relieve misery and address its causes, and to support all persons who struggle for full dignity." This is particular law for us. According to Canon Law, we are obligated to live out this rule for our lives while our supreme rule must be the following of Christ (canon 662 and echoed so many times in various quotes from Catherine's letters and her retreat notes).

Nor is racial animus, running deep in the human psyche, completely reformed by public law. As Earl Ofair Hutchinson remarked in *New American Media* April 24, 2006: "The mountain of federal and state antidiscrimination laws, affirmative action programs and successful employment discrimination lawsuits give the public the impression that

job discrimination is a relic of a shameful, racist past. But that isn't the case."

Pope John Paul II said that working against racism was still a crucial need for all peoples more than 2000 years after Jesus called the first disciples. In his 18 May 2001 address to the new ambassador of the Republic of South Africa to the Holy See, the Holy Father proclaimed, "At the dawn of the new millennium, therefore, the entire family of nations does well to affirm its commitment to recognize, uphold, and promote the fundamental dignity and inalienable rights of every human being."

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the government agency that enforces federal laws against racial discrimination in housing, employment, education, banking, jury service, and many other fields, must continuously refine its explanation of what racial discrimination means. This is because gross forms of racial discrimination continue to be suffered by persons of minority ethnic groups, and the forms also grow more pervasive and subtle.

Bishop Wilton Gregory as president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops addressed the 34th Annual Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Conference on 10 Sept. 2004: "As a matter of faith, the Catholic Church is concerned for the good of every human person and teaches that every person's dignity is God given and inalienable. Sadly, I can tell you from personal experience that not every Catholic lives up to our teaching on the dignity of each person. This is one of the great challenges that we bishops face on a daily basis when our own people—or even ourselves—contradict or do not live up to what we profess, thus causing confusion and cynicism about the faith that should be a mark of our character in everything we do."

In the most recent edition of the EEOC's Compliance Manual in 2-11 Cognizable Claims, race and color are distinguished as separate bases on which a person can bring legal action against an employer. These include adverse action based on physical characteristics associated with a particular race, such as the facial features and height of an Asian person. It includes the shade of skin color, whether a dark or light skinned African-American, for example. This race-color category also protects persons against discrimination because they are associated with another individual of a particular race or color, for example, a white employee married to a Native American or a woman who has a mixed-race child.

John Paul II reflected on modern times in his Sunday address on 25 August 2001: "In the last decades, characterized by the phenomenon of globalization and marked by the worrying resurgence of aggressive nationalism, ethnic violence, and widespread phenomena of racial discrimination, human dignity has often been seriously threatened."

The Holy Father goes on to say, "To oppose racism we must practice the culture of reciprocal acceptance, recognizing in every man and woman a brother or sister with whom we walk in solidarity and peace." Does this not echo the invitation from Deirdre Mullan at the Institute Chapter (The MAST Journal, vol 15, no. 3, 2005, page 3) for us to move in a Visitation response? We are called to be women open to different ways of thinking, speaking, and acting as Catherine was. Can we let go of our prejudices and fears so we are able to move into the "silent space" where "women's voices" dance together "weaving the will of God" for our time? May we move beyond racism into solidarity with those whom the gospel of Jesus and the model of Catherine call us to embrace.



Our Shadow in Historical Perspective

Sophie McGrath, R.S.M.

Introduction

During the morning tea break at the May 1998 congregational meeting, our congregational leader (Parramatta), Marie Gaudry, acting on a sudden impulse, asked me if I would prepare a background paper on our congregational shadow from an historical perspective. Impulsively, I agreed. It was apparent that, as a group, we considered that we had not faced our shadow and that it was important for our future growth that we do so. Acquiring a historical perspective on anything helps us to see it more clearly and make more sense of the present situation. It can be a freeing experience. Accordingly, writing this paper seemed a good idea at the time. Neither of us anticipated that it would develop into such a lengthy essay.

As we are aware, for a shadow to be produced there needs to be a light source and an object. The shadow is caused by the object obstructing the light. When the light is directly overhead of the object illuminating it equally on

all sides there is no shadow. We are conscious that as a congregation we are individually and collectively in the way of the light of divine grace. As we suffer the consequence personally and collectively our work of service to one another, the wider Church, and the world is less effective.

It is a recognized psychological insight that one's basic strengths or virtues can become distorted into weaknesses or vices. Edmund Fuller commenting on C.S. Lewis' *Space Trilogy* wrote that Christianity does not know evil as a separate entity, but understands evil as the corruption of an original good, susceptible of a possible redemption. It is this corruption which is sin. As a group we are concerned with our corporate sins.

As we are aware, sin in the Greek of the Gospels means "missing the mark"—an expression borrowed from archery to indicate the person's deviation from her true function and purpose. We are specifically concerned with missing our mark as a congregation, which is a result of our indi-

vidual sinfulness and the perversion of our basic strengths.

To see our present congregational shadow in historical perspective we need to view it in relation to the shadows of the original foundation community in Baggot St, the foundation community in Parramatta up to the 1950s and the post-Vatican II Parramatta congregation. Understanding that shadows tend to be the perversions of basic strengths, it is proposed to consider the strength of each era before considering its shadow in order to help us see the relationship between the two. I propose to call our strengths—those positive elements that have enabled the congregation to survive each era—our "bonding."

Sources

In seeking information concerning the bonding and shadow of the foundation community in Baggot St., I thought it helpful to turn to the early manuscripts concerning the life of this community. One of our Mercy scholars, Mary Sullivan of the Rochester, N.Y. congregation has recently provided us with a very valuable book entitled *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy*. (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 1995, hereafter S.) In this book, among other things, she gives us copies of most

It is a recognized psychological insight that one's basic strengths or virtues can become distorted into weaknesses or vices.

of the original manuscripts on Catherine McAuley and the early days of the Sisters of Mercy along with an informed analysis of the manuscripts and biographical information about the authors.

Of the various manuscripts, I have drawn mainly from that of Sr. Mary Clare Augustine Moore. It is a particularly helpful source for the shadow of the early days. Although Mary Clare Augustine had a great appreciation of Catherine, she was not uncritical and had the ability to record with surprising objectivity.

Clare Augustine had the eye of a fine artist and it was she who gave us the detailed description of Catherine in her prime in 1829 when she "looked at least ten years younger." Clare Augustine also noted, "Catherine broke down soon after, for when I saw her again in about six months I scarcely knew her" (S 193). Although Clare Augustine became a very committed member of the fledgling community at Baggot St., Catherine found her rather difficult, as will be seen.

Augustine Moore saw Catherine for the last time approximately four months before the latter's death in 1841. She explains:

On the morning of SS. Peter and Paul that year (1841) I saw our foundress for the last time being sent to Cork to open a day school for the wealthier class. I had no idea that her death was so near. True she was greatly broken in health, but she concealed half her illness, in fact never complained of any (S 215).

Clare Augustine Moore had a strong constitution. She outlived Catherine and her own Sister

Georgina (Mary Clare in religion), dying in Baggot St. in 1880. It is recorded that by 1854, her artistic talent was so well known that when the Irish bishops wished to send a memorial of congratulations to Pius IX, celebrating his declaration of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Clare Augustine was asked to illuminate the address in Gaelic (S 195).

