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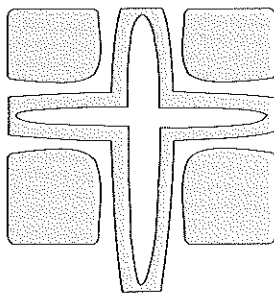
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The Journal of the
Mercy Association in
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Dear Sisters,

The initiative of the Institute Leadership Team, that all members engage in a process of reflection on the Mercy Constitutions, is significant for several reasons.

First, the 1991 Constitution exists as the normative, ecclesial expression of Mercy life in the Institute. This is a time when every regional community is adjusting to a new organizational plan. Names of regions' identifier towns now yield to a more amorphous trans-state division. As the familiar boundaries that used to identify regions shift, what is the deeper ground that provides a sense of permanence? This is why leadership turns our attention to the Constitutions, the guide for our life as a Mercy sisterhood, no matter our pre-1991 status as members of the Union or "independents."

Second, the reflection is critical at this time because the 1991 Constitutions remains the normative congregational document for vowed members, amidst the development of governance plans developed by each of the area communities. A governance plan is not a mini-constitution, nor a "break-away" document in which each area community decides how it will re-found itself as though members are starting a new order. An area governance plan is meant to be a description of a plastic, malleable organizational structure in which the provisions of the Constitutions will be carried out in relation to our identity as women within the Institute. In fact, working through the merger will necessitate changes over time, and such should be expected as members give critical thought and response to the plan's practical effects on everyday life.

A governance plan is thus not a revision of the 1991 Constitutions nor an area substitute for it. It is useful to make a distinction between the Constitutions, as source for describing Mercy identity, and area governance plans as descriptions for how members organize themselves in a transition time.

Third, reflection on the 1991 Constitutions is a way to restore the congregational history of relating to a single Constitutions that was once the norm, but a history that has for the last forty years been bumpy. Most Mercies presently in the community entered before 1965. The Constitutions at the time were based on revisions following the promulgation of the 1917 Code of Canon Law, and on the revisions in the years up to Vatican II. The pre-Vatican II Constitutions was the one read and memorized by most members of my regional community. It was taught to novices, read out during silent meals, re-read on Sundays, and reviewed at retreats and renewal periods. It created a bedrock consciousness for a generation of religious women.

I entered in 1967. My personal memory of "Constitutions" is that they were always changing. For the period between 1967 and 1991, I acquired at least four different "Constitutions." This is what I mean by "bumpy."

A single document, the 1991 Constitutions, can represent changed thinking, but that is different from achieving change at a deeper level of community-wide thought, habit, and practice. Immigrants report how challenging it is to recognize deep learning and unconscious conditioning associated with values and habits fostered by early training in their native culture. When they come to this country, they ask, "What shall I let go, what shall I keep? What newer values shall I take on as I try to adapt to modern American society? Who am I now in this new place, the same or different from who I was before?"

I am inspired when I realize that the voices embodied in our present Constitutions were from Mercy women who lived the post-1917 Constitutions, the WW II updates, and successive versions since Vatican II. Their own changed and changing consciousness, a spiritual emigration from an older culture of religious life to the new, is what is offered to us in the 1991 text. Like immigrants who make the transition from one culture to a different one, we take up, reread and reflect on the 1991 Constitutions in this period of reorganization, to learn the language of ecclesial sisterhood in this new land.



Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., Editor

Introduction

Aline M-J. Paris, R.S.M., Guest Editor

The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas met for the Institute Chapter in Laredo in June of 2005. At that time, it was the desire of MAST and the editorial board to bring to the Institute a theological reflection on several of the chapter issues. We did this in a previous issue, but it became evident for us at that time that two of the issues discussed at chapter were very broad and each would need an entire issue of *The MAST Journal*. One of these issues is immigration and the second is Mercy identity. This particular issue of the journal is on immigration. A future issue will be devoted to identity, once the first cycle of Institute-wide discussion in the Sacred Circles project has been completed.

The topic of immigration was timely in June of 2005, but never did any of us imagine how much bigger it would become in subsequent months. Since the chapter body's discussion, immigration, focused on illegal or undocumented aliens, has been in the consciousness of the American people. Should a wall be built on the southwestern border? Should penalties be imposed on people who help undocumented immigrants? Should there be massive deportations or amnesty for people living in the United States without benefit of papers? The questions can go on and on, as they have in the press and among candidates who were seeking political office in fall of 2006.

The American bishops also have caused some consternation with positions that supported the causes of the migrant people. Cardinal Roger Mahoney indicated last spring in the *New York Times* that he would instruct his priests to practice civil disobedience when it came to meeting the needs of the undocumented people in their parishes. Even though it is well over a year since the chapter and the public stance that the members adopted, it seems that the issue is still a timely one for our theological and biblical reflection.

At the beginning of this particular issue of the journal, we offer the chapter action and public stance taken in June of 2005. Gaye Moorhead, R.S.M., presented the immigration issue to the chapter and many Sisters requested the text of her presentation. In response, she has updated her initial presentation to fit the continuing discussion of the past year. Jennifer Reed-Bouley provides a look at the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching as it applies to the issue of immigration. This writer has taken a look at the scriptural tradition of the "alien" as found in the scriptures and present some conclusions about the rich biblical heritage regarding the treatment of the stranger. Marlene Perotte, R.S.M. describes her personal experience working with undocumented persons and the tragic circumstances that led them to emigrate north.

A journal theme takes on a life of its own once it is put into process, and that is true of this particular issue. As a result, we have included an "Around the Institute" collection of shorter pieces. Our Institute Leadership Team has been active on immigration concerns. Anne Curtis, R.S.M., participated in an interfaith telephone news conference in fall 2006; her statement has been included. Anne Vaccarest, R.S.M. speaks about her work with African immigrants. Kathleen Erickson, R.S.M. writes out of her experience of working with immigrant women held in detention centers. Marie Brown, one of our novices, describes her impressions of visiting the U.N. in New York.

Sisters Eloise Rosenblatt and Victoria Vondenberger offer a dialogue on biblical and political themes and contemporary canonical, papal, and episcopal sources dealing with immigration.

The Sisters of Mercy emigrated from Ireland to Newfoundland within a short time after the death of Catherine McAuley. Their history is told by Kathrine Bellamy, R.S.M., in *Weavers of the Tapestry: A History of the Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland*. This recent study is reviewed by Anne Beresford.

In the August 21, 2006 issue of *USA Today* Paulette Chu Minter wrote a forum piece entitled "Is the Catholic Church Pro-Immigrant? You Bet." She was addressing such skeptics as Lou Dobbs who had suggested that the Church just wanted to "add a few folks" to its pews, or Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO) who blamed "left-leaning religious activists," or Rep. Pete King (R-NY) a Roman Catholic, who indicated that the issue "has become the politically correct tune—it's fashionable." Minter's conclusion, after looking at the Church's history and documents, was, "If the Catholic Church has wound up on the politically correct side of today's debate, it certainly took a more principled and traditional route than its skeptics avow."

So, the purpose of this MAST issue is to see what some of these principles and traditions are so that we, too, along with the rest of the Church, wind up on the just or right side of the debate. This issue is certainly not a comprehensive look at the question of immigration, but it is our hope that it will further readers' thinking as well as be a catalyst for discussion among Sisters, associates, and companions.

Immigration

An Urgent Duty and Challenge

Gaye L. Moorhead, R.S.M.

Our elected delegates' unanimous support of a congressional stance on immigration at the 2005 Institute Chapter of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas timely coalesced with surging national and international debate, legislative activity, and demonstrations on the issue.

An Overview of Immigration Issues

Migration is erupting globally; the United Nations' current estimate is a population of nearly 200 million migrants and refugees worldwide.¹ Migration has an impact on nearly every country, including all regions of our Institute. It affects:

Countries of origin: All Sisters in the Philippines signed on to the request for chapter action because they witness the "brain drain" of Filipino medical professionals recruited to meet the health needs of U.S. citizens.

Countries of transit: Hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrations from China, Ecuador, Cuba, Somalia and many other countries pass through Mexico en route to the United States.

Countries of destination: The U.S. debate is about the strangers among us. Some citizens see the migrants as interlopers benefiting from local education, health, and human services at taxpayer

expense, as violators of the "rule of law" who stretch overworked border and law enforcement, or as outsiders taking jobs from hard-working American, and as, Lady Liberty's poor, "wretched refuse of teeming shores."

Other citizens see immigrants as essential, but scapegoated workers in conditions that our citizens won't tolerate, regardless of pay. They are also seen as poor persons whose inherent dignity entitles them to the protection of a blessed nation. They are those driven by desperation or persecution to enter in violation of an immigration law. However, it is a law based, in part, on unjust practices and quotas which unfairly separate families for years and sometimes decades.²

Beyond dispute, however, is the obvious growing influx of the *have-nots*—have not work, have not food, have not freedom or safety—into the worlds of the *haves*.

What leads so many people to leave their families and their homelands, often risking their lives to do so? What leads Somali migrants to pay a year's income to board rickety boats bound for Yemen, even though a thousand died this year in an eight-month period? Or soaring numbers of Eastern European migrants to enter Britain? Or countless numbers of Central Americans to risk crossing our Arizona desert, even though a record 460 men, women, and children died in their attempts in 2005?

The Vatican instruction, *Erga Migrantes*, summarizes the forces behind the movement: their socially, economically, politically, or religiously-motivated migration is a clear indication of an imbalance among the world's populations that drives people to emigrate, to leave their home countries; uncontrolled globalization makes them more a victim than a protagonist of their migration.³

Factors that have increased and will continue to increase migration flows in years to come include:

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- globalization-flinging markets wide open but not frontiers;
- protectionist barriers in international trade which do not allow emerging countries to sell their products on competitive terms in the markets of Western countries;
- the inequity between north and south; and
- the proliferation of civil wars and conflicts.⁴

The United States Debate

All engaged in the U.S. debate do agree on one thing: The current immigration system is broken. We can say that at community gatherings, to our brothers-in-law on Thanksgiving, and in the grocery line and not be pounced on. But beyond that, our perspectives differ widely about citizens from other countries who are here without our government's approval. Indeed, few issues are as divisive as identifying the reasons for and a solution to the presence of an estimated nine to twelve million undocumented immigrants among us.

Undocumented immigrants may have entered illegally with no visa, perhaps crossing the desert or the ocean. They may have come legally with a tourist or student visa and stayed beyond the time allowed or violated other terms of the visa. This is the situation of many undocumented Irish youth in Boston, who arrived as students and then began working. The 9/11 Commission found that none of the hijackers entered or tried to enter the United States by circumventing legal procedures or entering surreptitiously. Instead, they exploited legal entry systems.⁵

Obviously, undocumented immigrants look no different from other immigrants who are legally present or from citizens—one can't tell their legal status by looking at them. Still, vigilante Minutemen and women who once only trapped border-crossers straggling out of Arizona's Sonoran desert now patrol the northern border. They gather at city and suburban street corners throughout the country to film day laborers whom they believe are "illegal" (read more often than not: "of color") in order to report them to the authorities.

Although single men still compose the largest number of migrating individuals, women migrants are becoming more numerous and are currently estimated to be 49 percent of migrating peoples worldwide.⁶ In the United States, they become un-

skilled laborers and domestics—seamstresses, nannies, hotel maids—and are subject to even greater exploitation and violence than adult male immigrants. Incredibly, in twenty-first-century America and the other nations of our Institute, we witness the expanding industry of trafficking of immigrant women and children for sex and labor.⁷

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Economic Motivation for Immigration

So-called *push* factors are the desperate conditions that force people to migrate, and *pull* factors are the apparent better conditions in the countries to which they flee.

Statistics tell our southern border's tale of *push* and *pull*. The income gap between the United States and Mexico is the largest between any two contiguous countries in the world.⁸ An expectation in passage of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement was that it would improve conditions south of our border, but Mexico lacked (and continues to lack) the infrastructure of banks, roads, and schools needed to support a bolstered economy. Many of the jobs that first followed NAFTA into Mexico in the late nineties have now moved to infrastructure-supported China.

More than a decade after NAFTA's enactment, it is cheaper for Mexicans to buy imported corn than it is for them to grow their own corn.⁹ This supports the view of many that corn harvesters, like so many other Mexicans desperate for work, are among those going north now. It therefore is not surprising that, in 2006, Mexicans illegally present in the United States outnumber Mexicans who are legally present.¹⁰

This influx occurred despite—and some would argue because of—passage of the Illegal Immigration and Responsibility Act of 1996. This Act led to

miles of walls and fences and enhanced enforcement, including additional border patrol agents and electronic surveillance, at four key areas along our southern border, such as El Paso where it was named *Operation Hold the Line*. Because this made illegal entry more difficult in those areas, many undocumented Mexican workers who before had entered annually for seasonal employment and then returned home began to plant roots and to bring their families north. The business of coyotes (smugglers) boomed such that migrants arrived heavily in debt and were subject to increased exploitation and trafficking.¹¹ Entry points shifted from the customary urban routes like El Paso to dangerous, deadly, and less protected desert routes.

After a decade of the intensified enforcement, the result is that illegal immigration to the U.S. has increased; an estimated 700,000 unauthorized immigrants arrive annually in the U.S, outnumbering the 610,000 immigrants who arrive legally.

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The legislation also responded to national clamor for more arrests of undocumented workers. Its impact? After a steady decline of arrests, by 2003, only 445 employees were apprehended at the workplace (nearly half of them at one Wal-Mart raid), compared with 2,849 arrests in 1999.¹³

Why do "they" come and why were the government's efforts until recently so ineffectual and half-hearted in keeping "them" out? Jobs. The immigrants need them, and the businesses need the workers.¹⁴ A telling example is the H-2A program for visas for agricultural workers. The U.S. allows in

about 30,000 fruit and vegetable workers annually, but the market demands an estimated 500,000 workers each year. Annually, hundreds of thousands of jobs per year in those sectors are filled by undocumented immigrants. The Border Patrol's intensified arrest fervor in 2006 resulted in less intracountry movement of farm workers, a predictable lack, then, of needed workers, and the subsequent loss of crops in key agricultural states like California.¹⁵

The Wall

The 700-mile, two-layered metal wall featured in the Secure Fence Act of 2006 symbolizes the national impasse on the issue of undocumented immigrants and represents a steely resolve of politicians in an election to at long last do something "concrete" to repair the broken system.¹⁶

At the outset, controversy abounds over the preliminary issue as to whether the wall can do what its proponents wish it to do. Projected to be built on rugged terrain and to cover only one-third of the southern border (thus leaving 1300 miles unattended). With fewer billions of dollars appropriated than its anticipated cost, the wall is now credited with inspiring new and creative alternative ways to enter, such as by tunnels¹⁷ and at coastlines. The wall is likely to force smugglers' profits skyward and migrant entry to even more remote and hazardous locations. Notwithstanding their upset with illegal trespassers, Texans are speaking out that they cannot see partitioning off the Rio Grande, their state treasure, or family members and friends across the river, as a solution. Environmentalists note the wall's threat to migratory wildlife, as well as to the environment. The monumental Secure Fence may well prove to be a colossal misnomer.

When billions of dollars are to be spent on the enhanced security, wall, and anticipated frequent repair of the wall, the obvious question arises: why not use the funds to aid our southern neighbors' economies and to limit the adverse consequences of globalization? Beyond consideration of its cost, functionality and practicality, however, a guarded wall along the border of the most prosperous country in the world deserves comparison to a shameful Berlin monument.

Something there is that doesn't love a wall.¹⁸

Welcoming Others to Our Lands A Public Stance

Our Chapter Act proclaims, "We welcome you to our land; as a people, we are enriched by your presence."

