

The **MAST** *Journal*

Wisdom that Endures

"Sin" in the Life and Writings of Thérèse of Lisieux

Sister Margaret Quane, R.S.M

My Legacy to the Institute Is Charity

Sister Mary Euchria Malone, R.S.M

Unity in Love and Stability in Faith

Sister Mary Jeanne Salois, R.S.M

Development of a Faith Community for Redemptive Service

Sister Catherine (Mary Inviolata) Gallagher, R.S.M

Study on Judiciary Services

Sisters of Mercy of the Union, Eighth General Chapter

Address to Provincial Chapter: October 26, 1974

Sister Mary Mercy McAuliffe, R.S.M.

Authority in Service

Sister M. Stella Maris Bergen, R.S.M.

Our Relationships within the Church

Sisters of Mercy of the Union, Tenth General Chapter

U.S. Religious Life and the Decline of Vocations

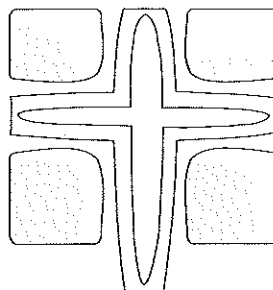
Archbishop John R. Quinn, Archbishop Thomas Kelly, O.P and

Bishop Raymond Lessard

Book Review of Avis Clendenen's *Experiencing Hildegard: Jungian Perspectives*

Reviewed by Therese Schroeder-Sheker

The Journal of the
Mercy Association in
Scripture and Theology



Vol. 19, No. 1
2009

Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends of Mercy

At our annual MAST meetings, in conversations with Sisters from other regions, and at funerals, it is usual to remember leaders with affection, ones who have marked particular eras of our religious life. It seemed good to the editorial board of *The MAST Journal* to offer an issue called "Wisdom That Endures," which would memorialize what some of our past leaders offered as their personal insight and spiritual vision.

In some cases, Mercy leaders understood elected office as a pastoral responsibility which included a duty to foster the community's spiritual life, in the tradition of a prioress or abbess in more ancient orders. From an historian's point of view, women religious practiced too rigorously the virtue of humility as self-effacement. God would save us all from pride if we each swept away any evidence of our personal accomplishments. Thus, much of the record of what women religious thought about spirituality and community life has been lost—not to a fire or flood—but simply because the talks given at convocations or retreat days were not saved. It did not occur to some leaders to save their papers; and there seems to have been no systematic, Union-wide, or Institute-wide program by which such talks were retained. We could pledge ourselves to conversion from this former practice, for the benefit of the Institute.

I am most grateful to archivists I initially consulted for their assistance in retrieving memorable addresses given to their local congregations: Sister Susan Nowalis of the Institute, Sister Paula Diann Marlin of Baltimore, Sister Maureen McGarrigle of Detroit, Sister Eleanor Little of Rhode Island, Sister Joella Cunnane of Chicago, and Sisters Marilyn Gouailhardou and Mary Helena Sanfilippo of Burlingame. I remember as a postulant that there was first and second seating for the professed Sisters in the Motherhouse refectory because the dining room was too small to fit them all at once. Likewise, an effort was made here, at this "first seating," to get a representation of talks given in several communities across the country. It will not be the last effort to do this, and not all archivists of former regional communities have been contacted. But at the sound of the bell....

The challenge of retrieving records today is considerable, because some files are "in transfer" from former regional community Motherhouses to centralized archives at new administrative centers. In the middle of such organizational upheaval it may be good for the soul to return to the wise, stabilizing teaching of women who interpreted the scriptures and the charism. We read their enduring wisdom again, as for the first time, with eyes alert to the emphases and ministerial outlook that have shaped our congregational life and mission.

In the process of gathering the material for this issue, I was happy to receive at last an essay that had been promised by Sister Margaret Quane of Australia. She'd completed a dissertation on Thérèse of Lisieux. I can't imagine a woman religious who has not been influenced by spiritual reading in the novitiate and retreats which touched on the theme of the "little way." Margaret's analysis shows the transition in Thérèse's spirituality from an emphasis on repentance for sin to loving reliance on God's Mercy. Her scholarly footnotes, which we judged useful to retain, offer a compendium of theological scholarship in a modest space, perhaps as compact as the bedrooms in the older building at Baggot Street.

A 1952 address by Burlingame Sister Mary Eucharist Malone seemed an unusual record, because it was a retreat-like talk presented to Sisters in healthcare, not a presentation to the community at large. It tried to answer the questions, How is Catholic, Mercy healthcare a singular form of hospital ministry? And, How are the classic sources of our Mercy charism to be translated into service to the sick? Today, with many fewer Sisters in healthcare administration, these sentiments are ones we still try to transmit through institutional sponsorship.

As a westerner, and non-Unionite, I had discovered Baltimore Sister Stella Maris Bergin's writings when I was doing research a few years ago on early forms of Mercy's grievance procedure, an outcome of the discussion after Vatican II about the rights of the baptized to due process. Sister Stella Maris headed the provincial committee which formulated a three part due-process structure for the Union congregations and it was enacted in 1971. She was advised by some of the same seminary professors and canonists who had helped the Council for Major Superiors of Men formulate their due process document in 1970. The LCWR process was an alternative procedure. Published in 1972, it served as the model for the 1991 Institute Reconciliation Process. What is most significant about this 1971 Report, and the record of its enactment at the 8th General Chapter, is that communal memory of the Appeals Committee Study on Judiciary Services seems to have evaporated into thin air in decades since.

Retrieval of this vital expression of *aggiornamento* from the 1970's would well serve as a curriculum to re-educate members today about due process, correct misperceptions about the finality of locally-made decisions justified by the managerial principle of "subsidiarity," and ground revision of the current Reconciliation Process. At present, there is as yet no formal due process, a right of all the baptized, available anywhere in the Institute because

no members have been elected to serve on reconciliation boards in the reorganized regional communities, or at the Institute level. In addition to the Committee Study, there is also a talk Sister Stella Maris gave which can inspire Sisters in leadership today, "Authority in Service."

Chicago Sister Catherine (Mary Inviolata) Gallagher's Community Day address in 1971 was actually the announcement of how congregational governance was going to reflect the Holy Father's call for renewal, and how administration was organizing its services as an expression of the congregation's identity as a "faith community for redemptive service." The committees, on which elected leaders would serve, were named according to the concerns that coalesced to create such a ministerial direction: Person, Human Community, Office of Apostolic Services, and Department of Personnel Services. The fostering of the community's faith life, and other administrative responsibilities were seen as out-flows of these four basic concerns. There is a genius that can be seen in the integration of ecclesial mandate, congregational charism, and administrative organization.

Detroit Sister Mary Jeanne Salois, in reflections which are likely dated 1971-72, took the Mercy Covenant document, and provided what seem to be retreat meditations on sections of it. Offered here are two of them entitled "Unity in Love" and "Stability in Faith." The context appears to be a retreat day, and these two meditations serve as introductions to periods of prayer. In other words, the leader of the community takes on the spiritual role of leading her Sisters in prayer through her own reflections. It is an expression of transparency in leadership, in a form we usually don't expect of "transparency" — disclosure of one's own inner spiritual life and meditation to the congregation.

What seems notable about Rhode Island Sister Mary Mercy McAuliffe's summons to Chapter delegates in 1974 is the naturalness of her voice and freedom from the constraints of speaking in "holy language." There is a freshness of expression as she urges delegates not to settle in, but to live religious life with dedication and authenticity, with their energies directed to service of others. The message to delegates is the same as to all community members. There is recognition of the phenomenon of the "weakest link," Sisters who don't pull their own weight, yet such a spirit of encouragement to all. Talks such as these were kept because Sisters at the time knew they were worth re-reading.

The Union's Tenth General Chapter of 1977 provided a study document whose author is not named. However, its discussion of the relationship of the Mercy community to the institutional Church seems especially relevant as we undergo the 2008-11 Apostolic Visitation. It could as well be said today, "As a community of women we are growing in self-understanding of our role as women, as person, and as a Christian community. This includes an increasing urgency to form our consciences, and to recognize ourselves as moral agents in our teaching and healing. We experience, then, a call to greater relationship with and in the Church. Even when we find ourselves in disagreement/conflict with some teaching of some Church authorities, our desire to challenge is never a desire to break with the institutional church."

Thinking about the current Apostolic Visitation and Investigation of LCWR, I discovered in a file a typescript copy of the 1986 *Quinn Report*, the outcome of Archbishop John R. Quinn's coordination of a study of religious life of men and women in the U.S., convoked by Pope John Paul II in 1983. On one level, fundamental questions posed in the present Visitation were asked and answered twenty-five years ago. The *Quinn Report* also offers a basis on which to compare and contrast the procedure for the study of religious life in the 1980's with the process today. I was grateful to receive the Archbishop's permission to re-publish this report in *The MAST Journal*, according to the text as it was edited by *Origins* in December of 1986. I also acknowledge the assistance of Laurel Miller, assistant to Archbishop Niederaur of San Francisco, Linda Asti, assistant to retired San Francisco Archbishop John R. Quinn, and George Carlson of the Santa Clara University Library.

This issue concludes with a book review of Mercy Associate Avis Clendenen's *Experiencing Hildegard: Jungian Perspectives*. Nun, mystic, artist and musician, medieval Hildegard has been rediscovered by women as a model for liberating self-expression, profound theology, and creative spirituality. Readers are encouraged to open the fascinating website, www.chaliceofrepose.org, of reviewer — musician Therese Schroeder-Sheker.

Gratitude goes to Sister Patricia Talone for her review, and to Sister Marilee Howard for layout of this issue.

Sincerely,

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



"Sin" in the Life and Writings of St Thérèse of Lisieux

Sister Margaret Quane, R.S.M.

Introduction

One surely does not immediately associate *sin*¹ with the name of the saint from Normandy, France – Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897). After her death and in response to the many miracles worked through her intercession and answers granted to the many petitions addressed to her, Thérèse was canonized by the Pope Benedict XV on 27 May 1925 and proclaimed the thirty-third Doctor of the Church on Mission Sunday 19 October 1997 by Pope John Paul II. Yet it became Thérèse's mission in life to be involved in one or other aspect of *sin*: her own, that of others and the salvation of souls, the latter including her own close alignment with the Crucified Christ in the Paschal Mystery. This study argues that *sin* was the catalyst in propelling Thérèse to a life of intimate knowledge of God's Merciful Love and to a life of holiness. I will treat the topic under the following headings: 1) Original Sin and the Divided Self; 2) Serious and Less Serious Sin; and 3) "The Sin against Faith." Reference to Thérèse's mission – "to pray for priests and the salvation of souls" – and the topics of conversion and grace will run parallel to these discussions. The conclusion to the paper will suggest a meaning for "the sin against faith" today.

Original Sin and the Divided Self

Thérèse experienced sin and its effects in her person. There is a breach, a flaw, in our nature that allows us to be tempted to sin. In fact, to be tempted is an essential part of being a human person.² The cause of this reality is variously attributed to the dichotomy between the "true" and "false" self,³ or "the dysfunction of the *ego*."⁴ In the words of St Paul, it is the pull between doing not the good which I love but "the very thing that I hate" (Rom 7:15). He writes, "I delight in the law

of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive of the law of sin that dwells in my members" (Rom 7:22-23). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Only the light of divine Revelation clarifies the reality of sin and particularly of the sin committed at mankind's [sic] origins".⁵ Thérèse did not escape an encounter with this interior struggle – a struggle which theology attributes to Original Sin.

**This study argues that *sin*
was the catalyst in propelling
Thérèse to a life of intimate
knowledge of God's Merciful
Love and to a life of holiness.**

The struggle appeared in her determination and her strong self-will that caused her mother, at times, to be exasperated and refer to Thérèse, lovingly, as her "little rascal."⁶

I am obliged to correct this poor little baby who gets into frightful tantrums; when things don't go just right and according to her way of thinking, she rolls on the floor in desperation like one without any hope. There are times when it gets too much for her and she literally chokes.⁷

It was evident, too, in her inability to cure herself from crying at the smallest upset: "I was anything but a sweet little girl much given to crying," she writes.⁸ Yet Thérèse, though highly sensitive, was also very good, very intelligent, and possessed an exceedingly reliable memory.⁹ Speaking in 1895 of her childhood and the awareness of her "willfulness," she writes:

Then [now], as in the days of my childhood, I cried out: "My God, 'I choose all!' I don't

want to be a *saint by halves*, I'm not afraid to suffer for You, I fear only one thing: to keep my *own will*; so take it, for 'I *choose all*' that You will".¹⁰

By the words "my own will" Thérèse means the possibility she experienced in her spirit the following of a way or an interior "voice" that might lead away from Jesus. And so we find that while waiting for permission to enter Carmel, a permission that was proving exceedingly difficult to get, Thérèse writes that she spent the time profitably, asking Jesus to "break her bonds,"¹¹ that is, the "bonds" that tied her to her "false self":

I made a resolution to give myself up more than ever to a *serious* and *mortified* life. When I say mortified, this is not to give the impression that I performed acts of pence. Alas, *I never made any*. ... Instead ... my mortifications consisted in breaking my will, always so ready to impose itself on others, in holding back a reply, in rendering little services without any recognition, in not lean my back against a support when seated, etc., etc.¹²

Traces of Thérèse's interior struggle are also found in her girlhood tendency to scrupulosity and, in her early religious life, dislike of receiving often-undeserved correction from the Prioress of Carmel or the Novice Mistress. Thérèse was engaged in on-going conversion. Contrary to some popular opinion that might paint Thérèse as spoiled, she was anything but that. Yes, she was loved deeply by family members and they showed it by doing everything for her. This possibly made it all the more difficult for Thérèse in Carmel where, for example, her ineptitude at handling a broom was the cause of uncharitable criticism. But Thérèse was not spoiled. "I often wonder how they managed to rear me without spoiling me," she said to Pauline in 1895. Pauline was the sister who, after Mme. Martin's death had taken on the role of "mother" to Thérèse.

Again, we read from her 1895 document:

Oh! How sweet is the way of Love! How I want to apply myself to doing the will of God always with the greatest self-surrender!¹³

More and more, "Love" was taking hold in Thérèse's soul and "sin" was being relegated to a very minor place. As for "imperfections," she prayed God to consume her *spiritual imperfections* in God's love, knowing that "the most holy souls will be perfect only in heaven."¹⁴ Realistically,

Thérèse's gift was to enter deeply
into the saving work of Jesus. In
this sense, Thérèse was a
missionary; and yet she lived for a
brief twenty-four years within a
very limited *milieu*.

she knew that *moral imperfections* – like "lack of judgment, good manners, touchiness; all the things which don't make life very agreeable" – that these are chronic in some of the Sisters with whom she lived. She observed that these Sisters are related to "within the limits of religious politeness" but generally their company is not sought. Her solution is to "seek out the company of Sisters who are the least agreeable ... in order to carry out with regard to these wounded souls the office of the Good Samaritan ... and to give Jesus joy."¹⁵ But we have moved on too quickly.

Serious and Less Serious Sin

The family in which Thérèse grew was one in which nineteenth century French Catholicism was practiced with much attention given to daily attendance at Mass and to other devotional practices.¹⁶ Thérèse seemed to have had an "overdose" of grace¹⁷ – grace of nature and of spirit. She exhibited rare insights into human nature's deepest meanings and displayed a wisdom beyond her years. At aged two months she had had a near-death experience¹⁸ and perhaps she had this in mind when she later wrote in 1896: "Our Lord, willing for Himself alone my first glance, saw fit to ask my heart in the cradle, if I can so express myself."¹⁹ Yes, God seemed to favour her from a very early age.²⁰

However, all this came at a price: to pray and to suffer for the salvation of souls. Usually one is *exceptionally* (if one can correctly say it this way) graced for the purpose of mission. That was Thérèse's experience. Her mission was to pray and to suffer for the salvation of souls – that souls might be saved from sin. With this sense of mission came insight into the Paschal Mystery or, as she expressed it in her day, into the sufferings of Jesus which she expressed in devotion to the Holy Face. Thérèse's gift was to enter deeply into the saving work of Jesus.²¹ In this sense, Thérèse was a missionary; and yet she lived for a brief twenty-four years within a very limited *milieu*.

Thérèse was being drawn to offer
herself without reserve to God's
merciful love. Her formal act of
self-offering, made so very privately
in her Carmelite convent ...,
subsequently lays wide open the
mercy of God and God's love shown
in Christ's Paschal Mystery for all to
see.

When she was six, going on seven, Thérèse was very carefully prepared for her First Confession by her sister, Pauline. One wonders what *sins* Thérèse might have told the priest. Still, this sacrament was then, and continued to be throughout her life, received with great devotion and joy. When she was eleven, Thérèse began to suffer from scruples that lasted for a year and a half. It was a particular kind of "martyrdom," she wrote.²² Yet, when she went to Confession she told the priest only those sins that Marie, her oldest sister, advised her to tell. The priest would not have known Thérèse was suffering from scruples.