In relation to the recent suffering of the Irish Sisters of Mercy in connection with their Goldenbridge orphanage it is interesting to note that, in 1856, Clare Augustine began teaching in the school associated with the Goldenbridge Refuge. This was an institution operated by the Dublin Sisters of Mercy for women prisoners about to be discharged from prison. The Refuge provided supportive housing during the final stage of their sentences and instruction and guidance that enabled them to secure work upon their release or to return to their families. In 1870, she became the supervisor of the Refuge (S 195).

Whatever the tensions between Catherine and Clare Augustine, within three years of the death of the former, the latter was encouraging other foundation members of the Dublin congregation to write their memoirs of Catherine. She used these along with her own experiences and oral history gathered from relevant clergy and lay people to produce "A Memoir of the Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland."

Sullivan comments:

Clare Augustine's "Memoir of the Foundress" is a marvelously

lively narrative, filled with stories, observations and insights that appear in no other early document. In certain respects it is the most independent and the least mannered of the early biographical accounts, using direct and sometimes even colloquial language, and informed throughout by Clare Moore's obvious effort to be objective about Catherine, despite her evident admiration and affection for "Foundress" as she so often names her (S 196).

My sources for the bonding and shadow of the foundation community of the Parramatta up to the 1950s and from after Vatican II to the 1980s are the background papers to *These Women*. Apart from an introductory paper on the roots and historical context of the initial Parramatta foundation, these papers covered the areas of spirituality, lifestyle, government, educational ministry, social welfare ministries and diversification of ministries. They contain more detail than was able to be included in the final book.

The bonding and shadow of now that I present is substantially that which we, as a congregation, provided at the recent congregational meeting.

Because Catherine McAuley has always been naturally the focus of attention, we often fail to realize that she could have accomplished nothing without the cooperation of her early associates, each of whom was a specially graced person. It is good for us to realize this because it puts us more in touch with the reality of the past and our own reality.

In the following, there will be much that will be familiar to most of us, but, hopefully, brought to-

gether in such a way as to help us understand our present situation with greater insight.

The Dublin Foundation Community

Against all apparent odds, the Sisters of Mercy foundation community of Baggot St. survived. A variety of elements contributed to form the bonding responsible for this. The following such bonding elements are presented not necessarily in order of importance.

It is significant to note that while Catherine was adapting the Presentation Rule she accepted the chapter "Of Humility" practically unaltered.

Mutual Affection

Throughout the various early manuscripts there is the antiphon:

"She (Catherine) had a really tender affection for us" (S 209).

The network of affection among the Sisters is evident in one of a series of notes from Vincent Whitty's letter to Cecelia Marmion during Catherine's last days:

Mother Elizabeth (Moore) here—her Bishop allowed her to remain a little time longer when he heard Revd Mother was so bad—how good God is—I do not know what Mother de Pazzi would do but for her. I wish you would soon write to Mother de P., it would console her (S 244).

Union and Charity

It was in response to an insistent request of Elizabeth Moore to provide the local Limerick curate with material for the annual charity sermon for the Sisters that Catherine wrote her brief history of the foundation of the institute. It is in this brief document that she stated:

One thing only is remarkable that no breach of charity ever occurred amongst us. The sun never, I believe, went down on our anger. This is our only boast—otherwise we have been deficient enough—and far, very far, from cooperating

generously with God in our regard, but we will try to do better—all of us—the black heads (professed sisters) will try to repair the past (S 252).

Vincent Whitty (later the leader of the Brisbane foundation) recorded in her letter to Sr. Cecelia Marmion concerning the dying of Catherine:

10 o'clock—The Sisters of Bootertown and Kingstown are here—each get their blessing, after which I asked her to bless the Mothers with their foundations. She went over every name—saying, oh, I remember them all—May God bless them—May the Holy Ghost pour out His choicest blessings—Make them truly good Religious—May they live in Union and Charity . . ." (S 242).

M. M. Elizabeth Moore, who was also at Catherine's death, related in her letter to Mary Ann Doyle: ". . . her first and last injunction to all was to preserve union and peace amongst each other—that if they did they would enjoy great happiness such as they would wonder where it came from . . ." (S 256).

Human Touch

Catherine endeavored to maintain a human touch in her dealings within the community. Among other details, Vincent Whitty told Cecelia Marmion in one of her hurried letters during Catherine's last illness: "She told Sr Teresa, now fearing that I might forget it again—will you tell the Sisters to get a good cup of tea—I think the community room would be a good place—when I am gone and to comfort one another—but God will comfort them" (S 243).

It is significant to note that while Catherine was adapting the Presentation Rule she accepted the chapter "Of Humility" practically unaltered. However, she inserted "and affection" after "respect" and changed "mutual honour and respect" to "tender concern and regard." There was a humanizing warmth in her approach (S 264).

Positive Outlook

Catherine fostered a positive outlook among her associates. Clare Augustine observed: ". . . the foundress . . . was always inclined to look on the sunny side of things and show it to others . . ." (S 201).

Informality

While insisting on courtesy at all times, Catherine adopted an informal manner with the foundation community. Clare Augustine explained:

On the 12th December 1831 the foundress and her companions were professed and immediately after the ceremony returned to Baggot St. On the following day Dr Murray came and appointed her Superior. For a long time she would not be called Revd Mother but only Mother Catherine. Even to the last she would not allow the least ceremony to be used towards her. If a sister spoke to her on affairs of conscience, she drew a chair beside her Revd Mother and talked on. At recreation she moved about the room but the sisters were not to stand up or she went off . . . At the first recreation the business of the convent was talked of as freely as if it were a Chapter of Discreets. She was with us precisely as my own mother was with her family, or rather we used less ceremony than was used at home (S 205-6).

Clare Augustine also commented: "She was no longer young, her habits were formed among Protestants, she did not like ceremony, and some of the ceremonies used in the Convents, as kneeling to the Superiors were particularly distasteful" (S 204).

Trust of the Sisters—Avoidance of Overregulation

Allied with this lack of formality was Catherine's trust of the Sisters and avoidance of overregulation. The Bermondsey analyst noted:

She (Catherine) was very careful not to give many positive

directions about any duty, or, as she used to call it, to make too many laws for it, giving her reason for it to a Sister who over zealously requested her to desire the community not to do some little thing out of order but not against the Rule. "It is better not," she answered mildly: "be careful never to make too many laws, for if you draw the string too tight it will break" (S 258).

In the Presentation chapter "Of the Vow of Obedience," Catherine made many changes, a number of them involving a greater modesty about the role of the mother superior and greater deference toward the good judgment of the Sisters (S 265).

She was no longer young, her habits were formed among Protestants, she did not like ceremony, and some of the ceremonies used in the Convents, as kneeling to the Superiors were particularly distasteful

In relation to the Presentation chapter "On the Vow of Chastity," Catherine omitted a paragraph that included such injunctions as: "When spoken to by men of any state or profession they shall observe and maintain the most guarded reserve, never fix their eyes on them, nor show themselves, in conversation or otherwise, in the least degree familiar with them, how devout or religious soever they may appear to be" (S 265).

