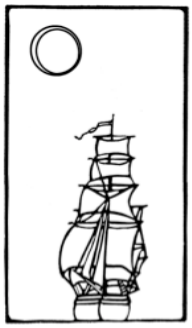

The MAST Journal

The Journal of the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology

Vol. 26, No. 3 2020

Counsels of Women

Sisters of Mercy Hermanas de la Misericordia

Dear Sisters, Associates, Companions and Friends of Mercy,

The theme of this issue is "Counsels of Women" because each article offers insights and advice to readers on how to live contemplatively, creatively and compassionately. More than just teaching a subject, each of these articles offers wise direction for personal development, relationship with God, community life, as well as ministry. Like the book of Sirach, the voice of the wise father-figure speaking to his son, these articles present the voices of women leaders speaking to their communities of faith, their friends, their co-workers and their students.

With the exception of Mother Austin Carroll's inaugural chapter reproduced from her *Retreat Instructions* of 1885, the papers published in this issue grew out of professional and pastoral events taking place over a six-month period in the latter part of 2019.

Mother Austin Carroll, R.S.M. (1835-1909), author of "On the Importance of a Retreat," was the charismatic, driving force of the New Orleans foundation for nearly 40 years in the post-Civil War era. Her retreat conferences were developed over several years in her role as novice director and superior and published in 1885. My knowledge that the *Retreat Instructions* existed was drawn from the bibliography listed by Hermenia Muldrey, R.S.M., in *Abounding in Mercy: Mother Austin Carroll* (New Orleans: Habersham, 1988). I am grateful to Kathryn Oosterhuis, Archivist of the Mercy Heritage Center in Belmont, North Carolina, for providing me an electronic image of the *Retreat Instructions*. Paula Diann Marlin, R.S.M., congregational archivist at Belmont, North Carolina, has alerted me to her own research on Mother Austin Carroll.

At the annual meeting of the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology (MAST) in June 27-29, 2019, in Belmont, North Carolina, several talks were presented. **Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M**., (South Central) a founding member of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative (CCGI) centered in Chicago, alerted us to the principles of dialogue that are the "rules for conversation" on divisive religious topics. In "Finding 'Common Ground' in Today's Church," she develops the implications for what the web-site at Catholic Theological Union describes as the purpose of the Cardinal Bernadin Center: "[His] ministry of reconciliation and peacemaking, inter-religious dialogue, leadership development for the Catholic Church, the consistent ethic of life and the search for common ground in the church and in the world."

The public lecture at the MAST meeting was delivered by **Ana Maria Pineda, R.S.M.** (West Midwest). It is rendered here as "Spirituality of Latina Women: Sacred Spaces, Sacred Voices." The presentation is dual-voiced. Ana Maria speaks autobiographically, disclosing her dual ancestry from indigenous women and Spanish forebears, her El Salvadorean birth, growing up in San Francisco in the heart of an ethnically defined family and culturally marked neighborhood, whose public art, religious devotions, traditions, and pilgrimages cluster to hint at how she understands herself as a Latina woman. At the same time, for readers of the *Journal*, her lecture proposes a spirituality that was not explicit in novitiates of past decades. What is the outcome and goal of self-understanding? My identity as a vowed woman religious, or my identity as a person whose ethnicity, family, and social location have shaped and defined who I am?

The annual meeting of the Mercy Network on Aging was held in New York October 4-5, 2019. The speakers addressed the challenge of understanding the adjustments that confront both the person who suffers dementia, and the aging person's care-givers. **Sharon Kerrigan, R.S.M.** (West Midwest) serves as a contact person for many retired sisters in Chicago. She regularly attends the MNOA conference. Her article, "Welcoming the Stranger: Reflections on the Care of Persons with Dementia," was written prior to the October conference, inspired by themes MNOA regularly addresses, and out of her own ministerial experience.