Although our Church and the nations of our Institute acknowledge the sovereign right of countries to control immigration and deter illegal entry,¹⁹ we have a duty as citizens to promote just legislation and an obligation to care for the one in front of us. In *Strangers No Longer*, their first joint pastoral, the U.S. and Mexican bishops propose a viable alternative to exclusion, "In the current condition of the world, in which global poverty and persecution are rampant, the presumption is that persons must migrate in order to support and protect themselves and that nations who are able to receive them should do so whenever possible."²⁰

Other articles in this issue of MAST address the theological and scriptural bases for a stance of welcoming the stranger. There is affirmation of a Chapter stance that binds us to the teachings of Christ and the social teachings of the Church. Others joins us in support of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops. We are united in spirit with other persons of faith and humanitarian groups, including members of Humane Borders and No More Deaths, who place life-saving water stations at the border. We identify with nationwide marchers peacefully demonstrating for refuge and welcome. We join with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and its communities, most of whom, like the Sisters of Mercy, were once immigrants serving immigrant communities. Now we actively support bipartisan legislation that promotes comprehensive, humane reform of our immigration system.

A public stance of the Sisters of Mercy is undertaken in the following spirit:

This request for chapter action is meant to result in more than a statement; it is meant to be of consequence, not only to immigrants, but also to us individually and as a congregation because of what solidarity and accompaniment will ultimately call us to be.

In the current condition of the world, in which global poverty and persecution are rampant, the presumption is that persons must migrate in order to support and protect themselves and that nations who are able to receive them should do so whenever possible.

Our Sisters, associates and coministers already accompany immigrants in countries throughout the Institute and continue to serve them. With heightened public concern, others might well join them. Mercies continue to strive to welcome immigrants, embracing the conviction of Pope John Paul II that one's status and one's citizenship do not dictate a response separate from our mission of Mercy.²¹

Our public stance, however, enables us to speak with one voice and to join others' voices with and for undocumented immigrants who are condemned to the shadows, whose courageous attempts to speak their suffering subjects them to arrest, separation from their children, detention, and deportation.

This "[s]olidarity means taking responsibility for those in trouble. For Christians, the migrant is not merely an individual to be respected in accordance with the norms established by law, but a person whose presence challenges them and whose needs become an obligation for their responsibility. "What have you done to your brother/ sister?" (cf. Gen 4:9). The answer should not be limited to what is imposed by law, but should arise out of a spirit of solidarity."²²



Notes

- 1 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *State of World Population 2006*, "The Good, the Bad, the Promising: Migration in the 21st Century," p. 5. Web site: www.unfpa.org/swp/2006/english
- 2 For example, if a Mexican lawful permanent resident of the United States successfully petitioned in December, 1999, for a visa for her spouse and children to join her, the visa only became available on October 29, 2006, seven years later. *Visa Bulletin for November, 2006* at http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_3046.html
- 3 *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* (The Love of Christ Toward Migrants), Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Section 29, 2004.
- 4 *Erga migrantes* at Section 4. See also, Castles, Stephen, 2004. "Confronting the Realities of Forced Migration." Migration Information Source, May, 2004, p. 8, accessed at Web site: <http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/print.cfm?ID=222>.
- 5 Staff report to the 9/11 Commission, www.9/11commission.gov/staff_statements/staff_statement_1.pdf

An exceptional report (7/06) released by the United States Military Academy's Combating Terrorism Center evaluates the national security implications of the immigration system, offers policy recommendations and establishes a method for gauging the impact of immigration policies on national security. The thoughtful work is "National Security and Immigration Policy: Reclaiming Terms, Measuring Success, and Setting Priorities," by Donald Kerwin, Executive Director of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., and Margaret Stock, a U.S. Army Reserve Lieutenant Colonel and Associate Professor in the Department of Social Sciences at West Point. The report can be accessed online at <http://ctc.usma.edu/research.asp> and is linked from the CLINIC website, www.cliniclegal.org
- 6 Jeffrey S. Passel, "Unauthorized Migrants' Numbers and Characteristics," Pew Hispanic Center (6/05). However, men outnumber women in the flow of unauthorized migrants to the United States. See also United Nations Population Fund, *State of the World Population 2006. A Mighty but Silent River: Women and Migration*, p. 21. Web site: www.unfpa.org/swp/2006/english
- 7 Trafficking women and children for the purpose of exploitation or smuggling them for profit are widespread practices. "They are a product of the increasingly restrictive immigration policies of rich countries. The high demand for labor in the North, combined with pressure to emigrate from the South, and strong barriers to mobility, have created business opportunities for a new 'migration industry.'" S. Castles, 1 May 2004. "Confronting the Realities of Forced Migration," Migration Information Source. Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute. Web site: www.migrationinformation.org/feature/print.cfm?ID=222, accessed October 28, 2006.
- 8 Stanford Historian David Kennedy. Accessed at <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/96nov/immigrat/kennedy.htm>
- 9 See, e.g., "Mexico's Corn Farmers See their Livelihoods Wither Away," *San Francisco Chronicle* (7/31/06), quoting Harley Shaiken, director of U.C. Berkeley's Center for Latin American Studies: "The beginnings of immigration are in the displacement of farmers in Mexico."

Inequality also increased after trade was liberalized in Argentina and Chile. In summer, 2006, at the urging of mercy Sisters in Peru, the Institute Justice Office sent out an OXFAM alert to oppose a proposed U.S.-Peru Free Trade Agreement in Congress. The alert read, "As with previous free trade agreements such as NAFTA and CAFTA, it will be ordinary workers and those already suffering in poverty who will feel the adverse effects of this agreement."
- 10 Wayne Cornelius, Director. *Impacts of U.S. Immigration Control Policies on Migratory Behavior: The View from Mexican Sending Communities*, Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, San Diego (June 28, 2005.)
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Since the mid-1990s, the number of unauthorized migrants added to the U.S. population each year has outpaced the number of legal permanent immigrants. Passel and Suro, June, 2005, Pew Hispanic Center.
- 13 Wayne Cornelius. As public criticism of lackluster efforts mounted, however, arrests increased dramatically: "From October 1, 2005, until June, 2006, Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested more than 2,100 people in work site enforcement investigations, compared with 1,145 in the previous fiscal year and 845 in fiscal 2004." *New York Times*, "Here Illegally, Working Hard and Paying Taxes," June 19, 2006.
- 14 Taking a page from James Carville's successful, focused message for Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign—strategic signs in their offices reminding them, "It's the economy, Stupid!"—a focus on migration would read the same, "It's the jobs!" Despite all the U.S. danger warnings, detentions and deportations, low-wage jobs are abundant here, and according to Mexico's Central Bank, "In 2005, Mexican immigrants sent home a record \$20 billion, making them Mexico's biggest foreign earner after oil." Reported in the *New York Times*, June 17, 2006.

- 15 "Pickers Few, and Congress Gets Blame," *New York Times*, (11/22/06), p. 1, with much of the blame related to the Congress's failure to approve the "AgJobs" program, which would bring in needed seasonal farm workers as temporary residents who would have the opportunity, over time, to become lawful permanent residents.
- 16 Approved after bipartisan compromise and signed by President Bush in October, 2006, it was drafted, according to one commentator, not so much to keep undocumented immigrants out of the country, as to keep politicians in office.
- 17 Alarmed that forty tunnels have been discovered in the U.S. since September 11, 2001, and that all but one have been on the southern border, Democratic Senator Diane Feinstein has proposed legislation providing for twenty-year jail terms for anyone building or financing such a tunnel.
- 18 Frost, Robert. "Mending Wall"
- 19 *Exsul Familia (On the Spiritual Care to Migrants)*, September 30, 1952; 51.
- 20 *Strangers No Longer, Together on the Journey of Hope*, A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States; 39.
- 21 Pope John Paul II, *Message for World Migration Day 1995-1996*.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 5.

LIKE SEED

We call them strangers
because of food, clothes, language

They look like us
with arms, legs, eyes

they laugh and cry
like we do
and fit right in
to the working day

They too have never been
outside the atmosphere

They require air and water
return their dead to fire and earth

Like seed
Borne on the wind
they come, the refugees

Patricia Ryan
March, 2006

“You Have Entertained Angels Without Knowing It” Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration

Jennifer Reed-Bouley, Ph.D.

The Catholic Church has historically played a significant role in United States and international immigration debates by consistently advocating for the rights of immigrants. The Catholic Church's position as a transnational institution places it in a unique position to teach about the rights of immigrants worldwide and attend to the spiritual, psychological, and physical needs of immigrants. The U.S. Catholic bishops have not only written many instructive statements regarding immigration, but they have also supported Migration and Refugee Services, Catholic Charities USA, schools, hospitals, and other agencies that provide material aid to people of all faiths who are on the move.

By founding and leading the annual celebration of National Migration Week, as well as their new Justice for Immigrants Campaign, the U.S. Catholic bishops continue to provide leadership in educating Christians regarding the official Church's position about immigration and the contributions immigrants make to U.S. society. Because Catholic involvement in the issue of immigration is so broad and deep, the present article cannot provide an exhaustive overview of Catholic social teaching on im-

migration; rather, it offers a brief analysis of some of the major themes.

Bishops' Teaching on Immigration

Modern teaching by popes and bishops on immigration since Pope Pius XII's Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia* emphasizes that welcoming strangers, aliens, and sojourners is a way to welcome Christ in our midst.¹ Unlike United States and international law, the Catholic stance on immigration places protection of economic rights on a par with political and civil rights. The right to migrate in order to preserve life supercedes the rights of relatively wealthy nations to control their borders, as the earth and all its resources are understood as gifts from a loving Creator to be shared among all. *Exsul Familia* establishes an oft-reiterated theme that less densely populated and wealthier countries (such as the U.S.) have a right to control their own borders, but they also have an obligation to receive persons from countries that are overcrowded and economically poor.²

The documentary tradition of Catholic social teaching on immigration most often refers to specific legislation being considered regarding immigration, a specific refugee crisis, or a situation of particularly strong anti-immigrant sentiment. The documents express the Church's awareness that the phenomenon of emigration is inextricably tied to other systemic issues, such as political and economic conditions in various countries. The documents express concern not only for those persons who flee inhuman conditions but also for justice to reign in every country.

The U.S. bishops, in particular, recommend that the best way for the U.S. government to control immigration would be to promote economic and political justice in other countries. They are especially aware of the economic interdependence between Mexico and the United States, and express

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their desire that U.S. businesses treat workers fairly and pay them a just wage. They encourage the U.S. to direct foreign aid with the goal of increasing development and stimulating employment in receiving countries. This would distribute the world's resources more equitably, thus supporting people's capacity to remain in their countries of birth instead of emigrating.

Furthermore, ecclesial teaching exhorts a change in the U.S. policy of offering preference in immigration to highly skilled workers, because this negates the positive effects of U.S. aid to these countries that need to retain their educated citizens. The U.S. bishops view their work on immigration and on global poverty as connected, as indicated by their explicit statement of connection between "Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope. The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform," and the Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty, under the leadership of Catholic Relief Services and the Office of International Justice and Peace.

Scripture serves as a foundational resource for Catholic social teaching on immigration. Stories of biblical figures who emigrated instruct the faithful that their obligations to immigrants have ancient roots. Second, short admonitions from Scripture regarding reception of immigrants are used to support the case for protecting immigrants' rights. The immigrant recalls the stranger, alien, or sojourner in Scripture, which are important religious symbols.³ Immigrants also remind the Church, through their transient status, that we are a pilgrim people on a journey toward the kingdom. Immigrants to the U.S. increase our awareness of the interdependence of all peoples and nations because they request the assistance of the U.S. as a result of their home countries' political and economic problems. The Catholic Church in the U.S. demonstrates its catholicity through the people who comprise it from many races and nations of origin.

Principles Reflected in *Strangers No Longer*:

Ecclesial teaching on immigration includes several foundational principles, the most important of which are human dignity, common good, and solidarity. Catholic social teaching asserts that people have a right to immigrate in order to secure a human living situation for themselves and their fami-

lies. The human person is the first point of reference for judging the adequacy of any specific policy proposal, as immigrants are regarded as subjects of rights and duties. Catholic social teaching on immigration expresses three major concerns regarding human dignity: the spiritual, psychological and physical well-being of all displaced peoples.

The argument from the principle of the common good is based upon an anthropological view

Ecclesial teaching exhorts a change in the U.S. policy of offering preference in immigration to highly skilled workers, because this negates the positive effects of U.S. aid to these countries that need to retain their educated citizens.

that human persons are interdependent and find themselves naturally in community. A human person is characterized by her or his ability and desire to be in relationship with others and God. The life situation of any person in the community affects the life situation of others. Ecclesial teaching on immigration emphasizes that the common good has an international, not simply a national, scope. Nationalism must be regarded as a lesser value than the common good of all people and the right of all people to enjoy a share of the goods of creation.

The principle of solidarity has obvious implications for Catholic social teaching on immigration, as solidarity demands a recognition of the interdependence of all human persons, regardless of economic, political, religious, or other aspects of personal identity. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, (38), Pope John Paul II defines solidarity as "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are really responsible for the good of all."⁴

In their recent teaching on immigration, the U.S. bishops offer specific suggestions about new

immigration policies that would be congruent with Catholic priorities. In their 2003 joint pastoral letter with the Mexican bishops, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, they affirm "that any just immigration reform proposal should address the root causes of migration, including poverty and conflict, and should include the following elements: (1) a broad-based legalization of the undocumented; (2) a temporary worker program with appropriate worker protections; (3) changes to the family-based immigration system to reduce waiting times for family reunification; and (4) restoration of due process protections for immigrants."⁵

In order to educate Catholics and others about this teaching, as well as influence public policy de-

The complexity of immigration law and (lack of) enforcement of laws within workplaces makes the bishops' current recommendations for improving U.S. immigration law vulnerable to manipulation by business interests.

cisions, in May 2005, the United States Catholic bishops initiated a new project, "Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope. The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform." Similarly, Cardinal Roger Mahoney offers very specific instruction on immigration policy in his op-ed piece published in the *New York Times* in March 2006.⁶ Here he publicly states that he has instructed priests of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to commit civil disobedience if a proposed law is enacted that would make it illegal to provide forms of material assistance (such as clothing or food) to undocumented immigrants.

Advocacy and Enforcement

Ecclesial teaching consistently distinguishes between two levels of teaching: The bishops provide principles of judgment (such human dignity and the common good) to which all faithful Catholics

must adhere, but they affirm that faithful Catholics may disagree about specific application of these principles to concrete situations.⁷ The U.S. Catholic bishops' recent involvement in the issue of immigration raises at least two issues for further consideration. First, is the U.S. bishops' recent advocacy for specific legislation consistent with their view of the two levels at which Catholic social teaching works? For example, Bishop Gerald R. Barnes, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration, announced support for the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005 (S. 1033, H.R. 2330).⁸ Is particular legislation such as this a concrete situation about which faithful Catholics may disagree? If not, would it be consistent for bishops to censure political leaders who do not advocate legislation such as this, parallel to dealings with Catholic political leaders who take public stances contrary to Catholic teaching on abortion and euthanasia?

Second, as Gaye Moorhead, R.S.M., points out in her article in this issue, enforcement of immigration laws in the workplace has actually declined in recent years despite heightened anti-immigrant political rhetoric. Although it has been shown that undocumented immigrants contribute positively to the U.S. economy, low-skilled workers legally present in the U.S. claim their wages and working conditions are threatened by the presence of an undocumented labor pool which lacks the power to report violations of labor laws.⁹

The complexity of immigration law and (lack of) enforcement of laws within workplaces makes the bishops' current recommendations for improving U.S. immigration law vulnerable to manipulation by business interests. These business interests historically and presently profess their support for enforcement of immigration law at U.S. borders, but they benefit financially from lax enforcement of immigration laws within the workplace. A temporary or guest worker program, such as that advocated by the bishops, is helpful to immigrants and citizens of the U.S. only if there is robust enforcement of labor laws.

Otherwise, employers lower the wage floor for all low-skilled workers and do not adequately protect workers' well-being. If a temporary or guest worker program is legalized, Catholic groups must be vigilant in ensuring that labor safeguards are not only included in the legislation but also enforced.

Otherwise, Catholic supporters of immigrants may be aligning themselves with those who support the same legislation but for very different reasons that ultimately may threaten the very people the Church hopes to protect and assist.

