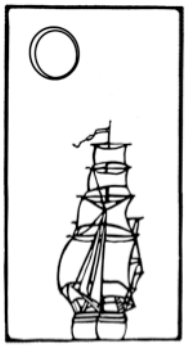

The MAST Journal

The Journal of the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology

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Commencements and Awards

Sisters of Mercy Hermanas de la Misericordia

Dear Sisters, Associates, Companions and Friends of Mercy,

TV news has become less what is written or read than conversational exchanges of opinion about a contested political statement or a crisis moment. Are we being swept out to a textless sea of words? By contrast with textless evening news, the contributors to this issue of "Commencements and Awards" have offered memorable written reflections at Mercy college and university graduations.

Some talks ritualize the closure of a Mercy-sponsored institution—a different kind of commencement. These texts represent a "neglected genre" of Mercy writing, women speaking about what they want to hand on to others as the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy. Some of these talks were collected in the archive of Conference of Mercy Higher Education, so thanks to Moya Dittmeier, Executive Director, contacted by Sister Doris Gottemoeller, who made them available.

Commencement addresses include an early one delivered by Mary Sullivan, R.S.M, in 1997 at Carlow College in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. What is valuable in this talk is the summary of Catherine McAuley's intention in founding the Sisters of Mercy and bequeathing that legacy of care for those in need to Carlow College graduates as their own inheritance.

The commencement talk of Margaret Farley, R.S.M., at St. Xavier College (now University) in 2005, on "mending the world" is timeless. The purpose of an education is to heal and mend the world. She quotes a story about Rabbi Hillel. He responded to a student discouraged about the world being a mess--that God had evidently not done a very good job--and encouraged the student to start immediately to fix things.

Rosemary Connelly, R.S.M., addressed the graduates of St. Mary's College at Notre Dame, Indiana in 2015, with the moving, personal account of her spiritual vision after 46 years as director of Misericordia, a residence and developmental center for special needs children and disabled adults. How did her vision and care for vulnerable persons guide the growth of an institution over decades?

Recent commencement talks include that of Patricia Talone, R.S.M., who spoke at the 2018 graduation at her alma mater, Gwynedd-Mercy University. She described her own evolution as a medical ethicist, the effect of reading Newman's "The Idea of a University" as an undergraduate, the importance of critical thinking, and the evidence of Mercy values she encountered in her interviews with students.

Marilyn Lacey, R.S.M., opened her 2018 commencement address at College of Saint Mary in Omaha with a humorous account of being praised with a term of honor as a "fat cow" at an event in Africa, described the challenges women face in Africa, and encouraged graduates to reflect on the power of women, what it meant to "put your woman on" as they left college.

Patricia McDermott, R.S.M., President of the Institute, addressed the Carlow University audience in 2018 at the celebration of 175 years of Mercy presence in Pittsburgh and the United States. She received an honorary doctorate on behalf of Frances Xavier Warde and the other six Mercy Sisters who came from Ireland to found the Pittsburgh congregation a few years after Catherine McAuley's death. Their modest biographical details, and in some cases, short lives, belie the power of what they started 175 years ago.

Helen Marie Burns, R.S.M., gave the commencement address, "Living the Present," in 2001 at Trinity College in Burlington, Vermont. The 76th commencement was also the closing of the college. At the end of this difficult process, she acknowledged the Mercy history that had brought about this educational ministry. She quoted a poem of Mary Oliver, who counseled that the three important things in life are to love, to hold and to let go.

Georgita Cunningham, R.S.M, was the last Sister of Mercy at Laurelhurst Village in Portland Oregon, to bid farewell in 2014, on behalf of the Sisters, to staff and residents at a care center for the elderly that had originally been Mount St. Joseph. It was now no longer owned by a Catholic entity. She noted that the Sisters of Mercy came to Oregon in 1896 and in a way stayed-- with 104 members buried in Portland, and 27 in North Bend, Oregon.

Joy Clough, R.S.M., offered "Meditation--Mentoring for the Mission of Teaching" to students completing a teacher-training program at St. Xavier University in 2013. She humorously but comprehensively described the ways Jesus exercised the ministry of teaching—holding seminars, varying his teaching style, meeting with opposition, yet passing along what he knew to the very end.

This issue, treating "neglected genres," includes talks given on the reception of awards and commendations. Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., was given a Mercy Recognition Award at the 20th anniversary of MAST's founding in 2006. Her talk focused on the meaning of personal voice, the importance of women writing in their own voice, as well as the difficulties women have in the church and the academy of having their personal voice acknowledged.

Victoria Vondenberger, R.S.M., was awarded the prestigious Role of Law Award by the Canon Law Society of America at its annual meeting in Indianapolis in 2017. She addressed the relation of mercy and justice, referring to Moses and the Law, what justice involves, and what truth means for canon lawyers and their ministry in the church.

Phyllis Hughes, R.S.M., received the Life-Time Achievement Award from Catholic Health Association in San Diego in 2018. She recalled the mind-boggling changes in healthcare over the decades when she was in administration, from women pulling and inserting cords at the main switchboard in the days before Xerox machines—to genetic research and surgical robotics today. The mission of Catholic healthcare will remain, but its expression will be different.

Susan Vickers, R.S.M., received the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility Legacy Award in 2018 in New York. She retired, after 30 years at Dignity Health, in her role as advocate with corporations for systemic change that linked health of the person, with health of the community and the planet. She counted her successes on environmental causes, and the challenges that remain on promoting gender and racial diversity on corporate boards.

Grateful for the records in this issue, The MAST Journal always welcomes additions!

Yours,

Eloise Rosenblatt

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

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Commencement Address, Carlow College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, May 3, 1997

Mary Sullivan, R.S.M.

I am honored to participate in these Commencement Exercises, and humbled to have been asked to address you.

I say "humbled" because, as a teacher, I am fully aware of the enormous effort and the heavy personal and financial costs that are required of most of those who pursue college degrees today.

As I leave my own campus each evening, I see students walking in from the parking lots. They have already put in a long day's work and must now face two or three hours of classes before they can go home to care for their families, and eventually rest. So, I have only admiration for your perseverance and discipline, in pursuit of the learning you treasure.

So, I have only admiration for your perseverance and discipline, in pursuit of the learning you treasure.

This afternoon is no time for a long-winded Commencement Address about abstract realities-and you'll be happy to know that I have not prepared such a talk. But I wish to celebrate the true meaning of this special moment in your lives by putting it in its rich historical context.

This College and all it stands for, your educational achievement here and all you hope to accomplish in the future as a Carlow graduate, would never have been possible had it not been for one woman whom you have never met--an Irishwoman who died 166 years ago: Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, who are the sponsors of this college.

You have seen portraits of Catherine McAuley in the College, but I would like to tell you about the person behind the stiff black and white habit, the woman who loved you before you were ever born, and who gave all she had for your well-being.

Catherine McAuley was born in Dublin in 1778. Although her father was then a successful architect and realtor, his death when Catherine was five, the increasing needs of her younger sister and brother, her mother's inability to manage the family's finances, and her mother's subsequent death, meant that Catherine was--except for the charity of friends--orphaned, poor, and homeless before she was twenty.

She then took a job as a domestic servant in the home of a wealthy older couple named William and Catherine Callaghan. The Callaghans loved Catherine and regarded her as their adoptive daughter, but she was, nonetheless, their domestic servant, and she remained so for almost twenty years, until both the Callaghans died.

If this were the whole story, I would not be here today, you would not be here today, and Carlow College surely would not be here today. But the rest of the story is this: At his death in 1822, William Callaghan bequeathed to Catherine McAuley all his material possessions and an inheritance of £25,000-equivalent, in today's money, to about $1,000,000.

I'm sure that sometime or other you have dreamed of winning the lottery, or the Publishers Clearinghouse Sweepstakes, and have contemplated all that you would buy with $1,000,000--a new car, a long vacation, a designer wardrobe, a life of leisure.

Catherine McAuley also had dreams, but her dreams were different from ours. They

were about unemployed, homeless young women and poor servant girls working in abusive households; they were about poor young children who could not go to school because their parents couldn't pay tuition, and about poor sick people dying of disease in hovels with no one to visit or care for them.

One of Catherine's friends and contemporaries describes Catherine's dreams, in the period before she received this inheritance:

> [she took] great delight in projecting means of affording shelter to unprotected young women. She had then no expectation of the large fortune that afterwards was hers, but her benefactor [William Callaghan] had once spoken of leaving her a thousand pounds, and she thought, if she had that or even a few hundred, she would hire a couple of rooms and work for and with her protegees. The idea haunted her very dreams. Night after night she would see herself in some very large place where a number of young women were employed as laundresses or at plain-work [sewing], while she herself would be surrounded by a crowd of ragged children which she was washing and dressing very busily. (Sullivan, ed. 45)

This was the dream that haunted Catherine McAuley. So now, when she was in her mid-forties and could have settled down to a comfortable social life as an heiress, Catherine decided, instead, to spend her whole inheritance to build a big house on Baggot Street in Dublin.

She called this house, the House of Mercy. Here, in 1827 she established a shelter and an employment agency for poor women and girls, and a school for poor female children from the surrounding neighborhoods. Gradually other young women, most of them in their twenties, joined her as resident volunteers and together they went out, in their "spare" time, to visit poor people living in the wretched slum dwellings in Dublin and in the hospitals available to the sick poor.

It was not Catherine's initial intention to found a religious congregation of women. In fact, she disliked many customs of religious life. She also thought that, if enclosure were required, being a religious would prevent her from serving the poor on the streets of Dublin.

But slowly she and the Baggot Street community began to realize that if they wished their works of mercy to continue beyond their own deaths, … they should, in fact, found a new kind of religious order of women.

But slowly she and the Baggot Street community began to realize that if they wished their works of mercy to continue beyond their own deaths, and if they wished to overcome the damaging effects of the harsh criticism directed against their atypical way of life, they should, in fact, found a new kind of religious order of women. This community would be specifically devoted to the public works of mercy--particularly, to the sheltering and training of poor women, the education of poor girls, and the visitation of the sick poor.

And so, in 1831, the Sisters of Mercy were born.

One of Catherine's earliest and closest associates in the work of the House of Mercy was an orphaned young woman named Frances Warde. She was only eighteen when she came to Baggot Street--over thirty years younger than Catherine.

In 1837 Catherine and Frances founded the third convent of the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland,

in a town called Carlow. Although Carlow was only about fifty miles south of Dublin, it took over six hours to get there by stage coach, over rough roads around the Wicklow Mountains.

In November 1843, two years after Catherine McAuley's death, Frances Warde and six other sisters from Carlow volunteered to come to Pittsburgh and found the first community of Sisters of Mercy in the United States. Their median age was twenty-nine. The journey from Carlow took seven weeks, crossing the Atlantic in a rickety sailing vessel that was nothing like the cruise ships we see on TV, and crossing the Pennsylvania mountains in stage coaches whose horses could make the steep grades only when the passengers got out and walked. Yet these women pressed on, arriving here on December 21.

And eighty-six years later, in 1929, the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh founded this College--calling it Mount Mercy, but later changing its name to "Carlow College," in honor of the first Sisters of Mercy in Carlow, Ireland, from whom they were descended.

All this history was made possible by the inheritance of one woman, and by what she chose to do with it.

We can joyously celebrate your Commencement here today because long ago one generous hearted woman had compelling dreams about people in desperate need, because she did not think she was too old to start something new, and because she gave all she was and all she possessed that other people might have lasting help and comfort.

When you receive your degree today, Catherine McAuley's inheritance will be bequeathed to you in a new and precious form. Your academic degree is a priceless inheritance of knowledge, understanding, and skills--a legacy much more valuable than $1,000,000.

You must now decide what to do with this inheritance, and to which dreams you will dedicate it-in this world of ignorance, sickness, and poverty as wretched as any Catherine McAuley saw in Dublin.

The explicit mission of Carlow College, like the still living dream of Catherine McAuley, has been to involve you "in a process of self-directed, lifelong learning" that would free you…

Your academic degree is a priceless inheritance of knowledge, understanding, and skills--a legacy much more valuable than $1,000,000.

…to think clearly and creatively, to discover and to challenge, or affirm, cultural and aesthetic values, to respond sensitively to God and others, and to render competent and compassionate service in [your] personal and professional life. ("Mission Statement")

There are many people in our world who take their inheritance, their college degrees, their $1,000,000, and run-to small, selfish, or wasteful pursuits. Catherine McAuley, Frances Warde, and the Sisters of Mercy who sponsor this college, beg you to have bigger, more generous, and more other-directed dreams. They ask you to render "compassionate service in [your] personal and professional lives."

You *have* the inheritance to found something really compassionate in this suffering world--in the classrooms where you will teach, in the hospitals where you will nurse, in the businesses you will administer, in the laboratories where you will work, or wherever you will serve in the future.

Please do not think you are too young, or too old, or too poor, or too weak to create some new and lasting contribution to the common good of

our sisters and brothers in this world.

Let me persuade you of this by telling you one last story.

You are familiar with the building on the Carlow campus called Tieman Hall-which now houses the Campus School, the Chemistry Department, and Math offices. That building is named after Eliza Jane Tieman.

On February 2, 1844, she entered the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh, as the first American woman to join the new community. In the following September, as Sister Mary Xavier, she helped to open the first school of the Sisters of Mercy in the United Sates, right here in Pittsburgh. On New Year's Day, 1847, she helped to found Mercy Hospital, the first hospital in Western Pennsylvania.

But fourteen months later, she was dead--exhausted by nightly nursing during an epidemic of ship-fever, which left her vulnerable to a virulent attack of erysipelas.

She was then twenty-nine years old, not too young, or too old, or too weak to give all her prior education, all her spiritual inheritance, and her very life, for the sake of poor immigrants dying of typhus in the only hospital in Pittsburgh (Carroll, *Leaves* 2:70-94; 118-123).

You will, I hope, never experience an epidemic of typhus. But you graduate into a world with equally virulent epidemics: racism, sexism, and classism; injustice, mercilessness, and greed; intolerance and cruelty toward the most vulnerable among us: those who are deemed poor, alien, criminal, socially sick, and ignorant.

Please take your Carlow inheritance, your treasure of knowledge and skills, your million-dollar degree, and go out and be a Catherine McAuley, a Frances Warde, an Eliza Tieman--and do so with joy and confidence. As Catherine once wrote of the education of women-but we may parenthetically insert "men":

> no work of charity can be more productive of good to society, or more conducive to the happiness of the poor than the careful instruction of women, since whatever be the station they are destined to fill, their example and advice will always possess influence, and wherever a religious [i.e., a godly] woman presides, peace and good order are generally to be found. (Rule 2.5)

And may *you* generously use *your* inheritance to build one House or one corner of Mercy-in a world that so profoundly needs merciful "peace and good order."

May *your* "example and advice" always possess great influence, wherever you preside. And may *you* generously use *your* inheritance to build one House or one corner of Mercy-in a world that so profoundly needs merciful "peace and good order."

I am thrilled to think of the good you can do with your lives, and I congratulate you deeply. Thank you so much.◆

Living the Present—Trinity College, Burlington,Vermont, 2001

Helen Marie Burns, R.S.M.

This 76th commencement ceremony has been a long time coming. Since every ending contains its beginning and every beginning contains its own ending, we could go back to Dublin, Ireland in 1827. The educational enterprise of which Trinity College has been a vital part can be traced to a House of Mercy established on Baggot Street (Dublin) in 1827 for the "daily education of hundreds of poor female children and [for the] instruction of young women" (Catherine's letter to Rev. Francis L'Estrange, O.C.D., September 10, 1828). This educational enterprise multiplied as Sisters of Mercy journeyed from Ireland to the United States in the nineteenth century.