Later, when she was but a few years in Carmel, Thérèse was much consoled in the Sacrament of Reconciliation by the words of Father Pichon: "In the presence of God, the Blessed Virgin, and all the saints, I declare that

you have never committed a mortal sin."²³ What does this remark tell us? That Thérèse's love for God was so great that even the slightest fault would seem to her to be a grievous fault? That she was still given to scrupulosity and needed reassurance? That Jansenism's influence had penetrated the walls of Carmel? However, from then onwards, Thérèse was graced to overcome any negative influences resulting from too much emphasis on *sin* and to follow the path to be "launched in full flight on the path of love and confidence."²⁴ To accept this offer of grace – and she accepted it with much joy – was moving in contrary motion to the accepted teaching about the path to holiness at the time, that is, to make reparation for one's sins and those of others. She writes:

I was thinking about the souls who offer themselves as victims of God's Justice in order to turn away the punishments reserved to sinners, drawing them upon themselves. This offering seemed great and very generous to me, but I was far from feeling attracted to making it.²⁵

Thérèse was being drawn to offer herself without reserve to God's *merciful love*. Her formal act of self-offering, made so very privately in her Carmelite convent on Trinity Sunday 1895, subsequently lays wide open the *mercy* of God and God's love shown in Christ's Paschal Mystery for all to see. Difficult as it is to explain, there is a real connection here between *love* and salvation. It is an article of Christian faith that Jesus saved us by his death and resurrection. Thérèse entered into that mystery in a special way.

The Sin Against Faith

In 1895 Thérèse accepted the command of her superior – who, at the time, was her blood sister Pauline – to write an account of her life. Towards the end of that document (Manuscript C in *Story of a Soul*) we find evidence of Thérèse having offered herself to God's Merciful Love. At that time, then, it can be argued, Thérèse was enjoying – in the language of the spiritual life – mystical marriage.²⁶ When she was making the Stations of

the Cross one day shortly after her Trinity Sunday experience, she received the "wound of love." After entering Carmel on 9 April 1888, Thérèse had rarely experienced spiritual consolations, yet this present experience of the "wound of love" was one of the few exceptions. This one, she reasoned, was God's response to her Act of Self-Oblation. The Act places emphasis on the excess of God's love rather than on God's retributive justice.

One might think, therefore, that from then on, Thérèse's life would be one of consolation, resting in the assurances of God's love for her. But, no. From Easter 1886, she entered into the most spiritually difficult period of her life. All consolations – be they so fleeting in her particular life – left her. She experienced dryness and the temptation that there was no heaven, no afterlife. This, I argue, was not the "dark night of the soul" spoken of by St John of the Cross, but rather the beginnings of a mystical gift that drew Thérèse until her death more and more deeply into the saving death of Jesus – his Redemptive Act.²⁷

Along with this, she writes that Jesus told her that the "sin against faith" exists. I suggest that her spiritual sense of experiencing in herself a "night of nothingness,"²⁸ her physical illness and her knowledge that there were those who rejected the Catholic faith – all this in Thérèse mirrors the "sin against faith". She lived out in her very person the effects of that sin. Her "trial of faith" and all it entailed somehow reflects the enormity of that sin and invites our deeper reflection on the relationship between sin and Jesus' death on the cross.²⁹

Dechristianization and Atheism in Thérèse's Day and Today

The years of France's Third Republic (1870-1940) are the years pertinent to our interest in Thérèse of Lisieux. The fundamental ideas of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment were still filtering into French Catholicism during the following decade: the belief in reason as the new revelation; the conviction that the world was governed by natural laws in the working of which God did not intervene; and the belief in progress

instead of in original sin. Further, the effects of the French Revolution also remained smoldering in new anti-religious movements often associated with materialism, nationalism, modernism, positivism, and republicanism.³⁰ In summary, a marked militant anti-clericalism and theism set the religious tone of the times.³¹

...a marked militant anti-clericalism and theism set the religious tone of the times.

And what of our own times? Recently, Benedict XVI has spoken of a "profound difference" today that exists between atheistic humanism and Christian humanism. The former, he said, "Exalts liberty as the lone principle of humanity, in contrast to God, and in this way transforms the human person into a god – but a false god, which makes its own system of behavior based on arbitrariness."³² All this we know for the media seems to provide daily evidence that our society is a very secular and materialistic. Writing in 2007 and reflecting on today's culture, James Hanvey distinguishes between "hard" or ideological secularism and "soft secularization." "Soft secularization," he writes, "Exhibits a secularist *habitus*, that is, a tendency towards a hard secularism."³³ The "sin against faith" today can be situated within "hard" secularism – an atheistic culture. Thérèse's reference to the "sin against faith" throws wide open the topic of atheism and causes us to ponder its meaning for today.

Ever since Vatican Council II there has been a widening of the Church's understanding of "who can be saved." Prior to this Council one might have learned that "outside the Church there is no salvation." Now, in contrast, Timothy's words in the New Testament have taken on greater significance: "God our Savior desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tm 2:4). The Council documents elaborate. The "fruits of the Spirit" are given not only to Christians but also to all people of good

will; for in their hearts, too, grace is active invisibly."³⁴ The detailed endnote explaining the current understanding of atheism³⁵ allows us to conclude that the "sin against faith" of which Thérèse spoke and which referred to those who rejected the Catholic faith (sometimes even in a hostile way) might be ones guilty of that sin. However, Thérèse's references to "sin against faith ... through the abuse of grace"³⁶ cannot be applied to today's world without modification. A more nuanced understanding is required, for we understand now there are many levels of *belief*. But does that mean the "sin against faith" no longer exists today? No. As Benedict XVI has indicated, there is, today, an atheistic humanism.

...this paper – speaking
objectively for we cannot judge
the subjective guilt of any one
person – lays the "sin against
faith" on those *people* who fail to
enable the culture to mediate
core Christian or ultimate values.
This is the primary interpretation
for today of the "sin against
faith."

Many people claim a "crisis of faith" today. And here Thérèse is particularly relevant. She writes that she is willing to sit "at the table of sinners," that is, among those who commit this "sin against faith," in order to bring them the blessings of salvation. Speaking of herself, she writes:

She is resigned to eat the bread of sorrow as long as You desire it; she does not wish to rise up from this table filled with bitterness at which poor sinners are eating until the day set by You. Can she not say in her name and in the name of her brothers [and sisters],

"Have pity on us, O Lord, for we are poor sinners!"³⁷

Thérèse knew, as we know today, the crisis of faith. Both the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries show evidence of their being shaken by changing ideologies that prevent the proclamation of the gospel message from having its relevant and powerful impact. The culture of the twenty-first century shows evidence of decadence. But rather than assigning sin nebulously to a anonymous decadent *culture*, this paper – speaking objectively for we cannot judge the subjective guilt of any one person – lays the "sin against faith" on those *people* who fail to enable the culture to mediate core Christian or ultimate values.³⁸ This is the primary interpretation for today of the "sin against faith."

Conclusion

Thérèse's mission, begun on earth but one she promised to continue from heaven, was to save souls (from sin and death) and to lead them to accept the embrace of God's Merciful Love. Shortly before her death she said:

I feel that I'm about to enter into my rest. But I feel especially that my mission is about to begin, my mission of making God loved as I love Him, of giving my little way to souls. I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth.³⁹

During her life, Thérèse's encounter with *sin* was real. She shared the human condition with its inbuilt "deficiency" along with the rest of us; but she also shared a profound insight into God's merciful love. Although Thérèse is not a trained theologian in the traditional sense, she has been acclaimed a Doctor of the Church in view of her major contribution in articulating a spirituality of faith for the modern age. That contribution, I suggest, lies in the area of *faith* and *sin*. St Thérèse of Lisieux offers "a credible and exhaustive response" to "the deep crisis of the contemporary world."⁴⁰



NOTES

1. *Sin* is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbour caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man [sic] and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as "an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law" (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 1849). Distinction is made these days between objective and subjective sin and between vincible and invincible ignorance. In the former instance, while in the past Catholic usage used the one word *sin* to describe both one's sinful act and the person's state of conscience, these days Church statements tend to separate the (objective) *act* from the (subjective / intentional) state. Sin resides in the subjective state, that is, in one's disordered relationship with God. Vincible and invincible ignorance is also about the person's intentional state: "Not infrequently conscience can be mistaken as a result of invincible ignorance, although it does not on that account forfeit its dignity; but this cannot be said when a man [sic] shows little concern for seeking what is true and good, and conscience gradually becomes almost blind from being accustomed to sin"; (see John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, # 62).
2. In speaking of the temptations of Jesus, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger writes: "Being tempted is an essential part of his [Jesus] being a man, part of his descent into fellowship with us, into the depths of our need" ("Looking at Christ – The Figure of Christ as Reflected in the Gospel Account of His Temptation", in *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 86.
3. See Joann Wolski-Conn and Walter Conn, "The Self," *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*: 865-875..
4. Eckhart Tolle, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* (Camberwell VIC: Michael Joseph, 2005), 73. Tolle notes that "the underlying emotion that governs all the activity of the ego is fear. The fear of being nobody, the fear of nonexistence, the fear of death" (80). Thérèse experienced this kind of dysfunctional ego when, after her Mother's death - when Thérèse was four and a half years - she could not, for the ensuing ten years, control her tears - even for the smallest incident which she experienced as unpleasant.
5. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 387.
6. See SS Manuscript A, 28. (*Story of A Soul: The Autobiography of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated from the original manuscripts by John Clarke (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1996)).
7. SS Manuscript A, 23.
8. *Ibid.* 55.
9. *Ibid.* 23.
10. *Ibid.* 27
11. *Ibid.* 141
12. *Ibid.* 143.
13. SS, Manuscript A, 181.
14. SS, Manuscript C, 246.
15. See SS, Manuscript C, 246.
16. Lingering traces of Jansenism were still present in some devotional practices in nineteenth France, for example, even the Carmelite sisters espoused a spirituality that stressed reparation for sin rather than, as Thérèse came to know, God's Merciful Love. Jansenism takes its name from Cornelius Jansen (1685-1634), a professor of theology in Louvain and eventually Bishop of Ypres in what is, today, Belgium. J. D. Crichton writes: "It is necessary to distinguish theological Jansenism (controversy about grace and predestination) from moral Jansenism – that austere way of life that became characteristic of Port Royal and those who attached themselves to it. It was associated with rigorism in morals, and in the exercise of the sacrament of Penance, infrequent communion, personal austerity, and a general sobriety in daily living" (J. D. Crichton, *Saints or Sinners? Jansenism and Jansenists in Seventeenth Century France* (Dublin: Veritas, 1996), 8). Jean Guittou writes of the Martin family: "If one compares the Martin family with a number of other families belonging to the end of the same middle-class century, it is surprising never to find the slightest

whiff of Jansenism, not even clinging like a perfume or in a dormant state" (see Jean Guilton, *The Spiritual Genius of St Thérèse*, trans. A Religious of the Retreat of the Sacred Heart (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1958), 17. On the other hand, if traces of Jansenism impacted Thérèse's spirituality, then it was moral not theological Jansenism that was an influence.

17. The subject of "grace" is complex. Simply defined, grace is God's Self-communication to humankind. Expressed in the negative, grace is not a flowing substance poured into the soul, nor is it a super-structure over one's human nature (see Karl Rahner, "Grace" in Gerald A. McCool, ed., *A Rahner Reader*; "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," *Theological Investigations* I; "God wishes to communicate himself. That is the first and last of his real plans and hence of his real world too. Everything else exists so that this one thing might be: the eternal miracle of infinite Love" (Karl Rahner, *Nature and Grace and Other Essays*, trans. Dinah Wharton (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 5). See also Karl Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace", in *God, Christ, Mary and Grace, Theological Investigations* I, trans., and intro. Cornelius Ernst (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 297-317).
18. The episode in brief: When Thérèse was two months, she became seriously ill and her mother feared she would die of the same kind of intestinal illness that took the lives of four Martin children previously. The doctor advised that only breast milk would save Thérèse's life. However, Mme. Martin was suffering from breast cancer and so could not totally supply for Thérèse's needs. She therefore employed the services of a wet nurse, Rose Tailé. Rose, on her first encounter with Thérèse, provided the needed breast milk. Thérèse fed satisfactorily, "sucking wholeheartedly"; but she later "threw up a few mouthfuls" and fell back as though dead. She remained in this state "apparently not breathing" for fifteen minutes (see the letter, dated 16 March 1873, that Mme. Martin wrote to her sister-in-law, Mme Guérin, in *General Correspondence* II, 1203f.). It is this state of being apparently dead for fifteen minutes that I refer to as NDE (Near Death Experience) and suggest that Thérèse encountered Something during that time that influenced her life from thereon. That, however, cannot be proved. Her mother does write, though: "Finally, after fifteen minutes passed by,

my little Thérèse opened her eyes and began to smile. From that moment on she was totally cured; her healthy appearance returned and her gaiety as well" (1204). Another thing that cannot be proved but which has received psychological analysis in the light of Thérèse's subsequent childhood behaviour, for example, given to much crying, is that Thérèse experienced an initial rejection on the face of her mother – a rejection that had long-lasting effects. (Mme Martin, as we know, was distressed at not being able to fully supply for her little daughter's needs). Another interpretation of the incident is that Thérèse read acceptance on the face of Rose Tailé and it was this acceptance that eventually "won through" enabling Thérèse to deal with subsequent emotional withdrawals: the death of her mother (1877), and departures of Pauline (1882) and then Marie (1886) for Carmel, thereby leaving Thérèse, to a large extent, without moral support. Thérèse's revered father died in 1894 from a stroke that also caused him memory loss. This last "withdrawal" was perhaps the most severe of all "withdrawals" for his youngest and favorite daughter, Thérèse (see Mary Frohlich, "Your Face is My Only Homeland: A Psychological Perspective on Thérèse of Lisieux and Devotion to the Holy Face," in David M. Hammond, ed., *Theology and Lived Christianity* (Mystic / Twenty-Third Publications, 2000): 177-205; Constance Fitzgerald, "The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux," *The Way Supplement* (Summer 1997): 74-96; Robert J. Giugliano, "Separation, Loss and Longing in the Infancy and Early Years of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face," *Studies in Spirituality* 14 (2004): 225-254).

19. *General Correspondence*, II, 1890-1897, trans. John Clarke (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1988), 1016.
20. We can only look at this from the human point of view – influenced, no doubt, by society's attention to "more" being better than "less." Nevertheless, Thérèse, herself, claims that in nature and in nurture she was blessed and that graces flowed towards her.
21. It is one thing to describe this mission on paper; it is quite another thing to "enter into" the saving mission of Jesus as Thérèse did. *Faith* is required of course. St Thomas Aquinas identified three elements in the act of faith, each associated with a Latin title: faith is *believing truths* revealed by God

- (*credere Deum*), it is *relying on God* as the One who reveals truly (*credere Deo*), and faith is *clinging to God* with one's whole being (*credere in Deum*). (Cited in Gerald Gleeson, (Crisis and Opportunity in Faith, *Compass Theology Review* 34/2 (Winter 2002): 17-22.
22. See SS Manuscript A, 84.
 23. SS Manuscript A, 149.
 24. SS Manuscript A, 149.
 25. SS Manuscript A, 180.
 26. Enjoying" is probably not the correct word, though John of the Cross indicates that in the state of transforming union one does indeed *enjoy* God's favour. However, that was not the case with Thérèse. Her experience of God's presence was a deep sense of peace in the bottom of the darkness in her soul. [Within the Christian tradition, the word "soul" points to the truth that human beings are spirit as well as flesh].
 27. In this regard, it is instructive to read: Guy Gaucher: *The Passion of Thérèse of Lisieux 4 April – 30 September 1897*, trans. Anne Marie Brennan (Homebush NSW: St Paul Publications, 1989); Jean-François Six, *Light of the Night: The Last Eighteen Months in the Life of Thérèse of Lisieux*, trans. John Bowden (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998); and Frederick L. Miller, *The Trial of Faith of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux* (New York: Alba House, 1998).
 28. Thérèse's style of writing is most descriptive. Describing her interior state at this time of the "trial of faith," she writes: "Then suddenly the fog that surrounds me becomes more dense; it penetrates my soul ... everything has disappeared ... It seems to me that the darkness, borrowing the voice of sinners, says mockingly to me: "You are dreaming about the light, about a fatherland ... you are dreaming about the *eternal* possession of the Creator ... you believe that one day you will walk out of this fog that surrounds you! Advance, advance; rejoice in death which will give you not what you hope for but a night still more profound, the night of nothingness" (Manuscript C, 213).
 29. The Father did not set on Jesus the "price" – the cruelty of his death – as the price to be paid for sin. (In this regard see James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin Through Easter Eyes*, foreword, Sebastian Moore (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1998). Nevertheless, it seems that in the eyes of God, *sin* is an enormity. Mystery is involved here. The gravity of sin is "overcome" by Love in excess expressed in Jesus' Incarnation and Redemption. Thérèse and the saints grasp this at a depth that is beyond the capacity of words to explain.
 30. Very generally: movements of the period in which the Church found elements of teaching contrary to its Tradition.
 31. See Norman Ravitch, *The Catholic Church and the French Nation 1589-1989* (Routledge: London, 1990), 104; see also Ralph Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism 1789-1914* (London: Routledge, 1989), 14.
 32. See John L. Allen, Jr. *National Catholic Reporter*, 21 August 2009, citing from Benedict's XVI's August 9 Sunday Angelus address at Castel Gondolfo.
 33. See James Hanvey, "Making the Invisible Visible: The Challenge to the Church in a Secular Culture," *The Pastoral Review* 3/4 (July/August 2007): 8-13. See also Michael Paul Gallagher, "From Social to Cultural Secularization" *Louvain Studies* 24 (1999): 103-118.
 34. *Gaudium et Spes*, # 22.
 35. *Atheism*, from "*a*" meaning "without" or "not," and "*theos*" meaning "god," can be described in two ways: Negative atheism and Positive atheism. From the standpoint of Negative atheism, "An atheist is someone without a belief in God: he or she need not be someone who believes that God does not exist. *Agnosticism* is compatible with this definition." In the second category of Positive atheism, "An atheist is one who holds no belief in the existence of God or gods and who believes that there is no God or gods. *Agnosticism* is incompatible with this position." (In this paper, the word "God" is the God of Judeo-Christianity, the God revealed in Jesus Christ). Other terms can be used in a discussion of atheism: "*Theism* has usually come to mean a belief in a personal God who takes an active interest in the world and who has given a special revelation to humans. So understood, theism stands in contrast to *deism*, the belief in a God that is based not on revelation but on evidence from nature. Negative atheism in a

broad sense is then the absence of belief in any god or Gods, not just the absence of belief in a personal theistic God, and negative atheism in the narrow sense is the absence of belief in a theistic God. For positive atheism in the narrow sense to be successfully defended, two tasks must be accomplished. First, the reasons for believing in a theistic God must be refuted; in other words, negative atheism in the narrow sense must be established. Second, reasons for disbelieving in a theistic God must be given. These categories should not be allowed to mask the complexity and variety of positions that atheists can hold, for a given individual can take different atheistic positions with respect to different concepts of God" (cf. Michael Martin, "Introduction", in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* at "Cambridge Companion" ACU National / ACU Library and eBooks). This paper interprets Thérèse's understanding of "the sin against faith" (or Atheism) to be primarily "positive atheism in the narrow sense", that is, "absence of belief in a theistic God and denial of God's existence". Thérèse said that Jesus made her feel that it was "abuse of grace" that led one to lose the "precious gift" of faith (see SS Manuscript C, 211). This paper interprets Thérèse's words to mean that it was this "abuse of grace" that led a "soul" to fall into this kind of atheism but, as we have previously seen from discussion on "grace" and it being given to all people, "abuse of grace" could be the cause of falling into atheism of any degree.