Sullivan draws an interesting comparison between Benedict's adaptation of an earlier rule of a writer known as "the Master" to produce his famous Benedictine

Rule and Catherine's adaptation of the Presentation Rule to produce the Rule and Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy.

Sullivan quotes the medieval historian Southern concerning Benedict's adaptation:

A comparison of the two documents leaves an unexpected impression on the reader's mind. Benedict, the most influential guide to the spiritual life in western history, appears as an uncomplicated and self-effacing man who was content to take nearly all his doctrine from the Rule of his predecessor. Yet with a few changes, omissions and additions he changed the whole character of his source.

Sullivan continues:

Similarly, Catherine produced a Rule and Constitution for the Sisters of Mercy which, while it is dependent in no small measure on the structure, concepts and wording of the Presentation Rule and Constitutions, has nevertheless a noticeably different character from its source. It is, I believe, more tender, in its expression, more humbly stated, and more confident in the good judgment of those who observe the Rule. In this Catherine no doubt benefited from the forty years which intervened between the writing of the two Rules, from her own considerable experience and maturity at the time of composition, and from her

already well-founded respect and affection for her co-workers. But also significant is the fact that Catherine was a woman, whereas the author of the Presentation Rule was a man (S 286).

As Sullivan explains Honora (Nano) Nagle had died and her friend and guide Rev. Laurence Callanan was requested by the bishop of Cork to work on a rule for the Presentation Sisters. It was a task that took him nine years. He drew heavily on the Augustinian tradition and the teachings of St Francis de Sales (S 286).

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from them.**

Decentralized Form of Government

The development of the various elements of bonding indicated above was facilitated by the form of government that Catherine chose. As we know, she chose the old monastic form of government involving relatively small autonomous groups. Providentially, this was accepted by Rome at a time when centralized government was coming to be preferred for the new women's religious groups spanning several dioceses. The old decentralized type of government meant that the Sisters were able to get to know one another more easily than in the scattered generalate situation. Importantly, too, the Reverend Mother was

able to get around on visitation more often, helping to form a bond of unity among the Sisters more readily than in a large generalate-governed group.

Serving God in the Poor and Not Expecting Thanks—Patience and Humility

Catherine protected her early associates from the discouragement of ingratitude by making it clear to them that they served God in the poor and were not to expect gratitude from them. Clare Augustine recorded an in-

cident that highlighted this realistic gospel-centered attitude:

One evening soon after I was received I happened to sit next her (Catherine) at first recreation and said something about the general appreciation of the Institute. She turned round to me and said very emphatically, "Do not be too sure of that. It is not every one, even of those who are benefited, that feels thankful. If you work with that expectation you will often be disappointed" (S 210).

Catherine then recalled the occasion when one of the Sisters was dying and she asked the women in the House of Mercy, who were recreating loudly in the yard, to tone down because of the situation. She said she heard one of

the women say: "Humph, indeed, what a fuss she makes! I thought the house was built for us and not for them" (S 210).

This incident told by Catherine was connected by Clare Augustine to an event associated with the debt unjustly put on Catherine for the work done on the school at Kingstown:

Now this anecdote occurred forcibly to me when in 1840 I had the charge of the House at Kingstown for a couple of months. A truly pious, charitable lady called to make arrangement which regarded the charity, but in the course of our conversation she said, "You see after all, your clever Mrs. McAuley had to pay that 400 pounds." She never reflected that every talent and every penny that our foundress possessed had been devoted to the poor. But she endured ingratitude and even insolence so sweetly that those who behaved ill towards her never felt they were doing wrong (S 210).

Such a stance clearly indicates humility and patience in action. Clare Augustine noted: "Poor Revd Mother's patience and humility seemed to increase with her trials" (S 214).

Big Minded, Outwardly Directed

Contributing to Catherine's capacity to deal with insult, calumny, and detraction was her big-minded stance that directed her outwardly to see the big picture.

Mary Sullivan pointed out that when Catherine wrote to her beloved friend, Frances Warde, in the summer of 1841, she contrasted their approach to things with that of Mary Clare Agnew, the superior of Bermondsey, who was critical of current practices in

the congregation. Catherine commented: "She wrote to me in the greatest alarm about a most trifling matter. If you and I were to write on such subjects we would never be done." Sullivan adds: "This observation is an important clue to the large mindedness of both Catherine and Frances. Their capacity to focus on the truly important, outward-directed tasks of the Sisters of Mercy was at the heart of their greatness and explains the natural basis of their affection for one another" (S 219–20).

Conserving the Essentials of the Congregation

From the beginning, Catherine faced the challenging task of identifying the essentials of community life and insisting on maintaining them—conserving in the best sense of the word.

Sister M. Teresa White was the foundation superior of Galway and Clare Augustine said of her:

(She was), I think, her favourite of all the Sisters. She (Catherine) said to me once: "Of all the sisters Sr M. Teresa has most of my spirit and I trust more to her guiding the Institute as I wish than to any other Sister." She disliked the spirit of change which possessed some of the Sisters under pretence of seeking greater perfection, saying that if they adopted the practices of other orders it was making out that ours was not requisite in the Church (S 212).

Lack of Legal Rigidity—Flexibility and Adaptability

Catherine was not rigid in the application of the Rule as Clare

One of the most useful things Catherine taught Elizabeth was respect for local needs and preference; for as Catherine wrote from Limerick . . . "Every place has its own particular ideas and feelings which must be yielded to when possible."

Augustine records concerning her consent to send a foundation to Birr, which was in the grip of a schism, although there was insufficient support offered. We are told: "Their (the Sisters) appearance produced an almost miraculous effect. Within a year there was scarcely a vestige of the schism, and the unfortunate author of it forsaken by his faction . . . afterwards repented and made his submission to the Bishop" (S 214).

This adaptability to local circumstances was also highlighted in the establishment of the Limerick foundation, of which the founding superior was Mary Elizabeth (Anne) Moore. She was a close friend of Catherine, somewhat older than the other foundation members and the only one of them who referred to Catherine at times as Kitty (S 251).

Sullivan comments:

One of the most useful things Catherine taught Elizabeth was respect for local needs and preference; for as Catherine wrote from Limerick . . . "Every place has its own particular ideas and feelings which must be yielded to when possible." Because the Limerick poor would deal only with "real nuns," not with the "caps" (postulants), Catherine dispensed with part of the

required probationary period before reception into the community so that the first two Limerick postulants could receive the habit earlier (S 249).

That Sr. M. Elizabeth Moore understood and internalized the keeping of the spirit of the law rather than the letter is indicated by an incident related concerning the early history of the Limerick community:

After the Sisters gained access to the city and county jails in 1843, prison ministry was an important aspect of Elizabeth's work as well, and she and other Sisters often spend long hours with prisoners, including those condemned to be hanged. Courtney (a historian) tells of a rare occurrence, the execution of a woman for alleged complicity in the murder of her husband, and notes that prior to her being hanged, Elizabeth visited her every day, "even during the August retreat, a time of seclusion and silence" (S 252).