Remembering the Past

Between 1895 and 1994 Sisters of Mercy opened twenty-nine institutions of higher learning throughout the United States, primarily in the service of women.

Eighteen of those institutions continue today. Mercy's higher education enterprise represents the largest number of Catholic colleges/universities sponsored by any group of women religious in the United States. Trinity College—its faculty and student body and this 76th commencement ceremony—stand in a rich tradition of excellence and service worthy of honor and praise.

We have a past built on values of compassionate service, generous hospitality, and educational excellence.

May I take this opportunity, on behalf of our Mercy Institute Leadership Team, to commend Sister Jeannine Mercure and her leadership team and Sister Jacqueline Marie Kieslich and her administrative team for your dignity and grace under pressure. We are proud to call you "sister" and, in some instances, "brother".

We could also go back to 1925 when Sisters Alphonsus Cassidy and Magdalen Delehanty succeeded in obtaining a state charter to open the first women's college in Vermont. Most likely these two women persevered in their efforts to open the doors of Trinity College because they believed, with our foundress Catherine McAuley, that "no work of charity can be more productive of good to society…than the careful instruction of women. Whatever station they are destined to fill, their example and advice will always have great influence and wherever a God-fearing woman presides, peace and good order are generally to be found."

We could also shorten our timeline and go back to whatever date marks the Trinity College debut of each member of this Class of 2001. Or back to June 7, 2000, when the Sisters of Mercy and the Board of Trustees announced transition plans for closing Trinity College of Vermont. That decision took no less courage than the founding moment of this college and represents no less concern for Mercy's educational enterprise.

Or we could simply begin with Friday evening, June 1, 2001, when the first of many "all college reunion" activities, formal and informal, opened. Each and all of these points of beginning contain an ending, each and all of these points of ending contain a beginning. We mark all beginnings and endings in today's wonderful festivities.

Your theme is well-chosen: "Honoring the Past--Celebrating the Future." Those of us gathered here have much to honor and much to celebrate. We have a past built on values of compassionate service, generous hospitality, and educational excellence. These values promise a future in which graduates of Trinity College—all five thousand of you--understand that knowledge is meant to improve life, to sustain life, to free life

– all life. These values also promise a future in which the spirit and energy that is Trinity College lives in attitudes and behaviors which suggest that learning is a lifelong process which creates a deepening sense of responsibility to oneself and to the world in which one finds oneself. Such promise celebrates a future in which all persons and all creatures find welcome in our hearts and in our neighborhoods. Such promise celebrates a future in which the spirit and energy that is Trinity College continues to live in a variety of creative and enriching ways.

Living the Present

Today, however, with this Class of 2001 and in the energy of this all college reunion, I would like to pause and explore the idea that our most important task as human beings--a task which Trinity College has taught you most deeply, especially in this year of many closings—is living the present. We have no other time – literally. The sooner we grasp that simple truth, the richer all of our lives will be. Whatever the point of beginning, whatever the point of ending, we need always remember that the time in-between--known as the present--is no less precious for the fact that it does not last forever.

The most and least each of us can do to insure a good future and a good past is to resolve today to live fully and to hold life—yours and mine and the stranger's across the street—precious.

The most and least each of us can do to insure a good future and a good past is to resolve today to live fully and to hold life—yours and mine and the stranger's across the street—precious. Only those who hold life precious and live life fully each day will find reason to improve it for themselves and others. Contemporary poet, Mary Oliver, offers her thoughts on the challenge and the task:

> To live in this world, you must be able to do three things: to love what is mortal; to hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it; and when the time comes to let it go, to let it go.

We learn to live life fully, one day at a time, by learning to love, to hold, and to let go. These are activities of heart and head – learning to remember and to expect, learning to love and to leave. Over and over again this past year and these past few days, conversations among friends, with parents, with relatives, among faculty and classmates, have taught you much about what you are holding. Conversations beginning with the familiar "Remember when" …or "I can hardly wait until…" hold rich memories and expectations.

Memories--our backward-looking dreams--and expectations--our forward-looking dreams--become the stuff of a life lived day-by-day. Look to your own experience. To the extent this celebration brings to mind memories of things we have been glad for doing and being to that extent our celebration is marked by satisfaction, pride and gratitude. To the extent that this celebration opens out in expectations of things we hope to do and be to that extent this celebration is marked by excitement, joy, anxiety, and awe. This is true for each of you who are graduates. This is true for your parents and friends. This is true for a spirit and energy called Trinity College. At any moment of our lives, all our past and all our future are contained in our present. Always, then, savor the present. Be satisfied. Be proud. Be restless. Be excited. Be grateful. Present is the only place where past and future happen. Enjoy the beauty of this wonder called NOW.

The Challenges of Living the Present

We live in a society that forgets so easily and, in fact, establishes industries to encourage forgetfulness. We live in a society that expects so

little in terms of human endeavor and human integrity and human behavior. We live in a society that is constantly moving on. It is no wonder we find ourselves unable to honor our past and unable to celebrate our future. We have lost sight of the importance of living today.

In addition to remembering and expecting ("holding [these] against your bones knowing your own life depends on it"), learning to love and to let go helps us to live life fully, one day at a time. Two short stories may suggest the core of this learning. The stories come from a collection of ancient and modern tales from the great religious traditions of the world. As with every story, these tales find their way around inside us so that their message begins to haunt us. The first tale is a modern tale about loving:

> A woman who took great pride in her lawn found herself with a large crop of dandelions. She tried every method she knew to get rid of them. Still they plagued her. Finally, she wrote the Department of Agriculture. She enumerated all the things she had tried and closed her letter with the question: "What shall I do now?"
>
> In due course the reply came: "We suggest you learn to love them."

You have heard this before in your years at Trinity College. Hopefully you will hear it again. The secret of a rich and meaningful life lies in what we have learned to love rather than in what we have learned to do and to think. The real test of loving comes when the dandelions emerge, the dandelions of disappointments, of conflicts, of closures. I would define love as seeing, encouraging, expecting in another person or event or institution the best they have to offer while gently recognizing and allowing the worst. Our world desperately needs persons who are willing to take pride in our best, but also to respect the limitations of our humanity and our universe. The woman in the story cared for her lawn. She attempted to improve its looks by every method available to her. Eventually, however, the key to her living well with her lawn lay in her ability to see with new eyes the dandelions, to learn to include them as part of the design for her lawn, to learn to love her lawn with dandelions.

Loving requires two movements – and a great deal of common sense – the first movement requires seeing and expecting the best; the second movement requires recognizing and bearing the worst. Common sense helps us to determine the proper timing for each. In order to live life well in the present, we all need to learn—over and over again—to love the dandelions. We need to understand that life is not always perfect, and our dreams do not always unfold as we would hope and, yet, our lawn remains beautiful on its own terms.

Today is all the time we ever have, and this small planet is all the Earth generations before us have had and generations after us will have.

Passing Through

Learning to let go is an equally difficult assignment. A simple Jewish tale holds some insight into this challenge:

> In the last century, a tourist from the States visited the famous Polish rabbi, Hofetz Chaim. He was astonished to see that the rabbi's home was only a simple room filled with books. The only furniture was a table and a bench.
>
> "Rabbi, where is your furniture?" asked the tourist. "Where is yours?" replied Hofetz. "Mine? But I'm only a visitor here. I'm only passing through," said the tourist. "So am I," said the rabbi. "So am I."

In addition to loving dandelions, the world today needs people who have the courage to admit that we are all "passing through." Today is all the time we ever have, and this small planet is all the Earth generations before us have had and

generations after us will have. What would be the change in our lives and our choices if we had the courage to admit that insight? What difference in our view of persons and places would occur if we understood, day-by-day, that we are "just passing through."

Think of the phrases in which "just passing through" appears most positively: "I was just passing through and thought I'd stop and see you." "I'm just passing through and was wondering if…" "I'm just passing through, but I'd be glad to…" Persons who are just passing through often enjoy a freedom, a delight, a curiosity, a generosity that those of us settled and rooted no longer experience. Persons who are "just passing through" see people and objects freshly. They often bring us out of our routine and our boredom by their unexpected arrival, their unsolicited commentaries, their detached observations.

Persons who are "just passing through" see people and objects freshly. They often bring us out of our routine and our boredom by their unexpected arrival, their unsolicited commentaries, their detached observations.

Persons who are "just passing through" have an interest in listening and learning. They can afford to be generous. The opinions of their companions are important, but not too important. They will meet other ideas soon. Persons who are just passing through enjoy their moment as fully as possible because they have no plan or expectation that another chance will come for such enjoyment. Learning to love helps us celebrate daily life, but equally important is a gentle awareness that we are always "just passing through."

This 76th commencement ceremony is a profound reminder of this basic truth. Many of us thought of Trinity College as a permanent fixture in our lives, in our community, in our educational enterprise. We hoped for its continuation. We mourn its closure. We momentarily forgot that Trinity College—and we ourselves--are "just passing through" this world in which we today find ourselves. Giving fully in this moment assures a history which we can honor and a future which we can celebrate, but it does not create permanence. Whatever the point of beginning, however, and whatever the point of ending, the time in-between is no less precious for the fact that it did not last forever.

I wish for each of you graduates this day the ability to live life fully in the present—may you have memories and expectations sufficient to sustain each today…may you have the wisdom to love the dandelions…may you have the courage to understand that, no matter what the illusion life offers to us, we are—all of us—just passing through. ◆

Mending Creation—Commencement Address, St. Xavier University, Chicago, Illinois, May 21, 2005

Margaret A. Farley, R.S.M.

Let me begin by congratulating you–the graduates of this class, and your families and friends who have supported you throughout your years here at St. Xavier's. What happens here today has to do with what has happened in you during these years, and what others have done with and for you to make this happen. If the meaning of the past is in the present, so is the meaning of the present in the future. It is therefore both too late and too early for me to interpret your years here–for what has not already been said during your time of living and thinking here at St. Xavier's cannot be said in a brief moment now; and until tomorrow comes, and the days to follow, the full meaning of today will not be clear to any of us.

Futures

And yet, as we gather here to celebrate both an ending and a beginning, let me dare to say something about your future. Futures hold steady with the discipline and the achievements of the past–achievements not only of learning and of skills, but of friendship and compassion. Futures carry the hopes of the present–not only for ourselves but for our world. Yet futures also seem to be relentlessly burdened by wounds from the past, and shadowed by fears in the present. There is a lot you do not and cannot know about your future. If you do not yet have a "place"–a job, a graduate program, a project; if it is still unclear where you will be this time next year–then at best you have only an inkling of what the meaning of today is for your future. And if you do have a job, a position, admission to another program, a family to build–still, you do not know how it will work out, how the situation will be, how the world will be, how you will be, into your future.

…and until tomorrow comes, and the days to follow, the full meaning of today will not be clear to any of us.

Fixing God's Creation

Let me think about this with you for a moment–about the movement of past to present to future. I will begin by telling you a story. It is a story from the tradition of Jewish rabbis, now retold by the great writer of the holocaust, Elie Wiesel. The story is about a student of Rabbi Hillel the Elder. This student, having studied about God and about the world, came to Rabbi Hillel one day and complained:

> "God took six whole days to create this world, and see what a terrible world it is–full of hatred and bloodshed, confusion and fear, prejudice and malice and tragic injustice." Hillel responded to his student, "Do you think that you could do any better–make a better world than God has made?" The student, taken aback for a moment, nonetheless answered, "Yes, I could!" So Hillel replied to him: "Then you must begin immediately."

Those of you who mark the milestone of your graduation today may not have the same question as Hillel's student, though you may be in sympathy with it. But what about Hillel's answer? Does it really make sense to think that we can make a better world? What could this possibly mean to you, or to any of us? You have learned a lot about great human achievements–in literature, art, philosophy, medicine, science, politics, business, education, theology. You have also learned about the wide and deep history of human suffering–the

consequences of injustice that goes on through the centuries, ravaging minds and hearts and bodies, despite human achievements or even infecting and corrupting the achievements themselves. You now go forth in diverse directions, with diverse futures. The difficulties and the possibilities that await you are both known and unknown. You will not, any of you, be spared the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" at some point in your lives; nor will you, I trust, be denied the happiness that can be uniquely yours.

What Needs Mending

What will, what can, any of you do to mend the broken world that God first made good? You have grappled with the frontier questions in whatever is your field–questions of economic crises, the education of children, an AIDS pandemic, the requirements of justice in business management, religious pluralism, the cross-cultural meaning of classics in art and literature, the clashing interpretations of history. You may have good reasons to think that you cannot make a completely better world. And yet, and yet, we all hear Hillel's response. It stirs something within us. Hillel was not a prophet of doom. He did not criticize his student for the student's complaints about the world. He also did not simply accept these complaints as inevitable or as the last word to be said about the world and about God. He was not cynical in his response to the student. His words did not patronize or condemn; they issued a genuine call. At the heart of his response was something we all believe, at least when we are at our best. For what Hillel suggested was that God does ask us to engage in the work of mending creation–not by ourselves but together with others, not for ourselves alone but for our children and for our neighbors near and far.

You know this world, and you know its possibilities for love and for beauty, and you know its tragedies.

You know this world, and you know its possibilities for love and for beauty, and you know its tragedies. The path before each of you may be different, even though what you desire is the same. You may go forth to vastly unequal situations, where your new credentials will be accepted or dismissed, praised or trivialized–depending sometimes only on your gender or your race or your sexual orientation or your economic situation, or on whether you can find work with those you can trust, move forward with companions who are loyal. None of you will be spared the cries of the poor and oppressed, unless you stop up your ears. None of you will be refused the opportunity of some important love, unless you harden your hearts.

Your Watch, Your Historical Moment

No one of us gets to choose the period of history into which we are born. None of us can ask for a different time or place. Here and now, in relation to our world, it is our "watch," your "watch." If the work of mending this world is to go on, it is you, we, who must work at the mending. We can wonder what happened to Hillel's student, going out to attempt to show Hillel to have been either right or wrong. Was this student tempted, as are we all, to think that whatever he or she saw to do was either too much or too little? Was the student like the prophet Elijah, who saw a mountain too high to climb and threw himself under a broom tree in weariness and despair? Was the student like Naaman, the Old Testament soldier who sought a cure for his leprosy, but balked at the prophet's remedy of simply walking into a small river? Or did the student, through a lifetime, learn that nothing is too small or too great to attempt if one is trying to mend the world? Of course, the world's problems are great, and the mountains are high; and of course, the rivers of peace and the lakes of happiness are often small and sometimes hidden. Think of the

challenges in our cities, in our religious and secular institutions; the challenges from relentless wars, from diseases that threaten us all, from prejudices and oppressions of all kinds. Think, too, of the pain in broken hearts and the challenges of fragile interpersonal relationships. Think on these challenges as you go forth. But now, with your new learning, in your own fields, if you see anything to do to mend this world, anything great or anything small, we need you not to despair before what seems to be impossible, or to dismiss what is after all possible but looks too small to be of use. To yield to inaction for either reason is to miss the future you might have made.

As you move into your future, my hope for you is wisdom for discerning what you are to do, and clear-sightedness to identify suffering and sorrow that can be remedied not by death but by social and personal changes of heart. I hope that as you search, as you love, as you labor, you will not be afraid. I hope that the power of God's Spirit will be within you as you dare to live, to act, to be faithful. I hope that your education has given *you* hope, so that this present day promises for all of us a future better world. I end with the words of the poet, Goethe: "[Now] what you can do, or dream you can, begin it."◆

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Receiving the Mercy Recognition Award at the MAST Meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 13, 2006

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.