36. See the following references in *Story of a Soul*: "At this time I was enjoying such a living faith, such a clear faith, that the thought of heaven made up all my happiness, and I was unable to believe there were really impious people who had not faith. I believed they were actually speaking against their own inner convictions when they denied the existence of heaven ... [But] during those very joyful days of the Easter season, Jesus made me feel that there were really souls who have no faith, and who, through the abuse of grace lost this precious treasure" (Manuscript C, 211f); "Your child, ... O Lord, has understood Your divine light, and she begs pardon for her brothers [and sisters]. She is resigned to eat the bread of sorrow as long

as You desire it; she does not wish to rise up from this table filled with bitterness at which poor sinners are eating until the day set by You" (212); "For is there a joy greater than that of suffering out of love for You? The more interior the suffering is and the less apparent to the eyes of creatures, the more it rejoices You, O my God! But if my suffering was really unknown to You, which is impossible, I would still be happy to have it, if through it I could prevent or make reparation for one single sin against faith" (214).

37. SS, Manuscript C, 212.
38. By "ultimate value" is meant the basic human values such as goodness, truth, and love. In a definition that is inclusive of all religions, Sandra Schneiders states that spirituality refers to "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives." In her definition of Christian spirituality, Schneiders states: "The horizon of ultimate value is the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ, and the project involves the living of his paschal mystery in the context of the Church community through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Living within this horizon of ultimate value, one relates in a particular way to all of reality, and it is this relationship to the whole of reality and to reality as a whole in a specifically Christian way which constitutes Christian spirituality" (see Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline", in Elizabeth A. Dreyer & Mark S. Burrows, ed., *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005): 5-24); "Spirituality in the Academy," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 676-697; "Religion and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?" *The Santa Clara Lectures* (Feb 2000)).
39. *St Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations*, trans. John Clarke (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1977), 102.
40. See *National Catholic Reporter*, 21 August 2009 (as above).

My Legacy to the Institute is Charity

Sister Mary Eucharist Malone, R.S.M., 1952

We commence our First Annual Institute this morning in the Name of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and under the protection of His Immaculate Mother, Mary ever virgin and in the spirit of our holy Mother Foundress. It is fitting the first day should be a day of Thanksgiving and that the first and last days of the institute should be feasts of Our Blessed Mother. Today, we honor her as our Lady of the Miraculous Medal and on Saturday, November 29th, as Our Lady of Beauraing. May she appear at least spiritually to us during these days and assist us in our endeavor to unite ourselves and others more closely to the Heart of her Divine Son.

On the night Our Lord instituted the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacrament of His love for us, He gave to His apostles and through them to us, a new commandment—a spiritual legacy: "...that you love one another, as I have loved you." (John XV, 12) Our holy Foundress gave to us, her spiritual children, a legacy like unto His: "My legacy to the Institute is charity." St. Paul tells us in his first epistle to the Corinthians: "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own; is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (XIII, 4-7).

Charity, as it was described by St. Paul, was the keynote of the infant Christian era and was also the keynote of the spirit of the infant institute of the Sisters of Mercy. Throughout the more than hundred years of its existence, the daughters of Mother Mary Catherine McAuley have cherished and traditionally practiced fervently this dual legacy. May we, as a result of these days set aside, as it were, for an inventory of our charity in "having spiritual interest in view above all," be encouraged and strengthened so that our every action will reflect the actions of our Founders.

If we are to take an inventory, we should realize first what is expected of us—Sisters who are caring for the sick in a Catholic hospital.

There are certain characteristic marks which differentiate a Catholic from a non-Catholic hospital. And our hospitals should be so characteristic of institutions conducted by Sisters of Mercy that their special marks will be evident even among Catholic hospitals. We think of these characteristics as those distinctive marks which set an institution apart from others of its kind; those qualities which predominantly make an institution what it is. As our hospital is first of all Catholic, all the distinguishing marks of a Catholic hospital should be ours.¹

Now Catholic means universal; in other words our hospitals care for all patients and for all parts of every patient or, in other words, for the whole patient—spiritually as well as physically. Our hospitals are agencies of the church; agencies to spread the Kingdom of Christ on earth.

As Christians our first obligation is our own sanctification. As religious, we have left the world in order to come back to it breathing the fire of God and inflaming the hearts of sick men and women with that fire of love. By sanctifying our activities through the spirit of obedience, we may sanctify ourselves; but our desire is to sanctify others. By sanctifying our work we may reach not merely bodies, but the souls of the patients we contact. Once we have begun to see God in our work, once we have started on the road to sanctity, this very sanctity begins to overflow into our work and into the souls of our patients as well as our fellow workers. (Thank God, we have the happiness of seeing this every day in the ministrations of our Sisters to the sick). It is necessary to keep in mind that we are missionaries carrying the message of Christ, especially the message of His charity, to our patients. We must be steeped in the idea that Christ has left the world in order to let us represent Him in the hospital. If we are to carry Him to others we must be grounded in His mercy, His goodness, His gentleness, His kindness, His love; we must see Christ in all those to whom we minister daily. Whether we are in the sick room the operating

room, the office or convent, it is Christ Whom we serve in one way or another.²

Our objective then is to sanctify ourselves and through this to carry Christ as well as to represent Him to others. How can we accomplish this? By our hospital work as this is the means God has given us of reaching souls to gain them for Christ. For those who are not in direct contact with patients, by prayer—prayer is the powerhouse of the hospital; without it our work would avail nothing. How many of us have and continually do ask our dear Sisters to pray for this or that one who is in spiritual need. And how generous they are with their prayers and sacrifices is evidenced by the tremendous graces given to souls.

Do our patients see Christ in us always? Are their hearts animated by the overflow of Christ's love in our own hearts? Have we unintentionally divorced God from the formally non-religious activities in which we must engage or does our every action reflect Him?

The spirit of Catholicism must permeate our Catholic hospitals. Have we imitated Christ? Have we remembered our heritage of love or have we suffered from the effects of Godlessness by imitating the world instead of Christ? Our religion is identified by Christlike charity, or the lack of it to those in need. Some of the means suggested by the Sisters which will assist us in keeping our hospitals Catholic in the real sense of the word and in maintaining in the true spirit of Catholicism include:

1. A prevailing spirit of Christlike charity.
2. Catholic lay personnel, especially in key positions.
3. Catholic student body.
4. Kindness, courtesy, patience.
5. Emphasis on the spiritual aspects in teaching.

We realize that these are only some of the many means that can be utilized. The necessity of having Catholic personnel, including student nurses, is of great importance as only those who believe in the Catholic faith can be expected to maintain a true spirit of Catholicism.

We must begin with ourselves—our cordial, kind attitude toward one another, then toward our personnel and our patients. Sometimes we place

emphasis on efficiency and not enough on kindness, which goes a long way. We should keep ourselves balanced, dealing always with each other kindly and charitably. If we do not, we are just a show and our results and efforts are worth nothing.

Means by which we may improve our efforts to maintain the true spirit of a Catholic hospital will be considered throughout our institute so we shall not consider them now.

Perhaps we may go on to consider our own hospital in light of the spirit of Mother McAuley. If we look at Chapter One in our Constitutions we note first the general object which is the perfection of the members of the Institute; then the special object, the service of the poor, the sick and the ignorant in order to promote the salvation of their souls. We are encouraged to see in these suffering poor, the person of Jesus Christ, Whom we have been graciously permitted to assist.

In our Guide which is so characteristic of the spirit of our holy Foundress we read, "The spirit of our Institute is mercy as the name denotes. Mercy can operate only in proportion as destitution, suffering, ignorance and other miseries call it forth...CHARITY embraces those who abound as well as those who are in need, but MERCY finds exercise only in proportion to the necessity of its object."

Mercy then should be and is the characteristic the distinguishing feature of all the institutes conducted by the Sisters of Mercy. Mercy extends not only to those who are in need physically, but also to those who are in need spiritually. Mother McAuley asks, "What greater misery than that of a soul in danger of being eternally miserable, and which is even careless about its imminent peril? Is not misery the proper object of mercy?"

The special objects of our care should be then the poor—the poor in body and the poor in spirit. Truly, by our vows we have become the consecrated servants of the poor. We are told in our Guide that whatever works, directly or indirectly interfere with the effectual and devoted discharge of our vocation cannot be the work our heavenly Father has given us to do—cannot be the service God demands of us, or the means by which He intends to sanctify us. We may already rely on God's grace and blessing when we are discharging

works of mercy as this is the end for which or beloved Institute has been raised up by God.

How may we accomplish the work of keeping this characteristic of MERCY ever active in our hospitals? Mainly by filling our own minds and hearts with the spirit of our holy Foundress so that that spirit will permeate our work in caring for the suffering poor of Christ.

She encouraged the Sisters to carry out this sacred duty of caring for the sick in a spirit of:

Faith...Labor out our lives in the service of the poor regarding and serving in them visibly our invisible Redeemer, without any earthly recompense.

Hope...Ever keeping His unwearied patience and humility present to our minds, endeavoring to imitate Him more perfectly every day in self-denial, patience and entire resignation.

Charity...Spirit of our Foundress is an exercise of charity toward God and toward our neighbor for His sake.

Poverty...Keep our hearts perfectly disengaged from all affections to things of this world.

Chastity...Esteem nothing more precious than this heavenly gift.

Obedience...Shall, without hesitation, comply with all directions, whether in matters of little or great moment, agreeable or disagreeable.

Prayer...Most sedulously attend to this most salutary exercise, in this take delight and seek in it our comfort and refreshment from the labors and fatigues of the Institute; by frequent visits during the day pay assiduous court to our heavenly Spouse on the throne of His Love. In all our sufferings and anxieties, in all our fears, afflictions, and temptations seek comfort and consolation at the foot of the altar.

Silence, Seclusion and Recollection...Those who cultivate and observe the spirit of the enclosure must strictly, at the same time prove by the effectual and edifying performance of their duties that it is

perfectly compatible with their efficient discharge, will be the firmest support of our beloved Institute.

Humility...Shall bear to each other great and cordial respect; all shall, with true humility, endeavor to vie with each other in manifesting towards our Sisters a respectful demeanor.

Mortification...The manner of practicing mortification and self denial is different from other orders, but is not less inculcated; for...this Congregation is founded on Calvary, there to serve a crucified Redeemer, after whose example the Sisters ought to crucify their senses, imaginations, and caprices for the love of their Divine Master.

Truly, if we are ever mindful of the spirit of our holy Foundress as manifested to us in our Guide, we may be certain of performing our duties as God wills. It is with a deep spirit of gratitude that we pledge ourselves anew to the care of our suffering Redeemer in the person of His suffering poor and we place all of our endeavors in the hands of our Blessed Mother and of our beloved Foundress.

Most holy and glorious Virgin Mother of God, we, thy humble suppliants, convinced of our need of the grace of God to fulfill the arduous duties and obligations of our pious Congregation, and of the greatness of thy power with Jesus Christ thy beloved Son, and of thy goodness toward poor Christians, most fervently salute thee this day as the Mother of Mercy, in full confidence of obtaining the Divine assistance through thy intercession. (Const. § 178).

Notes

1. Rev. James Moscow, "The Catholic Spirit of the Front Office," *Hospital Progress*, Vol. 4, No. 50, p. 99.
2. Very Rev. G. H. Guyot, C.M., "Hospital Routine vs. the Spiritual Life," *Hospital Progress*, Vol. 5, No. 51, p. 150.



Unity in Love Stability in Faith: Meditations on the Mercy Covenant

Sister Mary Jeanne Salois, R.S.M., Province of Detroit

Unity in Love

The charity of Christ has gathered us together. Led by one Spirit, dedicated to one Lord, and called to one Father, we are religious women united in faith and love to relate creatively and redemptively with those whose needs we are vowed to serve. The religious community makes explicit a characteristic implicit in all true community, that its bond goes beyond the interpersonal relationship among its members to the Person whose love is the core of our lives and of our relatedness to one another.¹

"The charity of Christ has gathered us together."

We are living in communion with other Sisters of Mercy in a religious congregation founded by Catherine McAuley in response to the love of Christ. Since it is the charity of Christ which has gathered us together, ours is a life of synthesis where all things are to be seen in the light of this great love. Our lives are to be an expression of His love for us, our love for Him, and our love for others in Him.

**The charity of Christ has
gathered us together.... united
in faith and love to relate
creatively and redemptively
with those whose needs we
are vowed to serve.**

Love is best expressed by imitation. We are to follow Christ on a road which leads to endless love. We can always love more; we can always discover in a more joyous, more grateful way how God loves us and how He enables us to grow in our love for others. In His love we, Sisters of

Mercy, are gathered together to walk this road of never-ending, ever-increasing love.

The path we follow is not obscure. We are "led by one Spirit, dedicated to one Lord, called to one Father...to relate creatively and redemptively with those whose needs we are vowed to serve."

The Spirit reveals Himself to us through the Gospel which is our primary rule. Unless we follow Christ as we find Him in the Gospel, His sign will not be seen among us as we turn to those whose needs we are vowed to serve. If we choose as guides false prophets who find the Gospel irrelevant, those we serve will see in us only a dissipation of energy.

**We are called to a synthesis
of love, called to translate
the Gospel into our lives in
terms of love of God and of
others.**

We are called to a synthesis of love, called to translate the Gospel into our lives in terms of love of God and of others. To open ourselves totally to God's love, we have freely vowed to live the evangelical counsels revealed in the Gospel, as one way of witnessing Christ to the world in the service of mankind. The path of the evangelical counsels which we travel does not separate us from the rest of mankind. Rather, this path links us wholly with the Christian world as we serve the secular city.

The evangelical counsels are blazing emblems of the heavenly kingdom. Like so many neon signs, they remind the secular city that its dwellings are not lasting; that there is no lasting city on the earth. These blazing emblems—the

vows we take in order to open ourselves to greater love—are threefold:

- Celibacy for the kingdom of God unites us with God in an outstanding way so we can be free for the service of others.
- In imitation of Christ who said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me,” we transform the vow of obedience into love, by freely and willingly embracing more than what is commanded. In obedience we run, rather than walk, on the path of self-giving—to meet the needs of those we are vowed to serve.
- We vow poverty as proof of our union and trust in the providence of our Beloved as did His first followers. “The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common” (Acts 4:32).

“We are religious women united in faith and love....”

—inspiration for the three-fold consecration and pattern for religious living. The pattern of living in faith and love needs to be guided by the life of Christ. To radically change the original commitment of vowed religious, for whatever cause, is to pursue an uncharted celibate existence. If this way of life parallels that already well-traveled in the secular city, there will be no living witnesses to light the way or to point to the everlasting city to come.