God-Centered—Providence

Vincent Whitty reported of the dying Catherine: "She said to me, if you give yourself entirely to God—all you have to serve him—every power of your mind and heart—you will have a consolation you will not know where it comes from" (S 243).

M. M. Elizabeth Moore, who had insisted on coming to Catherine's deathbed, was responsible for passing on to us Catherine's "Suscipe," which at this point in Mercy research is considered an original composition. It is a prayer that highlights trust in God's providential care (S 255).

Associated with this sense of dependence on God's providential care was devotion to Mary and the doctrine of the Communion of Saints.

Responsible Stewardship

Allied with a sense of reliance on Providence was a sense of responsible stewardship. To the end of her life, Catherine was concerned about the solvency of the community and she had trustworthy lay advisers. Clare Augustine recorded:

Next to McCavanagh, the most useful friend she had was Sister M de Pazzi's brother Mr. Bernard Delany. She always liked him very much and had great confidence in his business talents and discretion, and he fully justified it. He spared no pains to serve us, and if things are all right with us now, as I believe they are, much of it is due to his activity and liberality (S 215).

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Balance and Approachability

A very central element of bonding among the Dublin community was Catherine's balance and approachability, which she nurtured in her coworkers—especially those who assumed leadership positions. Sister M. Vincent Whitty wrote of Catherine twenty years after her death:

If you had known her, dearest Revd Mother how you would have loved and venerated her, and still be as familiar with her as with an intimate friend. I have often wished her lovely character could be *Photographed* for the admiration and instruction of posterity; it seems to me that words are slow and imperfect, in conveying all the lineaments of that gifted soul—she was so humble yet dignified, so playful and witty, yet reserved and charitable, so pious and strict, yet amiable and kind, but to me at least the climax of her attraction was that she was *always the same*, always ready to listen, to consider and to direct whenever applied to (S 240).

Catherine's balance and good sense in dealing with the shadow side of community life are enshrined in the fun poem she left behind in Limerick to encourage Mary Elizabeth Moore the founding superior:

My dearest Sister M.E.

Don't let crosses vex or tease.

*Try to meet all with peace and ease
notice the faults of every Day
but often in a playful way.*

*And when you seriously complain
let it be known to give you pain.*

*Attend to one thing at a time
you've fifteen hours from 6 to 9
be mild and sweet in all your ways.*

*Now and again bestow some praise
avoid all solemn declaration
all serious, close investigation.*

*Turn what you can into a jest
and with few words dismiss the rest
keep patience ever at your side
you'll want it for a constant guide.*

*Show fond affection every Day
and above all—Devoutly Pray
that God may bless the charge He's given
and make of you—their guide to Heaven.*

The parting advice of your ever affectionate M.C.M. (S 249).

Non-Exclusive Supporting Friendships

Non-exclusive supporting friendships were a significant help in strengthening the bonding of the first community of the Sisters of Mercy. Sullivan points out concerning the special friendship of Catherine with Elizabeth Moore:

Apparently Elizabeth saw and responded to certain needs of Catherine's heart in a way that Catherine's other close friends in the community, for example Clare Moore and Frances Warde, did not. While Catherine certainly turned to Clare and Frances for intellectual and administrative help, even after they moved from Baggot Street, and loved and trusted them deeply, Elizabeth evidently offered, and Catherine accepted, a kind of emotional support that was unique in her

relationship. This bond may have had something to do with Elizabeth being slightly older than the others and with her initiative and thoughtfulness. For example she knew that Catherine liked flowers, so she sent them to her. As Catherine wrote on July 24, 1939: "We have this moment received your sweet fruits and flowers. I seldom see any so fragrant to me. The offering of genuine affection, has everything to enhance its virtue. I am looking at them now and think the roses have some unusual shade—and such bright purple and rich yellow flowers..." (S 250).

It is also interesting to note that M. M. Elizabeth Moore wrote to Mother Mary Ann Doyle after Catherine's death and in this letter mentioned:

On Wednesday night or rather Thursday morning about 2 o'clock she called for a piece of paper and twine, tied up her boots and desired them to be put in the fire. The Sister to whom she gave them did not know what they were, but had directions to remain at the fire till all was consumed. Before she gave them to her she enquired was I out of the way, as the only one she supposed (who) would venture to open the parcel (S 255).

Friendships outside the Community

Inherent to the healthiness of the original Sisters of Mercy community was the fact that it did not function in a closed hothouse environment. Catherine had friends outside the community; especially she had supportive friendships with a number of clergymen. She modeled great respect for the clergy, but it is clear that her friends among the clergy valued

her friendship. There are numerous examples of this.

Dr. Blake, an early adviser of Catherine, was deputed later to establish the Irish College in Rome and subsequently appointed bishop of Dromore. He wrote to the Baggot St. community on receiving the news of Catherine's death:

Your letter reached me this morning just when I was going to the Altar. On seeing the black seal, I hastily opened it; my heart was instantly filled with grief, but I used it I hope, in making me offer with more

mindful of her and by our fervent supplications obtain for her, if she need it, that entire remission of every, even the smallest debt, which could retard her admission to the realms of bliss" (S 126).

No doubt Dr. Blake, as he had contact over a number of years with Catherine, was aware of her struggle to obtain a balance in her life and move towards wholeness. This struggle is evident as we consider now the shadow side of the foundation community at Baggot Street.

Inherent to the healthiness of the original Sisters of Mercy community was the fact that it did not function in a closed hothouse environment. Catherine had friends outside the community; especially she had supportive friendships with a number of clergymen.

fervour the divine sacrifice of propitiation for the happy repose of the dear departed friend whom I ever esteemed and revered and whose memory I shall ever esteem and reverence (S 126).

This is not patronizing paternalism but the response of a genuine friend. There was also a down to earth reality in Dr. Blake's friendship as he advised the Sisters:

Although your Foundress was holy and eminently holy, she was still a human being, liable to human temptation and infirmity, and obliged every day to express sincerely that halloved petition, "Forgive us our trespasses." Let us now be

Shadow Side of the Baggot St. Foundation Community

The shadow side of the early Baggot St. community was much in evidence during Catherine's absence at the Presentation novitiate at Georges Hill. Initially, this was due to the lack of a proper authority to regulate community affairs.

Lack of Proper Authority

Clare Augustine gives a candid assessment of the situation at Baggot St while Catherine was doing her novitiate at George's Hill:

Sister Marianne Delany had been left in charge of the household affairs and of the

duties of the Institute, but as to spirituals, the others were not much inclined to be guided by the junior of all, so every one mismanaged her own spiritualities in her own way. One took to fasting, another took the discipline, another slept in haircloth, while a fourth and fifth thought proper to remain up half the night in prayer . . . these freaks told on their health; all grew more or less sickly and Sr Caroline died of disease of the heart. She was a most pure and holy creature, very young and exceedingly beautiful. She was especially humble and her great delight was to be taken for a lay sister or told she was very silly. Then the lay sisters had to be dismissed after giving a deal of trouble (S 205).

wrung a reluctant consent from the foundress. But the sisters soon found this quite an unsuitable thing and at length it was with great difficulty she could get a sister to accompany her; as for anyone going *en chef* she could not hope it. Soon the fatigue and anxiety preyed on her constitution. She was dying when the foundress returned from George's Hill (S 205).