Dear august members and friends, I am grateful to you all for being here around the table, as we celebrate twenty years of the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology. I thank you for selecting me to receive this symbol of the writing and publishing I have done along with you these two decades.

As I thought about this dinner event, I wondered if I should write something as an acceptance speech. Jesus, in his long after-dinner High Priestly speech and prayer in John's gospel went on for several chapters-- 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17, apparently without written notes. Perhaps the four cups of wine during the Seder helped him extemporize after the meal was over. Should I presume to make notes, or would I have had enough wine to speak without them?

Happily, some good Mercy speakers trusted themselves to hand over their spoken words, and The MAST Journal has benefited from this evolution from speech to text.

Was John, the beloved disciple, taking notes on what Jesus said, which he published fifty years after the event? Should I just count on one of the beloved disciples here at the MAST meeting to take notes on what I said after dinner? I actually think no one took notes at the Last Supper, and no one really remembered exactly what Jesus said, because they had drunk just as much wine as he did. If what was true at Cana was also true at the Last Supper, the disciples may have felt more like sleeping than listening to Jesus. They had no more wine because they'd drunk it all. Jars of good wine were all empty. Fifty years later, an unknown disciple composed a prayer in the spirit of Jesus, that sounded like what Jesus would have prayed, and that's what we have in John 14-17.

For these biblically based reasons, I decided to write a few notes on my own, just to feel secure.

In the year prior to this moment, I must confess some anxiety about whether I would make the grade. Last year Sister Mary Sullivan and Sister Katherine Doyle received research awards, and each had produced a book. Mary had edited and published a new edition of the letters of Catherine McAuley (*The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley, 1818-1841, Four Courts Press, 2004*). Katherine had retrieved the records telling the story of Mother Baptist Russell (*Like a Tree by Running Water: The Story of Mary Baptist Russell, California's First Sister of Mercy*, *Blue Dolphin Publishing, 2004*). Michele Marie Donnelly had indicated to me that I was a candidate for the award the coming year. Of course, one must not manifest eagerness for honors and emoluments so as to lose the spirit of humility.

For these Mercy-inspired reasons, I thought I'd better produce a book, even a small one, to memorialize this award, and to have something to show for myself, to measure up to the criteria. The result is *Obedience to Reality*. It's a collection of six unpublished essays on religious life, and the Introduction explains what the context for each one was, from 1983 to 2005.

In the Introduction, I talked about the importance of voice. I used to think it would be sufficient to have on my tombstone, "She Got Them to Write," because when we were starting

MAST, it was easier to find a speaker than a writer. Happily, some good Mercy speakers trusted themselves to hand over their spoken words, and The MAST Journal has benefited from this evolution from speech to text. Also, in the course of many of us completing degrees and working in academic institutions, we included The MAST Journal among the places we published. Gradually, we have seen the circle of Mercy writers grow.

What "Having Voice" Means in Academia

I want to add an additional phrase to my tombstone: "She Got Them to Write in Their Own Voice." One of our original purposes in MAST was to give voice to Mercy scholars. My original understanding of voice was providing a forum for women of Mercy to speak in the Church and to write within the Institute. But voice as we know, is more than just publishing, or taking corporate public stands on social justice issues.

MAST women were not alone in recognizing we needed to give support to each other as women in finding our voice as writers. The very year MAST was founded, 1986, several female professors, Mary Belenkey, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger and Jill Tarule wrote *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind* (Basic Books). The issue of women's voice in college was central. The five-stage model for women developing their voice went like this: Women first recognized that their consciousness seemed to be identical with the authoritative information delivered by professors. Simple repetition and agreement was what they thought was expected. A second stage of women's awareness was awakening internally to the private voice of subjective opposition, a different position they held, in contrast to the professor or the textbook. A third stage in development of women's voice was the expression of that personal voice in the classroom, through public expression of their own position, a movement from silence to speech. A fourth stage of women's voice was speaking the language of the subject area in on-going dialogue about the topic with the professor and other students, through the mastery they had acquired from learning and studying it over a period of time. They became active participants in the language of the guild. A fifth stage of "voice" was the achievement of mastery, such that women began to create new knowledge, to shape the concepts of the subject matter in new ways according to their own insights.

Thus, women's movement from silence to speech, and from moving from service of the subject matter to being the shaper of the subject matter--these are essential elements in the concept of voice.

Thus, women's movement from silence to speech, and from moving from service of the subject matter to being the shaper of the subject matter--these are essential elements in the concept of voice. The artist learns by copying and imitating the masters, and gradually finds her own artistic genius within, normally after a long apprenticeship.

Applying this model to theology, we would agree that the voice of women, their mastery of theological discourse and its concepts, and women's creation of new knowledge at the fifth stage are not, let us say, actively encouraged in the Catholic world, despite the number of women in the field of theology, biblical studies, and spirituality. What is the basis for my reservation that the voice of women in church and society has to be promoted by us, intentionally, with energy, even with resistance against the quiet counter-tide?

Resistance to Women's Voice by Academics and Bishops

Let me give some examples of the resistance we women encounter. I reviewed a book for *Theological Studies* last year, *To Kill and Take Possession: Law, Morality and Society in Biblical Stories* (Hendrickson, 2002) translated from the Hebrew. The author, Daniel Friedmann, is professor of civil law at Tel Aviv University in Israel. For the last thirty years, a growing stream of scholarly articles have been written by Jewish feminist academics on the very biblical texts about women that Professor Friedmann deals with in his book. But you would not know this to look at his footnotes. I had to note his omission of citations to women scholars in an otherwise positive review of the book.

The program for the annual Catholic Biblical Association meeting at Loyola University in Chicago for August of this year notably includes women: three women and three men on the Program Committee, a Continuing Seminar on Feminist Hermeneutics that includes twelve women and two men. A Biblical Hermeneutics seminar has six men and six women. Thirteen women are making research reports and presentations, among thirty presentations by men. The editorial board and staff of the Catholic Biblical Association seems to be inclusive of women.

But turn to the latest issue of the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* itself, of January 2006. Not a single article by a woman scholar. This is not unusual for the CBQ. If there is one among the six or seven articles, this is unusual. And the male scholars, like the Tel Aviv law professor, seem to have agreed that women's scholarship need not be cited, and the editorial board of CBQ seems to be in at least tacit agreement that it is not necessary for men to either read or cite their female biblical colleagues.

Perhaps I should be happy that if a woman academic writes a book, it is most typically reviewed by a male academic. In the book reviews for this CBQ, I counted at least 35 men asked for reviews. There were eight or nine women. My conclusion: what seems to be an effort at gender balancing at the annual meeting in terms of social participation is not at all the reality when you look at the written record of who is getting memorialized in writing in the Catholic academic biblical press.

…what seems to be an effort at gender balancing at the annual meeting[CBQ] in terms of social participation is not at all the reality when you look at the written record of who is getting memorialized in writing in the Catholic academic biblical press.

Could this be related to the role of women in the church generally? Where do women "show up" on the agenda of the Bishops gathering in Los Angeles this week, June 15-17, 2006? I have received a confidential copy of the memo sent to all bishops by David J. Malloy, S.T.D., general secretary, who replaced you know who in Washington D.C. (Sharon Euart, R.S.M.) As you know, as a journalist, I am more likely to go to jail for contempt of court than reveal my confidential sources. Where do women appear on the Bishops' agenda?

On Thursday, there is a proposal to extend the appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious, which is mostly aging women religious. Women religious were never paid real salaries nor were deductions made for their retirement, so the solution now is to ask the laity for the money.

Later in the day is a vote to approve adaptations of the Order of Mass, which involves getting rid of inclusive language, and restoring "men" and "man" to the creed. There is also a presentation of Fishers of Men by the Vocations committee which presumably focuses on efforts to increase vocations to the priesthood, not the sisterhood. Women's issues, mostly featured as the

wrongdoing of women, get passively represented on June 16 by Cardinal McCarrick's report on the Task Force on Catholic Bishops and Politicians, a discussion on the issue of Catholics in public life. This concerns the way Catholic men and women in politics talk about the abortion issue—and women are primarily to blame for abortion. So, these are the areas where women appear, sort of, on the current agenda of Bishops. My conclusion: Women's place is to be an object of male discourse. There is no reference to any women providing feedback for these topics.

An Opera Singer as an Analogy for Women's Voice

Another aspect of what I mean by "She Got Them to Write in Their Own Voice" is suggested by the hand-out you have: A *New York Times* article of June 5, 2006: "An Opera Singer Gives a Party, in Celebration of Herself." If we want to talk about what voice is, here's a place to start, with a coloratura soprano. Here's the lead paragraph:

"Call it enterprising. You're an opera singer who has had a notable career, and you're not being heard in New York as much as you once were.

You're celebrating your 20th year on-stage, and no one is rushing to acknowledge it. What do you do? If you're the coloratura soprano Sumi Jo, you rent Carnegie Hall and give your own party." It's a somewhat catty review but does offer an analysis of the concept of voice.

Sumi Jo is Korean by ethnicity. To become an opera star, she first of all had to develop her own singing voice and to train it for many years. However, the languages of standard western opera are not Korean, but Italian, French, German. She has learned to give voice to a repertoire of western operatic arias, which she showcased in her one-woman performance. The reviewer notes her technical mastery of the ornamental and demanding coloratura style but contrasts it with the singer herself.

I reflect on this review as an analogy. What does it mean to find our voice as women of Mercy, and to support one another in developing that personal voice?

First, voice is unique to each woman. Sumi Jo is a coloratura soprano, a performer who must be able to hold her own even when she sings in concert with others. Her voice sometimes blends with the orchestra, but she must have the instinct and talent to make it heard above the music, and not be drowned by the orchestra. I would ask, what is the voice that is natural for you? What register do you sing in by birth, by gift?

Second, voice is expressed through a role we adopt. Some expressions of our voice are channeled through our professional roles as academic, administrator, spiritual director, practical theologian, historian, philosopher. We find a certain voice through our professional ability to use the languages of the guild, to express our voice in Italian, French, German, Spanish or Korean, as it were. One scholar has referred to academic discourse as "academentia," because it does crazy-making with our brain and the expression that results. Anyone who has attempted to enter discourse on the subject of post-modernity-- Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan knows about "academentia." At the same time, we must learn to speak the language of the guild to be credible as teachers, writers and researchers. However, as the reviewer notes, credibility is not a sequence of glittery gowns that

What does it mean to find our voice as women of Mercy, and to support one another in developing that personal voice?

we change as we sing. Voice is not a putting on gowns to impress others with our beauty and glamour.

I would say that our role as Sisters of Mercy, as professed members of an ecclesial congregation, can both channel and confine our voice and discourse through what may be called "Mercy-speak." By this I mean the voice of special language rules, familiar phrases, terms of art and concepts through which we speak to each other about the meaning of our lives. It is a voice, a language we find in official correspondence from the Institute, the way reports are phrased in VITA, and in the way we express what we think at community meetings. It is a special language that unites us and expresses our values when we speak to each other. However, let us not confuse "Mercy-speak" with what I mean most essentially by personal voice.

The third aspect of voice that this New York Times article suggests comes closest to the place in each of us that is the ground and goal for our writing. The reviewer contrasted the performer role with something deeper, something that either has or doesn't have integrity. "The persona that came across was that of a stereotypical diva, without any demonstration of truly compelling artistry to support it."

What I mean by voice is that place of connectedness and beauty that arises from who you really are as a woman, …

But then, the reviewer notes that there were moments of integrity, that "emotionally, her most convincing performances were of a Korean song, and her third encore, which she performed after announcing to the audience that she was dedicating the evening to her father, who died two months ago. Here, there was a kind of connectedness and beauty that made one want to hear her sing again."

What I mean by voice is that place of connectedness and beauty that arises from who you really are as a woman, a voice that is emotionally convincing because it has roots in your joy and grief, in the wisdom learned from suffering and given as spiritual gift. This is the voice in which you may express your thoughts in your primary language—in Korean as Sumi Jo, or in human experience, deeper than any role you have assumed, the context for your professional academic training, flowing beneath and around the rules of Mercy-speak. Professor Margaret Miles, Augustine scholar and commenter on aesthetics, western art and film, once described this voice, from which she writes so admirably as "writing from the bone."

It is my hope that MAST will be a setting where the deepest voice in you of emotional conviction, connectedness and beauty can flourish. From this, live. From this place of conviction and integrity, speak in your own voice. From this place of beauty and connectedness, of bone and sinew, write in your own voice.

I hope that the offering of this book to you, which does express my own voice, will nurture yours. Let us promote and encourage one another for all the years that are left to us in Mercy. ◆

Meditation-Mentoring for the Mission of Teaching, St. Xavier University, Chicago, Illinois, March 21, 2013

Joy Clough, R.S.M.

We don't really know why Jesus was about 30 years old before he launched his teaching career. As far as we know, it wasn't an obstructionist dissertation committee that held him back. Whatever the reason, what is widely recognized – even if Christianity is not one's faith tradition – is that Jesus was a master teacher, one whose words and actions have endured for centuries.

Jesus was frequently addressed by his contemporaries as "Teacher" and it was a title he accepted and claimed, saying to his followers on one occasion, "You call me Teacher, and fittingly enough, for that is what I am." (Jn. 13:13)

Indeed, he was. He gave what we might call major lectures, as on the occasion when "those present were about 5,000, not counting women and children." (Mt. 14:21)

He held small seminars, for example: "His disciples came to him with the request, "Explain to us the parable.'" (Mt. 13:36)

He even had office hours, of sorts: "A certain Pharisee named Nicodemus came to him at night." (Jn. 3: 1)

As a teacher, Jesus was well received at times. In fact, "The crowds were spellbound at his teaching." (Mt. 7:28) But there were some pretty problematic times as well, for instance when his neighbors "expelled him from the town and lead him to the brow of the hill, intending to hurl him over the edge." (Lk. 4:29-30)

Jesus was enthusiastic about teaching, urging his companions at one point, "Let us move on to other villages so I may teach there also." (Mk. 1: 38) But teaching also exhausted him, as when "a violent storm came up on the lake and the boat began to be swamped by waves…and through it all, Jesus was in the stern sound asleep." (Mt. 8:23-24; Mk. 4:38)

Jesus varied his teaching styles:

- Stories: "He addressed them at length in parables." (Mt. 13:3)
- Modeling: "I have given you an example that as I have done, so you must do." (Jn. 13:15)
- The Smart Board of his era: "Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground." (Jn. 8:8)
- Discussion: "What do you think of this case? A man had two sons…" (Mt. 21: 28)

He knew some of the satisfactions of teaching:

- the give and take of informed discussion, even debate;
- the creativity of crafting a message so it would really capture his "students";
- the light of understanding in someone's eyes;
- a change in a listener's attitude or behavior.

But Jesus also knew the frustrations of teaching – on one occasion exclaiming to his disciples, "'Do you still not see or comprehend? Are your minds completely blinded? Have you eyes but no sight, ears but no hearing!'" (Mk. 8:17-18. 21)

Yet he kept at it, and it was on the night before he died that Jesus laid claim to the title Teacher, and further, identified himself to his disciples as the way, the truth, and the life. Those words are the motto – Via, Veritas, Vita – of this University, words that remind us of the incredible honor and challenge of being teachers – as Jesus was, as each of you has chosen to be.

And so, we pray, simply yet profoundly,

Speak, Teacher,
we who strive – like you – to educate others-
are listening. ◆

X

I nearly threw in the towel
It was May, my first year teaching
After Algebra class, Carleen whispered in my ear
Sister, when ware we going to learn what X is?