“The religious community makes explicit a characteristic implicit in all true community, that its bond goes beyond the interpersonal

relationships among its members to the Person whose love is the core of our lives and of our relatedness to one another.”

To have Christ as the core of our lives is to commit ourselves to His mentality. The Gospel says, “You should carry each other’s troubles and fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6.2). One who carries the troubles of others soon becomes oblivious of her own difficulties. To have Christ as the center of our lives is to make incongruous an insularity of selfishness encasing this core. When Christ holds a central position, imitation of His understanding and selflessness in eager commitment is imperative.

We cannot be “led by one Father” if we are not affectionate sisters of all who share with us this common fatherhood. We do not deserve to be called friends and comrades in the work of Christ if we are not ready to literally sacrifice our lives to the happiness of those for whom he offered His life.

To love Christ is to want others to love Him and to love these others. There is no such thing as

one love for God and a different love for man. When we turn to our neighbor in the charity which has gathered us together, we are not turning away from God. There can be only one charity, the charity of Christ. “Love springs from God; no one can love without being born of God and knowing God” (I John 4:7).

The last testament of Pope John XXIII was:

“Love one another, dear children! Seek rather what unites, not what may separate you from one another. As I take leave or better still, as I say ‘til we meet again,’ Let me remind you of the most important things in life: Our blessed Savior Jesus; His good news: His holy Church, truth and kindness.... shall remember you all and pray for you.”

The unity of faith and love of religious women gives witness to the power of Christ, and is a glorification of this same Christ in their midst. If this unity is to be preserved, great care must be taken not to divorce it from the Christ of the Gospel...

Stability in Faith

What we most deeply share is our faith in Him who has loved us first. We cannot be a community unless we share this fundamental faith from which flow common values and aspirations giving stability to our pledged unity celebrated in Eucharistic covenant. Yet this faith admits of a variety of life styles, through the diversity and creativity within the group. Thus, true community is not something given or pre-established, but a task to be achieved, growing reality, calling for the loving day-to-day participation of every sister.²

Blessed moment in time which challenges us all to an ever more demanding search for the meaning of our faith and for new means of living this faith and proclaiming it around us!

Every living organism must achieve a reform and an evolution if it is to remain vitally alive. Our Mercy congregation is following this law of living organisms in a special manner during this period of experimentation and new experiences. Growth and evolution of a congregation is growth and evolution in the life of individual members. Each member of this congregation has roots firmly implanted in a baptismal consecration; each member is growing in faith through a special vowed consecration in a religious state; each member is striving toward greater holiness—greater intimacy with Christ.

In this growth process, the common faith we hold stabilizes the community by encompassing certain constants, certain common values and aspirations. What are these constants which unite us?

**If our faith is to mean anything in
our lives, it must motivate us to
action.**

Since our growth is toward holiness, the constants need to include elements which nourish the life of grace within us. These common values include prayer and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Christ must be loved, contemplated and adored. He must be received in the Eucharist if there is to be growth in holiness.

If our faith is to mean anything in our lives, it must motivate us to action. We believe that Christ said, "Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14:27). The cross is a constant in the life of every man because of his human condition. To the baptized Christian consecrated to Christ in a special way, the cross is a cherished reality carried willingly in imitation of Christ who responded in love to the will of His Father unto death.

Another value which gives stability to the pledged unity of our congregation as special daughters of Holy Mother Church is a love for the Church. How can we be special disciples of Christ if we do not love the Church which He founded while on earth? We are to help the Church grasp the signs of the times now challenging her. Sisters of Mercy, with their Irish legacy, should resemble the Irish professor who, after listening to his students recount with woe the dismal sins and neglects of the Catholic Church, said, "The Church is indeed an old whore. But she is still my mother, and I'll not leave her while she needs me in this her darkest hour."

**"We cannot be a community
unless we share this
fundamental faith from which
flows common values and
aspirations giving stability to our
pledged unity..."**

Unless certain constants are retained in religious life it is not likely to hold together. A humanistic approach to adaptation picks up some elements and drops others. For example, such an approach may pick up corporate poverty but drop personal self-sacrifice. It may speak of obedience while retaining almost complete personal autonomy. This approach may retain chastity while permitting almost every kind of masculine-feminine intimacy. Before we can call the resulting life religious, we need to ask if the salvaged pieces fit together. What kind of cement

can prevent religious life from falling apart in a debris of individualistic tastes and desires?

Chesterton, in his *The Thing: Why I Am a Catholic*, said of the Church:

The problem of an enduring ethic and culture consists in finding an arrangement of the pieces by which they remain related as do the stones in an arch. And I know only one scheme that has thus proved its solidarity, bestriding lands and ages with its gigantic arches carrying everywhere the high river of baptism upon an aqueduct of Rome.

As religious who have been part of this total scheme for hundreds of years, we need to keep our faith in the Church and in the common values of religious life. "We cannot be a community unless we share this fundamental faith from which flows common values and aspirations giving stability to our pledged unity..."

a more authentic poverty,
prompting religious to request
real financial responsibility and a
certain sense of insecurity while
sharing their earnings within the
community

In achieving a reform and evolution, we can expect to change our visible acting presence to this world. Convent structures are subject to modification. Expressions of poverty and obedience will vary from age to age. It is possible that democratic forms of government maybe better suited to a life of the counsels than the hierarchical structure familiar to all religious. Authority is no longer understood as power over persons; rather it is a service. Obedience is no longer defined in terms of dependence; it is allied with communion and shared responsibility.

The trend toward a more authentic poverty, prompting religious to request real financial responsibility and a certain sense of insecurity while sharing their earnings within the community, may be a better way of observing this

vow than the "permission concept" of old which covered all contingencies.

A certain de-structuring of religious life is both desirable and inevitable. In an age of rapid change we should not be bound by too many traditions. Pope Pius XII, in a letter sent to the major superiors of Portugal shortly before his death, repeated the warning of Our Lord: "Why do you transgress the law of the Lord because of your traditions?"

The question to ask ourselves is: What does Christ expect of the person who would follow Him more closely? The Gospel answer—a boundless love for Christ and others, real commitment to the Beatitudes, an unlimited trust and confidence in the Father, and a total willingness to deny oneself.

Religious do not accept the community *a priori*. We wish to build it up by way of experiencing community. A community must be more than a gathering of persons who live in harmony. Peace results from a spiritual unity based on the mutual love of members and their common love of Christ. This love is no love if it does not permit others to express their commitment in a variety of ways, according to the unique gifts, talents and dispositions of each member.

Throughout change in expressing religious life, the dedicated sister remains a pure virgin, a poor pilgrim, and an obedient woman of the Church. To her can be applied this verse by Sir Thomas More:

The heart that has truly loved never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close,
As the sunflower turns to her god when he sets
The same look which she turned when he rose.



NOTES

1. Mercy Covenant, Paragraph 234, Part 1.
2. Mercy Covenant, Paragraph 235, Part 2.

Development of a Faith Community for Redemptive Service

Community Day—September 26, 1971

*Sister Catherine (Mary Inviolata) Gallagher, R.S.M.
Province of Chicago*

Today, a day in which we are called together as community to seek a focus in renewal, can perhaps have no better introductory than the recent exhortation from our Holy Father on authentic renewal of religious life:

Dear Religious:

According to the different ways in which the call of God makes demands upon your spiritual families. You must give your full attention to the needs of men, their problems and their searchings. You must give witness in their midst, through prayer and action to the Good News of love, justice and peace.

The aspirations of men to a more fraternal life among individuals and nations require above all a change in ways of living, in mentality and in hearts. Such a mission, which is common to all the People of God, belongs to you in a special way. How can that mission ever be fulfilled if there is lacking an appreciation of the absolute, which results from a certain experience of God?

This does but emphasize the fact that authentic renewal of the religious life is of capital importance for the very renewal of the Church and of the World. (Pope Paul VI: Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of the Religious Life According to the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council, July, 1971).

We are brought together today, then, to bring further as a community that authentic renewal of which the Holy Father speaks.

At this time I would like to give you a sense of the sequence of our program. First, is this plenary session in which I hope to express considerations developed by the Executive Department. Then there will be an opportunity for your comment from the floor. Following this, there will be a longer period in which you will have a variety of options:

(1) There will be several sectional groupings to discuss specific points raised in our earlier discussion. In these sectional groupings, every person present will be expected to be a discussant, a builder of ideas or a raiser of questions;

(2) Another option for those who prefer to listen to the exchange of others will be held here in the auditorium.

Following the sectional meetings, a final plenary session will be called here in the auditorium, closing with a liturgy. Later, Sister Mary Alice will give further direction on the sectional meetings.

Before I begin my remarks this afternoon, Sisters, I'd like to share with you what came to me from scripture today. When I stopped in Chapel this morning and opened the New Testament, I was somewhat dismayed at the first line that came to me from the Acts of the Apostles: "What is this cock sparrow trying to say?" (17:18) and I look at you now and I ask myself, "What am I trying to say?" Very little, Sisters, if it isn't to call us to faith response as Sisters of Mercy today!

From our Holy Father's exhortation and from many other levels and means of communication within the community, we have a heightened realization of the desire of the Sisters to re-focus, to identify once again what unifies us. We reject a fallacy of "once and for all-ness" description or definition of who we are.

We propose to you today a demanding focus for all of us: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FAITH COMMUNITY FOR REDEMPTIVE SERVICE.

I feel that a recent statement from the Latin American Bishops is significant here:

Catholicity was not achieved one time for all time to be maintained at any price; it must be won

continually by courageous effort and open-eyed struggle. Today the Church feels the sharp pangs of her tragic inconsistency. She feels her disloyalty to the Gospel and her failure to confront the real situation in Latin America.

I think it would not be inappropriate for us to return to this statement and instead of Catholicity substitute the Sisters of Mercy.

May I read back to you:

The community of the Sisters of Mercy was not achieved one time, for all time, to be maintained at any price; the community of the Sisters of Mercy must be won continually by courageous effort and open-eyed struggle.

The Church was cited for her tragic inconsistency and her failure to meet the Gospel mandate. We are a part of that Church, enmeshed in the historical process. Yet, paradoxically, we identify ourselves within the Church as a group that will risk more, a group that dared to lift out of the status quo.

In renewal, we have tried to reduce or even eliminate our structure unfreedoms. But without these structures now, have we attempted to "nest in"? Have we, in fact, "nested in"? And are we not inclined to do just that: to fragment, to distort only one aspect of who we are and why we are?

Without question, there is much pain in the now. But we need to look at it for what it really is. Are we allowing it, are we allowing ourselves to invert? Self-pained? Self-pitied? Are we sustained in our efforts at arriving at identity? Perhaps we could say we have self-pity. Today let us seek together a demanding ideal for our identity!

Within the past several years our Chapters have concurred on many things. Two principles seem of special significance today:

(1) We have affirmed that we are a person-oriented community;

(2) We have agreed that decisions should be made at the lowest level possible—individual, local community, province.

Both principles are utterly destructive of the uniformity and conformity that some of us

mistakenly identified as our unity. The adoption of both these principles calls for far more mature response from all of us. Rightly, they recognize our human dignity! From there, we can move to faith community.

We have been called to renew, to authentic renewal, to take seriously Christ's words, "I have come to bring you life, life more abundantly." And that's where it is, at the level of life, shared life.

Our reams of paper are inconsequential if they don't communicate life, if we don't seek life and receive life through them, and more essentially, through one another. Here, this community, the Sisters of Mercy 1971 is a human thing, capable of new life, capable of addressing the needs of men today, in ways no single individual among us can do as well alone.

The community of the Sisters of Mercy was not achieved one time, for all time ... The community of the Sisters of Mercy must be won continually by courageous effort and open-eyed struggle.

As a faith community, we proclaim the All Holy, the Transcendent, the mystery of God-caring and God present in this world, God desiring to be made more present in this world, God desiring to be made more present through, and not just in, each of us. But present through us as community. United in our convictions that He is, we must stand willing to have any other icon we have constructed smashed by one another—so that we worship only the living God! We need have our forms of self-worship or creature-worship exposed, exposed as the icons they may have become.

And this calls us to service, redemptive service, beyond professionalism to reverence and presence to man, to contemporary ways of meeting his human needs so that he becomes more

capable of perceiving TRUTH, contemplating BEAUTY, desiring GOODNESS. These ultimately are presence to God. This, any of this, calls for transformation in the total Church and in this religious community of the Sisters of Mercy—far more radical than anything we have lived!

Let us be disturbed today about big things! Disturbed in the Spirit to a realization of mission, mission from the Father, mission with one another, on fire in the spirit to bring all men to full personhood, to that unity of all men where there is no servitude, no oppression, no alienation. What a responsive chord this strikes in us, the Sisters of Mercy! The yearning to do for and with in confronting misery. To deal within, with our own unfreedoms, to go out, striving inSPIRITED so men will be taught, men will be healed—and God will be praised!

So this focus for us, Sisters of Mercy, Province of Chicago 1971, "The Development of Faith Community for Redemptive Service."

Let us be disturbed today
about big things! Disturbed
in the Spirit to a realization of
mission, mission from the
Father, mission with one
another, on fire in the spirit...

Let me stress for just a moment the word "development." Development brings with it the exhilaration that life is here, capable of new life, life more abundantly. We seven in the Province Administration saw four basic components integral to this focus:

Person

Community

Performing Redemptive Service

As a Faith Group

Person

Consideration of person encompasses the invitation out—to other persons to join with us; applicants, the mutual considerations involved before initiation into the community; the pre-candidate phase, "living in" and incorporation in temporary commitment; and perpetual commitment. All of these phases are of significance, not just to individual in special roles, not just to a formation team or the persons who happen to be in Province Administration, but to the total community and to every local community, especially where new members are. Our premise here is that with new life, values are added to the local community. There is a mutuality in the sharing of new life and the continuing life that is there. This is only communicated as process, lived experience, not a paper prescription!

Human Community

We see here all growth and support in potency. Perhaps we look wistfully at our tendency to revert to the "tidiness" (and depersonalization!) of our earlier common life. And can we test our willingness to move from a group relationship of shared dependency on a structure "out there" beyond independent "hotel residence" shared-facility relationship, to shared interdependence for and with others. This is the ideal and can only be accomplished in faith.

Redemptive Service

We approach this through the development of a concept of ministry within the Church, and with the Church and as Church. Here we strive for a sense of mission that includes every service a Sister of Mercy presently performs or can perform, in or out of "our institutions." It is our ministry to the degree the service is healing or teaching man. Maybe, for some of us, the sense of ministry and apostolate has been clouded, perhaps more in time of loneliness than at other times. We look upon the personnel process of which we were a part this past year. Perhaps we wonder how this relates to our obedience as we previously perceived it, expressed from the pages of an

appointment book. How is the personnel process tied in to my apostolate, my mission? Today is meant somehow to be mission for all of us. In our affirmation of the community of the Sisters of Mercy, each of us is on mission in obedience to the call of the Father to all men. We extend the concept of obedience to whatever form a call to service reached any of us this year. The individual Sister's response to that in ministry tests out her authenticity in being obedient to the call of the Father.

As a Faith Group

It reaffirms, first of all, our baptism. We acknowledge our presence to the Father, our motivation from Him, our enlivenment by Him. We seek to be present to Him, having His presence in our lives make a difference, make us want to share His good with all. In this we are strengthened by the realization that the others sharing our life share our faith.

Somehow in the discussion of the four components of our goal, the Development of a Faith Community for Redemptive Service, we are made more aware of the integrity of the total statement of why we are, who we are. Now, perhaps it might help to identify for you how we in the Province Administration see our specification in supporting roles to further this focus in the community. May we return then to the first of the components we identified in Development of a Faith Community for Redemptive Service—that of person.

Let me stress for just a
moment the word
"development." Development
brings with it the exhilaration
that life is here, capable of
new life, life more abundantly.

Person

Sister Brenda has a special responsibility for:

- The invitation out to potential members
- Providing experiences for applicants
- Arrangement for "living-in" of pre-candidates
- Growth in incorporation by the Sisters in temporary commitment.

Sister Alice assumes the special responsibility for the furtherance of our growth as persons up to and including retirement years.

Human Community

- Sister Joan attempts to enhance interpersonal relationship and the communication processes
- Sister Magdalen assists in financial planning and supportive material resources.
- Sister Josephus directs her attention to the special human community found in our retirement centers.

Development of the Concept of Ministry

Office of Apostolic Services

- Sister Honora has major responsibility for ministry, especially in the pastoral and educational areas.
- Sister Josephus assists in the health field.
- Sister Alice assists in the area of higher education.
- Sister Brenda assists on an interim basis while secondary education is being phased into Sister Honora's role.

Department of Personnel Services

Sister Brenda assists in helping Sisters find placement in meaningful ministry.

Board of Directors

Some of our activity in ministry involves our institutional holdings where several of us hold membership on various boards of directors. The

first function of every board is to challenge the institution's commitment to the goal for which it was instituted, secondarily to safeguard the assets of the institutions. Sisters Mary Alice, Josephus, Magdalen, Honora and I are on various boards of directors within the Province.