There was also the maneuverings of Catherine Byrn, which later bore bitter fruit as Mary Augustine recalled:

But poor Revd Mother was not without her troubles. Sr M. Catherine Byrn, one of her first associates, besides a strong preference for the Order of St Dominic had a most decided love and talent for maneuver-

school children. Revd Mother had not the least idea of what was going on till the Revd friend came to remove her cousin (S 208).

Significantly, Clare Augustine added:

She (Catherine) never uttered a single word of remonstrance nor made any effort to shake her purpose, though she felt it painfully, a circumstance which puzzled the good friar and perhaps disappointed his protegee. It was himself who told me a great deal of this; the rest I learned from Revd Mother herself and the child employed to watch, who was, when I came in, a lay sister (S 208).

Although Catherine tended to be naturally a balanced person, she had to struggle through trial and error to attain a balance in the new world of religious life

Manipulative Individuals

The problems resulting from a lack of authority was compounded by the activities of manipulative individuals. There was, for example, the problem associated with collecting funds as Clare Augustine explains:

The soliciting of subscriptions which had at first been carried on by notes had for some time before her (Catherine's) departure been carried on by the orphans in the house, but after she left they quite fell off, and poor Sr Anne, or as she would be called, Aloysius O'Grady, in her zeal for the service of the poor proposed that the sisters themselves should collect and

ing, with a most fertile imagination. She had during Revd Mother's novitiate made acquaintance with a rather wealthy Dominican priest to whom, after her own reception, she gave such a distorted picture of her benefactress and her position that he thought it the most meritorious action in the world to remove her to Cabra. In the meantime she carefully concealed her project which she effected by means of her office of sacristan, which enabled her to keep one of the orphans sent to assist her in cleaning the chapel watching at the visitation entrance then opening on Baggot Street, till the answers to her notes were brought her by one of the

Spirit of Discontent

Clare Augustine made another significant observation following the account of the Catherine Byrn incident:

If it were only the loss of an intriguing subject, however gifted as Miss Byrn undeniably was, it might have been accounted a gain but it made others of the Sisters uneasy concerning their vocation, so that when the year of novitiate which was all that at (that) time was required, had elapsed, two who were most unfitted for Carmelites found that they had a Carmelite vocation (S 208).

Lack of Ascetical Balance

Although Catherine tended to be naturally a balanced person, she had to struggle through trial and error to attain a balance in the new world of religious life, which the rigid Jansenist heresy had penetrated through Irish-French associations. Her striving for balance in the matter of poverty is recorded by Clare Augustine:

She was a great lover of poverty and at first thought that there never could be enough of it. In consequence she resolved that all ceremonies should be strictly private, but the first attempt showed that the plan would not answer. Six sisters—one of whom she had received while at George's Hill, with very little means, at the request of (an) aunt, one of the Presentation Nuns whom she liked most—were to be received in the sacristy and orders were given that no visitors should be admitted. But there was much ringing of bells. Friends of the sisters, friends of the Institute, everyone sure that some one had been admitted, everyone indignant, then the mob that collected around them increased the confusion. But loud above all rose the voice of the junior postulant's mother who declared she would not allow her daughter to remain in the convent where she herself was so affronted, and the aunt's death, which occurred about a week after, having a vacancy at George's Hill, she actually forced her daughter to remove thither. So many indeed were offended by their exclusion that the ceremonies ever after were more public. Still she (Catherine) insisted on the postulants being dressed very simply and white muslin was the only costume allowed in her time (S 206).

Concerning the poverty issue Clare Augustine also records:

Another department in which her poverty showed itself injuriously was the refectory. She had a fine constitution, and a superior could not be like the others always employed in the active duties such as the school or the visitation, and therefore she did not feel so soon, though she did (so eventually) the consequences of the wretched dietary; but the

The breakfast table was a trial to one's nerves: sugar of the very blackest and coarsest kind with no sugar spoon, and for that matter the juniors seldom had a little lead spoon apiece, weak tea, very little milk, plates of very stale thick bread with a very thin scraping of butter.

sisters overworked in these departments soon sank. Three were attacked by virulent scurvy, all the others ill (S 206).

After the illness of the Sisters following Catherine's initial stringent dietary regime, Clare Augustine recalled:

Revd Mother who not withstanding her love of austerities was always kind to the sick did her best to restore them. The Surgeon General, the late Sir Philip Crampton, was called in . . . having always less faith in medicine than management, inquired into their food and occupations, and at once declared that an amelioration of the diet would be the best cure and especially he ordered beer. He tried to convince her of the real unwholesomeness of the visitation, but she never could understand and always maintained that fresh air must be good, forgetting that it must be taken by us mostly in Townsend St and Bull Alley. Even when I entered the diet was most unfit for persons doing our duties (S 207).

Clare Augustine could not help adding:

The breakfast table was a trial to one's nerves: sugar of the very blackest and coarsest kind with no sugar spoon, and for that matter the juniors seldom

had a little lead spoon apiece, weak tea, very little milk, plates of very stale thick bread with a very thin scraping of butter. But Crampton also said that the silence Religious observed at meals was unwholesome and so more recreation days were appointed than she afterwards found convenient (S 207).

Clare Augustine was not at Baggot St. when Catherine was dying but she recorded from her sources:

As far as I make out she was not more than a week or ten days confined to bed. Besides the internal abscess she had a hideous ulcer on her back, brought on by the use of hair-cloth and a large chain. This she had concealed. Her brother, how I know not, became aware of it and wanted to see it, which she refused to allow, but consented to let Sister M. Teresa Carton, who slept with her in the infirmary dress it. She told me it was almost as large as the palm of her own hand, with green matter in the middle (S 215).

As is well known, Catherine wrapped up her shoes and instruments of penance and ordered them to be burnt. Clare Augustine described the situation:

Revd Mother then called her (Sister M. Teresa Carton, a lay sister of whom she entertained

a great affection) to her bedside and showing her a packet she had wrapped in the brown paper and tied up most curiously told her she was to take it to the kitchen, stir up the fire, and when it blazed strong to put the parcel in it and turning her back to it to remain till it was quite consumed, "but" she continued, "I forbid you under obedience to attempt to open this parcel or look at it while it is burning." The Sister did not stir. The idea of standing where the cockroaches would be crawling about her was not a pleasant one, but the prohibition under obedience made the matter worse. Revd. Mother then said, "Would you be afraid dear?" "Oh, Revd Mother, I would be afraid I might look." "Well call Sister M. Vincent." Sr M. Vincent Whitty was awakened, came down and received the same injunction and solemn prohibition. She hinted to me of a haircloth, but as I could not approve of a breach of trust under any circumstance, I asked her no questions. She told Fr Vincent, the Passionist, she saw a discipline" (S 216).