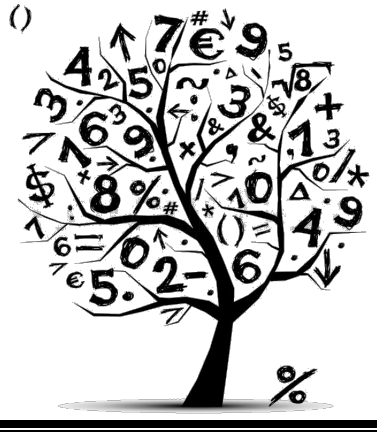
O Carleen, so many years later
I can tell you a lot more about X
It not only marks the spot
It symbolizes every unknown, any mystery
It's the letter that everyone is looking for

I've learned so much
since you stunned me with that question
My answer right now would be "Never"
We are never going to learn what X is

It is the nameless essence of an eternal search
the magnet pulling the evolutionary process
It is totally available and open to any brain
that needs a marker to hold on to
the Infinite reality passing through

We are never going to learn what X is
but we will never stop trying

--Patricia Ryan, R.S.M.
In *Leaves of Poetry* (Lake Forest, IL: Forest Printing, 2018), p. 126.



On the Departure of Sisters of Mercy from Laurelhurst Village, Portland, Oregon, July 28, 2014

Georgita Cunningham, R.S.M.

Permit me to do a quick summary of the Sisters of Mercy and then to speak specifically of the Sisters of Mercy at Mount Saint Joseph -- now Laurelhurst Village.

The Sisters of Mercy is a religious group of women founded in Dublin, Ireland in 1831 by a woman named Catherine McAuley. Catherine was moved by the problems of her day and intended to gather around her a group of women dedicated to serving the poor, the sick, and the uneducated. The early ministry (work) of the Sisters was the education of poor children. As interested women joined the project it grew to be who we are today. Officially known as Religious Sisters of Mercy we number about nine thousand and are worldwide.

In 1896 twelve Sisters arrived in Oregon and we have been involved in various forms of ministry ever since.

In 1896 twelve Sisters arrived in Oregon and we have been involved in various forms of ministry ever since. There have been homes for business women, homes for the aged, a baby home in what today is known as Oregon City. There have been schools in Mount Tabor, Eugene, Roseburg, Marshfield (now known as Coos Bay), Jordan and Portland. There have been hospitals in North Bend, Albany, Roseburg and Eugene.

In 1897 the Sisters officially opened a home for the aged in Portland and two years later that needed to be expanded. According to the records, a quarrel existed between the medical faculty at Williamette University and the Portland hospitals. The hospitals refused to accept Williamette medical students, so the Methodist hospital opened a facility of their own. Their hospital was later sold at a sheriff's sale and was purchased by the Sisters of Mercy on February 9, 1900. They named it Mount St. Joseph.

The Sisters admitted ambulatory and nursing care patients of 65 and older. A private room was $40.00 a month. A ward bed was $25.00 a month, and nursing care cost $60.00 a month. Life contracts sold for $500.00 to $3000.00. 30% to 50% or more of the charity residents outlived their contracts.

The first person to apply as a resident to Mount St. Joseph was a Methodist minister. He was 80 years old, helpless and poor. He had two dollars to his name and he offered these to Sister Theresa Kane, the admittance clerk. Sister took one dollar and left him with a dollar. She wrote: "I did not want to make him too dependent."

In 1929 this property in Portland became the headquarters for the Sisters of Mercy in the Northwest.

In about 1995 the Sisters of Mercy sold this property to a group called Catholic Health Associates who sold it to Catholic Health Initiatives who, in turn, sold it to Farmington Centers, Inc. In the bill of sale to Farmington Centers, Inc. there is a clause about maintaining "Catholic Presence." As a result, this institution is neither owned nor operated by the Catholic Church or the Sisters of Mercy, but the religious tradition, values and caring spirit are being maintained.

In the display case outside of the chapel area there is doll dressed in the traditional dress of a Sister of Mercy. That same "habit" was worn by Sisters from 1831 until 1967. The Community then moved rather quickly from that habit to a navy-blue A-line dress to navy- blue or black suits with white blouses, to the less identifiable dress today. We have no Sisters in the traditional habit,

but some still wear the navy- blue A-line dress and some are still wearing blue or black suits. Dress for each Sister is dependent upon personal preference, where she is in ministry, and what kind of ministry she does. Our symbols are generally the plain silver ring on the left hand, worn on the ring finger, and the Mercy cross.

Many decades ago, the seeds were planted that would one day become Laurelhurst Village with The Gardens and The Terrace. We planted a seed that would become larger than we could manage and afford so we joined resources and turned hospitals and nursing homes over to Catholic Hospital Association and did what we now do best -- spiritual ministry.

We may never see the end results of Laurelhurst Village, but we never intended to be the master builders. Today there are fewer Sisters. Nevertheless, we are a vibrant community, but the focus of our ministry now is more with issues of justice, immigration and housing.

Many of us do not realize that there are presently a hundred four (104) Sisters of Mercy who have lived and served in Oregon who are buried out at Mount Calvary Cemetery on West Burnside in Portland. Another twenty-seven Sisters are buried in North Bend, Oregon. The Sisters of Mercy will always be among us.

> We prefer to be the workers in the vineyard of the Lord wherever the work of the Lord calls us.

Thank you to each and every one of you who have walked the journey with us --administrators, staff, employees, residents and families of the residents. May God be with you always and may we all continue to cooperate in nurturing and watering the tree--your symbol of the Sisters of Mercy in Portland, Oregon. ◆

Commencement, St. Mary of Notre Dame College, Notre Dame Indiana, 2015

Rosemary Connelly, R.S.M.

Thank you, President Mooney, members of the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, families, friends, and of course, St. Mary of Notre Dame graduates of the year 2015.

Thank you graduates for the honor and privilege of being your Commencement speaker. I'm very impressed the graduates are asked to nominate someone, and I'm honored to be chosen as your speaker.

Thank you, Bridget Condon for nominating me. Bridget's Aunt Roey lived at Misericordia for 27 years and is now resting in God's Love. It is humbling to know that you could have chosen a famous theologian or some celebrity. Yet here I am, a grateful Sister of Mercy. For the past 46 years I have had the privilege and blessing of sharing life with God's most vulnerable and special people and their families.

I've learned many important life lessons from our children and adults, all developmentally disabled, some physically challenged. That's what I intend to share with you today-- What it means to live life on God's terms, without any unreal or false expectations of what life owes you or what should be.

That's what I intend to share with you today-- What it means to live life on God's terms, without any unreal or false expectations of what life owes you or what should be.

I came to Misericordia South in 1969, a skilled nursing home, and the only home we had at the time thinking I would be the gift-giver. Instead, this began a faith-filled journey that I consider one of the greatest gifts of my life. I owe this to my religious community. My appointment by the Sisters of Mercy was a mystery in itself. Misericordia administration had always been nurses. They must have thought I was very social, for through their generosity I had a B.S. from St. Xavier in Social Studies, an M.A. in Sociology from St. Louis, and an M.S.W. from Loyola.

In Chicago, St. Mary's of Notre Dame alumnae are highly regarded, especially at Misericordia. Many of your alumnae have become staff and volunteers here at Misericordia and have enhanced our children and adults' lives in many different ways. Last Sunday a former parent of one of our deceased residents spoke of his 90-year-old mother who is a graduate of St. Mary's. Her happiest memories are connected to her days at St. Mary's and the lifetime friends she made here.

In reading the history of St. Mary's, I was especially impressed with the legacy of Sister Madeleva Wolf, President from 1934 to 1961. Just imagine all the changes that occurred in our society during those years. Sister stated: "The Essence of our college – is not its building – its endowment fund – its enrollment – or even its Faculty – The Essence is the Teaching of the Truth." I was truly impressed with that statement.

I recently had the pleasure of speaking with Laura Osmanski, president of your class. I asked her to share with me the greatest gift she has received from St. Mary's. She stated, "A deeper discovery of what truth is." When I asked her to define what truth means to her, she said: "Truth is the ability to use faith and wisdom to understand reality. To be truthful, or to find truth, one must be cautious and also have the courage to ask and search for the right answers."

And right here I would like to add, one of the most important lessons I've learned from our children and adults is that by their very presence among us,
they teach us that we must have the wisdom and the courage to discover and then accept this truth: For some happenings in life there are no answers but there are answering people who are the incarnation,
the presence of God's love in our world today.

Graduates, think of all the answering people who reflect God's love for you--your parents, your family, your teachers, your friends, that are present with you today. I was going to ask you to give them a round of applause, but my goal is to keep this talk under 15 minutes so when I'm finished do hug them.

Teaching "truth" in our world today must be very challenging, more difficult, indeed, than when I was in college. Way back then, especially if you came from a Catholic family, you went to Catholic schools. Some went to Catholic grade school, high school and college. The truth was clearly defined, and the God of Fear was always present to keep you on the straight and narrow path, for your reward would be in Heaven. Even the government was regarded as an institution of truth. Our attitude was that America could do no wrong. We trusted our government and its officials. Black was black, white was white and there was no multicolor gray!

I remember in the 1960's admiring two priest brothers, the Jesuit and Josephite Berrigans, who personally placed themselves in opposition to the establishment by opposing the Viet Nam War. When they went so far as to claim the FBI (one of the most respected agencies in government at this time) lied, I thought they had become paranoid. Then Watergate occurred when you witnessed, even at the highest level of government, the Presidency, how corrupt the government could be. I gained a new respect for these two priest brothers, who suffered much from many, especially within Church communities. I do believe they were prophets of the truth and this demanded great sacrifice and courage. Sometimes truth demands sacrifice and courage!

I'd like to take a moment to thank all present who are involved in bestowing upon me an Honorary Degree from St. Mary's of Notre Dame. I am honored to become a member of your family. Here I'll publicly state, and this might shock you. I like receiving awards, including even honorary degrees. It is interesting, they've all been received from Catholic universities and services. This surely makes a very public statement about the value system in these faith-based institutions.

One would expect a Catholic sister would want to live a quiet, humble life just serving God's people and not seeking any recognition. When I was 18 years old, that's what I told my parents. That's why I wanted to enter the Sisters of Mercy, and that's the life I expected to live. The God of Mystery works in strange ways!

The only reason I can be comfortable and appreciate these awards is that I don't personalize them. I feel strongly that the institutions and agencies awarding these recognitions are publicly saying that our children and adults who call Misericordia "home" are valuable citizens of our society and they deserve the respect and dignity awarded to others. I'm just an instrument God is using to witness to the importance of their presence. They can teach us all "the truth" of how to accept mystery in our lives, and live meaningful and happy lives, and let God be God and not the god of false expectations.

Our society has never needed their presence among us more than it does today for we live in a most materialistic society, and we can all become victimized by these false values without even being aware.

Misericordia witnesses to the world that these most valuable and beautiful people not only have the right to life, but to one worth living. That's what Misericordia is all about. Our children and adults can't make a good world for themselves, but once it is theirs, they become the gift-givers.

In their weakness they are strong. How many of us could or would accept their limitations and still rejoice in the goodness of our world? These very special teachers, our residents, were created by God with purpose to their lives, no matter how wrapped in Mystery that purpose may seem, especially to non-believers.

I've learned so much about living life on God's terms from our children and adults and their families. It has been a joy to watch many of our Misericordia family learn from their own child with developmental disabilities, how to live with mystery. They stopped asking "Why, God?" or "Why me?" and learned to accept their child for just whom he or she truly is. Through their acceptance, they show us what God's unconditional love truly is. For they love this special child without any conditions attached, without any reservations, just like God loves us. And these families are more loving and accepting than they ever would have been without their child showing them the way to God through mystery. Parents and families with children with special needs become more compassionate and loving than they ever would have been if this special needs person wasn't a loving member of their family.

Recently I read a letter from a father of a son with severe disabilities. The letter was entitled:

<u>These are all the things my son's disabilities robbed from me.</u>

You would expect it would be filled with despair and anger but instead it was a witness to a faith of a believer: "God, you robbed my son of his speech – he's nonverbal – but You gave him a voice and even a platform, and You're using his life to bless and to teach me and others around him, about the mystery of Your love. You robbed me of only caring about those who are just like me. You robbed me of my own pride, selfishness and greed. You robbed me of living just for those society regards as lovable and successful." He ended by saying, "I've asked You, God, to change and heal my son, and instead You used my son to change and heal me."

Our parents and their families are believers who know this life which we hold onto so tightly, is just a brief moment in time, not to be wasted but to be used as a gift from God to live lovingly, generously, and to make a difference. If the world isn't a better place for all because I and you have walked this journey, then your gift of life has been lived in vain. Your life has been wasted – no matter how wealthy or successful the world might regard or value you.

Please, graduates, don't wait until you retire to do good. All that is truly yours is "the now." Make it part of your daily life to ask yourself, What did I do today that made my world a better place? Did I reach out to a wounded member within my own family, or in my neighborhood, or to a stranger? What did I do to make our world a more just society? Did I speak out for a person who has no voice, the poor, unwanted immigrants, those who have no hope, those who live with violence?

There are so many wounded people, no one should ever be bored. When you become a parent, teach your children, by your example, the importance of reaching out to God's wounded people and they will learn from you what is truly important and will have meaningful lives.

Be grateful you live in America. Be mindful that in this 21st century, Christianity, especially in Middle East, is the world's most heavily persecuted faith. Many countries treat Christians as second-class citizens and subject them to violence, intimidation and even death. Pray for these modern-day martyrs and be aware of their needs.

I'm first generation American. My parents loved their Irish heritage, but they thought the greatest gift they gave us was to be born in America. Remember the old country. It's a personal sadness for me to know how difficult it is

for worthy people to become U.S. citizens.

The children and adults of Misericordia taught me in a special way, the limitations of the human condition. Everyone and everything will never be perfect. Imperfections, disappointments, waiting, discouragement, disabilities, failure, death and sacrifice are a part of the rhythm of life.

I'm deeply concerned, even though I'm envious of the technological skills of the young. All children have to do today is press a button or speak into a gadget and they have the answers. What will happen (as it will if they live full lives) when something happens to them in life and there are no answers?

Here is a story of a woman who expected a perfect life. Her father spoiled her, gave everything to her, and always gave her what she wanted. Then she had a baby with Down Syndrome and her father could not change this. Her child is one of our happiest residents. She has lived a challenging, life-giving, happy life at Misericordia for the past 40 years. The mother died at 39, never having accepted her daughter. She didn't fit enough into this mother's image of "perfect."

Our residents have no expectations of life except what theirs is. They are contented and seem to know their lives have meaning. When are we most disappointed? When people or situations don't meet our expectations. Our residents accept life on God's terms. They never ask "Why?"

I feel so sad when good people have suffering in their lives and their response is, "Why is God punishing me? I lived a good life." Suffering is not a punishment. God showed us the way by sending His Only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer and die on the cross. But that suffering alone would make no sense. His rising from the dead, the Resurrection, should keep all our lives filled with hope, in the perspective of eternity. Our residents don't need answers. They need answering people who are the incarnation of God's loving presence.

At Misericordia, our residents are surrounded by answering people. Although 20 percent of our population have no family, or come from extreme poverty, many have wonderfully devoted families. They have a most competent, loving and compassionate Misericordia staff who know they never will become wealthy working here at Misericordia but are doing God's work each day. They are making a difference and have the joy of knowing that the world is more compassionate and caring.

Our children and adults know how to wait. The best lessons can be learned while waiting, and this is truly a contradiction of how most of us live in our modern world.