As a Faith Group

Faith is always a gift. With hope and love, it is the way we mediate a living out of evangelical counsels. This has priority in my role. I work with Spirituality Committees to identify and arrange programs and speakers than can help us deepen our relationship with God, giving this primacy in our lives, personally and as community. Officially, I have primary responsibility for calling the community to a deepening of this life of faith. (Only in faith, I assure you, can I accept the principle that I can call and you can hear a faith call to grow in faith yourself.)

This summarizes the responsibilities we see in furtherance of the goal we all share, Development of a Faith Community for Redemptive Service. If I know you at all, some of you are right there on that reflection from Acts, "What is this cock sparrow trying to say?" (Acts 17:18) And I respond with the first words of St. Paul, speaking to the Athenians, "My own eyes tell me that you are in all respects an extremely religious people." (Acts 17:22)

Let me raise some of the realistic creative tensions that we perceive. Perhaps some of them are exciting futurables. Perhaps they present themselves as an unmitigated problem. Hopefully, in our large group discussion or sectional meetings, we will have help from one another to "unwrap a problem," perhaps reveal a jewel of great price, a thrower of fire on the earth!

To suggest a few:

- Membership: What constitutes membership; how extensive can this be?
- Finance: Are there nuances of finance and financial arrangements by person or local community that can call us to more effective service, to more healthy responsibility?
- Community living: What degree of presence do we need to one another? Is there any minimal to retain a semblance of community?
- The Manner of Dealing with Conflict Healthfully
- The Obligation of the Community to the Person
- The Obligation of the Person to the Community
- The Concept of Mobility: Do we really accept the life of the pilgrim person we have twice affirmed, the concept of pilgrim community?
- Prayer Life: How present are we to God, alone, and with others?
- Ministry: Is there anywhere or anything which cannot be, ought not be, ministry for the Sisters of Mercy today?

The preceding, Sisters, is just a quick listing of possible, practical considerations. Remember the context in which they were presented—as futuristic or problem.

Before we entertain comment or further suggestion from the floor, may I recall for you our focus: The Development of Faith Community for Redemptive Service. Let us close recalling the words of Christ, "I have come to bring you life, life more abundantly."

Thank you, Sisters.



Report to the General Chapter of the Appeals Committee

Study on Judiciary Services

Sisters of Mercy Generalate, Bethesda, Maryland

Eighth General Chapter, Sisters of Mercy of the Union, 1971

Sisters Ann Nelson, R.S.M., M. Claver Cronin, R.S.M., M. Corinne Bart, R.S.M., M. McAuley Gillgannon, R.S.M., M. Paulita Morris, R.S.M., M. Stella Maris Bergin, R.S.M.

Proposal

That there be a communal recognition of the fundamental rights and responsibilities inherent in the membership of the Institute

Rationale: Both procedural and substantive due process in the American experience are ordained to the protection of the dignity of the human person, the freedom of the human person, and the basic rights of the human person. Within the life of the Church, too this is the case. The Second Vatican Council emphasized these values as distinctly Christian and belonging to the core of the Gospel message. The origin of the due process issue is in the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and did not arise because of the presence of conflict and dispute.

It would seem useful to recognize, communally, this teaching of the Church regarding the fundamental rights and freedoms of all persons, as well as the additional responsibilities and privileges which result from membership in our religious congregation. This communal recognition is especially needed in an age when a harmony of greater personal initiative and positive guidance is desired. Groups such as the Canon Law Society of America and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men in the United States have studied the issue of due process, both procedural and substantive, and have recommended that structures be provided for peaceful and orderly conciliation, arbitration, and judicial resolution of disputes when they arise. However, they emphasize also the need to create an atmosphere of Christian life in which disputes are less likely to occur.

With a view to this preventative approach, we propose the adoption of a common credo or communal recognition of appropriate values. Since 1964, the numerous groups which have been

commissioned by ecclesial authorities to study the issue of due process have come to realize that prior policies are needed. A set of policies, generally known and accepted, would be a basis for any operation in due process. (See Appendix) These policies would require a common credo as their point of departure. Such administrative policies would thus be formulated even before a particular issue would become a matter of dispute or controversy.

**Proposal: That there be a
communal recognition of the
fundamental rights and
responsibilities inherent in the
membership of the Institute**

Because due process requires a prior process of statement of administrative policies, and because these should be in accord with Christian principles, it would be well to state formally these values which we recognize and to which we adhere. Such a statement would provide at least partial rationale for future policy decisions and contribute to our sense of spirit and identification as Sisters of mercy. Therefore, we The Appeals Process Committee submit the following

Common Credo

1. As creatures of God all men are equal in dignity and have inherent individual rights and responsibilities to follow a personal conscience in pursuit of eternal realities.
2. Rightful authority has the power to command for the common good of the people of God and the protection of their individual rights.
3. The vow of obedience results in a special relationship between a free Christian and

- religious authority in accord with the principle of subsidiarity, the practice of shared responsibility, the dignity of the human person and our Constitutions and Mercy Covenant.
4. The principle of subsidiarity requires decision-making occurring at the level proper to it. A decision must not be vetoed by higher authority unless it can be adequately demonstrated that the decision has a negative effect upon the rights of others or the common good of the community. However, the burden of proof for requiring the reversal of a subordinate decision would rest upon the higher authority.
 5. The practice of shared responsibility requires that policy decisions be made in the light of communal advice whenever circumstances permit.
 6. The dignity of the human person is dependent upon the communal recognition of such individual rights as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of petition and the freedom to act in accord with personal conscience. All individual rights are limited by the rights of other individuals and those of the community. The sacredness of these rights is such that the burden of proof rests upon those persons who would limit rather than upon those who exercise them.
 7. The human governance of our religious institute involves a system of relationships promotive of the individual and corporate goals of our community, the service of the people of God, and the communal response to the signs of the times. All administrative procedures are designed in accord with procedural and substantive due process. Official policy of the community recognizes such rights of its membership as: the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty; the right to be informed of a specific charge made against one's reputation; the right to redress of grievances and the right to appeal in cases of dispute. The community as a legal and moral person has the same rights which its individual members enjoy.
- [What follows is a description of the three services offered by the Generalate: Conciliation, Arbitration and Review of Arbitration Process by Panel of Judiciary Services. Each process names its proper subject matter, agreements that are made prior to going forward, and describes the step by step procedure, giving what each party's responsibilities are.]

APPENDIX

Recommendation:

The Establishment of Procedures Antecedent to Administrative Decisions

Disputes between individual members and persons in positions of authority arise from a variety of situations in which individuals consider themselves aggrieved by administrative action on the part of authority. Administrative action usually involves the exercise of a large amount of discretion on the part of administrators; and to the extent that such discretion is uncontrolled and unchecked there exist wide possibilities not only for administrative actions which are in fact arbitrary and unjust, but more significantly for the

rise of disputes and manifold possibilities for widespread supposition on the part of those affected that the actions were arbitrary and unjust. Whence arise a proliferation of complaints against authority, of accusations and counter-accusations, and of long and bitter conflicts.

No governmental system in history has been without significant discretionary power; nor can be, and the governing authority of religious institutes should be no exception. Discretion is indispensable for tailoring decisions to unique problems. Total elimination of discretionary power would cripple authority's service to the people by depriving that service of all flexibility. However, such powers have been abused. Certain preventative steps, if adopted, would do much to eliminate unnecessary discretionary power and to

minimize the likelihood of injustice, real or supposed, following upon the exercise of administrative authority.

A. Delineation of Competence

The first step in confining discretionary power within proper limits, and in the controlling of its exercise within those limits, is a clear delineation of the authority of the particular administrative organ or individual administrator. Such delineation should be found in enabling legislation, or if none such exists, in the decree of authority which brings the particular administrative organ into existence. For example, the precise area of competence of a provincial personnel board or a liturgical commission should be clearly set forth.

When the limits of competence are not known either to those charged with the responsibility of administration or to those who are to be affected by the acts of administration, opportunity for misunderstanding, mistrust, and conflict is great.

B. Policy Stating

There should be published by an administrator or administrative body the considerations, criteria, and standards that will guide decisions to be made in individual cases. Detailed and precise policy statements would give some assurance of consistency in reaching decisions, and hence some assurance of equal justice by moving from a system of ad hoc determinations of policy in particular cases to a system of pre-announced policy determinations. By giving parties prior knowledge of the administrator's position, knowledgeable efforts to meet standards and so to receive a favorable administrative decision are made possible. Moreover, it becomes possible to obtain intelligent review, not only of published policies before proper authorities, but also, in conciliation, arbitration or judicial proceedings to obtain review of alleged unfair or arbitrary decisions in individual cases.

Policy-stating insofar as possible should be preceded by an open policy-making procedure which makes available to interested persons

information concerning what policy problems are under consideration, what criteria are being considered, and the reasons underlying the proposed policy. Interested persons should be invited to offer suggestions and criticisms.

Such a procedure would gain for administrative bodies and administrators the benefit of ideas contributed by many qualified persons, and would minimize subsequent tensions arising out of the application to individuals of policies of which they had no knowledge and to which they had no opportunity to raise objections.

From General Council Meeting Minutes

November 30, 1971—p. 2

Judiciary Service Conciliators:

By unanimous consensus of the Administrator General and Council, the following Sisters were appointed to serve as a staff of Conciliators for the Generalate Judiciary Service:

Baltimore:	Sister Mary Stella Maris Bergin Sister Carol Wheeler
Chicago:	Sister Mary Evangeline McSloy
Cincinnati:	Sister Rita Braun Sister Margaret Anne Molitor
Detroit:	Sister Mary Corinne Bart Sister Nancy Thompson
New York:	Sister May Enda Keggin
Omaha:	Sister Marie Micheletto Sister Mary Charles Keane
Providence:	Sister Mary Noel Blute Sister Ann Marie Nelson
St. Louis:	Sister Mary Ellen Greeley Sister Mary Kieran Moloney
Scranton:	Sister Mary Claver Cronin



Address to Provincial Chapter

October 26, 1974

Sister Mary Mercy McAuliffe, R.S.M.

Provincial Administrator

There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of us. (I Cor. 12:4-8)

As we begin a new year together as a Chapter group, let us expend our energies arising from the conviction that we are living in a religious and social age of complexity and uncertainty. Both qualities are not conducive to a factual assurity that clearly indicates the sure path to right decision.

Religious life today, and more precisely, the life of a Sister of Mercy, calls forth from each of us the need for the ability to live peacefully with uncertainties. The peace of which I speak avoids the two extremes; on the one hand, the false peace arising from the complacency of apathetic disinterestedness and on the other, predetermined self-righteousness arising from false certitudes of the one way, my way is the right way. The peace to which I refer arises from the faith conviction that while we live in the confusion of change, God is immutable. We need to constantly remind ourselves of this. When God in His immutability is the focal point of our lives, then Change, even the drastic change that we have experienced in our way of life that we thought to be stratified can become the happy circumstance of meeting God anew in a thousand new experiences of an ever-changing life.

We can never be really prepared for that which is wholly new. We have to adjust ourselves, and any radical adjustment is a crisis in self-esteem. It needs the dynamic of faith as well as that of self-confidence to face drastic change without inner trembling. A deep sense of the Lord allows us to live with a self-confidence that does not need to provide the answers ahead of time.

The person sure of his skill goes leisurely about his work whatever its responsibilities and accomplishes much though he works as if at play.

On the other hand, the person new to a job attacks his work as if he were saving the world, and he must do it himself if he is to get anything done at all. I make reference here to an inner sense of confidence that makes the difference. It is a necessary human quality we all need to possess. When there is the necessary skill to move mountains, there is no need for the faith that moves mountains. Our life to be lived in its fullest authenticity is a happy combination of both skill and faith. Self-confidence then in my person, in my self-concept as a religious woman and member of a religious community is a natural characteristic on which grace builds.

Religious life today, and more precisely, the life of a Sister of Mercy, calls forth from each of us the need for the ability to live peacefully with uncertainties. The peace of which I speak avoids the two extremes; on the one hand, the false peace arising from the complacency of apathetic disinterestedness and on the other, predetermined self-righteousness arising from false certitudes of the one way, my way is the right way.

I submit to you that for dynamic life to be operative within each of us as person, and all of us as committed members of a religious community, we need a sense of self-reliance that stems from a faith conviction of the immutability of God and belief in ourselves amid the changing circumstances of life. "Grace builds on nature" has more insightful meaning for us today than perhaps

it did in the age of changelessness that we have seen die.

The variety of gifts, the "all sorts of services to be done" with and for and in the "same God" is the biblical expression of my message. The age in which we live provides the opportunity and richness of being effective women of action for

Accountability is a necessary
component in all areas of our
responsibility. As members of a
religious community, we must
painfully learn new ways to
encourage, to challenge, to
question.

the sake of the Kingdom.

The challenge is personal; this is an inescapable reality. We speak needfully of a sense of accountability. No external force will provide the substitute of self-truthfulness. Each of us in listening sensitively to the Gospel message is brought to fuller realization that the giftedness of myself must reach out to "the services to be done," to the needs of our fellow human beings. The reward is inherent in the action.

Accountability is a necessary component in all areas of our responsibility. As members of a religious community, we must painfully learn new ways to encourage, to challenge, to question. The democratic process is one of the means to foster accountability, but it can never be for us the totality of methodology in decision-making and responsible action. As women of God, who publicly attest to spiritual motivation, we must use all our powers of reasoning, coupled with a deep faith conviction that allows for the movement of the Spirit within us and within others.

Each of us needs to struggle with a personal definition for simplicity of life; it cannot mean one, single narrow way. This world's goods which God in His goodness allows to pass through our hands must be used for those who are needful. We are stewards of material things and this is a weighty responsibility. The crux of our searching ways is personal interior struggle—a dissatisfaction with self which allows for patterned introspection which, when healthily engaged in,

allows us to see the other's need more than our own. In Walt Whitman's words:

I do not ask the wounded person how he feels.
I myself become the wounded person.

Already among us are Sisters living in communities who are making a variety of authentic responses to simplicity of life. It is not for us to know the interior dispositions of another but we must be in touch with our own interior dispositions. The future well-being of our religious community lies in each Sister's authentic response to God, to herself, and finally to each other. Our life together in community should be supportive of this; it can never be a narcissistic nesting-in, substitute-for-marriage kind of existence. It needs no underlining that the reaching out for substitutes means wasted energy and ultimate destruction.

The responsibility is ours. We are members of a community that recognizes the need to allow for options and that sets in motion a whole series of concomitant factors that must be considered against the backdrop of our religious commitment as expressed in *Mercy Covenant*. There is a framework; options do not allow for unlimited extensions which spread out endlessly and, therefore, meaninglessly.

The effectiveness of our genuine ongoing relationship to God, the healthy questioning of self in the search for greater authenticity, the supportive element of the communal dimension of our lives must look outwardly. The fruits of this are many, and for us they should be expressed in service to others. Each of us needs to seriously consider the effectiveness of our ministry. Collectively, we need to look at the "Spirit of Mercy" which communally is our characteristic. There is a certain urgency in the life of the gift-filled person, an urgency prompted by the will to give, to serve, to be. The lethargic, self-centered, joyless person who calls herself a Sister of Mercy is a contradiction. More than that, she is a complete denial of her public declaration to serve mankind.

If I have one concern that stands out among many concerns, it is for the non-motivated Sister of Mercy. What a sad commentary on a lost ideal. Perhaps our greatest sign of affluence is the time

we have, freed as we are from family responsibilities. For the Sister of Mercy, a summer vacation of ten weeks' duration which does not contain the element of service of others expressed in volunteer work in hospitals and parishes, as well as myriad other varieties of response is destructive of person and community. Mandates, directives, external forces will not provide corrective answer. It is new insights within each of us coupled with the response of God's grace that will see new life among us.

There is a tendency to judge a community by its least effective members. This is manifestly perverse and unfair; yet it has some limited justification. For the quality and destiny of a community is determined to a considerable extent by the nature and potentialities of its extreme elements. The inert mass of any group is its middle section—they are worked upon and shaped by minorities at both extremes: the best and the worst.

By opportunities, by life's goodness to us, by God's grace, I believe we are superior people and

this is a weighty responsibility. My prayer for us as a community is to ask the Lord to help us to be present to one another so that our presence may be a strength that heals the wounds of time and gives hope.

God is immutable; change, fear, anxiety, loss of the familiar and of stabilized forces in our lives are simply moving, transient circumstances that are accidental in the face of the one Absolute. Let us accept these things as the challenges of the moment and learn to harness them for the good they allow us to do through the gifts of our own personhood, strengthened by membership in this community of Mercy, secure in the knowledge that it is the same God working in all of us.

The business of the Chapter is pragmatic, but its motivating force is spiritual. We are the human instruments that in some small but significant way are needed to move mountains by skill and by faith. Let us help one another in the name of Mercy to do just this.