As the bishops note in their teaching, "Continue to love each other like brothers and sisters, and remember always to welcome strangers, for by doing this, some people have entertained angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2)



Notes

- 1 Pope Pius XII's *Exsul Familia* was released in 1952, in the context of World War II's creation of migrants and refugees. The "Magna Charta" for immigration, it established the foundation for further Catholic social teaching on immigration.
- 2 *Exsul Familia*, §§ 52–53.
- 3 According to Cardinal Roger Mahoney, for example, immigrants symbolize the human person's quest to realize his or her full potential. See Cardinal Roger Mahoney, "You Have Entertained Angels Without Knowing It," October 9, 1993, §18.
- 4 Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, §38.
- 5 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, 2003. For specific paragraphs where the bishops contrast their recommendations with the failed U.S. "Bracero Program" that ended in 1964 see §§ 74–77.
- 6 Cardinal Roger Mahoney, "Called By God to Help." Op-Ed in *New York Times*, March 22, 2006.
- 7 See, for example, teaching by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, including "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response" (1983), "The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace" (1993), "Economic Justice for All" (1986), "A Decade After Economic Justice for All" (1995), and "Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility" 2003.
- 8 See "Statement of Most Reverend Gerald R. Barnes, bishop of San Bernardino, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration on the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005," available at <http://sbdiocese.org/immigration/HR1033statement.pdf>.
- 9 See, for example, David Bacon, "And the Winner Is . . . Immigration Reform on the Killing Floor," *American Prospect*, November 10, 2005 about immigrants and the meatpacking industry.

RUINS I

"Your own smallness and limitation
ruined things" *John O'Donahue*

Go back and look
at the ruins you've left

rotting planks
were once floors

a pile of rubble
the former walls

restoration ignored

And upon these ruins
weep for the waste
of ruined friendships

Patricia Ryan
June, 2006

The Scriptural Tradition of Welcoming the Alien

Aline Paris, R.S.M.

I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
Matthew 25:35

We are faced with many controversial issues in our society today, and the topic of immigration is one of them. When it comes to arguing for or against such issues there is always a desire to find appropriate biblical texts that will either support a position or counter it. Often such a search is done in a restrictive or negative way—what does the Bible forbid? But, when it comes to the issue of the treatment of the immigrant or “alien,” as the Old Testament uses the term, there is a strong tradition of inclusivity. Precisely because of its inclusivity, the Bible can be a challenge to us, particularly in the current, fierce debate on the topic of illegal immigration. It is interesting to me that some of the fiercest critics of the status and treatment of undocumented people in the United States are precisely the religious people who frequently use the Bible as the basis for their arguments. We all pick and choose the biblical texts that support our beliefs and ignore the ones that do not agree with our political stances, so it should not be a surprise that the biblical tradition on this issue is being ignored in the current debate.

It is my intent in this article to look at texts in regards to the “alien” that are found in the Bible. There are fifty-seven appropriate references in the

Precisely because of its inclusivity, the Bible can be a challenge to us, particularly in the current, fierce debate on the topic of illegal immigration.

Old Testament alone that indicate the biblical belief about the place of the alien in Israelite society. In addition, I will look at the life and teachings of Jesus to see what additional insights can come to us from the New Testament.

“My father was a wandering Aramean”¹

Ancient Israel understood itself to be a migrating community.² In the book of Deuteronomy, directions are given for the celebration of the annual feast of Thanksgiving at the time of the harvest. The first fruits are to be given to God and a creedal formula for the ritual is specified: “My father was a wandering Aramean who went down to Egypt with a small household and lived there as an alien. But there he became a nation great, strong and numerous.”³ It was a yearly reminder to Israel that it was not to forget its roots as a migrating, nomadic people. Israel’s time of migration was also remembered as its time of greatest fidelity to God. It may be for this reason that later the prophet Hosea, facing an unfaithful community, speaks for God who says “I will allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart.”⁴

Israel as a people began with the call to Abraham to leave his homeland and migrate to the land of Canaan. “Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you.”⁵ Abraham lived as a resident alien⁶ in this land until he was able to buy a small plot for a burial ground⁷ but this was only for his use when he was dead. In addition to being an alien in the land of Canaan he was also an alien in Egypt when he was forced to go there due to famine,⁸ a theme that repeats itself with his son and grandsons. The promise of ownership of the land of Canaan was given as part of the covenant between God and Abraham but it was a promise that Abraham never saw fulfilled in

his lifetime. So, our father was a “wandering Aramean” and so were his descendants.

When another famine occurred after the death of Abraham, his son Isaac went to the land of the Philistines and was told to “reside in this land as an alien, and I will be with you, and will bless you.”⁹ Could we not look at the text as endorsing the blessing of God upon those who live in a land as aliens?

Migration to Egypt

The story of migration certainly continues with the movement to the land of Egypt during another famine. Jacob went down with all his children after his son Joseph, a resident alien, had risen to power in the land of Egypt. In a dramatic tale of forgiveness, Joseph says to his brothers “God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.”¹⁰ As in the case of Joseph, resident aliens can be of great service to their host countries.

But countries sometimes forget the benefits that aliens have brought to their land and this happened with the Egyptians. People forgot about Joseph and only saw how numerous the aliens had become in their land; and so oppression occurred. History has a way of repeating itself and we see this with many of the people from the south coming to the United States and doing the work that American citizens do not want to do. “The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor.”¹¹ In our American context, we could probably add meat-packing houses, domestic work, sex trade, etc. It is an undeniable fact that our economy depends upon the cheap labor force provided by the undocumented Latinos and Latinas among us.

The Israelites needed a liberator to free them from their oppression. Moses, the great prophet and friend of God accepted this responsibility. The irony is that the greatest figure of the Torah or Pentateuch and possibly the whole Old Testament has an alien name. He was brought up in a foreign court as the adopted son of a princess of Egypt.¹² Moses seemed to have been keenly aware of his status as alien when he named his own son Gershom, meaning—a stranger there—“for he said, ‘I have been an alien residing in a foreign land.’”¹³ He

brought the people from Egypt towards the promised land, yet he never entered it. He lived his entire life as a resident alien in foreign lands: Egypt, Midian, and the Sinai desert. Moses’ experience may be why the warning to the Israelites to treat the alien with justice and respect is so strong in the tradition of the Pentateuch, for they were never to forget that they too were once aliens. “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”¹⁴

Treatment of Aliens among the Israelites

Israel’s history and experience of living in a foreign land, particularly Egypt, colored the laws that occur in regards to the treatment of the aliens living among the Israelites. There are several references to the inclusion of the alien in the Israelite religious way of life.

Aliens are included in the prescriptions for the third commandment regarding the Sabbath, “But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.”¹⁵ In the prescriptions for some of the great religious feasts the aliens are considered.

The directives for the Passover ritual specify that aliens in the midst of the Israelite community are to be included in the festival, “For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether an alien or a native of the land.”¹⁶ Even the great feast of atonement, *Yom Kippur*, was to include the alien residents. “This shall be a statute to you forever: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall

Israel’s history and experience of
living in a foreign land,
particularly Egypt, colored the
laws that occur in regards to the
treatment of the aliens living
among the Israelites.

deny yourselves, and shall do no work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you.”¹⁷ Israel seems to have recognized that the mercy and forgiveness of God was for the alien as well as itself.

**The alien who resides with you
shall be to you as the citizen
among you; you shall love the
alien as yourself, for you were
aliens in the land of Egypt.**

The alien was also included in the religious laws that constituted the identity of the people as God's people. It was enjoined on the aliens to keep the legal precepts, “You shall keep my statutes and my ordinances and commit none of these abominations, either the citizen or the alien who resides among you . . . For whoever commits any of these abominations shall be cut off from their people.”¹⁸ To be “cut off” from the people implies belonging to them to begin with.

Although there is no evidence that all the food laws applied to the alien, the restriction from eating blood did apply to them.¹⁹ Other religious laws also applied to the alien. When in debt, an Israelite could sell himself to an alien as an indentured servant but the alien had to release him in the Jubilee year.²⁰ Also, in the establishment of the six cities of asylum for someone who had unintentionally committed murder, the place of refuge needed to be available to both the resident and transient alien as well as the citizen.²¹

“Cursed be anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice.”²² Israelite law decreed protection for the *anawim*, the poor of the Lord, and the alien belonged to this group. This tripartite formula appears several times in the Torah and the Prophets and it became a code phrase for those who needed the attention of the community. For example, at the time of the harvest there could not be a clean picking of wheat, olives, and grapes in order to have some left for those in need.²³ Fidelity to the covenant was measured by the justice shown to the alien, the widow and the orphan. And it was the

lack of such justice which led to Israel's downfall. This may be a warning for citizens of the United States who sometimes demonstrate an attitude of divine entitlement.

To summarize the evidence, then: Israelites and aliens were to have the same laws, ordinances, and protection. The alien was to be recognized as being on a par with the Israelites and not treated any differently. Furthermore, the alien was to be seen as one with the people of the covenant, as one who was to be loved. And always in the arguments, the rationale was the memory of Israel's time in Egypt. “The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”²⁴ The book of Numbers provides the ultimate reasoning behind this equality, “you and the alien shall be alike before the Lord.”²⁵ Isn't this the kernel of truth that we need to keep before our eyes in our current immigration debate—that we are the same in the eyes of God?

The Purists and the Book of Ruth

Unfortunately, Israel did forget that it had been an alien people in Egypt. Ironically, it forgot this after another experience of Diaspora, the Exile in Babylon. We, in this country also seem to be forgetting that we are a nation of immigrants which has been our strength. As Isala Birollo, C.S. states, “. . . one of the reasons for the United States being most powerful is because they have been receiving generations of immigrants.”²⁶ Yet now the children and grandchildren of immigrants want to turn their backs on the new generations crossing our borders.

When Israelites returned from Babylon under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, the population became very concerned with rebuilding the city of Jerusalem, the temple, and restoring a Jewish way of life.²⁷ It is not surprising that there would be concern for strict interpretation of the laws. One of the areas that received immediate attention and condemnation was the intermarriage that had occurred among the people who had either remained in the land or had been in Babylon. The language in reference to the alien is very strong and condemnatory: “Shall we again violate your (speaking to God) commandments by intermarrying with these abominable peoples?”²⁸ As a result, the men dis-

missed their foreign wives as well as their children.²⁹ There was not much justice practiced toward the poor, the widow, and the orphan.

It is in this postexilic context that some biblical exegetes argue the Book of Ruth was written. Although positioned between the Books of Judges and 1 Samuel, Ruth is a wisdom book as it is listed in the Hebrew canon. What can the Book of Ruth contribute to the immigration debate? It is a book that directly challenges the purist point of view towards the alien. Ruth was a Moabite.³⁰ She was a "foreign wife" but she was also the great-grandmother of King David with whom God established an everlasting covenant. Whether the story is historically accurate or not, it reflects a challenge to the animosity that was building towards the alien. The greatest king that Israel had known had "alien" blood. How, then, could this reconstituted Israel reject the immigrant? Would that we remember our "alien" blood.

Insights from the New Testament

"Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'"³¹ If residing as aliens in Egypt was central to Israel's self-understanding, it is not surprising that Matthew designed his narrative of the infancy of Jesus with the same understanding. One of the first events of Jesus' life was an experience of escape from the threat of death and becoming a refugee. Even when he did return to the land of his birth, he could not go back to Judea, but had to go to Nazareth in the north because the danger was still present in the rule of Archelaus, son of Herod. Jesus was a displaced child separated from his extended family. How common is this experience for many of the immigrants that we have among us in this country? Will this country be like Nazareth or will it be like Bethlehem? A place of refuge or a place of fear?³²

As an adult, Jesus continued a life of migration. He was an itinerant preacher, traveling between Galilee and Judah and claimed no home. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests;

but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."³³ Since Matthew is the only evangelist to attribute this particular saying to Jesus, it may give us an insight into Matthew's theme of wandering. The homelessness that began with the sojourn in Egypt continued throughout Jesus' life. Like the Israelites who wandered in the desert for forty years, Jesus wandered throughout his ministerial life. His life ended by being buried in a borrowed grave, a detail that is unique to Matthew.³⁴

The early Church did have to face the crisis of accepting others who were different, specifically Gentiles and Samaritans. The Acts of the Apostles and some of the letters of Paul, particularly Galatians, indicate the tension that occurred within the community. Although there were some who were purists like Ezra, the position that eventually prevailed was one of acceptance of those who were not Jews.

Come, you that are blessed by
my Father, inherit the kingdom
prepared for you from the
foundation of the world . . . for I
was a stranger and you
welcomed me.

The healing ministry of Jesus was an inclusive one even though there may have been some reluctance initially.³⁵ It is Luke, however, who provides stories that are the most recognizable in relation to those on the margin. It was a Samaritan leper who was the only one to come back to thank Jesus for having been healed³⁶ and, in the most popular gospel story known to all, it was the Samaritan traveler who stopped to help an injured man on the side of the road.³⁷ In the Gospel of John it was a Samaritan woman who had one of the few theological conversations with Jesus recorded in the Gospels.³⁸ The New Testament tradition, therefore, is one that recognizes the importance of the stranger in the community of the new Israel.

Conclusion

The ultimate challenge that the New Testament presents in regards to the question of immigration is the final judgment as recorded in Matthew. Like the prophets of the Old Testament who suggested that justice to the alien-widow-orphan was the ultimate way to worship God,³⁹ the basis for the judgment on the Day of the Lord is justice. "Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world . . . for I was a stranger and you welcomed me' . . . then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you . . . a stranger and welcomed you' . . . and the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"⁴⁰ The choice is ours to make, either we welcome the stranger or we do not, either we are with the sheep or we align ourselves with the goats. Let us choose life!⁴¹



Notes

- 1 Deut 26:5. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are from the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version).
- 2 Masculine, feminine, and neuter pronouns are all used in reference to Israel. For example, "he" is the beloved son (Hosea 11), "she" is the bride and harlot (Hosea 1-2), and "it" is the vineyard (Isaiah 5) I will use the neuter pronoun even though I am referring to Israel as the chosen people of God and not the northern kingdom, also known as Ephraim, or the modern state of Israel.
- 3 A reference to the patriarchs coming from Aram as recorded in Gen 24:10, 25:20, 28:5, 31: 20, 24 and being nomads. Jeremiah refers to nomads as "Arabs" (3:2).
- 4 Hos 2:16
- 5 Gen 12:1
- 6 Gen 17:8; 20:1; 21:23
- 7 Gen 23
- 8 Gen 12:10-20
- 9 Gen 26:3
- 10 Gen 45:7; 50: 20
- 11 Exod 1:13-14
- 12 Exod 2:10
- 13 Exod 2:22. The text could also be referring to Moses' sojourn in the land of Midian, an interpretation which is supported by a reference in Acts 7:26, "Moses fled and became a resident alien in the land of Midian. There he became the father of two sons."
- 14 Exod 22:21
- 15 Exod 20:10; 23:12; Deut 5:14
- 16 Exod 12:19 There is, however, a provision for circumcision as a qualification for participation in the Passover festival.
- 17 Lev 16:29
- 18 Lev 26, 29
- 19 Lev 17:12
- 20 Lev 25:47
- 21 Num 35:9-15
- 22 Deut 27:19. In addition see: Lev 19:10; 23:23; Deut 24:17; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Ezek 22:7, 29, Zech 7:10; Mal 3:5
- 23 Deut 24:19-21; Lev 19:9-10; 23:22
- 24 The New American Bible uses the phrase "the natives born among you" for citizens.
- 25 Num 15:15
- 26 Isala Birollo, C.S., Scalabrini Superior General in an interview in the video *Dying to Live* produced by the Center for Latino Culture, University of Notre Dame.
- 27 The designation of Jewish is a postexilic term since the reformed Israel is centered around Judah.
- 28 Ezra 9:10 (NAB); NRSV translates it differently, "intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations?" which softens the text.
- 29 Ezra 10:3
- 30 Moabites were the descendants of Moab, son of Lot and his daughter, therefore, the product of incest. Gen 19:37
- 31 Matt 2:14-15
- 32 Other than Mary, Matthew includes the names of three women in his genealogy of Jesus and all three—Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth—are non-Jews. Matt 1:4
- 33 Matt 8:20. The expression Son of Man is the most common title for Jesus in the gospels and occurs seventy-nine times; however, this particular quote is unique to Matthew.
- 34 Matt 27:59-60. The other three gospels only specify that the tomb was a new one. Matthew is the only one who specifies that the tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathea.
- 35 The Syro-Phoenician/Canaanite woman had to convince Jesus to heal her daughter. Mark 7:24-30, Matt 15:21-28
- 36 Luke 17:12-19
- 37 Luke 10:30-35
- 38 John 4
- 39 Example: Isa 58:5-9
- 40 Matt 25:34-40
- 41 Deut 30:19

The Undocumented as the Prophets of Our Time

Marlene Perrotte, R.S.M.