The happiest person I know, Mr. Wonderful – Terry – was born with physical anomalies and is developmentally disabled. A child once asked him "Mister, are you disabled?" And his response was, "Not that I ever noticed." Our residents teach us how extraordinary the ordinary gifts are--to be able to eat, dress, speak, see and hear – all gifts we all take for granted until they are no longer ours. Some who do not have any of the ordinary gifts show us by their eyes and their smile that they know they are loved. All God asks of them is to be. And our loving staff finds the person within, even though for many their bodies are so locked in mystery.

Our children and adults know how to wait. The best lessons can be learned while waiting, and this is truly a contradiction of how most of us live in our modern world. We want an immediate response. I have a story of one of our residents, P.J. When told of his mother's death he asked, "Will I see her again? Is she with God?" And when I told him "Yes," he responded, "I can wait." What faith!

My faith has changed since I came to Misericordia South in 1969. We had 132 children, all under the age of 6, and 69 babies with Down Syndrome. It was the time professionals told

families to place them and get on with life because these children wouldn't amount to anything. Custodial care was all that was available to these children. This was true at Misericordia South, which provided exceptional custodial care. The child would leave at 6 years of age and go to state institutions. Soon after I arrived, I visited the state institutions. There was much to be desired, especially in those days, so I decided none of our children would go there. The State questioned me for violating our license. I knew I would have challenges, but I was willing to take a risk and even accept failure. My priority was to get these beautiful little children out of bed.

I surrounded myself with young girls, not educated in the field but intelligent and willing to learn. I was very unpopular with the old-timers who were mostly middle-aged women who loved these children but felt they were safe in bed. No professionals were interested in us. I went to universities and hospitals and got no help, so we became the experts. At the same time, I felt overwhelmed by the suffering surrounding me. These beautiful children were all disabled and some terribly physically challenged as well. I watched the sadness of families when they came to visit. The parents did what professionals of this time told them was best for their child and for them.

Today the only babies we have are those who are in extreme condition and need daily medical and nursing care. Remember, at this time there were no programs out there for a special-needs child. Not until 1975 was legislation passed, The "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (IDEA). Then educators had to be involved, as well as doctors, nurses and therapists who all became interested. Parents of today receive much from our education system until they turn 22 years old. Then all educational services stop. This creates a real vacuum in the person's life.

I do believe one reason Misericordia has been so blessed by God is because every time we grew and expanded, it was to meet an unmet need. Besides presently building four lovely new homes for our aging population, which is a new phenomenon in the area of service, we plan on expanding our Outreach Program to help families fill this vacuum created when a person turns 22 years old.

When I was in grade school, the nuns scared me with gory stories of how martyrs died and then asked, "Do you love God enough to be a martyr?" This made me want to hide under my desk. I wasn't sure at all if I had the courage to die, nor did I know if I loved God enough. Now, that isn't important to me. What is important is to reflect how much God loves me. This love energizes me, challenges me, and calls me forth to be God's presence and to show God's love and do God's work.

Through the presence of our children and adults I truly understand what God's unconditional love for all of us truly means. The God of Love, the God of Mercy, in the Person of Jesus Christ shows us the way to understand "truth."

In many ways you are living in the best of times and the worst of times. It is the worst of times in that the spirit of our modern world is filled with idols and false gods such as greed, power, money, corruption, selfishness and indifference. If money determines who our society values, compare the salaries of movie and television stars, athletes, corporate leaders to what our society pays teachers, nurses and other service professionals. Compare what most people are willing to pay to attend an event featuring one of the above celebrities or to a sporting event to what they are willing to give to those living in poverty, those who have no voice in our society. The divergence between rich and poor has never been greater and just keeps on growing.

It is the best of times for many reasons. There is a growing awareness by individuals and corporations that they have a moral responsibility to reach out beyond their own comfort zone. Pope Francis is one of the greatest spiritual teachers of our times. He has called us to find Christ in the

poor, to lend our voices to their causes, to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them, to get involved throughout our world. He calls us to work toward justice and mercy for the immigrants of our time, for all of God's wounded people.

Faith gives you courage to take risks. At Misericordia we have taken many risks, just trusting in God for we know we are doing God's work. We began Misericordia North with 39 children and 30 staff. Today we have 600 children and adults in residence, 1,000 staff and an Outreach Program of 140 families. And God has touched the hearts (and yes–the wallets and purses) of so many believers. When I drive around our beautiful 31- acre campus with lovely residential and program buildings along with 10 homes in neighborhoods, I am in awe of how God has blessed us.

There have been some difficult challenges, especially within the government bureaucracy, for we stand in contradiction to the national trend which claims there is only one way to serve residents. One claim is that everyone should live outside an institution, in the community. We are the only agency with a full continuum of care, which enables us to care for many residents until God calls them home.

If you go through life with the philosophy that failure is not an option, you will never be able to take any risk. Then you'll never have any opportunities to learn. I like what Thomas Edison said when he tried 1,000 ways to make his electric light bulb invention work and failed every time. His famous comment was: "I've not failed. I've simply discovered 1,000 ways that didn't work." That's an optimistic person who wasn't afraid of failure. It has been said that often successful people fail their way to the top.

If you go through life with the philosophy that failure is not an option, you will never be able to take any risk.

As I said before, I discovered "truth" more deeply through the presence of God's most special residents and their families in my life. I found it in the truth of Jesus Christ saying, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Jesus is the truth. He shows us the way for you to follow. Jesus is not dead. He has risen. He is alive. We are Easter people, people of the Resurrection. He did not simply return to life, He is Life itself, because He is the Son of God –the Living God.

Don't be afraid to let the Risen Jesus into your life. He will welcome you with open arms. If you've been indifferent, take a risk. You won't be disappointed. If following Him seems difficult, don't be afraid. Be confident. Trust Him. He will give you the grace and peace you're looking for, and the strength to live as He would have you live a meaningful life.

The challenge is before you today. The culture you must live in is defined by pervasive materialism.

People are then defined, and they even define themselves in the measure of the material things they can acquire. This leads to a path of false expectations and false personal fulfillment.

So, graduates, you are blessed people. The world is waiting for you. Trust God and trust yourself. Continue to discover, to understand your "truth." Keep all of life's happenings in the perspective of eternity and then life will truly have meaning.

Someone once asked, "Have you ever seen a U-Haul behind a hearse?" If you are a believer, you will receive two promises: Life will have meaning and you will live forever. If you get a better offer then that, you should go for it! Thank you. ◆

Response to Receiving the Role of Law Award, Canon Law Society of America, Indianapolis, Indiana, October 16, 2017

Victoria Vondenberger, R.S.M.

I am honored to receive this award and I am grateful for this opportunity to speak to you. This is a dinner speech and the teacher in me wants you to know, as I proceed, how much more there is to come so I offer a menu for this banquet of words. I hope to whet your appetites with Moses, then offer a balanced main course and, for dessert, invite you into the pie of truth. On your table is a bookmark of related images.[1]

Appetizer: Moses and the Law

In the prayer space in my bedroom stands a small statue of Moses which I found in a thrift store. This "old" high school teacher, of course, still has sticky tack and magic markers which I used to craft his missing hand. Now Moses not only guards the law with one hand, but his new hand holds a walking staff to move into the future. The tablets of the law held by Moses' perfect hand are solid and form a tradition we canonists treasure. Add flames and you have the logo of CLSA. Today especially, we need that new staff to lead into the future, particularly when we see much of our world moving away from structure and institutions like the Church. We need to lead God's people to the promised future of hope (Jer. 29: 19). Do I have clear answers about how we will do this? No. But I trust us to discern together how to move forward within the law and lead God's people in right directions.

Today especially, we need that new staff to lead into the future, particularly when we see much of our world moving away from structure and institutions like the Church.

Main course: Balancing the Scales of Justice

As we discern the path to that future of hope we need to reconcile opposites or perhaps realize they are not so opposite after all. We must balance values like the three pairs of goods we will consider this evening: Tradition and Innovation, Justice and Mercy, "Us" and "Them." Dualism has plagued the thinking of our Church at least since the Gnostic heresy in the 2nd century. Belief that flesh is in conflict with spirit continues to war against the theology of Incarnation. I call us tonight to move beyond dualism, avoiding an "either-or" mentality while choosing to embrace a "both-and" perspective.

Rev. Lawrence Wrenn was the fourth person to receive this Role of Law Award in 1976, forty-one years ago. Ten years later, he wrote about goods we need to balance in tribunal ministry. I use his ideas each year with my canon law students at the seminary. Last year, Wrenn's article was published anew in a free e-book.[2] I experience those tensions not only in tribunal procedures but also within us. With the hands of Moses, we already considered one pair of the goods to balance which Wrenn names: Tradition and Innovation. It can be frightening to risk something new in our lives.

I was a parish organist beginning in 8th grade which was before Vatican II. This often meant singing solo, which scared me a lot at the time. During the first Mass I played, I was so scared about singing a capella that when the priest turned around from the altar and extended his hands, I sang, "Dominus vobiscum." Startled, Father Anselm Boeke jerked his gaze to the choir loft and sang in response, "Et cum spritu tuo," then quickly turned back to the altar while his whole chasuble shook as he tried to muffle his laughter. Over the years I honestly

forgot that moment of teenage embarrassment until Father Boeke reminded everyone at the celebration of my silver jubilee as a Sister of Mercy in 1988, the year I went to study canon law.

Moving into change can be frightening and embarrassing but picture the tension between risking innovation and holding on to tradition, evenly balanced in the scales of justice. From childhood, I paid attention to St. Thomas Aquinas because his feast day was celebrated on my birthday, March 7th. One of his teachings is "virtus stat in medio" (virtue stands in the middle). I think that applies to Wrenn's list and other tensions in our lives and our ministries.

Consider justice and mercy (the theme of this convention). I am frequently asked how I reconcile being a Sister of Mercy with being a minister of justice in our Church.[3] For some people, mercy and justice seem opposed. If justice involves only dispensing deserved punishment for wrongdoing, and if mercy means only pardoning earned punishment, those virtues would be in conflict. But we who follow Jesus and the Gospel do not make an "either-or" choice here. We strive for both. If we relieve the suffering of a person who is poor with a sandwich from our soup kitchen (mercy) without striving to correct the unjust social systems which caused the hunger (justice), we are neither merciful nor just. Mercy without justice can lead to dependency and entitlement, increasing the power of the giver over the one in need. Justice without mercy can lead to hardened hearts and cold, impersonal treatment of others. Virtue stands in the middle.

Mercy without justice can lead to dependency and entitlement, increasing the power of the giver over the one in need.

In 2009 I was privileged to be part of a panel of six US canonists at Santa Croce in Rome presenting our experiences of penal law. Inspired by Wrenn's balancing of tensions, I described the role of the Promoter of Justice as the responsibility to balance the rights of all those involved in a penal process, balancing justice and mercy.[4] The third pair of goods I have chosen to consider tonight is "us" and "them" which leads us to dessert.

Dessert: The Pie of Truth

There are painful divisions today in our world, in our Church and even in this canon law society. Sometimes that results in an "us" and "them" dualistic mentality where "we", of course, are completely correct with God on our side while "they" are totally wrong. Do you remember the harsh debate during our 2015 convention? Resolution # 5 was proposed in response to the revised procedures for marriage cases which had not yet even taken effect. Canonists I respect argued vehemently for both sides. What concerned me was the adversarial, defensive, fearful and even disrespectful, tenor of that debate. That experience leads me to offer tonight the pie of truth. During twenty years of teaching high school, I developed the image of the pie of truth to invite my students not to be so convinced of their own opinions that they could not hear truth in opposing views.

What we see depends on where we stand. Picture a large pie cut into wedges of various sizes. Add to that image a small center circle toward which each piece of the pie is cut. Your perspective about anything is one slice of the pie. Tonight, I invite us to consider the perspectives of those opposed to our views. No matter how small your wedge may be, it touches a part of the core. Your slice of the pie, your perspective, offers a unique view of what is ultimate truth or wisdom… or God.

If I stand in my piece of the pie and look over at yours, your viewpoint is crooked or skewed. But, if I am secure enough in what I believe, I could accept the grace to leave my perspective and

step over into your piece of the pie. Standing in your piece of the pie, I see more of the core of truth because I have added your perspective to my own. That is the gift of respectful dialogue. But it takes a lot of courage to risk stepping out of my beliefs, my convictions, my prejudices, and my biases, and into your viewpoint. It takes God's grace. I sometimes close my mind to new truth, fearing the changes a new insight might cause in my life. We tend to resist change, to demonize the different and fear the new. It can be very challenging to allow even God's Spirit to call me out of what is comfortable. We are told that Jesus came to comfort the afflicted, but Jesus also came to afflict the comfortable. Are we willing to leave our comfort zones? I hope so.

In our appetizer tonight, the statue of Moses called us to respect tradition while risking innovation. The main course of this talk called us move out of dualism as we balance tensions between goods such as justice and mercy. Now we are about to finish our dessert where we were called to move beyond the dualism of "us" and "them." How about some dancing after dinner tonight? I have a small magnet I bought in a market in a poor township while visiting Mercy missions in South Africa. It proclaims, "Hope is the ability to hear the music of the future – faith is the courage to dance to it in the present." Often, hope calls us to a future that is not yet clear to us.

"Hope is the ability to hear the music of the future – faith is the courage to dance to it in the present." Often, hope calls us to a future that is not yet clear to us.

When she responded to the music of the future she heard in prayer, Catherine McAuley did not want to start a religious order. However, the structure of religious life proved to be the best way in 1831 Dublin for Catherine to answer God's call to serve those who are poor, those who are ill, and those who are uneducated, so she founded the Sisters of Mercy. We Sisters of Mercy make a fourth vow of service because of that call to ministry which was at the core of Catherine's call to Mercy. In the midst of ministry, Catherine McAuley instructed the early Sisters of Mercy that it is critical to stay focused on God who is the Center, just as it is important for us as canonists to keep our focus on the salus animarum (Canon §1752). Catherine's exact words are, "We have one solid comfort amidst this little tripping about: our hearts can always be in the same place, centered in God -- for whom alone we go forward -- or stay back."[5]

As we prayerfully seek the music of hope for the future unfolding in our lives, our world and our Church, we are called to dance to that music right now in faith. Catherine McAuley liked to dance which probably led to her words describing our daily lives as "tripping about." As a musician as well as a canonist, I hear the divine music of the future calling us, together, more deeply into the center of the pie of truth. I pray that the Divine Lawgiver will grace each of us with enough humility that we will have the courage to step into the insights of each other so that, together, we will create a balance of justice and mercy in our ministries, so that we will behold more of God who is in our midst. Like the two hands of my little statue of Moses balancing innovation and tradition, Catherine McAuley calls her followers to let our focus on God help us know when to go forward and when to stay back. As canonists, we also are called to balance innovation and tradition as we move forward together, not dividing ourselves into us and them.

As we leave this dinner, dancing into a future of hope: "We have one solid comfort amidst this little tripping about: our hearts can always be in the same place, centered in God -- for whom alone we go forward -- or stay back." Thank you. ◆

Endnotes

[1] Bookmark created by graphic design artist Gert Stefanko, Associate of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, South Central Community: gstefanko@aol.com

[2] Lawrence Wrenn, *Reflections on the History of Procedural Law* (Smashwords Edition, 2017) See Article 6, "In Search of a Balanced Procedural law in Marriage Nullity Cases," previously published *The Jurist* 46 (1986), pp. 602-623 and Lawrence G. Wrenn, *Proceedings* 1987 Canon Law Society of America, Appendix One, pp. 86-101.

[3] Archdiocese of Cincinnati, *The Catholic Telegraph* (February 2016) "Justice and Mercy Meet in Tribunal Ministry" p. 43; also included in my "Pope Francis and Changes in the Tribunal Process: A Canonist's Perspective," The *MAST Journal* (Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology) Vol. 23, No. 3 (2016), pp. 40-44.