THE MAST JOURNAL, begun in 1990, is published three times a year by the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology. Members of the Editorial Board are Sisters Eloise Rosenblatt, Editor (West-Midwest), Marilee Howard, Managing Editor (West-Midwest), Patricia Talone (Mid-Atlantic), Marilyn King (West-Midwest), Aline Paris (Northeast), Kathleen McAlpin (Mid-Atlantic), Marie Michele Donnelly (Mid-Atlantic). Subscriptions and correspondence to Marilee Howard, R.S.M., Managing Editor, at Sisters of Mercy, 535 Sacramento St., Auburn, CA 95603, e-mail mhoward@mercysisters.org. Manuscript submissions to Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., at 1600 Petersen Ave. #40, San Jose, CA 95129, e-mail eloros@sbcglobal.net. Printing by St. Joseph Press, La Grange Park, Illinois.

Authority in Service

*Sister M. Stella Maris Bergin, R.S.M.
Baltimore Provincial Chapter, 1976*

So many of the problems that arise in the area of authority may be traced to the change in the concept of leadership. Too many persons are inclined to state bluntly that leadership has changed in the nation, the church, and religious life. What they do not seem to realize is that a new kind of leadership is demanded to meet the different expectations of "followship," and in addition, that leadership and "followship" are co-relative terms.

Harvanek holds that:

The leader, whether he rises from the community or comes in from outside, has many bonds of communication with the community; he functions successfully because of the way the community responds to him and he to the community. Anyone, it is alleged, can be a leader if he has the right situation and the right community; that is a situation and community that responds to his capacities and personality. The contrary is more readily recognized as true, that a leader who is a success in one community and situation may be a failure in another.¹

**In the foundation stage...,
the main business is to form
community by determining
goals and structure to fulfill
the purpose of the
organization.**

In any religious community there are roughly three situations that call for different expectations of leadership; namely, 1) the foundation stage; 2) the continuation and progress movement of the community; and 3) a community in a state of crisis.

In the foundation stage, a group of people sharing common goals come together and choose a leader or a leader calls a group of friends

together to do a certain work. In either case the main business is to form community by determining goals and structure to fulfill the purpose of the organization. Mother McAuley is an example of this type of leadership.

After the death of the foundress, a different type of leadership usually ensues. The pressing problem uppermost in the minds of the members is to find a leader who will continue the spirit and the works and make progress as the community grows. The leader chosen is a ruler whose authority is recognized and respected by a community ready and willing to obey her directives. Although she has councilors, everyone knows who is the "boss." In this stage there is a tendency to be much more rigid in the

**Then comes a third stage for
which few are prepared: a
community in crisis,
resembling our situation
today.**

interpretation of the law and customs than was the case during the leadership of the foundress. This stage is apt to continue for a long period of time with minor alterations.

Then comes a third stage for which few are prepared: a community in crisis, resembling our situation today. Many forces were at work simultaneously to cause changes in community and these changes occurred with such rapidity that few were ready to meet them with equanimity. As a result grave fears were engendered, motives were questioned, and trust gave way to suspicion. Vatican Council II demanded the church to take a new look at herself and her mission. Religious orders and congregations as cells within this church were asked to adapt to the needs of the times and to undertake personal and communal renewal. This challenged the stability of the

community and left many members frustrated. At the same time, it helped others to blossom and grow and become very responsible individuals. What was not apparent in the beginning was the need for a different type of leadership. The expectations of the different sisters were so diverse that no one person could possibly satisfy all. Some felt strongly that the community should maintain the *status quo* except for a few minor changes to conform to what they saw as fulfilling the requirements of Vatican II. Others were very apathetic and did nothing to move the community along. Still others had visions of a glorious future where there would be no need of anyone in authority. Eventually, there arose the tension between those who clung to community tradition and identity as they had experienced both, and another group who pushed for rapid updating in all areas to meet the needs of a new society and a changing environment.

Let us stop here to recall that this problem of crisis was by no means peculiar to religious life. A study of history will furnish numerous examples. The preservation of identity and the demand for change have always raised problems. The call to preserve and to innovate is not easily answered. *Perfectae Caritatis* used the term "adaptive renewal."

It asked religious to adapt to the contemporary world and at the same time to return to the spirit of the foundress. Herein lies the problem. Until we can resolve this dilemma we remain in a critical condition.

Against this backdrop let us view the results of the Study. I don't think any of us questions the statement, "The consent of the governed is needed in every form of leadership." In the third chapter Dr. Fay examines the "consent of the governed" in the Baltimore province. I presume that all of you in this room have not only carefully perused this material but have also made a deep study of it. The diversity of response to the questions is fairly characteristic of the nation as a whole. In any organization the change from strictly managerial

to some form of shared decision-making has not been effected without great trauma and certain basic fears of insecurity both on the part of the governed and of those who are called upon to exercise authority, ecclesial and religious bodies not excepted.

I would remind all of us that this third chapter of the Study gives us a picture of ourselves, the Sisters of Mercy of the Province of Baltimore, as expressed by the responses to the questions proposed in the early days of 1976. We need to take a good hard look at what we said and, perhaps, are still willing to say, and then decide

for the future. Things don't have to remain as they are; in fact, they can't. They will either get better or worse. It depends on us, the change-agents. Perhaps what is being asked of each of us is the practice of Christian asceticism outlined for us in *Mercy Covenant*:

...in this period of re-examination of attitudes, structures and actions, a great

faith, deep prayer and radical self-denial are demanded. Living with the ambiguity of today's historical situation is a strong element in present-day asceticism. To accept realistically the permanency of accelerating change in this world, to meet creatively the ambiguities and challenge of this evolution...require a strong spirit of self-denial.

In all our considerations we may never ignore either the majority or the minority opinion. All of us must come to grips with what constitutes "legitimate" authority and strive to familiarize ourselves with the advantages and disadvantages in a bind. As Dr. Fay points out, "...leaders are expected to exercise leadership and govern from the perspective of the total organization, but they are not expected to make anyone do anything she really doesn't want to do."

It appears to Dr. Fay that:

Different Sisters have different expectations regarding the role of authority, and they have different styles in their response to authority. Some want and expect a family-type authority,

Perfectae Caritatis ...asked
religious to adapt to the
contemporary world and at the
same time to return to the spirit
of the foundress. ...Until we can
resolve this dilemma we remain
in a critical condition.

and deal with superiors as if the superiors were in fact the head of the family. Others want and expect superiors to act like managers and executives; to make objective decisions based on their overall familiarity with the situation, and to act decisively in implementing those decisions. Still others want and expect to be treated by superiors as colleagues; they feel that they have as much to say about the decision as the superior does, and that their opinions, needs and desires must be a major part of every decision affecting them. In fact, some sisters want two, or even all three, of these things simultaneously. With such differing expectations regarding appropriate styles of leadership, the Province puts its leaders in an untenable position. (p. 66)

If we accept this picture as real, the Provincial Chapter and the members of the Baltimore province community need to come to a decision regarding what is expected of province officials; otherwise they cannot govern effectively.

Regardless of how traditional or progressive some answers appear on the questionnaire, I would venture to state that almost 100% of the sisters desire freedom and autonomy in their own lives but all are not so generous and allowing these same privileges to others. The lack of recognition of the need to submit to the authority of the group for the benefit of all is a root problem not only in the area of authority but, worse still, it is destructive of unity. To quote *Mercy Covenant* again:

Through obedience we search out the will of the Father in our lives together, so that what becomes His will for us, also becomes our will for one another and for ourselves. Our vow challenges us to listen to one another in love, to discover the truth of each person, and to respond to those demands upon our life which are legitimately made by those to whom we have given this authority (W-12).

In view of the ambivalence about authority and its other relationships which the Study has highlighted we will want to examine carefully recommendations 8, 9 and 10 as a springboard for

discussion of the questions suggested and others proposed by the individual groups in the time allotted for reflection and discussion.

Two articles published in *Review for Religious* are worth reviewing. One is entitled, "Superiors: Are They Outmoded?" by Columkille Regan, C.P., and the other is "The Exercise of Spiritual Leadership," by Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O.

Regan feels strongly that participative leadership is the style of the future and that religious communities needed to experience the trauma over the past decade in order to have a growth and development process. But he warns,

- To think that all we have seen in the past decade is now coming to an end and that we are once more reverting as history repeats itself is to misread history...As human events unfold, they continue to move forward on a new plane. What appears superficially to be the same is different, for every life situation is different. The people, the time, the experiences

are different. It is not being prophetic to say we have learned enough about leadership styles in the recent past to begin to see the design in our future leadership style. Evidently, it will be participative form of leadership blending the good features of the old with the rich experience of these latter years. I don't mean to indicate that it's going to be a single model either; pluriformity will continue. It will be incarnated according to the charism and life style of each community.

- The leader who has a sense of participative leadership knows that she is not going to act independently of her community, she is not going to act independently of her consultative body...She is herself part of a process. She must be an enabler and an animator of her sisters in the process of arriving at consensus. ...But she should realize and the community should realize, that there may be times when a decision is needed and the process for one reason or another breaks down or does not allow for full maturation. At that moment, the

...participative leadership is the style of the future and that religious communities needed to experience the trauma over the past decade in order to have a growth and development process.

superior, possessing the power that the community has invested in her must use that power as she sees fit for the good of the whole.²

Whether we agree or disagree with his thesis, I'm sure we all nod affirmatively to the last sentence of his article, "Superiors may be outmoded. Leaders will always be needed in the religious life."

Father Basil reports a survey he conducted for the Major Superiors of Men based on 16 responses. His findings say something to those presently in the role of leaders but to all of us who do exercise leadership roles whether we are aware of the fact or not.³

By way of conclusion I would like to offer you a few excerpts from Jacques Pasquier to set our minds in focus for the task ahead.

- Authority must no longer be expressed in authoritarian terms, but in terms of friendship: "I call you friends." This is the great revelation of Christ to his apostles and disciples.
- The function of challenging one another becomes more and more important to the gospel. Every time the apostles became complacent about themselves, Christ made them aware of his and their mission, and obliged them to take a stand. The quality of the evangelical life is spelt out very clearly in the gospel, and we need to challenge one another constantly on our response to its exigencies. The role of challenging is not so much to give answers as to raise questions....The answer that one gives is a faith-answer, a leap in the dark into insecurity. Such leadership will disturb us, but it will preserve and enhance the quality of our response to the gospel, so that our daily response may be more and more a gospel response.
- Leadership—a Christian leadership based on the gospel and the techniques and tools offered

by modern sciences—is the answer to the crisis that many in the church are experiencing. It is not an instantaneous solution: it requires a constant education and willingness to submit ourselves to the gospel. But this leadership will help us to find understanding and peace in the midst of conflict, to become more aware of ourselves for a better service of the world. It will help us to experience the fullness of freedom for which we are all striving, since, "the Spirit that God has given you does not make you a slave and cause you to be fearful."⁴



QUESTIONS

1. How can we remedy the lack of an official, accepted model of collegial authority?
2. Can we attempt to define the kind of leadership the province expects of those in positions of authority? (Provincial and Council, etc.)
3. What do we see as essential elements of structure for us on the province and local levels?
4. How can we structure the province and at the same time safeguard responsible autonomy?

NOTES

1. Robert Harvanek, "The Expectations of Leadership," *The Way*, Vol. 15, No. 1, p. 23.
2. Columille Regan, C.P., "Superiors: Are They Outmoded?" *Review for Religious*, Vol. 35, 1976, pp. 745-747.
3. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O., "The Exercise of Spiritual Leadership," *Review for Religious*, Vol. 35, 1976, pp. 766-770.
4. Jacques Pasquier, "The Psychology of Leadership," *The Way*, Vol. 15, No. 1, p. 45.

Our Relationship Within The Church

*Tenth General Chapter, Sisters of Mercy of the Union
April 1977*

Our efforts as Sisters of Mercy to ponder our relationship with the Church took spirit from Vatican II: "The people of God believe that they are led by the Spirit...Moved by that faith they try to discern in the events, the needs, and the longing which they share with other people of our time, what may be genuine signs of the...purpose of God." More recently influence by the U.S. Bishops' Conference on Liberty and Justice for All, we are aware that "the effort to renew the Church in changing circumstances is at the heart of Christian life...Always the Christian faith, carried to...new times, required of its adherents bold, creative action to preserve the ancient truths and embody them in communities capable of transforming their world."

Since Vatican II there have been many efforts to understand the Church in richer ways. It is variously spoken of as "community," as "institution," as "servant," etc. We intend here to focus on two of these ways of describing the reality of the Church—the Church as "community" and the Church as "institution." We understand the Church as community to be all those persons who are bonded together in the life of Jesus Christ. This is actualized in many forms within the one church. We understand the Church as institution to be its structures, rules and delineated roles. Both of these ways of understanding the Church are important and they are interrelated. The institutionalization of the Church is precisely for the sake of the continued existence of the Church as community and as servant in the world.

We as Sisters of Mercy experience the Church under its aspect of community in many ways: we are baptized into a worshipping community; we live in a religious community; we participate in parish community; we form communities of service. From the beginning the Sisters of Mercy have also had an important relationship with the Church as institution; we have canonical status

with the Church; our vows are received by the Church; our charism of mercy is publicly recognized within the Church; we relate to parish and diocesan structures; we sponsor institutions in the name of the Church.

At this historical moment in the development of the Church there are two aspects of the institutional Church that present special concerns. The first concern relates to the way in which institutional structures facilitate and express the Church as community. Since Vatican II important changes have taken place in traditional structures, e.g. the parish. These changes have furthered the growth of Church as community. However, there is still an urgent need to discover new and creative forms of community to complement traditional Church structures.

Always the Christian faith,
carried to...new times, required
of its adherents bold, creative
action to preserve the ancient
truths and embody them in
communities capable of
transforming their world.

The second area of concern relates to the complex questions about the nature of authority within the Church. In the Church's role as teacher and healer, often authority and power are perceived to be solely placed in the hierarchy and clergy. Nonetheless, the Church's tradition has always affirmed that there are many ways in which the truth and life of Jesus empower each person as a thinker and doer in His name. The contemporary challenge is to understand more clearly that the empowerment of the individual is actualized in relation to the Church as community and as institution.

As Sisters of Mercy we can neither escape the anguish of experiencing the above concerns nor the responsibility of addressing them. We experience them among ourselves and encounter them in our ministry.

The question of new models of community raised itself for us as for the Church. The question of relating to many communities simultaneously and of discerning fidelity to sometimes conflicting commitments is our question as well as that of each person in the Church. Precisely as members of a religious community we have today the special responsibility to witness to the viability of new forms of faithful, worshipping communities and actively to foster their growth. It is possible for us to take leadership in stimulating change in existing structures and in creating alternate models of community. We can do this by providing meaningful liturgical experiences within our local communities and community institutions, participating in the formation of Church communities other than the traditional parish, actively working toward adopting new models of Church structure. Our efforts to be faithful members of local communities, parish communities, ministry communities, etc., can serve to add insight to the efforts of other to live with similar demands.

As members of a religious
community we have today the
special responsibility to witness
to the viability of new forms of
faithful, worshipping
communities and actively to
foster their growth.

The question of authority in the Church also raises itself for us in a special way. We are identified with the institutional Church as teachers and healers, yet we have often thought of ourselves as without authority and power, as only transmitters of the truth formulated by the Church hierarchy. We have, consequently seldom if ever allowed ourselves to question corporately Church teaching or to develop policies in ministry which depart from Church discipline. Perhaps more

importantly, we have also not accustomed ourselves to take responsibility for assisting in the Church's search for truth.

Now, however, we are sharing more and more in the whole Church's growing understanding of the dignity and responsibility of each person to think and to do. As a community of women we are growing in self-understanding of our role as women, as person, and as a Christian community. This includes an increasing urgency to form our consciences, and to recognize ourselves as moral agents in our teaching and healing. We experience, then, a call to greater relationship with and in the Church. Even when we find ourselves in disagreement/conflict with some teaching of some Church authorities, our desire to challenge is never a desire to break with the institutional church. When we are faced with structures which do not allow fully creative collaboration and reflective disagreement with Church authorities, we experience ourselves as responsible to help generate alternative structures.

While affirming the official Church teaching, there are areas, particularly in the moral realm, in which we as a community have a responsibility to participate in the evolution of Church teachings:

1. An important aspect of our current ministries can be to support the Church in its development of new teachings or new emphases within the traditional teachings, in response to evolving moral contexts in the Church and in society.

2. In some areas we have a special responsibility to help change Church teaching and practice where that teaching and practice have become obsolete, inhibitive of Christian life, or injurious to individuals, the Church or society.

3. In extreme circumstances the community, and/or individuals within the community, may find it a matter of conscience not only to work actively for change in a specific Church teaching, but at the same time, to dissent from the teaching.

Corporate public dissent in the form of official statements and/or institutional policies which depart from such Church teaching may be justified when continued implementation of

Church teaching and policy proves seriously harmful to persons. Minimal criteria for justifying corporate public dissent include:

1. Continued implementation of the teaching entails grave harm done to persons.
2. Strong theological or ethical reasons support a position in opposition to the teaching.
3. Corporate public dissent is seen to serve the overall good of the Church in this instance.
4. The public has the right to know about the dissent in order to take it into account in conscience formation.

5. Public dissent is a last resort after all other avenues of dialogue have been exhausted.
6. The dissent is authorized by the appropriate authority in the community.

As we work toward a more responsible posture in relation to the Church, we recognize that it is necessary to explore every avenue of dialogue. We shall do this in continuity with our tradition as Sisters of Mercy. We do it also in continuity with the authentic tradition of the Church wherein new life has always demanded ongoing reform and renewal, ongoing humble but courageous love.