"It is the vocation of the prophet to keep alive the ministry of the imagination, to keep on conjuring and proposing future alternatives to the single one the king wants to urge as the only thinkable one."

Walter Brueggemann

It was an ominous day in September of 1996 when Dayli, Dany Marlene and Eduardo presented themselves at Las Americas seeking representation in Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) court. This was my first political asylum case working with Las Americas in El Paso, Texas. My life would never be the same.

Dany Marlene, aged fourteen, and her brother Eduardo, aged twelve, natives and citizens of Honduras, came to the United States in April, 1992 to reunite with their parents. Antonio and Maria came to the U.S. in March of 1990, followed by their daughter Dayli in September, 1990. All set foot on the soil of this country, to use the term "Entering Without Inspection" (EWI).

A Model of Analysis: Taking Seriously the Option for the Poor

When I met the children in September of 1996, they had been picked up by INS because they had no official documents allowing them to be in this country. They faced deportation. To prepare for their political asylum defense I applied the first two components of the Hermeneutical Circle. The Hermeneutical Circle is a reflective process and consists of: 1) the hermeneutical principle of taking seriously what the option for the poor involves; 2) the examination of social realities that produce poverty; 3) the identification of theological motives for supporting the poor; and 4) a new way of interpreting the world and God who impels us to truly act on behalf of justice in relation to the poor.

This process helps participants to better understand the unseen structural and theological mechanisms that undergird social oppression. We live in a divided world strangled by conflict where oppressors continue to benefit from the system while those oppressed suffer from the system. The family members I faced were the oppressed, the victims of a system that has deep roots.

Johann Metz speaks of dangerous memory of victims and their tormentors. Out of the dangerous memory comes the cry of resistance that does not allow the status quo to remain unchallenged. The dangerous memory lives in the hearts and spirits of those whose response to life is contextualized in a world where death is visible daily in many ways. They live out of a reality and a passion that has the power to both scandalize and to transform.

The Story of Antonio

Political narratives can transform hearers, but only if we have "ears to hear" (Mark 4:9). Let us hear the story of our Honduran family. Antonio, the father of the children, was deceased when I met the children. Their mother had remarried a U.S. citizen. Antonio had worked in Honduras for the Tela Railroad Co, a subsidiary of the Cincinnati-based

We live in a divided world
strangled by conflict where
oppressors continue to benefit
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oppressed suffer from the
system.

Chiquita Brands International, formerly known as the United Fruit Company. He was a union leader with the Banana Workers' Union SITRATERCO.

Antonio was approached by the CIA security unit of the Tela Railroad Co. that sought his help as an informant within the union that was being infiltrated by a popular movement. Believing that if he did not accept this offer he would lose his job, he accepted this position in which he directly reported to a captain in the Honduran military.

Although the family thought the children were safe, the death squad tracked them down. One day as Dayli and her sister Karen walked to school, a death squad car killed Karen, leaving Dayli alive but with the memory of the murder of her sister.

The battalion he reported to was the Death Squad Battalion 3-16. The battalion was formed, trained and financed by the CIA. Many were graduates from the School of the Americas. The B 3-16's counterparts in Guatemala were the G2 battalion, and in El Salvador the Atlacatl battalion. After discovering that the information Antonio had given about a university student resulted in the student's death, he became aware that he was involved with a death squad. Trying to deal with the situation led him to fabricate information, which the death squad found out. This resulted in constant surveillance of his house and two attempts on his life. The children were not allowed to attend school. One night they all escaped. The children were placed with an aunt and the parents made their way to the U.S.

Although the family thought the children were safe, the death squad tracked them down. One day as Dayli and her sister Karen walked to school, a death squad car killed Karen, leaving Dayli alive but with the memory of the murder of her sister. Although Dayli was seven months pregnant, she left Honduras immediately. Her other siblings eventu-

ally left Honduras at ages twelve and fourteen to reunite with their family in the U.S.

This story is not an isolated incident. Such stories are repeated throughout Latin America and among many immigrants to the U.S. Another example is the story of Nestor.

The Story of Nestor

Nestor, also from Honduras, loved school. The Catholic Brothers helped him get a scholarship. Because Nestor's father could no longer work, his mother sold food to try to make money for medication to treat his sister's spinal bifida. The family plot of land no longer provided enough income through agriculture. Nestor, fifteen, was conscious of the economic realities of his family, and he dropped out of school to work at a denim *maquiladora* (factory). *Maquiladoras* demand quotas from workers. Since Nestor was young, it was difficult to meet his quota and the security official would not allow him to leave until he did. This placed him at risk of being attacked by numerous gangs when he left the plant late. He was robbed twice.

Seeing no other way out of their terrible situation, Nestor's family sold a parcel of land and entrusted the money to Nestor to make his way to the United States. Nestor was sixteen and an unaccompanied minor when he entered the United States without inspection (EWI) in April of 2000.

When I met Nestor, he was extremely distraught and could not eat. Looking into his eyes, I could see he was demoralized and felt like a failure to his parents and sister. As I sat with this malnourished child in detention by the INS, I wondered if he would ever feel hope and life again. I helped him reunite with a friend of the family. The friend gave him the opportunity to find work without a work permit. Nestor is one of the thousands of faceless undocumented persons living on our soil and daily walking our streets trying to find work.

U.S. Intelligence and Labor Interests in Central America

The roots of these stories are part of a large social-political tree that was planted at the turn of the century. The north coast of Honduras, the country's richest farm land, was controlled by U.S. fruit

companies. By 1914, they owned nearly a million acres of Honduras's most fertile territory.

In 1954, the second legally and democratically elected president of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, introduced land reforms that threatened U.S. commercial interests. Arbenz expropriated more than 400,000 acres of Rockefeller-owned United Fruit Company holdings held by such stock owners as the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles and his brother, CIA Director Allen Dulles. In response, the CIA began training a small force in Honduras to overthrow Arbenz.

While the CIA was planning to invade and overthrow the Arbenz government, the Fruit Company, Inc. appropriated a desirable section of the central coast of Honduras. Arbenz was overthrown by CIA-financed counterrevolutionaries led by Castillo Armas. George Meany of the AFL backed the overthrow of Guatemala's Arbenz. Armas and his counter-revolutionaries smashed the unions representing the United Fruit workers.

Similar CIA-sponsored operations took place on other occasions as American business interests abroad were threatened by democratically elected leaders who supported citizens' agendas of land reform, unions, redistribution of wealth, nationalization of foreign-owned industry, and protection of workers, consumers and the environment. First, right-wing groups within the country are identified, such as the military. The CIA then hires, trains and works with them to overthrow the existing government using propaganda, infiltration, death squads, and assassination. These efforts culminate in a military coup.

The CIA trains the security apparatus to crack down on the traditional enemies of big business. The highest officials of the AFL-CIO during the George Meany-Lane Kirkland years worked hand-in-hand with the U.S. government to oppose, subvert, and destroy democratic movements across the world, especially in Latin America.

The AFL-CIO used the cover of union solidarity to aid the reactionary foreign policy aims of the U.S. government. George Meany of the AFL union encouraged the CIA to infiltrate the "communist unions of Latin America." The AFL-CIO-created American Institute for Free Labor Development was especially notorious for its CIA connections

and for siding with repressive governments, often against progressive unions.

The victims were said to be "communists," but almost always they are just peasants, liberals, moderates, labor union leaders, political exponents, and advocates of free speech and democracy. SITRATERCO, the Banana Workers' Union in Honduras, was the object of such repression. These actions against labor leaders were justified as part of the war against communism.

The CIA was instrumental in training and equipping Battalion 3-16. This unit was responsible for cracking down on dissidents or "enemies of the state." It was operated under CIA supervision and training and received U.S. instruction in interrogation, surveillance, and hostage rescue. This special counterinsurgency force is considered a death squad.

In the 1950s, the Honduran government formed a counterinsurgency unit. In 1980, this counterinsurgency unit incorporated into the CIA-created intelligence unit that reported directly to the head of the armed forces. Army Battalion 3-16 was created by a need for information. The CIA was instrumental in training and equipping Battalion 3-16. This unit was responsible for cracking down on dissidents or "enemies of the state." It was operated under CIA supervision and training and received U.S. instruction in interrogation, surveillance, and hostage rescue. This special counterinsurgency force is considered a death squad.

The CIA has courted right-wing dictators because they allow wealthy U.S. citizens to exploit

Creative sacred imagination can move us to think beyond national security mindsets and transport us into the kingdom of God where the commonwealth of this Gaia planet serves the common good of the whole earth community.

the country's resources and cheap labor employed in *maquiladora* plants. The poor and middle class fight the wars that stem from CIA actions, from Vietnam to Gulf War II. So, we come full circle to the reasons our family and Nestor find themselves as unwanted economic and political refugees in this free and wealthy country.

The military death squads in Honduras (B3-16), in Guatemala (G2) and in El Salvador (B-Atlatl) were particularly active during the 1980s and early 1990s in disappearing, torturing, and killing "enemies of the state." Thousands of peasants, labor union leaders, journalists, and popular leaders fled their country and entered the U.S. without inspection. Many of their family members, especially children made the hazardous journey north to be reunited with their loved ones and to seek economic survival.

Added to the already noted political and economic history are the new trade policies such as North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Before its implementation, it required Mexico to amend its constitution to allow foreign ownership. 1.5 million Mexican peasants' livelihood was destroyed as cheap subsidized U.S. corn (70 percent cheaper) was dumped in Mexico, resulting in doubling the number of Mexicans making the perilous journey to the U.S. to seek work.

Conclusion

So—we return to Dayli, Dany Marlene, Eduardo, Nestor and the millions of refugees and immigrants in our country who walk our streets. We pass by them or put to our lips the fruits and vegetables their calloused hands harvest. How do we respond? Does our knowledge of the option for the poor and an examination of social realities affect our theology and how we know God? And how do you and I understand a world where God calls us to act on behalf of justice?

We live in times that inspire us to open our minds to the prophetic ministry of imagination that can tear down fences. Creative sacred imagination can move us to think beyond national security mindsets and transport us into the kingdom of God where the commonwealth of this Gaia planet serves the common good of the whole earth community.

Recently I heard the story of one of our newest refugees. An eleven-year-old male child carrying his eighteen-month-old nephew entered the US as unaccompanied minors. From the mouths of babes come prophetic cries compelling us to face God and all that we thought we knew. We are invited to open our ears wider.



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Institute of the Sisters of Mercy

Chapter, 2005, Laredo, Texas

Immigration Chapter Action

The Fourth Institute Chapter encourages us to implement our public stance on immigration in every arena and in every country of the Institute.

Critical Concerns, 2005 Chapter Acts

Immigration Public Stance

The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas strive to witness to Mercy by reverencing the dignity of each person, creating a spirit of hospitality, and pursuing integrity of word and deed in our lives. As an Institute, we recognize an urgent duty and challenge to stand in solidarity with immigrants seeking fullness of life.

We say to you immigrants who are in our midst:

- We welcome you to our land; as a people, we are enriched by your presence.
- We will use our influence to advocate that services be offered to you at ministries sponsored by or directed by the Sisters of Mercy, including our healthcare institutions and clinics, educational facilities, Houses of Mercy, prayer centers, shelters, housing developments, and outreach, pastoral and advocacy ministries.
- We will make every effort to serve you regardless of your immigration status or your ability to pay.

We invite others of good will to join us in our efforts and we will join their efforts to:

- Use our offices, “pulpits,” communications and justice networks, academic and religious settings, and all means of persuasion to advocate for broader welcoming which honors human dignity and explores reform of serious legal restrictions and problems which accompany migration, such as demographics, work and working conditions, exploitation, and trafficking;
- Rethink services to help all of us to live our faith authentically in today’s multicultural and multireligious contexts;
- Seek to secure funding and advocate for resources to help meet immigrant families’ basic needs, including interpreters in their birth language, as well as instruction in the dominant language of their host countries;

Advocate for systemic immigration reform. This reform has as its cornerstone just immigration laws, the goal of family unity and reunification, and the recognition that the root causes of migration lie in environmental, economic and social inequities and in the proliferation of violence.



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Around the Institute on the Immigration Theme

Anne Curtis, R.S.M., Anne Vaccarest, R.S.M., Kathleen Erickson, R.S.M., Marie Brown, Novice

Many Sisters, associates, and companions are involved in either systemic or direct service with the immigration issue, particularly in working with recent refugees or undocumented people who have come into the United States from the southern borders. The following are reflections or reports from Sisters in the Institute.

Sr. Anne Curtis, RSM, Institute Leadership Team. September 12, 2006

Interfaith Telephonic News Conference on Comprehensive Immigration Reform,

Speakers:

Sister Anne Curtis, RSM, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

Dr. Rev. Mari Castellanos, United Church of Christ

Bishop Roy I. Sano, United Methodist Council of Bishops

Bhai Gurdarshan Singh, Guru Gobind Singh Foundation

Bishop Stephen P. Bouman, Metropolitan New York Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, Jr., National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference

Rabbi Scott Sperling, The Union for Reform Judaism, Mid-Atlantic Council

Father Michael Leonard, Chicago Irish Immigrant Support Center

Dr. Khaleel Mohammed, Imam and Professor of Religion at San Diego State University

Thank you and good afternoon to all of you on the call. I am very happy to be speaking for the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and as part of such a strong panel connecting with the advocate community across the country today.

Sisters of Mercy have always ministered to immigrants here in the United States and around the world as part of our commitment to serve the most vulnerable. Our ancestors were immigrants, those who established our roots in this country. For us, immigrants have a human face and a human story—they are the people Sisters of Mercy know and care about, those we have accompanied for 175 years. Today we can do no less as we continue to respond to the gospel's call to welcome the stranger among us.

Sisters of Mercy call on Congress to find a solution that is; 1) rooted in our heritage as a nation that welcomed most of our families as "strangers," and 2) a bill that truly will fix the outdated and broken policies currently in place.

Legislation that makes border enforcement the solution to a broken immigration system must be rejected. We need legislation that gets at the root causes of migration—such as adjusting trade and other policies that contribute to economic and social conditions that force migration in order to ensure survival. U.S. immigration policy cannot be understood in isolation from the worldwide movement of people and the driving forces behind this movement, such as economics, violence, and ecological devastation.

We are very disappointed with the disingenuousness of this summer's immigration hearings. It would be naïve to believe that a "get tough border approach" will protect Americans from those who wish to harm us. We must ask the question, "Why our southern border is the most militarized border in the world between two nations not at war." We are not at war with immigrants who labor in our econ-

omy. In the last six years, the Bush administration has doubled the border enforcement budget, yet four times as many people are still risking entry into the U.S. today looking for jobs, refuge, and reunification with their families. Instead of focusing on enforcement, let us focus on why so many people are forced to leave their own homes and risk such a dangerous journey.

We believe that what is just is also what is practical. What is humane is also what will serve our nation's interests. Allowing people to work legally, to become full participants in our communities and to start the path to lawful permanent residence and citizenship will make our nation safer, our economy stronger and reflect our better selves as a nation.