[4] "Balancing Rights: Role of the Promoter of Justice" in *Towards Future Developments in Penal Law: U.S. Theory and Practice*, ed. Patricia M. Dugan (Wilson and LaFleur, Gratianus series, 2010).

[5] Mary C. Sullivan, ed., *The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley, 1818-1841* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004): 332.

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. This work is meant to serve women, the Church, and the Institute.

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 next Annual Meeting at **Mercy Heritage Center, Belmont, NC, June 27-30, 2019**. 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 of the Americas by providing a forum for ongoing theological education.

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

Dues can be paid by check, payable to MAST and sent to association Treasurer, Marilyn King, R.S.M., 220 Laura Lane, Lebanon, KY, 40033-8155. E-mail mheleneking@windstream.net.

Since 1991, The MAST Journal has been published three times a year. Members of the organization serve on the journal's editorial board on a rotating basis, and several members have, over the years, taken on responsibility 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.

Commencement—Gwynedd Mercy University, Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania, May 12, 2018

Patricia Talone, R.S.M.

Chair of the board, Nancy Dunleavy, board members, President Deanne D'Emilio, Dean Emeritus Andrea Hollingsworth, Tender Courage Award Recipient Christine Eberle, Student Speaker, Lisa Brown, Executive Council members, my fellow Sisters of Mercy, Faculty, Staff, Alumnae and Alumni and, most of all, esteemed graduates. Thank you for the honor to address you on this wonderful occasion. Preparing for this talk provided me the opportunity to reflect upon my own Gwynedd education and its immeasurable influence on my life. If there is one thing I have learned since my youth it is this: the most important thing in life is not **what you do**, but the **kind of person** you become.

Fiftieth Anniversary

When President D'Emilio invited me to speak with you, she did not know that it is the fiftieth anniversary of my Gwynedd graduation. Nineteen Sixty-Eight was a tumultuous time, not unlike the one in which we all now live. The summer after my graduation our country experienced riots, demonstrations and protests over both civil rights and the Vietnam War. But, like today, there was also a spirit of hope because a new generation of Americans were stepping forward to exert their civil authority and responsibility.

But, like today, there was also a spirit of hope because a new generation of Americans were stepping forward to exert their civil authority and responsibility.

When I graduated, if someone had told me that I would spend the bulk of my professional life as a health-care ethicist, I would have looked at them as if they had two heads. In the late sixties my professional field did not even exist as such. And, if there were glimmers of a field-to-come (and there were), believe me, they were not populated by women. The field of health-care ethics grew as our medical system became more expert and complex. We became better at saving lives. Scientists developed more effective medicines and superior machines designed to prolong life and to improve life's quality. We quickly moved into an attitude of what philosopher Daniel Callahan calls "technological monism." It didn't take long for people to ask questions like, "Just because we can prolong life, ought we to do so?" "What kind of life are we prolonging for this person?" and "At what cost to the patient (and family) are we putting off the inevitability of death?"

Questions like these were just beginning to be posed by physicians, nurses, scientists and academics when I was an undergraduate. For the most part, lectures addressing these queries were limited to students in nursing or pre-med departments, as if the ordinary adult woman or man never faced such doubts in their own lives. From my own family experience, I knew that was just not true. So, I began, informally and driven by curiosity, to do what a college graduate is educated to do. I read, questioned, consulted experts and then read some more. I believe that my undergraduate education on this campus prepared me to seek out answers to complex challenges and questions.

Newman

During my first semester as a Gwynedd, I read an assigned essay entitled "The Idea of a University," by John Henry Cardinal Newman.

The essay has been a guide in my professional and personal life ever since. It is a document to which I have returned when I taught undergrads, graduate students, residents and interns. A nineteenth-century Oxford professor, poet, classics scholar and theologian, Newman was a profoundly erudite man. The essay that so influenced me was written in 1854 after the one-time Oxford Don had founded the University College Dublin. There he welcomed the poor of Ireland--Catholics who came from the industrial or agricultural class, who, up to that time, had been excluded from higher learning. Newman sought to instill in his University students an "enlargement of mind, intellectual and social, of an ardent love of the particular study (that they undertook) and a noble devotion to its interests." He demanded intellectual rigor of the University's students, whose alumni include authors James Joyce and Roddy Doyle, six former prime ministers and most of the justices of the Supreme Court of Ireland, as well as noted dramatists and directors of the famed Irish stage and screen. Newman cautioned students at the University, "You have come, not merely to be taught, but to learn. You have come to exert your minds. You have come to make what you hear your own, by putting out your hand, as it were to grasp and appropriate it."

"You have come, not merely to be taught, but to learn. You have come to exert your minds. You have come to make what you hear your own, by putting out your hand, as it were to grasp and appropriate it."

Now you might well say, "That was in 1854. What does it have to do with our own fast-paced information age?" As you well know, our world and our country are embroiled in unprecedented unrest. What can an ivory-tower nineteenth century scholar tell us about how to live and thrive? Newman taught at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution when success was measured by capital and production was key to capital. In today's information age, capital is still considered a standard of success but the key to achieving success is knowledge. I'm not talking about "Thank God I will never take another test kind of knowledge." Rather, I am talking about **critical thinking**. Albert Einstein once said, "Education is not about the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think." As the world shifts and as you may move into different and new jobs or professions, it is **who you are** as a thinking individual that will bring you confidence in the face of change.

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze the data before you, to measure it against past learning and experience and to develop an informed opinion or conviction about the best way to use that knowledge. It ultimately propels you to become a **lifelong learner.** Furthermore, grounding education in the liberal arts provides one with the nimbleness needed to connect current scientific, economic and political developments to the bedrock disciplines of history, literature and the arts. That intellectual agility, well-applied, affords the lifelong learner creativity to address ever-changing challenges. None of your fields of study is isolated. As with ethics, you need to be interested and conversant in many areas. They are all intimately connected.

Like Newman's students in Dublin, many of you are among the first in your families to attain a college degree. Now that you hold that diploma and join the ranks of almost 40% of Americans with at least an Associate degree, you are deemed a **professional**. In Newman's day, the term professional was limited to very specific fields – medicine, law, theology and military service. Today we hear of professional (although not

always educated) musicians, sports stars, cooks and trash collectors. I use "trash collectors" not as a disrespectful or throw-away term. Today's trash collector has the potential to contribute to saving and reusing the resources of our planet. Similarly, today's cook helps us to consider how what we eat contributes to a better society and a healthier world.

Because you are a professional, society and your employers have the right to expect that you possess expert knowledge in your field, that you will produce high quality work, that you will practice in an ethical manner and demonstrate behavior and altruism worthy of your field. Don't expect a gold star if you do all these things. This is what you owe society as a matter of justice because you receive fair remuneration and because your work contributes to the aggregate reputation and merit of your discipline and the broader community you serve.

Mercy Values

Because it has been quite a few years since I taught undergrads, I asked President D'Emilio if I might interview some graduates. I had questions I wanted to ask. And each of my interviewees were eloquent and well able to answer my queries. I found committed, professional critical-thinkers. Each one hopes to continue formal education beyond a bachelor's degree. Speaking to them thrilled my professorial heart.

Even more than their professional aspirations though, what I heard in myriads of ways was a personal commitment to live Gwynedd Mercy's core values of:

- Integrity in word and deed
- Respect for the dignity of each person
- Service to society, and
- Social justice in a diverse world

Catherine McAuley, the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, and by extension, inspiration for this university, was a contemporary of John Henry Newman. She brought her considerable talent, energy and fortune to bear to assuage the needs of the poor of her day. Her spirit compels us to welcome the stranger, heal the sick, teach the uneducated, comfort the dying, clothe the naked and feed the hungry.

The challenges you face today are every bit as acute as the ones that Catherine McAuley faced in the 19th century. Despite low unemployment and a fairly stable economy, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, over 40 million people live below the poverty level in this, the richest country in the world. And, the rate of poverty for children is even greater than that of adults; it stands at 44%. This reality alone directly impacts many of the professions in which you serve-- education, health care and business. If the next generation of the American workforce struggles for essentials of daily living, how can we expect to be leaders in a technologized world? Catherine McAuley's love of God and of the poor drove her to address the needs of **her** time. It is your turn to do the same. Ghandi once said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

Catherine McAuley's love of God and of the poor drove her to address the needs of her time. It is your turn to do the same.

Conclusion

As I listened to my small sampling of graduates, I was more convinced than ever that the most important thing in life is not what you **do**, but who you **are.** Your education here at Gwynedd, providing what my student interlocutors described as a strong community, with support and encouragement from faculty, and with respect for each individual--this prepares you to drive the change needed in today's society.

John Henry Newman cut to the core of faith,

community, and personal calling in a prayer that has guided me over many years. With profound confidence he declared, "God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do his work."

As I discovered, you will find that WHAT you do will change and adapt to the needs of your times. Be assured, great things will be demanded of you. **who** you are, **the kind of person you are**, how you develop as a thinking and feeling human being, will be the core of your life's meaning and inform the legacy you give to the future. ◆

Commencement Address, College of St. Mary, Omaha, Nebraska, May 20, 2018

Marilyn Lacey, R.S.M.

Thank you for that lovely introduction. It reminds of the most unique introduction I ever received. It was in a remote village in South Sudan, a war zone in Africa where the organization I work with had set up literacy classes for women. When I visited the village to see how the program was coming along, about 30 women had gathered in a circle beneath a shade tree to greet me. The group leader -- a tall, very beautiful woman -- stood up to give the welcome speech. She was speaking Dinka. I had no idea what she was saying, except that now and then I heard my name: "Blah blah blah, Sister Marilyn, blah blah blah." Each time my name was mentioned, the women clapped politely. Except for the last time, when they all stood and erupted into applause and started dancing and singing. So, I turned to the interpreter sitting next to me: "What did she just say about me?" "Oh, she thanked you for this literacy class and said that you, Sister Marilyn, are truly a fat cow."

A fat cow? I've been called many things, but that was a first! Believe it or not, fat cow is the highest compliment you can give to anyone in South Sudan, because cows bring prosperity. In South Sudan, parents name their children after cows. In South Sudan, all the love songs are about cows.

So, this morning, I thank you, President Stevens, your Board of Trustees, faculty and staff, your honored guests, friends and family members, and of course: you who are graduating, the Class of 2018, for inviting me here. This fat cow is honored to be with you.

I was invited here not to give a completion address, but a commencement address. We focus not on the past but on the present and the future. Of course, we salute what you have accomplished: a college degree. That's awesome. Certainly, cause for celebration. But I'm here because today is commencement: Beginning! Something new! The prophet Isaiah, speaking for God, says: "Behold, I am doing something NEW. Right now, it's springing up, Can't you see it?" (Isaiah 43:19)

What FOR YOU is starting today? What, FOR YOU, is COMMENCING? Look no farther than the marvelous statue here on campus of the WOMAN STRIDING AHEAD. Picture it in your mind. What a powerful image. What an inspiration!

I see three strong messages conveyed by that image:

First: Let that statue remind you that you are a woman.

It's both a dangerous thing and a glorious thing to be a woman in 2018.

It's both a dangerous thing and a glorious thing to be a woman in 2018. We are painfully aware of inequality, subjugation, sexual violence, and the #Me Too Movement. We recognize the burdens borne by single mothers, by those who are abused or trafficked, by millions of migrants, displaced persons, and refugees –the vast majority of whom are female, all around the world.

I work in refugee camps in East Africa with women who have lost everything. These women have never been to school, because their culture didn't allow it. These women were told from infancy that they are worthless; quite literally, worth less than cows. They are slaves to their brothers until, at puberty, they are married to an old man not of their choosing and become his slave. These girls have no rights. Life is both difficult and dangerous for them, made even worse

by a raging civil war where rape is the unquestioned and unpunished privilege of armed men. If you were to visit a refugee camp there and explain the # Me Too movement, EVERY woman would raise her hand.

I also work in the mountains of rural Haiti, with women who are desperately poor, trying to eke out a living from tiny gardens on steep hillsides where deforestation has caused topsoil to erode and crop yields to plummet. Everything is an uphill struggle for these women.

Yet there is a proverb in Haiti, *Mete Fanm Sou W*, which translates literally as **"Put your woman on!"** When facing problems, Haitians never say, "Man up!" No, they say: Put your *woman* on! Deal with it like a *woman*. Hold up the house like a *woman*. Be strong like a *woman*. Be courageous like a *woman*. Be inclusive like a *woman*. Be compassionate like a *woman*.

As Cesar Chavez said, "Those who are educated can never be uneducated." No one can take that precious gift from you.

You hear that proverb often in Haiti, because life there is indeed hard. The proverb reminds women to be their best selves – but it also reminds men that being strong is more about heart than muscle. So, I invite you graduates today: *Put your woman on!*

Second: Let that statue remind you that you are not just any woman. You are a woman who is highly educated!

It may be difficult to be a woman today. But it's also a glorious thing to be a woman today. Especially an educated woman. As Cesar Chavez said, "Those who are educated can never be uneducated." No one can take that precious gift from you.

What percent of the world's population, do you suppose, holds a college degree? 33%? 25%? No, far from it. A study from Harvard several years ago determined that fewer than 7% of the world's population have an undergraduate degree. I couldn't find any statistics on how that 7% splits by gender; but let's be generous and suppose it's an even split. That means just 3.5% of women in the world have an undergraduate degree. That means you are now, educationally, in the top 3.5% of women in the whole world. That's a big deal. And some of you are getting a master's degree, Wow.

A Persian proverb says, "When you see someone who has done something great, compliment her parents." All of you parents who were able to be here today: Congratulations! Let's hear it for our parents!

And now, you graduates. When the cheering dies down and you've hung your diploma proudly on your wall at home, I hope you will also be aware that your degree isn't just academic. It's not just about the knowledge and skills you've learned over these college years. You've grown. You've changed. You have new friends for life. You have power. You have voice. You have agency. You have choice. How will you use it all? Where will you make your mark? My hope is that you will use it all for good, that you will use it to spread mercy and justice in our world, and especially that you will use it to mentor and encourage younger women coming up behind you. Yes, let that statue remind you that you are in the top echelon of educated women in the world.

Third: Let that statue remind you that you are striding ahead.

There's such energy conveyed by that statue. Like her, you are not standing still. Not resting on your laurels. You won't be putting your feet up and gazing at your diploma all day—well, okay, maybe you will do that for a day or two. But very soon you'll be striding, moving out into our troubled world. Confident in who you are now. Bringing your unique gifts into the world. Your education, like your faith, must be a c*atapult*, not a

cocoon. The German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, described it this way: "We are held close, and then lavishly flung forth!"

You've been held close in this college community. Supported by fellow students and caring faculty and friends and family. Now it's time to be flung forth! Rilke says again:

> Whoever you are: some evening
> take a step out of your house which you know
> so well.
>
> Enormous space is near.

Enormous space is near. Expansiveness. Adventures. But also, plenty of challenges. What will give you the strength and the groundedness to not lose your way?

Allow me to share a story about a friend of mine. She is also a Mercy Sister. Very bright. Highly educated. She worked for many years at the United Nations advocating for migrants and for women. She's competent in so many things, but one thing she absolutely hates is housework. Are you with me on this? Right, so one summer she was assigned to work at a retreat center that had a large, carpeted conference room, big enough to hold several hundred people. Her job was to vacuum it on Saturday. She procrastinated as long as she could, and finally got out the vacuum cleaner, put on some headphones so she could listen to music, and started vacuuming. Up and down, up and down the huge room, sort of half-dancing to the music. After ten minutes or so, another sister walked in and tapped her on the shoulder. My friend took off her headphones. "What?" The other sister said, "Your vacuum cleaner. It's not plugged in." My advice to you as you stride forth from the College of St. Mary: *Stay plugged in*.