A Blessing for Women Ministers Diocese of San Jose

*Conclusion of Series on Women in Scripture, Church and Contemporary Ministry
by Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., February 5, 2009, Transfiguration Parish, San Jose*

- ❖ May the God of Eve be your "ezer" and help. Created in God's image, be fruitful in the help you give to your family, friends and parish.
- ❖ May the God of Hannah hear your prayer, release your voice and give you courage to defend yourself.
- ❖ May the God of Ruth protect you in the fields where you labor, and make you an advocate for other women.
- ❖ May the God of victimized women, Jephthah's daughter and the woman caught in adultery, comfort you in your tears and move the community to change the way women are treated.
- ❖ May the God of the Samaritan woman make you proud of all you have survived, so "everything you ever did," the truth of your life, will encourage others.
- ❖ May the God of the Anointing Woman see your great love and sacrifice, and inspire your community to honor the memory of what you have done.
- ❖ May the God of the Widow give you determination to seek what is yours, confidence in your cause, and courage to be persistent in prayer and action.
- ❖ May the God of Chloe, Phoebe, Prisca and Lydia fill your heart with a spirit of hospitality and charity, and make your self-giving in the household of the church the sign of what Eucharist means.
- ❖ May the God who knows you by name recognize in you the face of his beloved Son Jesus. May the same Holy Spirit rest on you. Like Jesus, may all listen to your teaching and be led to faith by how you live.

U.S. Religious Life and the Decline of Vocations:

Pontifical Commission's Report to U.S. Bishops

Archbishop John R. Quinn, Archbishop Thomas Kelly, O.P. and Bishop Raymond Lessard

The Pontifical Commission on Religious Life presented a report on its three years of work and on the decline in vocations to the Holy Father in October. He followed the work with the greatest personal interest and encouragement. He expressed pleasure at receiving the report and indicated in his letter to the bishops that he would respond after he has had time to consider the contents more carefully.

The report itself, 152 pages in length including appendices, was prepared for the Holy Father. What is presented here is simply an indication of some of the highlights of what we have discovered in these three years and does not pretend to do justice to the immense amount of effort expended by bishops and religious, and by the Committee of Religious and the staff which so ably served the Pontifical Commission in the fulfillment of its task.

The Mandate

In June, 1984, a letter was addressed by the Holy Father to the bishops of the United States. The letter asked two things. It asked the bishops to render special pastoral service to the religious in their dioceses and it asked that a study be made of the reasons why young people do not enter religious life in greater numbers.

The Holy Father created the Pontifical Commission to assist the bishops in carrying out this special pastoral service and to conduct the study on the decline in vocations.

The History

The announcement of the Holy Father's letter and his request to the bishops for special pastoral service to the religious was greeted with anxiety among many religious. Many bishops were not certain what was being asked of them or how they should carry out their task. Hence, the first step was to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and

understanding, a positive attitude toward the work to be carried out.

The Episcopal Conference and the two Conferences of Major Superiors were conspicuous in lending their public and positive support and encouragement to the task and in giving their cooperation to its accomplishment.

The Pontifical Commission adopted as the basis for its work the Encyclical of Pope Paul VI *Ecclesiam Suam* which elaborates the principles of dialogue in the Church. Based on these principles the work of the past three years fell into three stages: listening, dialogue and evaluation.

In the first stage, the listening sessions, both bishops and religious came to understand one another better. Bishops felt that they were coming closer to the religious in their dioceses and gaining a new grasp of religious life and of the experience of that life during the past twenty years of renewal and transition. Religious felt that they were being heard by their bishops and consequently by the Pope. The overall positive results of these listening sessions underlined the importance and the value of the initiative of the Holy Father.

While the sessions themselves had an overall positive effect there were both positive and negative factors mentioned in regard to religious life in the past twenty years. Among the factors mentioned as positive were:

1. The rediscovery of the charism of the foundress or founder.
2. Deepening of a more authentic spirituality.
3. New understanding of apostolic religious life.
4. New understanding of and provision for the uniqueness of the individual in religious life.
5. Participation by religious in the decision-making processes of their order.
6. New awareness of the universality of the Church's mission.
7. Growing appreciation of the feminine.
8. Deeper sense of solidarity with the Church.
9. The rewriting and updating of constitutions.

10. New signs of hope through older and more mature vocations.
11. The intervention of the Holy Father calling the bishops to this special pastoral service.

Among the factors mentioned as negative during the past twenty years were:

1. Some stated the belief that there is a loss of identity in congregations.
2. Some stated the belief that there is a decline in respect for the Pope and the Magisterium of the Church.
3. Most cited as negative:
 - loss of numbers.
 - lack of more new vocations.
 - tensions within communities.
 - increasing inability to continue some traditional works such as schools and hospitals.
 - criticism by laity and priests.
 - serious financial problems.
 - tensions at times in working with officials in Rome.

In the second stage the bishops undertook to dialogue with religious about these and other concerns particularly in the light of the document "Essential Elements of Religious Life," which had been prepared at the request of the Holy Father by the Congregation for Religious. The bishops, for the most part, came to recognize the many positive developments in religious life during these years and also gained a new and clearer understanding of some of the factors which threaten religious life. Each bishop has addressed a letter to the Holy Father expressing the results of the listening sessions and the dialogues and indicating his judgment about the condition of religious life in his local church.

Study of the Decline in Vocations

The study was to seek the answer to two questions:

1. Why had so many left religious life?
2. Why were so few entering religious life?

It is very important to call attention to the question we are attempting to answer. It will

determine the content and something of the tone of our analysis. We are not asking such questions as: How did so many religious women and men pass through so profound a period of transition with perseverance and fidelity? Nor: How can we account for the basic soundness of religious life in the United States? If we were asking such questions, our report would be different. As it is, we have been directed to investigate the serious problem of the numerical decline among apostolic religious in the United States. The report on the decline in vocations does not propose to be a comprehensive picture either of American society or of religious life in the United States. It does propose to attempt an answer to the specific question posed by the Holy Father.

The study began by assembling the empirical data. This data was then given to some 40 experts in a variety of fields for their reaction and interpretation in light of their expertise and experience. The experts were then convened and a core report was prepared. This core report was in turn given to 17 bishops who were asked to react and to share the report with some priests, religious and lay people in their diocese for their reaction as well.

It should be noted that in a period of such intense transition as this, any response to the question about the decline in vocations will have something of an incomplete, fragmentary character.

Nevertheless, an examination of the data reveals that there was an abnormal rise in the number of religious vocations following World War II until 1960 when the decline began. And it should be noted that the decline began before the Second Vatican Council.

A study of the statistics published by the Vatican Bureau of Statistics shows that notwithstanding the decline in the number of vocations, the United States still has one of the highest proportional numbers of religious and candidates for religious life of any country in the world. Less than 6% of the world's Catholics are in the United States yet approximately 27% of the world's religious are in the United States and 32% of the world's novices are in the United States. Hence, though the numbers are down, they are still

representative in the context of the universal Church.

From what we have been able to discover there appear to be five general classes of reasons for the decline in vocations. They are the following:

1. Cultural factors.
2. The impact of the Second Vatican Council.
3. Developments in the Church in the United States.
4. Impact of all the above on religious communities as such.
5. Experiences which have affected personal choices.

Cultural Factors

Among the cultural factors which have affected the number of vocations, but which it is not possible to treat more fully here, the following appear to be significant:

1. New attitudes toward freedom, authority and obedience.
2. New attitudes toward affectivity, intimacy and sexuality.
3. New attitudes toward the role of women.
4. Changes in technological culture.
5. The dynamics of rapid cultural change.
6. The difficulties of permanent commitment.

The Impact of the Second Vatican Council

During these years, the Church has had to cope with worldwide and rapid cultural shifts, and at the same time to assimilate the profound changes and the impact of the Second Vatican Council. Some of the changes noted above were under-way in society before the Council began. But most of them exerted their greatest popular impact since 1965. The Council introduced a new attitude toward the world and offered a new set of theological themes for reflection. The following seem noteworthy:

1. The affirmation of the universal call to holiness. Popular thought more or less generally had taken for granted that the call to holiness lay in the religious life or in the priesthood. It grew increasingly clear that one

did not have to enter such a life in order to pursue the call the holiness.

2. The Council encouraged an expansion of the largely hitherto private approach to morality into a new emphasis on the social dimension of the Gospel of Christ leading to a new interest by both religious and lay people in the social problems of our times.
3. The Council gave new emphasis to the role of the laity in the Church stressing the critical importance of lay ministry.
4. These are only a few of the indications of the far-reaching implications of the Council and they contribute to the explanation of why there might be less interest in a vocation to religious life when other opportunities for service in the Church had now become more available.

Developments in the Church in the United States

To the cultural shifts and the impact of the Council a third consideration must be added—a pervasive change in the nature of the Catholic community in the United States. That change consisted essentially in the emergence of the Catholic community from a cultural ghetto into the mainstream of American society. Whereas Catholics through previous decades had lived largely in cultural or ethnic neighborhoods or ghettos, they began, after World War II, to join the move of their fellow American to the suburbs. Here they became quickly assimilated into the general population. The election of John F. Kennedy became the symbol that Catholics had joined the mainstream of American life at last. And all this happened just as the American culture itself was undergoing far-reaching cultural shifts. It had profound effects on the attitude toward religious life. It was the period of the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal and the psychosexual revolution. It was also the period of the rise of the women's movement. Without doubt the cumulus of these things had an effect on religious vocations.

Impact of These Factors on Religious Communities in the United States

Religious came to the United States in numbers in the nineteenth century from Europe. Communication with motherhouses was difficult. Religious in the U.S. were in new and recently established areas. They had to adapt to the new world and to its needs and they did what common sense indicated looking upon the demands of their mission.

When technology developed and communication became easier, many adaptations to American life had already been made, yet in some instances superiors in Europe called for changes along the lines of the European experience. Hence some points of tension were already showing themselves during the time of the great numerical growth, 1945-60.

During this time, 1945-60, with the return of large numbers of men from World War II, women were pushed out of jobs and public service careers to some degree. Many generous women of high ideals often chose to enter religious communities where they might fulfill their aspirations for broader ecclesial service to God and their fellow human beings. But by the 1960's an expanding economy again needed the services of women. Vocations declined as new options became available to them.

During this period, Pius XII issued the call for more professionalization among religious. As a result women religious in particular were increasingly better educated, earning doctorates and joining faculties of universities.

With this new and more professional education and the rise of the civil rights movement, religious developed a new sense of the needs of society and, with the teaching of the Council on the role of the Church in the world, they came to see the religious vocation no longer exclusively confined to maintaining Church institutions, but also in terms of service to the world and particularly in the promotion of justice and human rights.

In an effort to understand what has taken place it is helpful to note that in the past 500 years there have been three major cultural shifts in the

Western world: the Reformation, the French Revolution and the present moment. Each period saw a dramatic decline in religious life. Yet that decline was followed by a new flowering of religious life. For instance, most of the religious orders we know today were founded during or after the French Revolution. Perhaps we will witness the same flowering as the major cultural change we are in unfolds further.

Experiences Which Have Affected Personal Choices

In the previous section, social and cultural factors were suggested which influence religious life. Here some of the personal causes for the numerical decline will be presented as follows:

1. *Identity crisis.* The profound effect of the manifold causes mentioned above have led to an identity crisis for some individual religious and for some religious communities. This has in turn sometimes led to a blurred corporate identity. It would seem that clear corporate identity and its public articulation are necessary factors in attracting vocations.
2. *Interiorization of Religious Life.* In the course of such profound change those religious who had not deeply interiorized their religious life tended to drift into mediocrity or to leave. When religious life was more structured it was more possible for persons who were immature or underdeveloped emotionally and psychologically to be carried along with some degree of success by structures. When changes were made, some who were too dependent on structures were unable to cope. This led to many withdrawals, while it led others to a new interiorization of their religious life.
3. *Public Witness.* If religious are to attract vocations, there are indications that it will be necessary for them to be more willing to share with others the contemplative dimension of their lives and to share that this is a priority in their lives. Also religious are less and less present to that age group which is making life decisions: youth in the upper high school and college years.

4. *Selection Process.* A generation ago most religious communities did not have the careful screening process of candidates which they have today. This, together with better programs of spiritual direction and psychological guidance, help screen out applicants who are too passive, too dependent, too oriented toward security and unrealistic in their expectations of community.
5. *Celibacy and Permanence.* For some who would otherwise be qualified, both celibacy and permanent vows are a reason for not embracing this vocation.

These, of course, or not the only factors to be mentioned, but they are some indication of the multiple factors involved in the decline in vocations. The question about vocations comes down to three considerations: the culture, the religious community and the person. In relation to all three there are manifold considerations. Hence, it is not possible to explain so complex a phenomenon as the numerical decline by any single factor in itself.

Yet it is important to realize that the great vocation boom between 1945 and 1960 was an abnormal period. It is also important to realize that a considerable number of new candidates do enter. They are now generally older and better educated at the time of entrance than in the past. Nevertheless, there are many things in the culture that run counter to a religious vocation and it does not seem that the time of cultural shift is completed. And so it is likely that we are not going to see a notable increase of religious vocations in the foreseeable future, and the current decline in numbers should probably be regarded as more systemic than as deriving from the fault of individuals or from the lack of religious spirit.

Concluding Observations

It is the hope of most bishops and religious that this conclusion of the work of the Pontifical Commission will not leave a vacuum. The response to our report promised by the Holy Father will no doubt give some indications as to how this can be done. Also the task force recently appointed by Bishop Malone to work on the

question will aid us in discovering the most effective path.

Other matters that remain to be addressed lie in the area of ecclesiology where, for instance, there is a tendency in some quarters so to emphasize the idea of the "people of God" that the hierarchical nature of the Church is obscured. On the other hand, there are those who so emphasize the hierarchical nature of the Church as to obscure the role and participation of the faithful in the mission of the Church. Hence, the need to continue to encourage a truly balanced ecclesiology.

Pope John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* pointed out that the movement for the promotion of women was a sign of the times, that it had Christian foundations, and that women would not tolerate any longer being treated as inanimate objects or instruments.

It is to be expected that these same principles subsequently elaborated by Paul VI and John Paul II would be applied by women not simply to their life in society but also to their life in the Church. This movement for the promotion of women must be seen in its positive dimensions insofar as it reflects the biblical revelation of the basic equality of men and women even though it may have some negative features which are not compatible with the teaching of the Church and which must be clearly acknowledged. It is not likely to decrease and it calls on the wisdom and vision of the pastors of the Church for support and encouragement where this can be given. It is widely believed that this is also an important factor in vocations to the religious life of women. For instance, there is considerable and spreading concern over the limited scope for participation by women in policy and decision-making roles in the Church. In view of this, some potential candidates can find other modes of service and hesitate to enter religious life.

The role of superiors is an issue of some concern. Some superiors do not feel supported. Other religious believe that in some instances there is a diffusion of authority leading to a confusion about the distinction between the role of leaders and members. There is also continuing discussion about personal authority and a collegial style of government. What seems to be needed is

a correct synthesis of the consultative and collegial approach with a correct understanding of personal authority in religious life.

In addition, there are certain tensions which exist between some religious and the Holy See. There is need for us to help reduce these tensions which sometimes are rooted in cultural differences (European v. American) or in different approaches in law (Anglo-Saxon vs. Roman). It is particularly important for our Bishops' Conference to maintain close working relationships with the Conferences of Major Superiors. This too can be a means of reducing tensions where they exist as well as a means of strengthening and fostering the positive ideals of religious life in the United States.

In conclusion, our three years' work leads us to believe that in general religious life in the United States is in good condition. We acknowledge, of course, that there are some individuals and some groups which give cause for concern and do not appear to fulfill the ideals of religious life. There has been widespread agreement among bishops and religious that the initiative of the Holy Father was a very positive thing for the Church and for religious life in the United States. They hope that the newfound relationship will continue between bishops and religious.

The Pontifical Commission is grateful to the Holy Father for entrusting this work of service to use. We ask pardon for those ways in which we have fallen short.

We are grateful to the Episcopal Conference, to the Conferences of Religious, to Archbishop Laghi whose support and encouragement have been in part responsible for whatever effectiveness our work has had. The Congregation for Religious has always been available to us and we thank them.

There are no adequate words to thank the Committee of Religious and the staff of the Pontifical Commission whose devotion to the Church and whose dedicated service has been inspiring.

The Pontifical Commission likewise expresses deep-felt gratitude to the Pallotine

Foundation which provided the larger part of the funding involved in our work.

Finally, all that we have experienced in the service of religious life during these three years leaves us with a renewed understanding of the words of Gregory the Great:

"Since the dawn is changed gradually from darkness into light, the Church is fittingly styled daybreak or dawn.

While she is being led from the night of infidelity to the light of faith, she is opened gradually to the splendor of heavenly brightness, just as dawn yields to the day after darkness.

The Song of Song says aptly: "Who is this who moves forward like the advancing dawn?" Holy Church, inasmuch as she keeps searching for the rewards of eternal life...