The Sisters of Mercy will continue to advocate for humane and compassionate immigration legislation. We believe that every person has the right to safe and decent living and working conditions, education, and healthcare. We believe immigrants should have the opportunity to work toward citizenship and secure the unity of their families. This will strengthen American communities, and continue our heritage as a welcoming nation, a nation built by immigrants.

Who among us would not do whatever is necessary to take care of our families? The gospel and the directives of our religious congregation call us to act and speak on behalf of our sisters and brothers who have been silenced. We welcome the invitation to be true to the call. . . . We challenge our representatives in Congress to do the same.

Sr. Anne Vaccarest, R.S.M., Manchester, New Hampshire

African Immigrants

Every Tuesday and Thursday, a group of Sisters from Nashua and Manchester (N.H.) gather in the basement of the former St. George Church in Manchester to give English and citizenship classes to individuals, mostly women, who have come to this country from Sudan, Congo, and Somalia.

With the growing consciousness of the needs of the immigrant population, and particularly after the Fourth Institute Chapter named standing in solidarity with immigrants as a critical concern, Sisters were eager to respond. After listening to a panel made up of immigrants from several differ-

ent countries, Sisters recognized that the most appropriate—and much needed—service they could give as educators would be to teach English as a second language.

Sister Esther Norton began tutoring members of a Bosnian family in English and continues to go to their home in the evening. Knowing that there were immigrants from Africa in Manchester who needed help in English, Sister Esther approached Sister Irene-Marie Pelland, P.M., who is connected with the African Apostolate of the Diocese of Manchester, about starting an ESL program for persons in the city from various African nations. Sister Irene-Marie saw several women at the weekly African Mass and found that they were interested. After learning that there was classroom space available in the basement of the former St. George Church, Sister Esther and Sister Anastasia Smith enlisted the aid of Sisters and others to teach classes and take care of the children while the mothers were in class. Now Sisters Mary Barnea and Gloria Boisclair help with the children while Sisters Anastasia and Bonnie Granfield teach the intermediate/advanced group and Sister Esther works with the beginners. Sister Madonna Moran gives individual tutoring sessions.

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The Sisters are also helping some of the women prepare for citizenship. Sister Anastasia says that they are eager to learn, ambitious, and desire to be good citizens, have a job, and send their children to school. Most of the students are women. Some of them have been in this country one or two years or more and have not been able to learn English because they are at home with their children.

They are industrious and grateful for the opportunity, says Sister Anastasia. This program is good for them because the children can be taken care of while they are in class, she says.

Sr. Kathleen Erickson, R.S.M.

Reflection: "It's About Who We Are"

The issue of immigration has the potential to do us a favor, if we will let it. It is presently a hot issue politically, a critical concern of the Sisters of Mercy, and the topic of debate in many arenas. In what way might it "do us a favor"? It might help us to see who we are.

Immigration is a worldwide phenomenon and it is about poverty. Politicians and activists engage in carefully worded arguments about how to deal with the situation compassionately, what "comprehensive" immigration reform means, and possible solutions. While the rhetoric continues, desperately poor people, more and more of them women, are leaving home, country, children and all that is familiar in order to find a way to support themselves and their families.

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families.

To get to the U.S.-Mexico border, thousands of Latin American people endure grueling journeys, hunger, thirst, and exhaustion. They risk violence and robbery. An estimated third to half of the women are raped. Hundreds lose limbs or even

lives jumping on trains headed north. They crawl through filthy contaminated sewer water in underground tunnels. More than five hundred a year die in the desert or the Rio Grande River.

If people are caught by Border Patrol, some are treated with violence and disrespect. Most are handcuffed, put in chains, and taken to jails or detentions centers where they are strip-searched and processed, given prison uniforms and held for weeks, usually months. Mexican citizens are sometimes deported in the middle of the night in remote areas without food, water, or resources.

Why is this happening? As our technology and communication abilities become more sophisticated, we can, as human beings, see more clearly than ever before that the way the world is put together does not work for far too many people. Greed, unjust systems, racism, colonialism, hatred, economic inequality, environmental degradation, and violence are far too prevalent. We can see the need for change and struggle to understand how to change. It is time to face the shadow side of our existence on this planet. And in examining root causes of the situation, we are stumbling into having to examine our deepest beliefs and spirituality. The change that is needed is an interior one.

In the detention centers, where I provide spiritual counseling to undocumented women, depression and despair are palpable. I experience that despair as "ours," felt by immigrants out of their desperation, and felt by ourselves as an uneasiness about our role in their suffering. At some level, more of us are grasping that people who are paid five to ten dollars a day by U.S. corporations so that we have inexpensive goods in our stores, are poor because of our lifestyle.

In "Exodus," a gripping article about our southern border published in the September 2006 issue of *Mother Jones*, journalist Charles Bowden says, "For several decades now our economic theology has outsourced not only American jobs but also the reality that most people on this planet must endure. We buy clothes made by children and comment on the good price. Oceans have largely sheltered us from the consequences of our actions. But the Third World has finally said hello and this time not even a wall will keep it silent or at bay . . . We have entered the future even as we pretend it is simply a version of our past."

Where will we gather the strength and the wisdom to face the challenge of change demanded by this future? Will our theologians and spiritual leaders be able to call us out of the divisive righteousness of our belief systems to the truth of what we are doing? Are we ready to hear, and to change? Just as an individual may, with the right circumstances and desire, be able to see herself as she really is and take steps to change behaviors, so the human race may be able to grasp the fact that we are all one, that communion and Eucharist are more than symbolic, that separation is an illusion, and that the struggling suffering immigrants who need “comprehensive immigration reform” are us. It could be we are in a collective process similar to an individual’s spiritual dark night.

Immigration is about survival. It’s about haves and have-nots. It seems more and more possible that it is about our future as a human race. In that sense, we are living in a pivotal and exciting time. Spiritual writers, activists, contemplatives and scientists speak of “new consciousness.” For centuries, religions have asserted the primacy of love, the unity of all things, the golden rule. And for centuries, divisions have kept human beings at war, even divisions over religion. Enough. Now we have the capacity to destroy our own environment, one another’s countries, and ultimately our own place on the planet. What will keep us from doing this? A movement from head to heart to gut, from words to realization to practice.

If we go within and examine what we say we believe, and look at our exterior reality, will we, as Beatrice Bruteau, Thomas Merton, Ken Wilbur, Teilhard de Chardin, Barbara Marx Hubbard, and so many others imply, be able to make a shift in consciousness toward the unity of all creation? Will we risk our long-held beliefs to truly explore new ways of articulating and understanding them? Will hu-

man beings, as individuals, be able to let go of our small selves to realize the True Self that is all of us?

Immigration challenges our very way of life. There is a lot of talk about how to resolve the situation. However, as Charles Bowden says, “But in the end, you don’t get to pick solutions. You simply have choices, and by these choices you will discover who you really are. You can turn your back on poor people, or you can open your arms and welcome them into an increasingly crowded country and exhausted landscape.”

What a spiritual and theological challenge! What a challenge to our hearts, our fears, and our future. Immigrants—heroes and heroines of our time who refuse to watch their children starve—are surely playing a part in the favor of our growth as spiritual human beings.

Sr. Marie Brown, Novice. September 3–15, 2006
An Experience of the United Nations and Mercy Global Concerns

The United Nations-Mercy Global Concern in-service provided much fodder for my continuing reflection on what makes the world operate, and how Mercy is to interact with the world. During our days inside the United Nations building or the one across the street where Mercy Global Concern rents a small office and accesses a conference room, I witnessed the fervor and variety of views voiced in these buildings. There’s value in simply being a place where this can happen.

The Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations declares what these nations pledge by their membership.

- to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
- to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
- to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and
- to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

In the end, you don’t get to pick solutions. You simply have choices, and by these choices you will discover who you really are.

Each morning, the Mercy novices and novice ministers hopped off a crowded city bus and headed into one of the buildings. We heard a great deal about the problems of the world and some small, hearty efforts toward solutions. During the second week, I stood on the conference room balcony and saw below dozens of gleaming black limousines lining the street in front of the United Nations complex. "The diplomats," I concluded, "arriving for their sessions."

Countries have not withdrawn their memberships during subsequent decades of internal strife or mutual hostility. I wonder: What motivates a government to join the UN? What motivates it to stay? Is membership a public relations gesture with little resolve to match deeds with words? Is the world a field where power brokers play power games with one another but rarely lose their own lives? Is the way of war an age-old crutch that even mighty nations are afraid to give up? Do smaller, weaker nations simply react in kind because to do otherwise would guarantee their demise at the hands of the powerful? Have wars, including guerrilla wars, between member nations really been last resorts? Is the UN Charter an impossible dream? I admit my ignorance of the complexities, my lack of fresh questions.

On the other hand, what cataclysms have been averted? What genuine positive developments have occurred? What injustices have been corrected? I have faith that good comes when people of good will speak and listen to one another. Thank goodness for the United Nations.

Closer to home (I can walk to Mexico in twenty minutes from our Mercy Novitiate in Laredo, Texas), I wonder what the proposed 700-mile Berlin-Mexico wall will do for our neighborly relations. Who are our neighbors in Mexico: the people, or entities with power who use enough people as means to ends, with little concern for the rest? Is the wall to keep out terrorists? It seems to me that even an average terrorist could figure out how to get around, or 30,000 feet over, such a wall. Why don't we put up a much longer wall along the Canadian border?

One of Laredo's bridges across the Rio Grande is called the World Trade Bridge, opened in 2000. Each day, a couple thousand big trucks laden with goods cross over it into the United States. If, by our UN charter membership, we pledge to promote

"the economic and social advancement of all peoples," then why do many of the Mexican people our trade agreements claim to benefit seek desperately, often risking their lives in river and desert, to come here for a small chance to earn a living for their families? That others besides me ask these questions shows that ordinary people can spot inconsistency between the words and deeds of governments and their multinational corporate allies.

The "Berlin-Mexico wall" moniker came to my mind intuitively. The association occurs to many others, including no less a student of the world than Former Soviet president and 1990 Nobel Peace Prize winner Mikhail Gorbachev. Speaking at a college in Midland, Texas, on October 17, Gorbachev calls us to the high road. "You remember President Reagan standing in Berlin and saying, 'This wall should be torn down.' Now the United States seems to be building almost the Wall of China between itself and this other nation with which it has been associated for many decades and has had cooperation and interaction with. I think what is really needed are ideas and proposals about how to improve that cooperation and work out all of those issues regarding immigration flows. I don't think the U.S. is so weak and so much lacks confidence as not to be able to find a different solution" (*Midland Reporter-Telegram*, 10/18/06).

I do not have worldly answers to the questions I raise. They lead me to the one question I *must* help to answer with my life: "What is the role of Mercy and the way of Mercy in this world?"

Though even this passage has spawned controversy, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* comes to mind:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:

Who are women of Mercy if not women who carry the word of God to the world, by voice and deed? The people of the world have suffered enough from the power of FORCE and annihilation in the name of justice—justice as *punishment*, not as *right relations*. The word of Mercy will have a much more powerful and lasting effect as an irresistible force of attraction. Only in this way can people claim for themselves the will do to what is being asked of them.



Immigration

Perspectives of Bible, Civil Law, and Canon Law

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

(ER) The issues of whether to let immigrants come freely into the U.S. and what sort of controls to establish when they do come are not new questions in our Christian religious tradition.

(VV) The 1983 Code of Canon Law provides a bill of rights for the Christian Faithful based on human dignity and applying to all people, not only citizens of a particular country. The Church has a long history of protecting *ius* and calling people to live up to *ius*, which Latin word includes a right that is also a responsibility in Catholic tradition. Among the rights of individuals specified in the Code of Canon Law particularly applicable to the situation of immigrants are the rights to receive assistance from pastors (canon 213), to worship God as they choose (canon 214), to receive a Christian education (canon 217), as parents, the primary right to see to the education of their children (canon 226), and to receive decent remuneration for work so that they may provide for their own needs and those of their families (canon 231). Canon 227 says that all members of the Christian faithful enjoy “the right to have recognized that freedom which all citizens have in the affairs of the earthly city.” There is also a balance to individual rights. In exercising their rights, the people of God must always take into account the common good, the rights of others and their own duties (canon 223).

(ER) At every stage of biblical history, readers can identify some version of the question, “To survive, shall we pull together and unite as one people, or shall we accommodate ourselves to the world around us and adapt to it?” It is called the tension of “particularism” versus “universalism.” The Pentateuch is governed by a particularist vision which emphasizes the history of a migrating family which has a special destiny because of their relationship with God. The narratives focus on family identity

and tribal relationships among those who believe in the God of Abraham and Sarah, who receive commandments of their God through Moses, and whose postexodus journey out of Egypt leads them to emigrate to a new land.

(VV) Pope Benedict XVI, in his message for the 93rd World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2007, which is dated 18 October 2006, speaks of the migrant family. He begins with the image of Joseph with Mary and Jesus forced to abandon their homeland and take refuge in Egypt that offers “a glimpse of the painful condition in which all migrants live, especially, refugees, exiles, evacuees, internally displaced persons, those who are persecuted.” The Holy Father tells us that the commitment of members of the Catholic Church must be not only to the good of the individual immigrant but also the good of that person’s family. The Church worldwide has come to see that she must defend the rights of immigrants using her authority for advocacy and opening “Centres where migrants are listened to, Houses where they are welcomed, Offices for services offered to persons and families with other initiatives set up to respond to the growing needs in this field.”

(ER) The Book of Ruth answers the question of boundary setting and “immigrant policy” from a universalist perspective. What a gift this immi-

The Holy Father tells us that the commitment of members of the Catholic Church must be not only to the good of the individual immigrant but also the good of that person’s family.

grant, this Moabite woman was to the nation of Israel. She followed Naomi back to the land of Israel, married into the Jewish family of Boaz, converted to Judaism, and became the great-grandmother of King David.

(VV) Noting that the world is “characterized by the global phenomenon of migration,” Pope John Paul II, in his 2005 address for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, noted that not only the receiving countries, but also the immigrants themselves can benefit from the journey. “By introducing themselves into a new environment, immigrants often become more aware of who they are, especially when they miss the persons and values that are important to them.” Our previous Pope calls us to balance our response to immigrants: “It is essential to exclude on the one hand assimilationist models that tend to transform those who are different into their own copy, and on the other, models of marginalization of immigrants, with attitudes that can even arrive at the choice of *apartheid*. The way to take is the path of genuine integration with an open outlook that refuses to consider solely the differences between immigrants and the local people.”

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“characterized by the global
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Pope John Paul II . . . noted that
not only the receiving countries,
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journey.

(ER) The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe a postexilic return to Judah from Babylon in which pastors with a particularist vision tried to refocus the life of the returnees on their religious identity. They directed believers to separate themselves from spouses who did not share their faith or religious traditions. But this strictness and absolutism gave way to inclusion of social currents that would,

from a particularist perspective, be considered alien. In the wisdom literature of Job, Proverbs, the Song of Songs, Sirach, Qoheleth, and Wisdom of Solomon, the pastoral writers recognize the value of learning received from “the outsiders.” They describe Jewish wisdom as marked by a broad inclusivity, ultimately a distillation and integration of the “scientia” found in the secular world. Much of the teaching in these books echoes the universal enlightenment of the great spiritual traditions familiar to Jewish theologians—those of the “foreign philosophers” of Egypt, Babylonia and Persia.

(VV) Benedict XVI in an address to the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People on 15 May 2006, said that all Christians “must open their hearts especially to the lowly and the poor, in whom Christ himself is present in a singular way.” Way back in April of 1963, in *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII said that every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence and that the rights of immigrants as persons must be respected wherever they are.