When you are plugged in, you can strive forward while at the same time being attentive to the present moment.

When life lures you out of your cocoon or flings you out of your comfort zone, stay plugged in! Stay plugged in to the deep life-force that grounds us in love and unites us with others. No matter what name you give this life-force: The Holy One, Creator, God of Compassion, Yahweh, Allah, Abba. Stay plugged in! Today is the great feast of Pentecost, when Jesus' closest disciples huddled in an upper room, praying for guidance to figure out "what's next"? God's Spirit inexplicably filled their hearts, turning them into fearless advocates, eager to share Good News with the world.

When you are plugged in, you can strive forward while at the same time being attentive to the present moment. After all, the present moment is the only place you can encounter the Holy.

If you're not plugged in, your work might be productive, but it won't be fruitful. You won't connect well with others. Over time, you will likely burn out. Joy will disappear.

One of the most joyful people I've ever met is the Dalai Lama. I was fortunate to spend a whole day with him in California, among a group of people he was honoring as "unsung heroes of compassion." During the event he put a blessing cloth around my neck and embraced me. We exchanged greetings, and I was struck by how simple and happy and attentive he is. It was a great day for me. I have devoted my life to working with refugees, and the Dalai Lama is the world's most famous refugee. I was really excited.

Anyway, the next morning I got up as usual, prayed and then picked up the San Jose Mercury News to read during breakfast. Much to my surprise, on the front page was a picture of me being hugged by the Dalai Lama (in color, no less). Very cool. My first thought was, *My*

mother's going to love this! So, I am heading to work, and I stop to get gas for my car. I finish and start driving off, and I hear this awful metallic screeching noise. This is the sound you never want to hear when leaving a gas station. I had forgotten to take the hose out of the gas tank – why? Because I was not living in the present moment. I was lost in the fog of my 15 minutes of fame. Well, I was horrified. I stopped the car, scrambled out, and was grabbing my purse for my insurance card when I saw this little man come running out of the gas station booth. He's running toward me, he's not looking happy, and he's shouting, "What in the world are you doing?" Then suddenly he stops, bows deeply toward me and says "Oh! It's YOU!"

Turns out this man was from Tibet, home of the Dalai Lama. He was reading the Mercury News and recognized me from the photo. Can you believe it? But me, I am embarrassed at the puddles of gas everywhere and wanting to pay for the damage. "No," he says, "It is a great honor that you come to my place of work." I again offer to pay for his trouble. He refuses again but asks, "May I touch you?"

Then I understood. Tibetans believe that the Dalai Lama is the incarnation of the divine. This man knew from the photo that I had touched the Dalai Lama. He believed that if he could touch me, through me he could touch the Divine. Isn't that profound? This man taught me so much. He was truly plugged in. He was working hard but he was attentive to the present moment. Ready to meet the Holy One, even in the likes of me, an old lady wrecking his day. What a grace!

When you are plugged in, your presence can be gentle in a powerful way. You can be unafraid because the hand that flings you forth at the same time always holds you close. God is doing something new in you. Can't you see it? You can choose to cross borders, choose to bring a woman's insight, a woman's healing touch, a woman's willingness to reconcile, a woman's cherishing of relationships, a woman's awareness that leadership is for service not domination.

Stay plugged in to that Holy Spirit. Choose what is life-giving. Refuse what is death-dealing. Go deep. Go beneath whatever divides or exploits. Reject narrow, fundamentalist paths that separate or punish. Embrace inclusion, connectedness, wholeness. Pursue what brings LIFE into this world. Not just for your own happiness, but robust LIFE for all.

Remember how Jesus described his own mission: "I came that you might have LIFE and have it fully" (Jn. 10:10). Be that **woman**; be that **educated woman**, be that **walking woman**, plugged in and striding ahead, full of confidence and contagious joy.

To sum up what we learn from your statue:

1. You're a *woman*. That's saying a lot. So, PUT YOUR WOMAN ON!

2. You're an *educated* woman. That's saying even more. You belong to the highest echelon of women in the world. You have a college degree. Put that great gift of education to work. Couple it with mercy and justice. Make miracles happen!

3. You're a woman STRIDING AHEAD YET ALWAYS PLUGGED IN. So long as you stay plugged in, you can both move forward and stay centered in the present moment. Allow yourself to be flung into the unknown, confident that you have gifts the world needs.

We are so proud of you. You are commencing! This is your moment, this is your life: Go for it, with our heartfelt encouragement! I have only one request: invite me to your 10th reunion, please. I want to hear about all your adventures. Thank you and God bless you. ◆

2018 Lifetime Achievement Award Presented at Catholic Health Assembly, San Diego, California, June 11, 2018

Phyllis Hughes, R.S.M.

(Adapted from an article by Nancy Frazier O'Brien of Catholic Health Association)

Commendation

Sister Phyllis Hughes was recognized for a 51-year career that included leadership positions in healthcare administration, Sisters of Mercy Burlingame, Mercy Housing and Catholic Relief Services, as well as service on 28 Catholic Healthcare Boards of Directors, chairing the boards of both Catholic Health Association (CHA) and Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI). Additionally, she served the marginalized during several mission trips to developing countries. Even today, she continues to contribute through her membership on a number of boards and committees.

As president and chief executive of Mercy Hospital in Bakersfield, Calif., in the 1980s, she started an outreach program that dug deep to determine the community needs of those in poorer neighborhoods. Surprisingly, the biggest need identified in one neighborhood was for a basketball team that would keep young people engaged. Sr. Phyllis went to her board, got funding for the team and found a volunteer coach. Next, she secured funding for a dental clinic for people unable to afford private dental care. After she left Mercy Hospital, the hospital created the Sister Phyllis Hughes Grant Program, to provide funds to Kern County nonprofits that meet identified community needs. It continues to this day.

Throughout her career Sr. Hughes has served on 28 Catholic health care boards of directors and countless other sponsorship councils, task forces, councils and committees.

Sr. Phyllis left Mercy Bakersfield in 1987 and spent a sabbatical year that included three months visiting hospitals and clinics in Thailand, India, Nepal, Kenya and South Africa. She took a post in 1988 as vice president of what was then Catholic Healthcare West in San Francisco, later to be called Dignity Health. Five years into that job she got the call to serve as president of the Burlingame Regional Community of the Sisters of Mercy based in Burlingame, California.

The next place she was needed was at Mercy Housing's national headquarters in Denver, where she served from 1997 to 2000 as vice president in charge of Healthy Community Initiatives. Her role was to bring major Catholic health systems into local community efforts to increase affordable housing.

During a leave from Mercy Housing Sr. Phyllis completed work at University of California at Berkeley for a doctorate in international public health, including six weeks of research in Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan. She put that experience to good use in her next position as manager of international HIV/AIDS outreach for Baltimore-based Catholic Relief Services, where she worked from 2005 to 2008.

Throughout her career Sr. Hughes has served on 28 Catholic health care boards of directors and countless other sponsorship councils, task forces, councils and committees. She's chaired the boards of CHA and CHI. Even now, in her 70s, she's on

"five boards and six committees -- or is it six boards and five committees? I can never remember," she says with a laugh.

Remarks of Sister Phyllis Hughes, R.S.M.

May I take a few minutes to address those of you in this room that are younger than I am. That would be just about everybody.

My first ministry in a Catholic hospital was a very long time ago. It was before Xerox and computers. ICU's had just barely come in. There were no CT scanners or MRI's. Normal OB stays were down from ten days to five. The administrator of the hospital (there were no CEO's then) spent every Thursday evening hand-signing 1000 payroll checks and five women known as telephone operators connected calls using phone jacks on a switchboard.

Obviously there has been a lot of change and we are on the edge of even more mind-boggling shifts as we try to transform health care and deal with the challenges of genetics, artificial intelligence, cyberspace, 3-D printing, and robotics. Health-care now extends to web-based medicine and changing reimbursement patterns. How will we confront the opioid and obesity crises? One of the bigger, over-arching issues is the question of what needs to be in a hospital and what doesn't need to be.

What will happen if our society finally figures out that some form of universal coverage is how we want to live? Will that mean that there is no longer a mission for Catholic health care regarding those who are poor and those who are vulnerable?

I would argue that it would be a great win if coverage happened, but that there will still be a need for the mission of bringing God's healing love and compassion to all whom we serve. It will look different, and we will be challenged, but I encourage you to hold fast to that inspiration and that history.

I feel I've had the opportunity to see a lot of the changes in healthcare from a front row seat, sometimes with great angst because you didn't know what was the right thing to do, but I really think we are learning as we go. My advice to someone in the next generation is "keep the faith"! Really, really think about, pray about, and work toward a deeper understanding of mission. The mission of Catholic health care is even more critical now than it has ever been.

My advice to someone in the next generation is "keep the faith"! Really, really think about, pray about, and work toward a deeper understanding of mission.

I would not be here tonight if it weren't for the support and nurturing of my family, friends, the Sisters of Mercy and many colleagues and co-workers over these years, especially those from Dignity Health, Catholic Health Initiatives and Providence St. Joseph Health.

I thank all of you and finally I thank the Board and staff of Catholic Health Association for this award and for the steadfast support you have been to me and to so many others over the years. Keep the faith! God bless you all. ◆

Awarding Honorary Doctorates to U.S. Founding Sisters of Mercy, Carlow University, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, August 30, 2018

Patricia McDermott, R.S.M.

On behalf of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, I am very grateful to accept these honorary degrees for Sisters Josephine Cullen, Veronica McDarby, Agatha O'Brien, Philomena Reid, Aloysia Strange, Elizabeth Strange and Frances Xavier Warde, whose statement is often quoted among Sisters of Mercy: "It's a glorious thing to be a Sister of Mercy."

Certainly, the Sisters of Mercy who claim Pittsburgh as their home and have deep respect and love for Carlow University are very appreciative of this honor given to their founding sisters on the occasion of our celebrating 175 years of Mercy presence in the United States. "It's truly a glorious moment for them to be a Sister of Mercy today."

Over the past weeks, I have mused what it must have been like to leave Carlow, Ireland in early November 1843 and make a way to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on December 21, 1843. Six weeks of treacherous travel, nursing the sick on the boat across turbulent waters and all done in a spirit of adventure, yes…deep faith, definitely…but I can only imagine the uncertainty and sense of loss of leaving family, friends, and country behind.

These seven women came to this country as immigrants and they immediately accompanied other new immigrants, mainly Irish at that time, to make a new home in a strange land. The "tools" that would assist them in making a new home were the gospel of Jesus Christ and their charism or gift of mercy that they wanted to spread and make available for those in need.

Who were these seven women? Very simply, they were women in love with a God who asked them to leave all and be in service to others. Of course, each had her own specific gifts and quirks, but they were bonded in their commitment to extend themselves to those who were poor, uneducated and sick.

Who were these seven women? Very simply, they were women in love with a God who asked them to leave all and be in service to others.

Frances Warde, the leader, is a giant in Mercy life, a founder, an organizer, and a "take charge" type of personality who embraced a pioneer spirit. She was a dynamic personality who could engender confidence in others and get the task done and be off to the next adventure.

Josephine Cullen was a gracious and kind woman, became an able administrator for Mercy Hospital in its early days and succeeded Frances as leader in Pittsburgh when Frances went off to New Hampshire for her next response in Mercy. Josephine's legacy of mercy was most felt by those who were sick and poor.

Veronica McDarby did not volunteer in Carlow, Ireland to be one of the original seven to come to Pittsburgh. However, she was asked to join the group and she reluctantly said yes. Having arrived in Pittsburgh, she identified deeply with those who feel powerless and tended them graciously. She was a woman of deep consoling love.

Agatha O'Brien came to Pittsburgh as a woman still in the process of becoming a Sister of Mercy. She professed her final vows in Pittsburgh and after a short stay of three years was recognized for her leadership and became the first superior in Chicago.

A funny story is told about Philomena Reid who, having been in Pittsburgh nearly a week, awakens on the evening of December 31 thinking she is hearing gunfire, only to discover our New

Year's Eve tradition of fireworks. After a very short career of teaching, utterly exhausted, likely by the transition and change of climate, she died at the age of 25.

Aloysia Strange also faced health challenges in coming to this new country, as did so many new immigrants. She was instrumental in opening an academy and died in 1847, having served the people of Pittsburgh for less than four years.

Elizabeth Strange is remembered as a sensitive, well-educated woman with a very warm personality. She was instrumental in growing the Pittsburgh community of Sisters of Mercy. After some years, she returned to Dublin, and brought back several young girls as new recruits.

Each of these seven women had her own gifts, deep commitment to those who are poor and in need and together they created an energy, a well- spring of Mercy in this community. We gather today, whether we know it or not, as the benefactors of their faith, goodness, careful planning and courage. They are our ancestors in Mercy; they were the face of mercy and compassion to a fast-growing city in the nineteenth century.

Certainly, today is a wonderful historical moment and we as Sisters of Mercy stand proud in our history. We also, though, stand humble and grateful for the countless women and men of Mercy demeanor, commitment and values who have contributed and continue to contribute to this Mercy University.

As first-year students, beginners in a life of knowing Carlow, you will be invited into this lineage of mercy because, whether you know it or not, you are also full of Mercy. Each of us in this room comes blessed and rich with the gifts of mercy. This institution, with its leaders, faculty and staff, will invite you to join in making that mercy real – for one another and for our world.

We celebrate today that after 175 years of Mercy presence in Pittsburgh and the United States, we stand ready to continue that embodiment of mercy life for this campus and for our world.

We celebrate today that after 175 years of Mercy presence in Pittsburgh and the United States, we stand ready to continue that embodiment of mercy life for this campus and for our world. You will quickly find that this campus will become an open door to the needs of one another and the needs of our world. Look for that door where Mercy is needed, walk across the threshold, and through that door of need. Make your mercy-full presence real.

On those days, when you feel less able to meet the challenges of being Mercy for one another and for our world, lean into the ever present and life-giving spirit of Josephine, Veronica, Agatha, Philomena, Aloysia, Elizabeth and Frances. They will continue to teach and encourage and lead you forward into a vibrant mercy expression of living and loving. ◆

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility Legacy Award, Riverside Church, New York City, New York, October 2, 2018

Susan Vickers, R.S.M.

Commendation by Susan Makos

When one thinks of Sr. Susan Vickers, many qualities come immediately to mind:

- Wisdom
- Grace
- Tenacity
- Clarity of mission and purpose
- Passionate advocate for the greater good for all

In her more than 30 years of ministry in roles with Dignity Health, she championed advocacy to promote a more just and sustainable world for all to thrive, by advocating on issues including access to health care, a clean and healthy environment, access to safe water, and protection of women and children from trafficking. The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility database lists nearly 1000 engagements in her years engaging companies. In addition to advocating for public policies and with companies to promote a healthy world, Susan also led Dignity Health to be the nation's first health system to recognize and act on the critical linkages between the health of the person, community and the planet. With Susan's urging and guidance, Dignity Health was one of the first health systems to issue a sustainability report, as Susan asked of companies she engaged. Simply said, Susan "walked the walk" and led by example. She also was an early champion of community investing, recognizing that investing in communities led to healthier communities. Four of her colleagues from Dignity Health are here today and join in celebrating with her.

ICCR has also been blessed with her leadership on teams for issue areas, membership on the ICCR committees and board, and serving as Board Chair and Vice Chair at important moments in ICCR's development. For many of us in this room, Susan was our mentor on not only corporate social responsibility but also how to work in coalition. Susan continues this legacy of leadership as she now chairs the board of her own religious community's Mercy Investment Services. As some have described a Sister of Mercy, Susan walks a "mystical path with practical feet." We at Mercy Investment Services are grateful for her support, leadership and guidance of our work.