This was evidence of unwise excessive penitential practices that she did not recommend to her associates.

Struggle to Establish a Hierarchy of Values

There is much evidence of the shadow caused by Catherine's

struggle to establish a hierarchy of values, sort out the essential from the nonessentials and determine what was open to change and what was not. Clare Augustine recorded:

She (Catherine) was an ardent lover of poverty, yet it was with great difficulty she was induced to change the expensive gossamer veils the professed wore for woollen ones, saying that if once changes began no one would know where they would stop (S 213).

Of another occasion, Clare Augustine related:

She loved to pray before the Most Holy Sacrament and finding that in Carlow they used after the mid-day prayers one of the beautiful Effusions of Love at the end of The Soul United to Jesus, she liked them so well that she began to use them herself. After a month, however, she ceased this devotion and when I asked her why said that if she added prayers herself some very devout successor would add more and another more till, especially in poor convents, the sisters would be incapable of the duties of the Institute and we would end like the Presentation Nuns after Miss Nagle's death in being enclosed (S 213).

Destructive Spirit of Change

That Catherine's fears were not unfounded was clear from

subsequent events most especially in Bermondsey. The problems of the Bermondsey pioneer community drew comment from Clare Augustine:

The air of London was uncongenial to her (Catherine) but more so the spirit of one of the sisters [Mary Clare (Elizabeth) Agnew]. This last, who all through her life, when she was a Protestant, when a convert in secular life, when a Sister of Mercy, and when no longer so, was consistently actuated by the desire of concentrating everyone's admiration and, if possible, affection on herself, could not live without manoeuvring. She contrived to create a misunderstanding between our foundress and Mother M. Clare, which though of short duration was very painful to the former, who loved her younger sister fondly. She also contrived to make M. Cecilia Marmion discontented with our customs and bent on making changes, which was also a fret to our dear Superior (S 212).

Personality Clashes

There is ample evidence in the early reminiscences of the Baggot St. foundation community of personality clashes.

Apart from her involvement in the active works of the community, Augustine Moore, because of her artistic abilities, was employed in preparing an illuminated register of the entrance, reception, profession dates, etc. of the members of the Dublin community and later an illuminated copy of the Rule. It is as a result of correspondence concerning her artistic talents that we are aware of a personality clash between Catherine and herself. This is indicated in a letter of Catherine in

There is much evidence of the shadow caused by Catherine's struggle to establish a hierarchy of values, sort out the essential from the nonessentials and determine what was open to change and what was not.

January 1839 to Frances Warde in response to some calligraphy done in Carlow:

The invitation is very nicely done. I think the printing remarkably good. *The Judge* (Clare Augustine) thinks the etching would be exceedingly good if not so heavy, which she says gives it the appearance of a print, but I do not mind half of what she says on these scientific points, which she delights in unfolding to the fools that hearken to her. She will do anything in the Register you wish, but what is mentioned . . . She is very slow (S 194).

In early March 1941, Catherine wrote with greater exasperation concerning Clare Augustine to Frances Warde:

Sister Mary Clare Augustine Moore is a character not suited to my taste or my ability to govern, though possessing many very estimable points. She teased and perplexed me so much about the difficulty of copying the two pages, that I was really obliged to give up, unwilling to command lest it should produce disedifying consequences. She said that it would take the entire Lent. Indeed you can have no idea how little she does in a week. As to a Day's work, it is laughable to look at it. She will show me three leaves saying, "I finished these today" (S 194).

On another occasion concerning the same problem, Catherine wrote again to Frances Warde:

That one has more of her own ways yet than ours, and it is not easy to fix her to a point. She finds the duties sufficient to fill up her time and, as her constitution is strong, she is much employed in outdoor work (S194).

Catherine's Weaknesses

Although Clare Augustine Moore had a deep appreciation of Catherine she was not blind to flaws in her character. She pointed out that Catherine had her favorites and reports concerning her sister's children: "The eldest was a lovely and highly gifted child, Mary, her aunt's favorite of all her family . . ." (S199).

poverty where she tended to excessiveness, so also she was not naturally an astute business woman. Clare Augustine was conscious that Catherine tended to go for the lowest quote that inevitably brought the most shoddy and inadequate workmanship that ended up costing the community more.

Such was the case when she

Catherine was not above being deceived by a pretty face. Clare Augustine recorded: "Then there were the lay sisters in the management of whom she utterly and always failed. She had a weakness for pretty faces."

Augustine Moore was also critical of Catherine's excessive softness with children. In connection with the children of her family for whom she had assumed responsibility Augustine Moore observed: ". . . I cannot say that our dear foundress had a talent for education; she doted on children and invariably spoiled them" (S 200).

Catherine was not above being deceived by a pretty face. Clare Augustine recorded: "Then there were the lay sisters in the management of whom she utterly and always failed. She had a weakness for pretty faces . . ." (S 204).

Poor Stewardship

Just as Catherine struggled to attain balance in the matter of

invested a legacy of 1000 pounds on an industrial laundry for the House of Mercy. Clare Augustine commented: "The expense of the building greatly exceeded her calculations and the building itself was a continual worry. Neither were the returns when it was built at all equal to her expectations; in fact for long enough after her death they were miserably insignificant" (S 212).

From her other sources, Clare Augustine, without euphemism, recorded concerning Catherine's preparation for death: "She immediately began to set the affairs of the house in order, looked over her papers and destroyed a few. She was greatly harassed by pecuniary difficulties, in fact so much so that she feared the Community might be obliged to disperse" (S 215).

Avoiding Honest Confrontation

The desire to avoid confrontation and the time-honored procedure in human institutions of "promoting incompetency" would appear to be suggested by Clare Augustine in the following:

When she returned from Bermondsey she filled up all the offices of Discreets (counselors), which had not been done before. I fancy she thought Sr M. de Pazzi too austere a Mistress of Novices and named her Mother Assistant. The Sister who replaced her soon showed however, how little she had of her spirit and how much of the spirit of change (S 213).

Again this "spirit of change" seemed to be towards greater strictness since Clare Augustine gives by way of example the new Mistress of Novices interfering with a common practice on rec-

early community through human frailty and the natural inadequacies of its members:

The school at Kingstown opened directly on the street so that seculars could enter it without any Sister being aware of it, except she who taught, nor even had she been willing could she at all times communicate the entrance of a visitor to the local Superior. Unfortunately the school Sister was by vanity and selfishness most liable to err in such a position, and err she did, most injuriously for the Institute. The Superior with a multitude of virtues had no talents, and her mistakes proved almost as troublesome as the other's sins (S 214).

We could ask: Is Clare Augustine inclined to be harshly judgmental in this assessment? Is she showing a lack of compassion for human weakness?

Although, as indicated previously, there was much affection among the early Sisters, there were times when jealousy within the community was evident.

reaction days. Catherine intervened and this time confronted the person concerned. We are told: "About half an hour after, the Mistress of Novices was observed with tearful eyes and there were no more improvements while she (Catherine) lived" (S 213).