(ER) In the New Testament, a similar tension is personified in the competing values of James of Jerusalem and Paul of Tarsus, apostle to the Gentiles. Luke describes a national and ethnic crisis of particularism versus universalism in Acts 15. According to James, if Gentiles without any biblical tradition “cross the border” into the community of those who follow Jesus, they must take on the religious practices and customs of the residents, including circumcision and the dietary laws. Paul’s view was less strict, more universalist and accommodating. A compromise was reached that required the “outsiders” to observe marriage and dietary laws, but spared the men from the requirement of circumcision (Acts 15:19–20). Since women did not have to undergo circumcision, the fact that gentile men could become members of the community without this ordeal meant that families could more easily enter the Christian community together. This was probably a pastoral compromise that took longer than one summit meeting in Jerusalem to hammer out!

(VV) Pope Benedict XVI in his address for 2007 given in October 2006 says it is his duty to call the attention of the world to the families of refu-

gees whose conditions are even worse than in the past. "Everything must also be done to guarantee the rights and dignity of the families and to assure them housing facilities according to their needs." Pope Benedict notes especially the plight of women who "end up as victims of trafficking of human beings and of prostitution." Benedict XVI says that part of the solution is for Church members to work for family reunification for those who are not citizens of the country in which they seek work.

(ER) This universalist tendency in both the OT and NT informs the stance Sisters of Mercy take on the immigration issue, as they urge legislators to avoid harsh and punitive measures as a solution to immigration reform. They are particularly sensitive to the plight of families, and separation of spouses from each other, and children from their parents.

(VV) The website justiceforimmigrants.org offers a Catholic perspective on immigration issues and quotes the US bishops calling for reform that includes statements such as "many migrants are compelled to leave their homes out of economic necessity in order to provide even the most basic of needs for themselves and their families." The bishops also note that the backlog of visas for other family members often results in waits of five to fifteen or more years for families to be reunited. That must change. Another aspect of the situation that must be considered is that "The U.S. economy depends upon the labor provided by migrants."

(ER) Sister Patricia Talone, R.S.M. (Merion), works at the Catholic Health Association in St. Louis, which represents more than 2,000 health facilities. Her colleague, Sister Carol Keehan, D.C., wrote a letter on behalf of CHA to the Senate Judiciary Committee on Immigration Reform on March 9, 2006. She opposed H.R. 4437, and urged that comprehensive immigration reform include family-based provisions, as well as "programs for temporary workers and earned legalization for those already in the country." She protested harsh and punitive provisions that would criminalize undocumented presence in the country, and also punish those who assisted the undocumented. In the name of CHA, she supported an alternative bill, S.1033, that balanced "strengthened enforcement and

The universalist tendency in both the OT and NT informs the stance Sisters of Mercy take on the immigration issue, as they urge legislators to avoid harsh and punitive measures as a solution to immigration reform. They are particularly sensitive to the plight of families.

expanded legal channels for entry." She summed up the principles on which immigration reform should be based—a course that "maintains our ideals as a nation of immigrants, restores the rule of law, and protects our homeland."

(VV) The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* proclaims (# 2241) "The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the *foreigner* in search of security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him." The *Catechism* also says (# 2433) that access to employment must be open to all "without discrimination: men and women, healthy and disabled, natives and immigrants."

(ER) For Sisters of Mercy today, there may be another protective and redeeming instinct that seeks to welcome rather than to exclude the stranger, and to stick up for the less powerful ethnic groups who are trying to find better paying jobs in the U.S. In a review of Niall Ferguson's *The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York Times Book Review, Sunday, Nov. 12, 2006, p. 14), Mr. Montefiore describes how a preoccupation with ethnic exclusivity and nationalism fostered brutalities of ethnic cleansing in both WW I and WW II, notably the Holocaust, the "first and only industrialized genocide." The same preoccupation with ethnic exclusivity

has led to state-sponsored massacres by Serbian Catholics against Bosnian Muslims in the former Yugoslavia; by Catholic Hutus against Catholic Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi; by Sunni Muslims against Shiite Muslims in Iraq; and presently by Muslim Sudanese against Black African Arabs in Darfur.

(VV) The Interfaith Statement in Support of Comprehensive Immigration Reform dated 14 October 2005 and signed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops mentions the Hebrew Bible (Lev 19:33–34) reminding the Jewish People they were once strangers in Egypt plus the New Testament (Matt 25:35) Jesus calling Christians to welcome the stranger and reminding us what we do for the least we do for Jesus (Matt 25:40). The document is further enriched by noting that the Qur'an tells us we should serve God and do good to those who are in need including neighbors who are strangers (4:36) while the Hindu Scripture Taittiriya Upanishad tells us "The guest is a representative of God (1.11.2)."

Of course, the primary document about immigration from a Catholic Church perspective is *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope* published jointly by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops and *Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano* on 22 January 2003 (available on the USCCB website). A key quote from the introduction (§ 6) to that document continues to prick my conscience and also seems to summarize the various quotations from the Old Testament, New Testament, Qur'an and Upanishad:

The question for immigration reform—referring to the U.S.-Mexico border problem—is the balance between the demands of maintaining security against wrongdoers, and compassion for families seeking a better life.

"We judge ourselves as a community of faith by the way we treat the most vulnerable among us."

(ER) In urging a comprehensive and compassionate approach to immigration reform, Sisters of Mercy are resisting the tendency of human beings, when they feel politically or economically distressed, to get preoccupied with ethnic exclusivity and nationalism as a solution to their social problems. In recent years, we have seen the cost to citizens of Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Iraq, and Sudan when military forces try to impose hard and fast geographical boundaries based on ethnicity, language, and religion. It has in many cases lead to uncontrollable, murderous violence of neighbor against neighbor, without regard for each other's humanity, slaughtering each other by the hundreds of thousands. Those who try to flee the rampage find that flight makes them even more vulnerable to violence.

(VV) In a joint statement, the bishops of Mexico and the United States in June 2006 reported that their investigations found that those who travel "from Central America through Mexico in an attempt to reach the United States are subject to exploitation and abuse" and they "have no protection of law to ensure their well-being and safe passage" even though they "migrate in order to support themselves and their families and intend no harm to the national security of Mexico or the United States." The bishops called upon both countries to protect the human rights of migrants.

(ER) The question for immigration reform—referring to the U.S.-Mexico border problem—is the balance between the demands of maintaining security against wrongdoers, and compassion for families seeking a better life. Will too fanatical a determination to separate populations make social stability and real economic progress less likely for people on both sides of the border?

(VV) Pope John Paul II in his 2005 address about immigrants calls us to the solution of honest "dialogue between peoples of different cultures in a context of pluralism that goes beyond mere tolerance and reaches sympathy." The immediately past Holy Father says that the very juxtaposition of immigrants and local citizens tends to encourage an exchange of cultural values which we as

Illegal immigrants from Mexico to the U.S. are mostly young, single men . . . In Mexico, some rural villages are emptied of men, leaving many women without prospects for husbands.

One aspect of immigration reform means focusing on this imbalance.

Catholic need to encourage. He goes on to say that even in the efforts of Christians to proclaim Christ's gospel to all creation, we "must do so with respect for the conscience of others."

(ER) Illegal immigrants from Mexico to the U.S. are mostly young, single men, in part because of the physical difficulties of the journey north. This fact about the gender pattern of immigration has an impact on populations in both countries, according to a recent analysis in the *New York Times* (Nov. 30, 2006, p. C 3). Once in the U.S., men cluster in all-male enclaves as they search for jobs to earn money. Ultimately they are less likely to find wives, start families and establish a pattern of social stability. In Mexico, some rural villages are emptied of men, leaving many women without prospects for husbands. One aspect of immigration reform means focusing on this imbalance. "It is common for villages to have many unmarried young women, but virtually no young men. The women who are married often go without their husbands for years. The remaining men are more

likely to treat their women badly, knowing they can always find another partner."

(VV) In his 2006 address for the 92nd World Day of Migrants and Refugees (18 October 2005), Benedict XVI made his first formal address on the topic of immigration. He noted that "one of the most recognizable signs of the times" is the increase in immigration of peoples. He also noted that the most recent studies of this phenomenon show an increasing number of women immigrants and refugees, the "feminization" of the movement since in the past "it was mainly men who emigrated" although women sometimes accompanied their husbands or father in that movement. Now, "Women cross the border of their homeland alone in search of work in another country" and such a woman often becomes "the principal source of income for her family." This change in the face of immigration has led to an increase in "trafficking of human beings—especially women—which flourishes where opportunities to improve their standard of living or even to survive are limited." The holy father says "The Church sees this entire world of suffering and violence" and calls all Christians "to help these brothers and sisters in their suffering."

Rev. Manuel Viera, O.F.M., works with me at the Cincinnati tribunal and is also in charge of Hispanic ministry for Butler County in the Archdiocese. It is his observation that the mostly Mexican women with whom he ministers are particularly gratified that the Holy Father seems to be the first person to publicly note the plight of women who migrate alone and that the pope actually calls the world to come to their aid. Surely Catherine McAuley would have embraced the needs of these women today.



Our Shadow in Historical Perspective

Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta, Vatican II—1998 Chapter

Sophie McGrath, R.S.M.

Editor's Note: The First section of this study appears as "Our Shadow in Historical Perspective" in *The MAST Journal* 16.1 (2006), pp. 28–41.

Having highlighted the bonding and shadow elements in the original Baggot Street Community and the bonding and shadow aspects of the Parramatta congregation from its origin in 1888 to the 1950s, we will now reflect upon the bonding and shadow elements of the Parramatta congregation from Vatican II to the 1998 Chapter.

Vatican II to 1980s

There had been rumblings of change throughout the 1950s leading to such developments as approximately half the Sisters of Mercy congregations in Australia forming a federation and the other half a union. The Parramatta leaders actively participated in the formation of the federation and our horizons were broadened to some extent.¹ Various modifications occurred during the 50s such as the elimination of the train on the habit and the adoption of a soft black guimp in place of the white starched one, but the big challenge came with the special 1968–69 General Chapter. All religious congregations after the promulgation of the Vatican II Council *Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life* were directed to hold such a Chapter.²

Each religious congregation was challenged to the renewal and adaptation of its congregation in the light of the gospel, its founding charism and such relevant new disciplines as psychology and sociology. "Renewal" was considered to be concerned with the spiritual lives of the religious and "adaptation" with their updated response to contemporary society. The challenge was "not to throw the baby out with the bath water"—to determine what was essential and what was accidental to our particular tradition of religious life.³

The following are some of the changes that were made during the 1970s in the Parramatta Congregation in an effort to adapt to contempo-

rary culture: greater consultation of Sisters especially in matters of apostolate; more decisions to be made locally; gradual phasing out of bells; less formality in community living; functional silence; chapter of faults gave way to renewal of life discussions; a more homely and feminine touch to decor in the convent was introduced; there was opportunity for recreation beyond the convent and more opportunity was given for holidaying outside the convent with the introduction of "service" during the holiday period to meet special needs; importantly provision was made for more family contact, though it was regulated.⁴

The many changes of this period were fraught with ambivalence for the Parramatta Congregation. Although many of the changes were generally welcomed, the bonding elements appeared less evident and the shadows were abundant.⁵

Bonding

Catherine McAuley and Mercy Charism

The most significant bonding element in this period was the beginning of in-depth study and reflection upon the life of Catherine McAuley and the Mercy charism.⁶

Education in Canon Law

One of the most pivotal events in this period was a series of lectures given to the Sisters on law by Fr. Wally Black, M.S.C. While Fr. Black's central thesis was that "good law is life giving and growth producing" he also made clear the primacy of conscience and the necessity for the maturity and privacy of the Sisters being cultivated and respected. This message in some cases degenerated into the cultivation of individualism at the expense of community building.⁷ The request of a Sister to study canon law at a tertiary level was granted.

Increased Educational Opportunities

More Sisters were given the opportunity of tertiary education; over the years every Sister was given the opportunity of participating in a renewal program.

Broadening of Horizons

The horizons of the Sisters were broadened through the introduction of pilgrimages and the studying of Sisters overseas, increased interest in the affairs of the wider community, especially the welfare of women, and a greater emphasis on cooperating with the laity.⁸

Greater Acceptance and Appreciation of Differences

Use of the various social sciences, especially psychology, provided a means of helping Sisters, especially through renewal programs, appreciate the various personality types that inevitably occur within communities. A related development was the growing tendency to develop the special talents of Sisters and place them in ministries suited to them.⁹

Ongoing Concern to Maintain Basic Values

It is noticeable that, at the various chapters during this period, the following were affirmed: community prayer, most notably the office (prayer of the Church); daily mass; the annual retreat; hospitality and the tender care of the sick. With each succeeding chapter, however, the directions and recommendations became fewer and more general, with most decisions finally being made at the local level and diversity was favored over uniformity. Very few customs survived as they appeared to be imposing structures, and structures were regarded by many with serious suspicion.¹⁰

Helpful New Bonding Customs and Structures

There were positive moves such as the introduction of eulogies at the funeral masses of our Sisters and the provision for congregational meetings that brought us together as a group, though genuine interaction was inevitably circumscribed by time and numbers. The custom of the sacristan putting up outside the chapel the name of the Sister whose feast day it was or the special mass intention for the

day was kept in an updated form by the Generalate Office issuing monthly intention sheets which function as a unifying means of communication.

Shadows

This period of cataclysmic change produced many shadows.

Changes in the Habit

The most stressful tension in the congregation was caused by the series of Chapter Acts involving changes to the habit, which led ultimately to the wearing of more contemporary dress and making the wearing of the veil optional.¹¹

Study and Full-Time Commitment in the Apostolate, With Community Responsibilities

Tensions were caused by Sisters studying and working full time in the apostolate as well as taking special responsibilities in the community e.g., helping with infirmary work.

The horizons of the Sisters were broadened through the introduction of pilgrimages and the studying of Sisters overseas, increased interest in the affairs of the wider community.

Less Communal Prayer

There was a gradual lessening of praying together and this was often perceived as a deterioration of the common life and weakening of community.¹²

Problem of Cars

There developed at times a resentment of "the have" and "the have nots," most obviously regarding those who could drive and had access to a car and those who did not. Gradually, individual cars required by ministry became the norm rather than

shared community cars. This bothered some from the perspective of poverty.¹³

Loneliness

As Sisters were permitted to spend part of the holiday period with their family and groups of Sisters were permitted to rent holiday accommodation, some Sisters experienced loneliness during holidays when they had no family to go to and were staying in a convent situation.¹⁴

Lack of Genuine Dialogue

Tension persisted in the various attempts made during this period to discern the essentials from the nonessentials in the Mercy way of life. Calm discussion proved difficult and problems were swept under the carpet in the name of harmony. Genuine dialogue within the different schools of thought in the congregation was avoided.¹⁵

The role of the local leader
(superior) became blurred in an
effort to promote
coresponsibility at the local level
and the authority of subsidiarity
of the local superior was lost in
the group, leaving the way open
to manipulation of the group by
strong personalities.

Limitations of Small Communities

Problems were caused by the decrease in the size of communities e.g., the accommodation of "difficult" members. People living in smaller groups often found it hard to organise time to pray, eat, and recreate together.¹⁶

Lack of Clear Authority

The role of the local leader (superior) became blurred in an effort to promote coresponsibility at

the local level and the authority of subsidiarity of the local superior was lost in the group, leaving the way open to manipulation of the group by strong personalities. With the lack of clear leadership, the situation easily led to the practical acceptance of mediocrity and individualism.¹⁷

Problems Associated with TV Viewing

There were problems associated with the introduction of TV to the convent community room. Apart from the problem of a single person or group dominating the TV, community life was eroded by excessive TV viewing.¹⁸

Privacy/Community

Implementing the new understanding of law tended to generate a tension between legitimate privacy and openness in community.