Please join me in congratulating Sr. Susan Vickers on receiving the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility Legacy Award.

Within the ICCR community I always feel as if I am standing on the shoulders of giants.

Remarks of Susan Vickers, R.S.M.

Thank you, Susan, for that gracious presentation and thanks to the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility board of directors, members and staff! You have touched my heart. I am honored and humbled to receive the Legacy Award. And what a joy it is to have colleagues from Dignity Health celebrating this occasion with me. Give a wave so everyone knows who you are.

Within the ICCR community I always feel as if I am standing on the shoulders of giants.

I remember well those early days in the last century when Tim Smith, then ICCR's Executive Director, traveled to San Francisco to acquaint me

with the issues and the organization and facilitate our participation from the west coast. And shortly after came Barbara Aires' invitation (or was it an ultimatum) to trade a long-distance relationship for in-person engagement. And I'm grateful to staff, including Val, David, and Donna Katzin who mentored me through those first corporate meetings and annual general meetings of shareholders.

There have been fruitful partnerships with then-fledgling organizations like Citizens for a Better Environment, CERES, and Health Care Without Harm.

Milestones for me include Bank of America's commitment to set goals and dedicate resources for lending in low-moderate census tracks nationwide, General Electric's pledge to assess, report and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in operations and business centers worldwide and Knight-Ridder's agreement to develop and implement ethical criteria for accepting cigarette advertising. Of course, not all corporate engagement results in win-win outcomes. Foremost in my memory is a resolution on board diversity at an unnamed Silicon Valley company whose CEO proclaimed unabashedly that there was not a woman or person of color in the country qualified to sit on his board.

I have no doubt that together we have made a difference calling on the world's most powerful companies to address their impacts on the world's most vulnerable communities!

As you know, I retired from Dignity Health exactly one year ago today. I hope you also know how I treasure the many years of collaboration with you on the most pressing issues confronting our society and our planet. I have no doubt that together we have made a difference calling on the world's most powerful companies to address their impacts on the world's most vulnerable communities! Carry on with integrity and with passion! ◆

Discussion Questions

(Burns) *The most important task as human beings…is living in the present.*

What wisdom have you found for your personal life in holding to this truth? What have been the hardest things you had to let go of? What could you keep from what you let go of?

(Clough) *Jesus was a master teacher, one whose words and actions have endured for centuries.*

What examples of Jesus as teacher match your own experience of success, resistance, and endurance?

(Connelly) *They can teach us all "the truth" of how to accept mystery in our lives, and live meaningful and happy lives, and let God be God and not the god of false expectations.*

How is family life, a classroom, a church, or a public institution challenged and changed by the presence of special needs children or developmentally disabled adults?

(Cunningham) *As a result, this institution is neither owned nor operated by the Catholic Church or the Sisters of Mercy, but the religious tradition, values and caring spirit are being maintained.*

What are your observations on the present culture of schools, hospitals, and social organizations which the Sisters of Mercy founded, but the Sisters are no longer physically present?

(Farley) *Think of the challenges in our cities, in our religious and secular institutions; the challenges from relentless wars, from diseases that threaten us all, from prejudices and oppressions of all kinds. Think, too, of the pain in broken hearts and the challenges of fragile interpersonal relationships.*

Where do you dedicate your own "mending of the world"? Where do you get push-back? Where reception?

(Hughes) *What will happen if our society finally figures out that some form of universal coverage is how we want to live? Will that mean that there is no longer a mission for Catholic health care regarding those who are poor and those who are vulnerable? I would argue that it would be a great win if coverage happened, but that there will still be a need for the mission of bringing God's healing love and compassion to all whom we serve. It will look different, and we will be challenged, but I encourage you to hold fast to that inspiration and that history.*

If everyone in the USA had universal healthcare coverage, like some countries in Europe, what healthcare-related needs would still not be met?

(Lacey) *It's both a dangerous thing and a glorious thing to be a woman in 2018. We are painfully aware of inequality, subjugation, sexual violence, and the #Me Too Movement. We recognize the burdens borne by single mothers, by those who are abused or trafficked, by millions of migrants, displaced persons, and refugees –the vast majority of whom are female, all around the world.*

Conscious of women's special needs and vulnerabilities, Catherine McAuley housed, educated and visited them. Have the needs and vulnerabilities of women changed 200 years later?

(McDermott) *I can only imagine the uncertainty and sense of loss of leaving family, friends, and country behind.*

What do you imagine are the gifts of character and spirituality that have made leave-takings like this possible for countless Sisters of Mercy who have been missionaries from their homeland to another country?

(Rosenblatt) *What I mean by voice is that place of connectedness and beauty that arises from who you really are as a woman, a voice that is emotionally convincing because it has roots in your joy and grief, in the wisdom learned from suffering and given as spiritual gift. This is the voice in which you may express your thoughts in your primary language…in human experience, deeper than any role you have assumed, the context for your professional academic training, flowing beneath and around the rules of Mercy-speak.*

How do you know when someone is speaking in their own voice and "being themselves"? How do they look, how do they sound? What feeling do you get from them?

(Sullivan) *When you receive your degree today, Catherine McAuley's inheritance will be bequeathed to you in a new and precious form. Your academic degree is a priceless inheritance of knowledge, understanding, and skills—a legacy much more valuable than $1,000,000…. Please do not think you are too young, or too old, or too poor, or too weak to create some new and lasting contribution to the common good of our sisters and brothers in this world.*

If you inherited a self-renewing fund worth a million dollars, what would you do with it?

(Talone) *The most important thing in life is not what you do, but who you are.*

As an educator, what qualities of personal development have you tried to foster? As someone educated, what did your teachers inculcate in you that you value the most? As a colleague in healthcare or social services, what qualities have you tried to promote as the most significant for the service of the poor, the sick and the ignorant?

(Vickers) *Milestones for me include Bank of America's commitment to set goals and dedicate resources for lending in low-moderate census tracks nationwide, General Electric's pledge to assess, report and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in operations and business centers worldwide and Knight-*

Ridder's agreement to develop and implement ethical criteria for accepting cigarette advertising. Of course, not all corporate engagement results in win-win outcomes.

When you are engaged in what you believe is a good work, and you meet resistance, how do you decide when to continue, when to throw in the towel and when to move on to a different work?

(Vondenberger) *If justice involves only dispensing deserved punishment for wrongdoing and if mercy means only pardoning earned punishment, those virtues would be in conflict. But we who follow Jesus and the Gospel do not make an "either-or" choice here…If we relieve the suffering of a person who is poor with a sandwich from our soup kitchen (mercy) without striving to correct the unjust social systems which caused the hunger (justice), we are neither merciful nor just. Mercy without justice can lead to dependency and entitlement, increasing the power of the giver over the one in need. Justice without mercy can lead to hardened hearts and cold, impersonal treatment of others. Virtue stands in the middle*.

How do you practice mercy without being manipulated, taken advantage of, and sucked dry? How do you practice justice even with an accusation you are hard-hearted, emotionally disconnected, impersonal and unwelcoming?

California State Senate Prayer February 21, 2017

Michelle Gorman, R.S.M., Chaplain to the Senate

According to Vaclav Havel (1936-2011):
Hope is an orientation of the heart;
it transcends the world that is immediately experienced,
and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons….

O God in whom we hope, we ask you to bless our efforts to bring leadership, justice, and ongoing solutions to the challenges of our times.

Give us the strength to accomplish the seemingly impossible with limited time, energy, and resources.

Help us to be especially sensitive to the needs of those on the margins, those who are vulnerable, those who are close to despair.

May all that we do today engender hope in our communities, for as Harvey Milk (1930-1978) once said: "the important thing is not that we can live on hope alone, but that without it, life is not worth living."

And so we continue to hope in your providence. Amen.

Contributors

Helen Marie Burns, R.S.M. (West-Midwest) is an educator, administrator, and facilitator. She holds a Ph.D. from the Univ. of Iowa. Currently she is working part-time with Trinity Health (Livonia, MI) in their Performing Catholic Identity appraisal, and with Trinity Senior Services Management as a consultant for mission integration. She also serves on the Mercy Hospital Board of Directors (Iowa City). St. Joseph Hospital and Health Center (Syracuse), and Carlow University (Pittsburgh). She served until 2014 as Vice-President of Mission Integration at Mount Aloysius College, Cresson, PA. She spent twenty-three years in administrative roles within the Sisters of Mercy, including Vice-President on the Institute Leadership Team.

Joy Clough, R.S.M. (West-Midwest) holds degrees in English and journalism and background in secondary education. She has many publications, including "In Service to Chicago: The History of Mercy Hospital," "First in Chicago: A History of St. Xavier University," "Chicago's Sisters of Mercy," and *Intercessions of Mercy* (ACTA, 2009). She has held leadership positions, including director of public information for the Archdiocese of Chicago, president of the Sisters of Mercy Chicago Regional Community, and Director of Mission and Heritage at Saint Xavier University and chair of the Darst Center board. She commissioned a history by Mary Beth Connolly, *Women of Faith: The Chicago Sisters of Mercy and the Evolution of a Religious Community* (Fordham Univ. Press, 2014).

Rosemary Connelly, R.S.M. (West-Midwest), has been Administrator of Misericordia Heart of Mercy since 1969, one of the nation's leading communities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She holds two M.A.'s-- in sociology from St. Louis Univ. in social work from Loyola Univ., Chicago. She oversees a program that includes 600 children and adult residents, an outreach program serving more than 140 families, 1,100 employees and thousands of volunteers both on and off campus. Misericordia residential options, educational programs, vocational training, therapy and medical services, social and recreational activities, health and fitness, and opportunities for spiritual growth. She has received nine honorary doctorate degrees, and numerous awards and honors.

Georgita Cunningham, R.S.M. (West-Midwest) holds an M.A. in theology from St. Xavier Univ. in Chicago, as well as an M. A. in counseling from Creighton Univ. in Omaha, NE. She has a background in elementary high school teaching in Iowa, Missouri, as well as religious education coordinator in Pocatello, ID. From 1976 to 1994 she served in various positions at Mount Angel Seminary in Oregon—director of pastoral training for seminarians, and assistant to the academic dean. For ten years she held numerous pastoral duties in Salt Lake City and Las Vegas. Her last role was chaplain at Laurelhurst Care Center in Portland, Oregon, where she was the last Sister of Mercy and where she said farewell to the residents and staff.

Margaret Farley, R.S.M. (West-Midwest) is Gilbert L. Stark Professor Emerita of Christian Ethics at Yale Univ. where she taught ethics from 1971 to 2007. She holds an M.A. from Univ. of Detroit and a Ph.D. from Yale. She is past president of both the Catholic Theological Society of America and the Society of Christian Ethics. She is the author of *Personal Commitments: Making, Keeping, Breaking* (1986) and the

controversial *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (2006). She is founder of the All-Africa Conference, bringing together African women religious to respond to the pandemic of HIV/AIDS in Africa. She is the author of over 70 articles and the recipient of 14 honorary doctorates.

Phyllis Hughes, R.S.M. (West-Midwest) holds an M.A. in healthcare administration and a doctorate in public health from Univ. of California at Berkeley. She has had a 51-year career in leadership—as CEO of St. Joseph Hospital (Phoenix, AZ), CEO of Mercy Hospital (Bakersfield, CA), vice-president for Mercy Housing (Denver, CO), President of Sisters of Mercy (Burlingame), director for HIV/AIDS for Catholic Relief Services (Baltimore), and service on 28 healthcare boards, including board president for Catholic Health Association and Catholic Health Initiative. When not traveling for current board work, she lives in a transitional rehabilitative residence for women coming out of prison.

Marilyn Lacey, R.S.M. (West-Midwest) is founder and executive director of Mercy Beyond Borders, a nonprofit working with women and girls in South Sudan, Haiti, Uganda and Kenya to alleviate their extreme poverty. She holds an M.A. in social work from Univ. of California at Berkeley and 3 honorary doctorates. In 2017 she was awarded $1 million from The Opus Prize Foundation in recognition of her faith-filled work with Mercy Beyond Borders. AARP selected Marilyn as a Purpose Prize Fellow along with 14 other nonprofit leaders nationally. Her memoir, *This Flowing Toward Me: A Story of God Arriving in Strangers*, was published by Ave Maria Press (Notre Dame, IN) in 2009.

Patricia McDermott, R.S.M. (West Midwest) Sister Patricia McDermott is the president of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Prior to being elected president in 2011 and again in 2017, she served two terms on the Institute Leadership Team. Prior to this, she served four years on the Omaha team, and then as president of the former regional community of Omaha, NE from 1990-1998. She holds a doctorate in pastoral theology from the Catholic University of America, with a prior teaching career in secondary education in which she taught English, journalism and religious education for 10 years.

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M. (West-Midwest) has an M.A. in comparative literature from Univ. of Southern California, and Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. She taught biblical studies in seminary and university and was an administrator in graduate school. She is presently a California attorney and litigator in family law. She serves on the Consecrated Life committee for the Canon Law Society of America. She is editor of *The MAST Journal*.

Mary C. Sullivan, R.S.M. (NyPaW) holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in English from the Univ. of Notre Dame, and an M.Th. in systematic theology from the Univ. of London. She is presently Emerita professor of Language and Literature at Rochester Institute of Technology as well as dean emerita of its College of Liberal Arts. She is the author of numerous articles and seminal works on the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, including *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy* (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995), *The Friendship of Florence Nightingale and Mary Clare Moore* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), *The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley, 1818-1841* (Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2004), *The Path of Mercy: The Life of Catherine McAuley* (CUA Press, 2012) and *A Shining Lamp: The Oral Instructions of Catherine McAuley* (CUA Press of America, 2017).

Patricia Talone, R.S.M. (Mid-Atlantic) holds a Ph.D. in theological ethics from Marquette Univ. From 2003 to 2016, she was Vice-President for Mission Services at the Catholic Health Association of the U.S. She has a teaching background in all grade levels. She was vocations director for the Merion community from 1972 to 1983. She serves on numerous boards--Georgian Court Univ., the Catholic Climate Covenant, and St. Ignatius Nursing and Rehabilitation Center; many years earlier for National Catholic AIDS Network and Mid-America Transplant Services. She holds two honorary doctorates, from the Univ. of Scranton and Misericordia Univ. She has published extensively in ethics and health care. Currently, she is serving on the Institute ethics committee for MESA (Mercy Education Systems of the Americas).

Susan Vickers, R.S.M. (West-Midwest) has a background in elementary education, serving as principal. She was elected to the Burlingame regional leadership team. For the past 30 years, she has worked for Catholic Healthcare West/Dignity Health as social justice advocate on issues like global warming, investing, gender diversity and toxic products use. She served on the board and as chair of Mercy Investment Services. From 1998 to 2004 and 2007 to 2013, she was on the board of ICCR, and on many boards, including Investor Environmental Health Network. She attended the Paris climate talks in 2016 and spoke on Catholic investing in Rome in 2017.

Victoria Vondenberger, R.S.M. (South Central) is a canon lawyer with a J.C.L. from St. Paul University, Ottawa. She is the director of the tribunal for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, promoter of justice and defender of the bond since 1990. Her background is secondary education – English, theology, journalism, and administration. She is published in *Studia Canonica* and *The Jurist*. As editor of *Jurisprudence* she has contributed to the Canon Law Society's *Advisory Opinions and Roman Replies*, as well as *Procedural Handbook for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.* She is the author of *Catholics, Marriage and Divorce: Real People, Real Questions* (2004). She served as secretary of the CLSA from 2004-2006.

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