Natural Inadequacies of Members

Clare Augustine again highlighted the pain suffered in the

Jealousy among Members

Although, as indicated previously, there was much affection among the early Sisters, there were times when jealousy within the community was evident, as illustrated by Clare Augustine:

A Sister whom I know she (Catherine) loved and trusted more than others was afflicted with severe disease which injured her mental much more than her bodily powers, so that she became inconceivably melancholy and captious. Revd

Mother was too large-minded herself to understand a groundless jealousy, indeed any jealousy at all, tried in vain to find out what was the trouble. At last one morning I was drawing at Lecture . . . and not finding it convenient to rise the moment it was concluded, was left the last. Revd Mother, who knew this Sister often spoke to me said: "Sister M. Clare, what ails Sr N-?" Now it would not have answered at all to tell her Sr N-'s grievances, so I only said, "Revd Mother, I wish you could sit in the Community room as you used to do when it was down stairs." She answered that she could not, on account of her failing strength, but she wished we would sit with her. In the Community room I found the Sister who asked me with some warmth what had detained me. I told her Revd Mother wished us to sit with her and that she ought to bring down her desk, but she refused, saying she could not speak to Revd Mother if Sisters her juniors were to be constantly present. I went back and said, "Revd Mother, it will not do for us all to sit here so, if you please, I shall take away my things, but you could ask Sr N- only." About an hour after, I met Sr N-, quite radiant, her desk in hand. Revd Mother had complained of loneliness and asked her to sit with her . . . and poor Sr N- gave less annoyance for a while (S 214).

There is evidence here and from later comments by Clare Augustine More that this Sister was suffering from a mental illness.

In Summary

We have seen that the significant bonding elements among the foundation community of the Sisters of Mercy in Baggot St were:

- mutual affection and union and charity
- the human touch
- a positive outlook
- an amalgam of courtesy and informality in dealing with authority and one another
- concerning authority—approachability, trust of the Sisters and discussing community affairs with them, lack of legal rigidity and overregulation—flexibility adaptability.
- a clear realization that they were serving God in the poor and not expecting gratitude
- identifying the essentials in religious community life and conserving them
- a big-minded and outwardly directed attitude enabling them to see the bigger picture

- a decentralized form of government facilitating contact between the Sisters and enabling the major superior to act as a unifying person
- a trust in Providence allied with a sense of responsible stewardship
- non-exclusive supportive friendships both inside and outside the community.

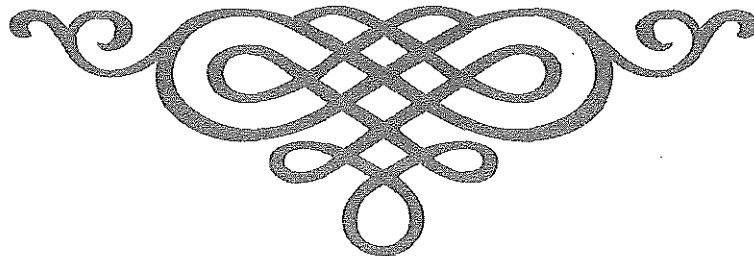
Catherine modeled strongly all these bonding elements and promoted them among her coworkers.

The Dublin foundation community was a very human one with all the frailties that beset human nature. The shadow of the foundation Baggot St. community is evident in the following aspects of their shared history:

- lack of proper authority while Catherine was at George's Hill

- personality clashes
- jealousy
- authority deceived by appearances—Catherine's weakness for pretty faces
- manipulative individuals
- spirit of discontent
- lack of ascetical balance, especially in the matter of poverty
- struggle to establish a hierarchy of values in community life
- destructive spirit of change
- poor stewardship
- avoiding honest confrontation
- natural inadequacies of members

At times, Catherine showed and, at other times, recognized and confronted these aspects in the original community.



Some Definitions for Discussing Racism

Shelly P. Harrell, Ph.D.

From *Multicultural Challenges: Journeying with a Stranger, A Multicultural Workshop*, facilitated by Shelly P. Harrell, Ph.D. and Stephanie Pearson, Ph.D., presented to the Sisters of Mercy of Burlingame, California, April 16–17, 1994.

Race—A pseudo-biological category that distinguishes people based on external physical characteristics (e.g., skin color, body shape/size, facial features, hair texture). Race has been used socially and politically to oppress various groups. People of one race can vary in terms of ethnicity and culture.

Ethnicity—A group whose members share a common history and origin, as well as commonalities in terms of factors such as nationality, religion, and cultural activities. However, degree of connectedness to the group may vary among group members.

Culture—The way of life of a group of people including the shared values, beliefs, behaviors, family roles, social relationships, verbal and nonverbal communication styles, orientation to authority, as well as aesthetic preference and expressions (art, music, food). Within a group, it is “what everybody knows that everybody else knows” that is so much a part of life that it is sometimes difficult to identify. People of different races can share a common culture.

Acculturation—A dynamic process that occurs when members of one culture (culture of origin) come into contact with another culture (host/dominant culture) over a long period of time. The process involves exposure to,

reaction to, and possible adoption of aspects of the other group’s “culture.”

Biculturation—The process in which aspects of one’s culture of origin are retained while simultaneously adopting aspects of the host/dominant culture.

Assimilation—The process of giving up connections to and aspects of one’s culture of origin and “blending in” with the host/dominant culture.

Racial/Ethnic Identification—An individual’s choice of racial or ethnic self-definition.

Racial/Ethnic Identity—The part of one’s identity (sense of self) associated with one’s race or ethnicity that develops over time and can be dynamic and cyclical.

Ethnocentrism—The process of perceiving, evaluation, and judging the world around us through our own racial/ethnic/cultural framework. This is often accompanied by an unwillingness or inability to understand other perspectives, values, and behaviors, and tends to result in the belief that one’s own group is superior.

Stereotype—A relatively fixed and stable image of the characteristics and behaviors of a group of people that simplifies the world around us. Stereotypes can be positive or negative. Their potential damage comes from their overgeneralization and ignorance of the characteristics of individuals. We tend to pay attention to people who “fit” our stereotypes and not notice peo-

ple who challenge them, which perpetuates the belief of stereotype as “truth.” Stereotypes tend to be resistant to disconfirming evidence and individuals who challenge one’s stereotypes are often seen as “the exception” so that the stereotype can be maintained.

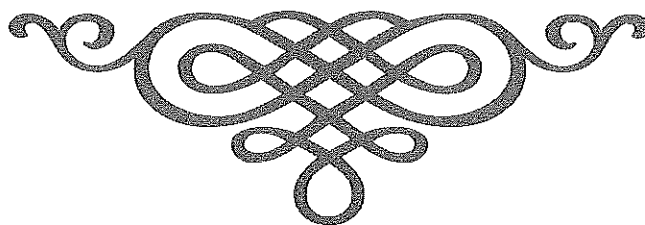
Prejudice—An attitude or opinion that is held in the absence of (or despite) full information. Prejudice can be directed toward a group of people as a whole, or toward an individual because she is a member of that group. Prejudice is typically negative in nature and based on faulty, distorted, or unsubstantiated information that is overgeneralized and relatively inflexible. Prejudices may be conscious or relatively unconscious.