Poverty, Individual Conscience, Accountability

A more nuanced understanding of poverty and the recognition of the religious as a mature person making responsible decisions generated tension between individual conscience and accountability to the community and between updated living conditions and simplicity of life-style.¹⁹

Social Sciences a Two-Edged Sword

As a result of the various social sciences being used as tools to help in renewal education, psychology tended to replace genuine Christian spirituality and the life-giving aspects of the ascetical tradition of religious life were discredited. There were influences also from the New Age movement. By the late 1980s, there was a weakening of the previously strong Eucharistic tradition in the congregation as daily mass attendance became more difficult or was not given a priority. In addition a chapel or prayer room with the Eucharistic presence was at times considered an optional extra in a newly formed house in contrast to Catherine McAuley's view that the chapel was the most important room in the house.²⁰

Difficulties in Faith Sharing

During this period, attempts were made to foster faith sharing through such structures as review of

life groups, discussion groups etc. and beginning the year with community goal setting meetings in a gospel setting. Such structures generally were not maintained or were used infrequently since faith sharing and discussion in local communities did not flourish in an atmosphere fraught with tension.²¹

Difficulties with Retreat Days

Small communities, the recognition of individual differences, and the practice of functional silence, as well as a strong reaction against structures, made it difficult to arrange monthly retreat days. After modifying the custom, reducing them in number, and calling them recollection days, it was eventually decided that each Sister would arrange them for herself. Finally the custom fell virtually into disuse.²²

Loss of Small Communal Customs

Many small customs, which nourished a sense of community bonding, fell into disuse except among some of the more senior Sisters; e.g., saying together for a deceased Sister for a month after her death the following traditional prayer: "Absolve we beseech you O Lord the soul of our dear Sister departed that being dead to this world she may live unto you and whatever sins she may have committed in this life through human frailty may you in your infinite goodness and mercy pardon her and bring her to the joys of everlasting life. Amen."²³

Loss of Members

Particularly during the middle of this period, many Sisters left the congregation and few entered. This did not strengthen the morale of those remaining, who often genuinely grieved for those who had gone even though they might consider that it was best for them. There was, too, the problem of creating an adequate formation program to replace the pre-Vatican II one. This process at times generated tension between the novice mistress, the congregational leader, and other interested parties.²⁴

In her opening address at the 1986 Chapter, Sister Ellen Conway observed:

As I see it at present, we are caught in a movement. New vistas and new discoveries await us. We do not know what God has in store for us as we seek Him relentlessly and with single-mindedness . . . The movement that I mentioned earlier is a movement

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of the grass roots, Therein lies its strength and its vigour and its power, whilst at the same time, it is very new and tender and needs to be nurtured, It can withstand the elements of tension and strain because of its suppleness, but it is too early to enclose it or shape it clearly. This could well be possible, and perhaps, needed in a few years.²⁵

The 1990s—Focussing on the 1998 Chapter

The information for this period was supplied by the congregation at the May 1998 congregational meeting, from the floor of the meeting, and through written comments.²⁶ In the following, I have used the plural "we" to indicate our corporate identity. We are well aware that what one of us says or does affects all of us. If one of us speaks and/or acts wisely, we are all the stronger for it; if one of us speaks and/or acts superficially, we are all the weaker for that.

In the following, I have been faithful in recording the spoken and written comments that one or some of us made concerning our strengths and weaknesses. Not all of these comments show equal insight or carry equal weight, but they are there for us to own collectively and assess honestly.

Bonding Elements

We were asked to describe the positive aspects of ourselves as a congregation. In response, we nominated our willingness to change, to take risks and support new ministries, to trust God (Providence) and one another. We saw ourselves as optimistic and forward looking, discerning the signs of the times,

responding practically to perceived needs and being prepared to think laterally about ministries.

We pointed out the creativity and zeal and perseverance evident in many of the Sisters working in various ministries. We applauded the initiative of congregational members in educating themselves for the sake of service—responding to the perceived needs in the Church.

We also saw ourselves as being ready to share our resources and to be at the cutting edge of things; e.g., women's concerns, AIDS victims, commitment to empowering the poor; advocacy for the underprivileged.

We claimed an affection and forbearance for one another. We claimed also a bondedness to one another that expressed itself in loyalty to and love of the congregation. Associated with this attitude, we expressed a sense of gratitude to past Sisters—those valiant and creative women who had gone before. We saw value in our community celebrations, especially our jubilee celebrations and requiem masses for our Sisters, which fittingly paid tribute to the life of our Sisters and a faith in eternal life and the Communion of Saints.

We claimed faithfulness to Catherine McAuley's charism and spirituality, trust in God, a commitment to gospel values and prayerfulness.

We saw as a positive element at that time the fact that there are Sisters interested in formation who show initiative, a positive attitude to religious life and a sense of responsibility for the congregation within the wider context of the Church and the world beyond. We saw this and their promotion of Mercy associates as life giving to us in most challenging times.

We saw ourselves as being grateful and conscious of the abundant blessings we had received—a listening leadership, vibrant younger religious, supportive older religious, wise stewardship, material resources, tender care of the sick, opportunities for professional training for ministry. We expressed appreciation of the welfare state, which provides benefits that enables us to work in ministries that do not pay well or do not pay at all but are needed for the welfare of Australia. We also appreciated our cultural heritage, especially our musical heritage.

As in the previous periods, hospitality came through as a valued aspect of our life together and in relation to the wider Church and community. Visita-

tion was also nominated as an important community ministry that was maintained in many guises.

Shadow

From the floor, the opinion was expressed that we are good at listing our positive points but avoid confronting our shadow. It was suggested that, for genuine growth to take place, it is important that, as a congregation, we name our shadow and begin to deal with it honestly.

We saw ourselves as being overly concerned about public opinion and jealous of our reputation. Allied with this, we saw an overly perfectionist attitude.

We claimed that judgmentalism was a destructive shadow element and was often associated with lack of communication between Sisters. Allied with this, we saw a critical attitude to new ministries. We asserted that some Sisters are still hurting over the past. We lamented that there are cliques and some Sisters are cruelly ostracised. We accused ourselves at times of gossiping and lacking in confidentiality.

We expressed the opinion that we were individually comfortable and failed to share. We are conscious that individual ministries can lead to self-centredness. We saw also the shadow of personal and communal ambition as well as an unhealthy competitiveness. We thought that we appeared to fear being challenged, conflict, and the future, and were waiting to be directed to action, leaving initiative to the leadership team.

We regretted that we do not talk to one another about the things that really matter. As a congregation, we do not listen to one another talking at depth about our different ministries. There is no structure to provide for this. On congregational occasions, on the whole, we simply "bounce off one another" with superficial encounters.

We recognized that overactivity leads to burn-out and that our largely unstructured lifestyle can bring confusion. This we saw as not being helped by our unwillingness to deal with conflict or to challenge one another. We detected a general lack of sharing—goods, interests, time to listen—which leads to loneliness. We regretted our lack of faith sharing at a deeper levels. We also regretted that the stories of Sisters' faith journeys only come out in eulogies after their death.

We considered that too often the demands of ministry were put before the needs of the Sisters; e.g., the aged. We saw Sisters valued for doing, not being; we saw the work ethic being overemphasised. We lamented the lack of appraisal of our lifestyle.

We accused ourselves of complacency (even snobbery and "in the rut-ness"). We detected a misuse of power—in the congregation and in ministry in the schools. We named irresponsibility with resources as a shadow. We regretted the decline in the ministry of visitation

We lamented our lack of interest in current affairs and justice issues. We regretted that sometimes outside resources are neglected—not using expertise available outside the congregation. We asked the question: "Is our acceptance of welfare benefits selfish?"

Most aspects of our shadow articulated above may be connected with a positive aspect of our position. For example the last question asked can be linked to the bonding element noted above that pensions supplied by the welfare state to our senior members permits them to engage in ministries that do not pay well or at all. It also means that wage- or stipend-earning younger Sisters do not have to seek highly paid positions to support the older members of the congregation.

Conclusion

We have now been presented with a brief listing of the bonding elements and shadow of the Baggot Street foundation community, the Parramatta foundation community and its development up to the 1950s, the post-Vatican II Parramatta congregation into the 1980s and the Parramatta congregation of the 1990s as we perceive it now in 1998. From this historical perspective, we can observe obvious similarities despite the dramatic developments in the culture of religious life.

Constant factors evident in the shadow side of these different historical groups are: the frailty of human nature leading to a lifelong struggle to attain a spiritual balance; jealousy among members; irritation caused by the friction of different personality types; lack of communication; criticism of those in ministries not one's own; sacrifice of the individual to the community and abuse of the community by discontented individuals; discontent by

some with the present situation looking for a stricter discipline and more structures geared to an enclosed monastic tradition in the case of the Baggot Street foundation community and in the post-Vatican II period in the Parramatta congregation the discontented seeking for an ever greater relaxation in discipline and structures geared more to an individualistic, secular way of life.

We lamented our lack of interest
in current affairs and justice
issues. We regretted that
sometimes outside resources
are neglected—not using
expertise available outside the
congregation.

Constant factors in the bonding elements that held the different groups together are: a genuine affection for one another; a sense of loyalty for the group; a genuine desire to serve the poor, sick, and ignorant; a willingness to change, but a desire to maintain the essentials and not alter the fundamental character of the Institute; a commitment to hospitality; an acknowledgment of the importance of prayer, individual and communal; a recognition of the Eucharist as the sign and source of the unity of the community; a tender care of the sick.

Also evident from the Baggot Street foundation community to the present time has been a strong sense of the congregation as being at the service of the Church and hence the wider community and not an end in itself. It is significant, too, that from the time of Catherine, while there have been some negative relationships with the clergy, the usual situation has been one of mutual respect, friendship, and intelligent cooperation. Also from the beginning we have involved the laity in our ministry.

As has been seen, Catherine contributed to the shadow side of the original Baggot Street community through her excessive rigorism, especially concerning poverty. She also damaged her own health though using instruments of penance that she did not recommend to her community. It would seem

that under the direction of her second mistress of novice at the Presentation Convent, Catherine came under the influence of a woman who was schooled in the pessimism of Jansenism, the Catholic version of the hard heresy of Calvinism.

Factors that help a relationship
succeed: time must be invested
in it; the miracle of
compliment-encouragement,
gratitude . . . working on
"what can be" rather than
"what has been" and forgiveness.

It took Catherine some time to attain a saving balance. She was, however, by nature and grace more in tune with the spirituality of Frances de Sales, which has been described as "a devout humanism." Although the early Baggot Street community suffered the consequences of the shadow caused by natural inadequacies, personality differences and spiritual immaturity, Catherine had confidence in her Sisters. She held them in respectful affection and challenged them to leadership.

We are in the process of striving to attain a balance during this time of transition in religious life. There is strong evidence that we want to strengthen our community life together, especially in increased prayer and genuine presence to one another.

We have expressed a consciousness of judgmentalism in the congregation and, even though we may be guilty of it ourselves, we do not like it. (It has been observed that criticism of others is usually autobiographical of the critic.) We know that judgmentalism is radically un-Christian and destructive of the individual and the congregation.

It is a reality of our congregational life that some people are dismissed and judged as wanting in various areas and even ostracized. They are spoken of in their absence without respect. We do not want this as a congregation.

There is no doubt that we will continue talking about one another. Women especially tend to be interested in people and our gossiping is the missing-

the-mark aspect of a basically life-giving gift. Our ideal is that we genuinely appreciate the differences among us. To some of us some, others appear as eccentrics, sometimes amusing, at other times irritating. The challenge is that we genuinely love one another in Christ and when we speak of one another, even if that person has to all appearances acted irresponsibly and selfishly, we speak of them with deep respect. No matter what we think of them, it is a basic tenant of our faith that each person is precious to God and hence to us.

Praying together regularly, even when such prayer is not to the liturgical taste of each member in the community, is an essential part of our bonding. Listening to one another speak of the things that matter to us individually and as a group is important. We need structures to help us do this and, hopefully, we have reached a stage of maturity in our post-Vatican II renewal where we do not flee in fear, but can discuss the pros and cons of structures (customs and rituals) that can be life giving and help us to face together divisive issues and as far as possible resolve them.

The psychologist Peter Cantwell points out that there are five main factors that help a relationship succeed: time must be invested in it; the miracle of compliment-encouragement, gratitude; being big-hearted rather than tight-fisted; working on "what can be" rather than "what has been" and forgiveness, which is the oil of a relationship. Cantwell was referring to marriage.²⁷ Do you think that it applies equally well to our community life?

Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M., in her article "Religious Life: Where Does it Fit in Today's Church?" considers one factor

. . . that keeps us from adopting common practices and behaviors is a fear of restorationism, a concern that someone will try to reverse the passage of history and return to the practices we discarded years ago. We can see, if we reflect on the learnings of these intervening years, that such a reversal is not even remotely possible.

She continues:

Our failure, however, is that for the most part we have not identified and reflected on the learnings of these years of renewal. We have not asked ourselves how our current practices express our love for Jesus Christ and our commitment to the Church in a credible way, how they support and enhance our mission, how they promote greater passion for

the gospel and for the service of the poor and needy. Our lack of critical reflection on our present reality leaves the task of evaluation to those outside our midst who are often ill-informed and intemperate in their judgment.²⁸

It is now several decades since our renewal Chapter of 1968–69 when we faced the initial task of adapting our way of life to contemporary times. The period since then has been turbulent, and the intervening years have seen dramatic changes. It is now time to honestly attempt to evaluate our present situation and experiment with introducing checks and balances that will redress present destructive tendencies. Presently there is a strong grass-roots movement, especially among our newest members, for the development of a healthy gospel community life in the Mercy tradition in the congregation. Our task is no less daunting than that which faced Catherine as she attempted to adapt monastic customs for an apostolically active community and to sort out the essentials from the accidentals in religious life.

We stand in 1998 with material and educational resources that the foundation community of Baggot Street would not have imagined. We have all had opportunities of education and renewal that have broadened our horizons and introduced us to disciplines of knowledge that should have helped us to mature to the stage where we do not feel threatened by the prospect of honestly evaluating our present situation and dialoguing respectfully with those in the community who hold different views. Genuine union and charity is not threatened by us sharing in love our various perceptions of our way of life.

That we are able to undertake this dialogue depends upon our spiritual development and we do not have the data to compare that with the original Baggot Street community. Unlike them, however, we now have a long tradition of Mercy upon which to draw, and numerous Sisters of Mercy from our congregation who have died and according to our consoling doctrine of the Communion of Saints are united with us in love and can support us in prayer. May they pray for us that we be granted the gifts of wisdom and openness to the truth and great respect for each other that are essential to our facing together our real shadow in honest dialogue.



Notes

- 1 Details of this participation are found in "History of the Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta, Background Paper, No 6, Government Part 1," (henceforth Government, I), 11 (PA).
- 2 "Life-style of the Parramatta Congregation, Background Paper No.5, Part II, "From the 1950s to Contemporary Times," (henceforth, Life-Style II), 62. (PA).
- 3 See such publications as E. Gambari, *Journey Toward Renewal*, New York, 1968; E.E. Grollmes (ed.), *Vows But No Walls*, New York, 1968.
- 4 "The Spirituality of the Parramatta Congregation, Background Paper No.4, Part III, (henceforth Spirituality III), 45–47, (PA); Life-Style, II, 33–63.
- 5 Oral History.
- 6 Spirituality III, 24–26.
- 7 Spirituality III, 46.
- 8 Spirituality III, 16.
- 9 Spirituality III, 41–2. Here it is noted, among other things, that the Sisters of Mercy of Australia in 1977 invited a sociologist, Fr. Michael Gaine, director of the Liverpool Institute of Socio-Religious Studies, to give the keynote address; and that the Parramatta Sisters of Mercy were put in touch with the American Centre for Planned Change, which was designed to bring the findings of the social sciences to the aid of religious in their renewal efforts.
- 10 See Chapter *Decisions of the Sisters of Mercy*, Parramatta for the years 1969, 1975, 1981, 1986 (PA).
- 11 Life-Style II, 38–49.
- 12 Life-Style II, 54.
- 13 Life-Style II, 70–71.
- 14 Life-Style II, 34–36.
- 15 Life-Style II, 54–61.
- 16 Life-Style II, 57.
- 17 Life-Style II, 27–31.
- 18 Life-Style II, 63.
- 19 Spirituality III, 19–22, 46.
- 20 Spirituality III, 12–13; Oral History.
- 21 Spirituality III, 28–29.
- 22 Spirituality III, 8–9, 31–32.
- 23 Oral History.
- 24 Life-Style II, 72. Spirituality III, 19–23.
- 25 Sister Ellen Conway, 'Opening Address,' *Directory and Chapter Acts, The Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta, 1986*, 19, (PA).
- 26 Copies to be found in 1998 Chapter File, (PA).
- 27 Dr. Peter Cantwell, "Why Relationships Succeed or Fail," *Inform—Current Thinking on Catholic Issues*, No 56, 3.
- 28 Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M., "Religious Life: Where Does It Fit in Today's Church?" *Spiritual Renewal*, 1997.