The dawn intimates that the night is over; it does not yet proclaim the full light of day. While it dispels the darkness and welcomes the light, it holds both of them, the one mixed with the other...Are not all of us who follow the truth in this life daybreak and dawn? While we do some things which already belong to the light, we are not free from the remnants of darkness.

It will be fully day for the Church of the elect when she is no longer darkened by the shadow of sin. It will be fully day for her when she shines with the perfect brilliance of interior light.

This dawn is aptly shown to be an ongoing process when Scripture says: "And you showed the dawn its place." A thing which is shown its place is certainly called from one place to another. What is the place of the dawn but the perfect clarity of the eternal vision?" 2



Notes

1. Editor's Note: Permission to re-publish this report was given to *The MAST Journal* by Archbishop John R. Quinn. This Report was distributed widely to religious superiors in 1986, and published in the Catholic News' Service *Origins* Vol. 16: No. 24 (December 4, 1986): 467-470.
2. Office of Readings, Liturgy of the Hours. Second Reading, Ninth Reading in Ordinary Time, Thursday).

BOOK REVIEW

Experiencing Hildegard: Jungian Perspectives

Avis Clendenen, Chiron Publications, 2009

Reviewer: Therese Schroeder-Sheker

The past thirty years of Hildegard studies has produced a wealth of international scholarship and artistry. So lively and timely were these manifold efforts that our 12th century Benedictine abbess eventually mainstreamed both culture and popular consciousness in reconstructions on stage, CD recordings, works of fiction, and works of interpretation.

Now, theologian Avis Clendenen revisits the life and meaning of poet and visionary Hildegard of Bingen. The subtitle of her book informs us from the start that the work comes to us from a Jungian perspective, but as soon as we begin reading, it becomes clear that the author also brings the fullest strengths and sensitivities of Christian theology, eco-feminism, and social justice to the fore. These three sculpt, harmonize and nuance her pastoral orientation and give this author's voice a particular, original tonal color and timbre. Her Jungian perspectives shine.

Clendenen takes Hildegard seriously. In seven lucid, penetrating and imaginative chapters, the author grapples with the raw materials of Hildegard's many achievements and their implications in our lives today. Following each section, the author has developed a reflective exercise to help stimulate our active engagement and integration of the content of the chapter. Each of these exercises is fresh and creative. The publication includes a marvelous apparatus detailing the seven exact references in Jung's *Collected Works* to Hildegard of Bingen, a chronology of Hildegard's life, and finally, a bibliography.

Experiencing Hildegard explores the abbess's monasticism, visions, writings, relationships, political obstacles, illnesses and stages of life. Each exploration proceeds in large, insightful frameworks in contrast to a dismissive reductionism that once relegated so much of the *vox feminae* to neurosis. Clendenen finds new ways in which healing connections might be seeded and provoked in the soul of the

contemporary reader, who might not otherwise have fresh entrée into either Hildegard's generative biographical contradictions or their own! Previous scholarship has addressed many Hildegardian themes (gender, roles, symbol, power, marginalization, subjugation, reversals, illness, health, healing, language, creativity, etc.) in rich and varied ways, but Clendenen is walking with and *looking through* something and someone. There is a particular gesture and posture here that is unmistakably pastoral. As social justice asks us to unmask deception, so does committed, sustained inner work. The author is asking us to personally reconsider layers of identity, biographical events, spiritual solutions and yes, even history, including the particularly negative embedded linguistic structures that so deeply wound us, in the light of archetypal significance and patterning *and* in the imagination of the Gospels.

The author is asking us to
personally reconsider layers of
identity, biographical events,
spiritual solutions and yes, even
history...

Clendenen's exploration of personal and collective shadow material is particularly poignant, practical and redemptive. She examines the numinous, and brings a theological depth and Eucharistic awareness to the mighty and gradual process of individuation. She helps readers connect body, remembering, sacrifice, freedom, and prophetic leadership in a living engagement with the life of Jesus as we move towards individuation. There is no proselytizing. She is sitting with archetypes and archetypal patterns of healing and wholeness, integrating the feminine and sophianic dimension back into the fullness of

life, and in so doing, invites us to reconcile our theological and psychological realities into a more authentic, conscious, lived and embodied spirituality.

The culminating chapter envisions Hildegard's *viriditas* as a soul force that can seed the new interiorized monasticism that calls so many contemporary women and men. For Clendenen, this same *viriditas* provides a fundamental diagnostic and prescription for our environmental future. She names *viriditas* as a current that can shape a healing, covenantal response to the environmental crisis that encroaches our planet and threatens all her inter-related inhabitants.

Hildegard's spirituality makes palpable a lineage of risk, and her newest champion, Avis

Clendenen, has extended that transformative lineage in seven bold, and intelligent ways. *Brava!* The psychology/theology interface is a contemporary necessity. I recommend this work highly, and suspect that it will be warmly welcomed by clinicians, spiritual directors, artists, the Hildegard readership and the general searching public.



Reviewed by:

Therese Schroeder-Sheker

Academic Dean

The Chalice of Repose Project

Mt. Angel, Oregon

www.chaliceofrepose.org

This Issue's Discussion Questions: Wisdom that Endures

- (Quane) What is your memory about the spirituality of the "Little Flower" in your training in religious life? Does this article modify any of your former assumptions about Therese of Lisieux?
- (Malone) As you understand the need to pass on our Mercy heritage to co-workers in our health-care institutions today, which of the sentiments and citations of the charism in this conference do you find most convincing and relevant?
- (Salois) For Sisters who are familiar with the Mercy Covenant, what did you find especially unifying about this expression of commitment to shared spiritual values? How is our Institute Constitutions different from your memory of Mercy Covenant?
- (Gallagher) What does the term "redemptive service" mean to you in your ministry? What kinds of support would you appreciate having from "central office"?
- (Judiciary Services) Decisions made by local leadership are justified by the idea of "subsidiarity," i.e. decisions should be made by those closest to the scene. Are there decisions by local leadership, in your experience, that should sometimes get a "second look" by leadership higher up? What would be your hope for such a review?
- (McAuliffe) "We need a sense of self-reliance that stems from a faith conviction of the immutability of God and belief in ourselves amid the changing circumstances of life." What difference does self-reliance make? How is this expectation different from "leaving it all in God's hands"? What characterizes Mercy ministry?
- (Bergin) How does the flow and process of this talk itself model a consultative, respectful and collegial style of congregational leadership?
- (Relationship with Church) "When we are faced with structures which do not allow fully creative collaboration and reflective disagreement with Church authorities, we experience ourselves as responsible to help generate alternative structures." So where do you assess we are as an Institute in generating alternative structures? What are they?
- (Quinn) Given the approach, the focus questions, the consultation process and the outcome of the Quinn Study, what comparisons and contrasts can you draw between the study of U.S. religious life convoked in 1983, and the present Visitation of women religious of 2009-2011?

Contributors

Sister M. Stella Maris Bergin, R.S.M., was born in Ireland in 1906. She entered the Sisters of Mercy in Savannah, Georgia in 1922 at age 16. She received an A.B. in math and physics from Catholic University of America in 1934, and an M.A. in 1942. She taught in high schools, at Mount Saint Agnes College in Baltimore, and for several summers at CUA's extension program in Memphis, Tennessee. She served two terms as Assistant Provincial, and then two terms as fourth Mother Provincial of Baltimore Province from 1953-1969. She was Vicar General of the Union for two terms 1959-1971. She was known for giving lectures to the Sisters on the documents of Vatican II. In the 1970's she was administrator of Mount St. Rita's Health Center in Cumberland, Rhode Island. She died in 1987 at age 80 and is buried in Atlanta. This information was provided by Sister Paula Diann Marlin.

Avis Clendenen (Ph.D., D. Min.) is Professor of Religious Studies at Saint Xavier University in Chicago. She is a Mercy Associate in the West Midwest Community. Avis is the author of *Experiencing Hildegard: Jungian Perspectives* (Chiron Publications, 2009), as well as co-author with Irene Dugan, r.c. of *Love Is All Around in Disguise: Meditations for Spiritual Seekers* (Chiron Publications, 2004). She is co-author with Troy Martin of *Forgiveness: Finding Freedom Through Reconciliation* (Crossroad, 2002).

Sister Catherine (Mary Inviolata) Gallagher, R.S.M., entered the Sisters of Mercy in Chicago in 1934. She served for the majority of her 75 years in religion in leadership—in education, healthcare and community administration. She served as principal of two high schools. She did volunteer correctional education at Cook County Jail for 32 years. For thirteen years she was the president of Mercy Health Care System, and also involved in purchasing. She served two terms as Provincial of the Chicago Province (1970-1976 and 1979-1986). She was known nationally for her promotion of the renewal of religious life after Vatican II. She was a board chair in higher education and healthcare, and served as consultant and speaker in many institutional settings. In 1999 she left healthcare and volunteered at Mercy Manor in Aurora, outside Chicago, until her retirement. She died at age 91 in 2009. This information was provided by Sister Mary Joella Cunnane.

Sister Mary Eucharist Malone, R.S.M. was born in 1909, and entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1928. Discovering that she was unable to teach elementary school students because of her partial deafness, she did clerical work in educational and healthcare institutions from 1931 to 1941. She became administrator at St. Joseph's Hospital in Phoenix, Arizona from 1942-1953. She served simultaneously as general councilor and administrator at Mercy Hospital in San Diego from 1952 to 1959. Involved in a series of construction projects—hospital and Motherhouse expansions, and a retirement convent—she prided herself on her skill at reading architectural plans and supervising contractors. She was Superior General of the Sisters of Mercy of California and Arizona from 1965-1974, and served as Chair of the Western Region of the Conference of Major Superiors. She was one of only three U.S. major superiors who were members of the general council of the International Union of Superiors General. Following Vatican II, she was influential in the Sister Formation movement and promotion of theological renewal. In the decades of her prayer ministry, she initiated programs in spiritual direction training and shared scripture study for laity at Mercy Center in Burlingame. She died in 1989. This information was provided by Sisters Marilyn Gouailhardou and Mary Helena Sanfilippo.

Sister Mary Mercy McAuliffe, R.S.M. grew up in Bedford, Massachusetts, and was educated by Sisters of Mercy in the parish school. She entered the community in 1944 at Cumberland, Rhode Island, and was professed in 1947. She was an elementary and high school teacher and principal at both levels. She holds an M.A. in library science from Marywood College in Scranton, Pennsylvania. For many years she served at Salve Regina University in administration, on the Board of Trustees, and as Assistant Director of the Library. She served as Assistant Provincial from about 1968 to 1972, and was Provincial from 1972 to 1977,

when she gave the address printed in this issue. After community administration, she returned to Salve as librarian, and retired in 2000. She presently is in good humor and health, and enjoying what she describes as a life of "reflective leisure." She is one of the writers of Sisters' obituaries, and recently co-authored a story about Mercy centenarians who live at St. Rita Health Centre in Cumberland, R.I. for the *Mercy Northeast* newsletter. She provided this information herself to the Editor.

Sister Margaret Quane, R.S.M. (Australia) entered the Sisters of Mercy (Brisbane Congregation) in 1958. Her B.A. was a double major in Studies in Music and Studies in Religion from the University of Queensland. Her M.A. in theology is from Griffith University. She holds Licentiate diplomas in piano and violin; Associate diplomas in singing and speech and drama, and a Teacher's Diploma in piano from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music. She has produced five professional discs, in which she is featured as accompanist or violinist, and she regularly provides musical accompaniment at congregational events and at her parish. She recently completed a Ph.D. in Christian Spirituality from the Australian Catholic University with a dissertation on Therese of Lisieux.

Archbishop John Rafael Quinn is currently the Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of San Francisco. He served as the Archdiocese's sixth archbishop from 1977 to 1995. Archbishop Quinn also served as president of the United States Catholic Conference and National Conference of Catholic Bishops from 1977 to 1980. He was born in Riverside, California, and was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of San Diego on July 19, 1953. He is known as a learned and scholarly leader with his doctoral degree in patristics. He was named an auxiliary bishop for San Diego in 1967. In 1971, he was appointed Bishop of Oklahoma City-Tulsa. When the diocese was split to form the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and the Diocese of Tulsa in 1972, Quinn became the first Archbishop of Oklahoma City. In 1977, Quinn was reassigned to become the Archbishop of San Francisco. Early in his career in San Francisco, Quinn recognized that the Archdiocese was too large and he was instrumental in devising plans for the creation of the Diocese of San Jose which was erected by Pope John Paul II in 1981. In 1983, he was appointed by Pope John Paul II to head the national study of men and women religious in the U.S. The "Quinn Report" as it was known, was the 157-page summary of the three-year study he submitted to the Vatican in 1986. The *Origins* précis, which is re-printed here, is the overview that was made available to all U.S. bishops and religious. He is the author of *The Reform of the Papacy: The Costly Call to Christian Unity* (1999).

Sister M. Jeanne Salois, R.S.M. (West Midwest) was born in Michigan in 1915. She received her B.A. from Mercy College of Detroit and a M.A. from Michigan State University in Home Economics. She began her ministry in the elementary classroom. In 1961, she completed her doctorate in education from Cornell University. After this, she served as community and diocesan superintendent of education, academic dean of Mercy College of Detroit and initiated and directed research service for both the Province of Detroit and the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of the United States. Traveling in her role as Director of Education for the Detroit Province, she was killed in an automobile accident on a snowy road in February, 1972 in western Michigan. The meditations on the Mercy Covenant featured here, can most likely be dated to 1970, just after the 1969 Chapter. This information was provided by Sister Maureen McGarrigle.

Therese Schroeder-Sheker is Academic Dean of the School of Music-Thanatology at the Chalice of Repose Project in Oregon. A harpist and singer, she has maintained careers in both medicine and the humanities as artist, clinician and educator. As a musician, she made her Carnegie Hall debut in 1980 and has concertized all over the world, specializing in medieval and 20th century art song. She is the founder of the palliative medical modality of music-thanatology. She is a former president of the International Hildegard von Bingen Society, and was the music engraver for the 1985 edition of Hildegard's *Ordo Virtutum* published by The Medieval Institute in Kalamazoo, Michigan. She performed Hildegard's music extensively during a seven year cycle of performances 1985 - 1992. Please see www.chaliceofrepose.org for more information.



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 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. Aline Paris, R.S.M., currently serves as MAST's executive director. MAST will hold its **annual meeting in Philadelphia, at St. Raphaela Center June 18-20, 2010.** Members act as theologians in the Church and carry on theological work in their respective disciplines and ministries. They also seek to be of service to the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy by providing a forum for ongoing theological education.

For information on becoming a member and being added to MAST's mailing list please contact the association's Executive Director, Aline Paris, R.S.M. by e-mail at aparis@mercysyn.org or by mail at College of Saint Mary, 7000 Mercy Road, Omaha, NE, 68016. *CSM.edu*

Dues can be paid by check, payable to MAST and sent to the association Treasurer, Marilee Howard, R.S.M. at 535 Sacramento Street, Auburn, CA 95603. Inquiries regarding dues can be e-mailed to mhoward@mercysisters.org.

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. Aline Paris, R.S.M., currently serves as MAST's executive director.

Information for New Subscribers and Current Readers

New Subscription: *The MAST Journal* is published three times a year by the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology. To subscribe, please fill out the form below or a copy of it. Make your check payable to *The MAST Journal* and send to Marilee Howard, R.S.M., MAST Managing Editor, Sisters of Mercy, 535 Sacramento Street, Auburn, CA 95603. Email: mhoward@mercysisters.org.

Back Issues: If you are interested in obtaining a back issue of *The MAST Journal*, contact Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., Editor, at eloros@sbcglobal.net. Back issues are supplied at \$ 5.00 each, including mailing.

Address Change: If your address is incorrect or if you have changed your mailing address, please send that information to Marilee Howard, R.S.M., MAST Managing Editor, Sisters of Mercy, 535 Sacramento Street, Auburn, CA 95603. Email: mhoward@mercysisters.org.

Issue Didn't Arrive: If your subscription is up to date and your issue of the journal did not arrive (and you know the issue has been published, the grapevine says!), then write to Marilee Howard, R.S.M., MAST Managing Editor, Sisters of Mercy, 535 Sacramento Street, Auburn, CA 95603. Email: mhoward@mercysisters.org.

Want to Write: If you have an idea for an article, or you have a talk or article you would like published in *The MAST Journal*, please send the article or inquiry to Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., MAST Office, 1600 Petersen Ave. #40, San Jose, CA 95129. Please include a complete return mailing address on all correspondence or contact her by e-mail at eloros@sbcglobal.net.

I Wish to Subscribe to *The MAST Journal* for

1year _____
(\$ 20.00 US; \$ 30.00 outside U.S.)

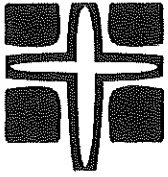
2 years _____
(\$ 40.00 US; \$60.00 outside U.S.)

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Please make payment by check payable to The MAST Journal (U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. financial institution), money order/ international Money order, or U.S. currency.



Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Auburn Regional Community
Mercy Center Auburn
535 Sacramento Street
Auburn, CA 95603

No22n-Profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Auburn, CA
PERMIT NO. 183