Discrimination—Any kind of behavior or action in which a group, or members of a group, are treated unfairly or unjustly, and where the rights of an individual or group are impinged upon.

Racism—A process that systematically perpetuates the domination, superiority, privileges, and access to resources of one race to the relative exclusion of another. Racism results from the transformation of prejudice through the exercise of power against the group. Racism can occur at individual, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels.

Oppression—Treatment of a group of people within a society that results in being denied equal access to resources, freedoms, and power within that society.

White privilege—Access to resources, opportunities, freedoms, comfort, acceptance, and power within a society that is often assumed, unseen, and denied. It does not negate that Whites have struggles within a society, but rather acknowledges the *relative* position of ease that Whites have relative to other racial groups with respect to survival, daily living, and personal control within a society.





Contributors

Cora Marie Billings, R.S.M. (Merion) is director of the Office of Black Catholics for the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia, and a member of the Canon Law Society of America. She is coordinator for the Alliance of Sisters of Mercy of Color in the United States.

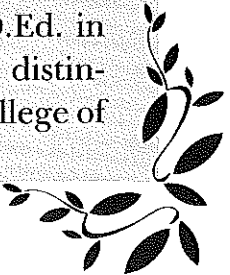
Sophie McGrath, R.S.M. (Parramatta, Australia) holds an M.A. from Sydney University in education, and a Ph.D. in history from Macquarie University. She is a member of the Mercy International Research Commission (MIRC), which was created in 2004 by the Mercy International Association (MIA). She taught and administered in Mercy schools and has served in congregational leadership. Since 1989, she has worked principally in the field of women's history. She is cofounder at the Australian Catholic University (ACU National) of the Golding Centre for Women's History, Theology and Spirituality, which she currently administers from the Strathfield (Sydney) campus. She is author of *These Women: Women Religious in the History of Australia*.

Shelly P. Harrell, Ph.D. and **Stephanie Pearson, Ph.D.**, are licensed clinical psychologists. The material on racism presented in this issue of *The MAST Journal* is reproduced from handouts they presented in *Multicultural Challenges: Journeying with a Stranger: A Multicultural Workshop Facilitated by Presented to the Sisters of Mercy of Burlingame*, April 16-17, 1994. At that time, Dr. Harrell and Dr. Pearson were associated with Didi Heirsch Community Mental Health Center in Culver City, in southern California.

Maria Priscilla Moreno, R.S.M. (St. Louis) has an M.A. in elementary education and certification in special education and early childhood. She is currently a member of the Leadership Team for the St. Louis Regional Community. Before being elected to leadership, she did vocation ministry for the West-Midwest for five years. She is a member of the Alliance of Sisters of Mercy of Color.

Mary Hermenia Muldrey, R.S.M. (St. Louis) a native of New Orleans, and a survivor of evacuations of hospital patients from Hurricane Katrina, has been a member of the Sisters of Mercy for more than seventy years. Teacher, researcher, and archivist, she has had a life-long interest in biography and community history. She is the author of *This is the Day: Historical Sketch of the Sisters of Mercy in Louisiana, 1869-1969* (1969); *Abounding in Mercy: Mother Austin Carroll* (1988) and numerous articles and talks on Mercy history in the southern part of the U.S.A. She received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Sixth Triennial Conference of the History of Women Religious in Atchison, Kansas in 2004.

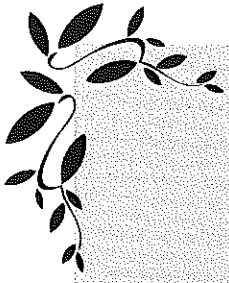
Carol Rittner, R.S.M. (Dallas, Pennsylvania) holds an M.A. in English from the University of Maryland, and an M.T.S. from St. John's Seminary in Detroit, and a D.Ed. in higher education administration from Pennsylvania State University. She is distinguished professor of Holocaust and genocide studies at the Richard Stockton College of



New Jersey. Her publications include coedited volumes of essays, *The Holocaust and the Christian World* (2000), "Good News" After Auschwitz? *Christian Faith in a Post-Holocaust World* (2001), *Pius XII and the Holocaust* (2002), *Will Genocide Ever End?* (2002) and *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?* (2004).

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M. (Burlingame) holds a Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, and a J.D. from Lincoln Law School in San Jose, California. She has been a professor of biblical studies in college, university, and seminary settings, and served in higher education administration. She is presently on the faculty of Silicon Valley Law School. She has been editor of *The MAST Journal* since 1993. Her most recent book is *Obedience to Reality: Essays on Religious Life*, WestWind Press (2006).

Victoria Vondenberger, R.S.M. (Cincinnati) is a canon lawyer with a J.C.L. from St. Paul University in Ottawa. She is director of the tribunal for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati as well as promoter of justice and defender of the bond since 1990. She served for twenty years in secondary education—English, theology, journalism, and administration. Her publications appear in canon law journals, *Studia Canonica* and *The Jurist*. She is an editor of *Jurisprudence* and has contributed to the Canon Law Society of America's *Advisory Opinions* and *Roman Replies*, as well as *Procedural Handbook for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*. She is the author of *Catholics, Marriage and Divorce: Real People, Real Questions* (2004). She was elected secretary of the CLSA at its 2004 meeting.



Discussion Questions

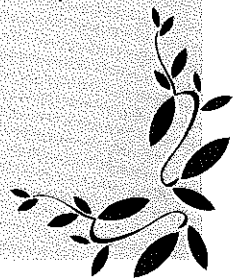
Shelly P. Harrell, Ph.D. and Stephanie Pearson, Ph.D.

Intercultural Introductions

1. Where were you born and raised and what kind of racial and ethnic diversity existed in your community, school, church, etc.?
2. As you were growing up, what messages did you get from your family about issues of race, ethnicity, and culture?
3. How do you identify yourself racially and ethnically?
4. What does your racial and ethnic group membership mean to you at this time in your life?

Small Group Discussion Questions—Intercultural Introductions

1. How did it feel to introduce yourself in this way?
2. How did it feel to introduce your partner to others?
3. How did it feel to be introduced by someone else?
4. Did anyone feel that they were not introduced accurately or that something important was left out? What was that like?
5. What did you learn from this exercise about issues related to racial and ethnic identity and the different things it means to people?



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MERCY ASSOCIATION IN SCRIPTURE AND THEOLOGY

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

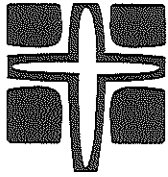
MAST has been meeting annually since then, and the organization now numbers fifty, with members living and working in Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America, as well as in the United States. Marie Michele Donnelly, R.S.M. currently serves as MAST's executive director. MAST will hold its annual meeting in Philadelphia, June 11–13, 2006.

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

Membership dues are \$25 per year, payable to Marilee Howard, R.S.M., MAST treasurer, 8380 Colesville Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Email: mhoward@sistersofmercy.org.

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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. Marilyn King, R.S.M., currently serves as MAST's executive director. MAST will hold its 21st annual meeting in Philadelphia in June, 2007, and its 22nd annual meeting in Burlingame, California, in June 2008.



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