Book Review

Weavers of the Tapestry by Sister Kathrine Bellamy

Anne Beresford

Genre: Non-fiction: A History of the Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland

Format: Paperback, 963 pages, b&w photos

Published: May 2006

Price: \$29.95

ISBN: 1-894463-84-6.

Publisher: Flanker Press
St. John's Newfoundland, 2006
[www.flankerpress.com/
weavers_tapestry.shtml](http://www.flankerpress.com/weavers_tapestry.shtml)

Sister Kathrine Bellamy was encouraged by the Leadership Team of the Sisters of Mercy to write this history, telling the story of the Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland. For six years, she researched the information that she gathered from extensive reading of the Annals and Archives of the Sisters of Mercy found in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia, Rhode Island, and Newfoundland; historical texts written about the church in Newfoundland; local newspapers from 1842 to the present; *Pathways of Mercy*, an earlier history of the Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland; and especially from her conversations with her many friends and acquaintances who put the human touch on her story.

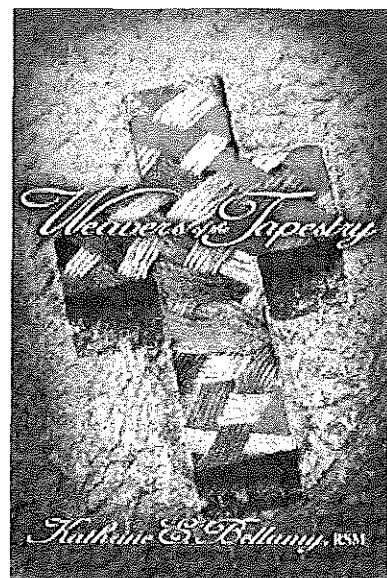
The book contains an extensive bibliography, a helpful index, seventy-three pages of photos from three centuries depicting the changing architecture, the modifications of the habit, and the necessary maps of the locations used in the book. Another strong point is the extensive yet unobtrusive footnoting that shows the extent of Sister Kathrine's research.

Kathrine says that her purpose in telling the story is to show how "ordinary people did ordinary

things." Through the grace of God, these ordinary things became a mammoth accomplishment.

The book begins at the starting place with Catherine McAuley showing her reasons for beginning this new group of religious. Not quite six months after the death of the foundress, the first Sisters set sail from Ireland for Newfoundland. *Weavers of the Tapestry* traces the story from 1842 to the present.

The book captures the ways the Sisters lived out the Paschal Mystery. The darker threads of the tapestry were many because, although there was a bustling new economy, Newfoundland was not a prosperous place. Kathrine shows how the Sisters often put their own lives at risk visiting people who were suffering from diphtheria, typhoid fever, cholera, tuberculosis, or Spanish influenza. In 1846, 1892, and 1942 they witnessed catastrophic fires. In 1929, they ministered to those who had lost family members in a tsunami. The Sisters knew the sorrow of closing houses in communities where the people had shown them so much love and stood by sadly watching their numbers dwindle during the



post-Vatican II exodus. They also celebrated the joys of the resurrection as they wove the brighter parts of the tapestry. Kathrine tells how there was joy in simple living; the Sisters wanted little and were so grateful for the smallest kindness shown. They were happy to be royally welcomed at new foundations where the people erected Triumphal Arches, waved flags, and shouted as salvos of artillery reverberated among the hills. The Sisters rejoiced in the knowledge that they were helping to alleviate some of the suffering and were filled with joy when the children performed so well both in the classroom, on the stage, and later in their chosen vocations in life. Yes, the Sisters really understood what Catherine McAuley meant when she wrote, "This is your life, joys and sorrows mingled, one succeeding the other."

Kathrine shows how these valiant women, before the days of the feminist movement, managed to rise above the male domination of ecclesial rule. She depicts some of the bishops as gentle and caring while others are seen to rule with "episcopal pomposity" so that often the Sisters had to show superior strength to continue the work of Mercy. However, it was not only the bishops who exacted blind obedience. Some of the superiors who lacked real leadership qualities and some of the strict teaching Sisters had a tendency to repress those in their charge. But Kathrine tells of these shortcomings with wit rather than negativism. For example, she writes of one superior who scolded firemen battling a night fire at the convent telling them that they ought not to be shouting during the Great Silence. She also tells of a teacher who "brooked no nonsense" accepting no excuse for "slipshod work" although this same Sister could be seen giving cookies to those who worked hard. Fortunately, the incompetent superiors and overbearing teachers were few in number, and the Sisters made great strides in their work.

The work of the Sisters of Mercy in the beginning involved mainly teaching the children and

nursing in their Mercy hospitals. They went about visiting the sick in their homes and in the hospitals and spending time encouraging the imprisoned. Over the years, the fields of work multiplied to include: running an orphanage, administering boarding schools, teaching at university, engaging in social work, doing pastoral work, running prayer and retreat houses, operating hostels for young single women, working in food banks, being present and socializing at a gathering place for the underprivileged, operating a huge home for the aged, helping to care for those with HIV and AIDS, administering parishes in small settlements, and managing huge medical and academic institutions. Kathrine tells about all of these accomplishments with clear insight, accurate detail, and clever wit.

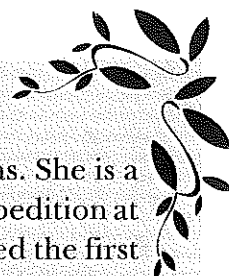
Besides showing the diversity of ministries, Kathrine explains how the congregation grew from a few Sisters at one convent in St. John's to many convents all over Newfoundland. Several Sisters are working with First Nations people in the Labrador region of the province; several others are working in distant Peru. The growth has truly been like that undergone by the tiny mustard seed in becoming a gigantic tree and Kathrine really shows an appreciation for the work of her predecessors.

There is, throughout the pages of this book, a message of hope for all readers, encouraging them to persevere in their individual and group work as they go to "bring the message of God's love and mercy to all people." No ordinary task, no ordinary person is ordinary in God's eyes.

The book is a jewel of history for the academic, but it is also a contemplation of the way the earlier Sisters lived out the charism of Mercy and an inspiration to the present members of the congregation to discern how they will live out this charism today. For those who have known the Sisters in Newfoundland and for all those who like a human-interest style of writing the book is a scintillating yarn with a gentle musical score sounding between the lines.



Contributors



Marie Brown is a novice at the Sisters of Mercy Institute Novitiate in Laredo, Texas. She is a member of the Chinook Tribe, which hosted the members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition at the mouth of the Columbia River during the winter of 1805–1806 and later welcomed the first immigrants to the Oregon Territory. She has a B.A. in French from the University of Washington, Seattle. She entered the Catholic Church in 1987 and continued serving in nonprofit ministries as a writer, public relations and media representative, peer counselor, catechist, and volunteer coordinator. Before moving to Burlingame to enter the Sisters of Mercy, she lived in her birth home, Camp Sherman, Oregon, on the wild and scenic Metolius River, a “graced three years” during which she volunteered for local causes and earned a living by “doing anything honorable that people were willing to pay me to do.” For three years prior to the novitiate, Marie served as weekend staff and helped with fundraising for St. Vincent De Paul’s Catherine’s Center, a home and program for women returning from prison to the community in San Mateo County, California.

Kathrine Bellamy, R.S.M. (Newfoundland), holds a doctorate in musicology from the University of Wisconsin. She has taught in various schools in Newfoundland where she fostered a love of music among her students. So strong is this influence that her choir members of the 1960s still come together with her to sing. Memorial University of Newfoundland granted her the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa* for her contribution to music in the province of Newfoundland. She has recently received the Papal Honour of the Cross *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* for her contribution to church music as organist, director, and composer and for her pioneer work at Emmaus House—a food bank for five Christian denominations providing for the poor of the city. In 2006, to honor her civic activities in her province, she was invested into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador by the Honourable Edward Roberts, Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Anne Beresford has taught in many places in Newfoundland, in Labrador, and in Australia. Having retired from teaching secondary school students, she has been editing theses for university students and books for various other Newfoundland authors. She has had a long association with the Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland. Two of her sisters have been Sisters of Mercy since the 1950s.

Anne Curtis, R.S.M. (Rochester, ILT), as a member of the ILT, serves as coordinator to several Institute areas including justice and vocation and incorporation. Anne served as a lobbyist for six years at NETWORK, in Washington, DC, and currently serves on the boards of Pax Christi, USA and CLINIC, the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. She served as the justice coordinator for the Sisters of Mercy Regional Community of Rochester, NY, for several years while also holding the position of case manager at Melita House for pregnant women in Rochester. Prior to that, she was a missionary in Santiago, Chile. She holds an M.A. in theology from St. Michael College, Winooski, Vermont and a B.A. in psychology from St. John Fisher College, Rochester, New York.





Kathleen Erickson, R.S.M. (Omaha), has fifteen years experience at the U.S.-Mexican border. She is the cofounder and director of the Women's Intercultural Center in Anthony, New Mexico and Texas. She has an M.A. in religious education from Seattle University and an M.A. in secondary administration from University of Northern Colorado.

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*.

Gaye L. Moorhead, R.S.M. (Rochester), is currently president of the Rochester Regional Community. She was the founder and coordinator of the Mercy Migrant Education Ministry from 1994–2001, a mobile education ministry sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas for Hispanic migrant primary students, with health and outreach services for their families. She holds a J.D. from the University of Notre Dame Law School (1980), and an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Trinity College, Burlington, Vermont, 2000.

Aline M-J Paris, R.S.M. (Northeast Community), is from Vermont, but is currently ministering at the College of St. Mary in Omaha, Nebraska as an associate professor of theology and as liturgist for the college. She holds a D.Min., a master of theological studies and a certificate in biblical spirituality from Catholic Theological Union at Chicago, and an M.A. in theology from St. Michael's College, Vermont. She also spent a year at the Institut Supérieur de Liturgie, at l'Institute Catholique de Paris, France.

Marlene Perrotte, R.S.M. (Northeast Community), lives in Albuquerque, where she works with immigrants in detention. She serves as a human rights advocate and immigration law practitioner with Las Americas, an immigrant advocacy center in Anthony, New Mexico. She is a member of the Partnership for Earth Spirituality working with her interest in the militarization of space. She is also an educator in math and science at the Central New Mexico Community College in Albuquerque. She has a M.A. in theology and ministry (MTM) with an emphasis on social ethics and social justice ministry from Loyola University in Chicago.

Jennifer Reed-Bouley, Ph.D., is associate professor of theology and director of the Service-Learning Program at College of Saint Mary in Omaha, Nebraska. She earned a Ph.D. in Christian ethics from Loyola University Chicago in 1998, an M.A. in theology from Loyola University Chicago in 1993, and B.A. from the University of Notre Dame in 1990. Her areas of expertise include Catholic social teaching and ethics. Her recent contributions to Mercy-sponsored





publications include "The Congruence Between Catholic Social Teaching and Mercy Higher Education" in the Conference for Mercy Higher Education DVD entitled "Transforming Hallmark: Education and Action for Justice" and an article, "Bringing Service and Learning Home: A Partnership Between College of Saint Mary and Mercy Housing," *Living Mercy*, Summer 2006.

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).

Patricia Ryan, R.S.M. (Burlingame), recently participated in the University of Iowa Writer's Program. She facilitates a monthly poetry writing group and has been published in the National Library of Poetry Anthology. Her poems often reflect her great interest in ecology and conscious evolution. Part of her background includes teaching chemistry; she served a term as president of the Burlingame regional community. She is a member of Bioneers and Sisters of Earth and has given retreats and workshops on eco-spirituality as well as leading tours to Ireland. Her lifelong role as an educator continues as an academic tutor at Mercy High School in San Francisco.

Anne Vaccarest, R.S.M. (Northeast Community), has an M.A. in philosophy from the Catholic University of America. Her thirty years' experience in the communications ministry includes the following positions: associate in the Office of Communications of the Diocese of Manchester, NH; director of communications for the Sisters of Mercy of the Union; and communications director for the Regional Community of New Hampshire. She is now a contributor to the Mercy Northeast Community Newsletter and does freelance editing.

Victoria Vondenberger, R.S.M. (Cincinnati), is a canon lawyer with a J.C.L. from St. Paul University in Ottawa. She is the director of the tribunal for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati as well as promoter of justice and defender of the bond, a position held 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 served as secretary of the CLSA from 2004–2006.





Discussion Questions

(Moorhead) “After a decade of the intensified enforcement, the result is that illegal immigration to the U.S. has increased; an estimated 700,000 unauthorized immigrants arrive annually in the U.S., outnumbering the 610,000 immigrants who arrive legally.”

If present enforcement policies are not working, what changes for what groups of persons seem most important for you and why—seasonal male agricultural workers, single women seeking seasonal work, seekers of permanent residency, wives seeking to be reunited with a husband, children seeking unification with parents, professional persons fleeing death threats and political persecution, or others? If you were going to give assistance to one group rather than another, which group would that be?

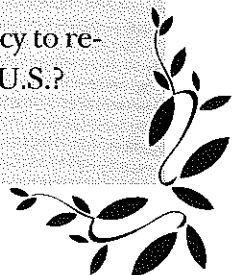
(Paris) “Ruth was a Moabite. She was a “foreign wife,” but she was also the great-grandmother of King David with whom God established an everlasting covenant. Whether the story is historically accurate or not, it reflects a challenge to the animosity that was building towards the alien. The greatest king that Israel had known had “alien” blood. How, then, could this reconstituted Israel reject the immigrant? Would that we remember our ‘alien’ blood.”

What was the experience of your family members who emigrated to the U.S.? Language and cultural challenges? What forces drove them to come to America? How is that experience, as you understand it, similar to, and different from the current crisis of illegal immigration from Central America and Mexico?

(Perrotte) Has the U.S. created its own problem of immigration by the undocumented from Central America through NAFTA and its effect on the common laborers, for example, in Mexico? If the U.S. supported past Central American governments, which forced “peasants, labor union leaders, journalists, [and] popular leaders” to flee for their lives, what revisions in entry policies should be made now? What information do you need to enter this argument and assess both sides of the picture?

(Reed-Bouley) “The documentary tradition of Catholic social teaching on immigration most often refers to specific legislation being considered regarding immigration, a specific refugee crisis, or a situation of particularly strong anti-immigrant sentiment . . . the phenomenon of emigration is inextricably tied to other systemic issues, such as political and economic conditions in various countries. The documents express concern not only for those persons who flee inhuman conditions, but also for justice to reign in every country.”

What injustices in what other countries should the U.S. government target in its foreign policy to reduce the desperation and danger that prompts persons to risk undocumented entry into the U.S.?



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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.

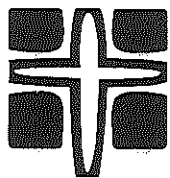
MAST has been meeting annually since then, and the organization now numbers fifty, with members living and working in Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America, as well as in the United States. Marilyn King, R.S.M., currently serves as MAST's executive director. MAST will hold its 21st annual meeting in **Philadelphia at St. Rafaela Retreat Center June 15–17, 2007**, and its 22nd annual meeting in **Burlingame, California, at Mercy Center June 13–15, 2008**.

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.

If you would like to be on the mailing list, write: Marilyn King, R.S.M., Executive Director, The Laura, 1995 Sam Browning Road, Lebanon, KY 40033 or e-mail mheleneking@alltel.net.

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.



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