At the annual meeting of the Canon Law Society of America in Atlantic City, New Jersey in October 14-17, 2019, **Nancy Bauer, O.S.B**., presented a paper on the Vatican's directives for monasteries facing difficult choices, with decreasing numbers. Whether they can continue their community life, merge with another foundation, or declare the completion of the monastery's existence. A canon lawyer specializing in church teaching on consecrated life, Sister Nancy applies these criteria to apostolic communities in "The Usefulness of *Cor Orans* Addressed to Contemplative Nuns for All Religious Institutes." She proposes that the Vatican's criteria for viability also apply to active orders---what it means to be "alive and vital."

Rabbi Jayme Alpert, originally from New York, has transplanted herself to California and two years ago was welcomed as Senior Rabbi at Congregation Beth David, a conservative Jewish community in Saratoga, California, in the heart of Silicon Valley. For more than 40 years, faith communities in the city of Saratoga have hosted a morning interfaith service on Thanksgiving Day. Churches and synagogues rotate hosting the prayer service, followed by a reception. Religious leaders alternate among themselves delivery of the address, sermon or homily. On November 28, 2019, Rabbi Alpert's reflection was "Gratitude and Blessings on Thanksgiving." She drew on the wisdom of the sages: "Ancient rabbinic wisdom understood that without taking a moment to recite a blessing, days might pass by without our taking time to wonder at the world. To behold all that is majestic and magical around us and to express our appreciation."

The wise counsel of women of faith is celebrated here by *The MAST Journal*, and the editor is confident there will never be a lack of such speakers and writers. If the contributors are contemporaries, their articles appear in the main body of the issue. If their writings are published, or re-published from decades past, they are honored, as Mother Austin Carroll, in the section Wisdom That Endures.

Yours,

Eloise Rosenblatt

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

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Finding "Common Ground" in Today's Church

Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M.

The metaphor of 'common ground' may need some justification in the case of church life. Skeptics might argue that it suggests a 'least common denominator' of church teaching or practice, something everyone can agree on because it challenges nothing. Before defending the term, let me give a little history of its usage in American Catholic life.

In 1996 a group of colleagues, including the Archbishop of Chicago, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, founded a movement called the Catholic Common Ground Initiative. It was my privilege to be part of that group. Today the Initiative is housed at The Bernardin Center at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago (Catholiccommonground.org). Its activities consist of annual conferences, occasional papers, and a newsletter devoted to critical issues in the church on which there is significant, sometimes acrimonious, division. The method it proposes is dialogue, a process based in seeking to understand one another's position from a posture of mutual respect.

This isn't the place to rehearse the divisive issues which troubled the church in the 1990s and which prompted the founding of the CCGI. But we can probably agree that there is a robust list of such issues today. They include theological and moral issues, pastoral and social concerns, issues of church organization and of liturgical practice. If you want to get a good dinner table conversation going with family and friends (or not!), try one of these questions:

- Should the church recognize same-sex marriages?
- Is the church's ban on contraception and on tubal ligations defensible?
- Should women be ordained deacons (or priests)?
- What are the causes of the clerical sexual abuse and what should be done?
- Should Catholic candidates for public office oppose legalized abortion?
- Is the restoration of the Mass in Latin, with the celebrant's back to the people, defensible?
- Should divorced and re-married Catholics be admitted to Communion?
- Is women's religious life in the U.S. well-served by two conferences, the LCWR and the CMSWR?

The reader can probably extend this list based on personal experiences. Differences of opinion are not, in themselves, anything to regret or eliminate from church life. It is from differences addressed respectfully, in a posture of mutual love, that the *sensus fidelium* emerges and leads, eventually, in some cases, to definitive proclamations by popes or church councils. What is regrettable, however, is that too often differences are not addressed in this way. The result is confusion, negative judgments, and polarization. Hence the founding of the CCGI.

Differences of opinion are not, in themselves, anything to regret or eliminate from church life.

"Common ground" is understood in CCGI materials as an effort to "reaffirm and promote the full range and demands of authentic unity, acceptable diversity, and respectful dialogue, not just as a way to dampen conflict but as a way to make our conflicts constructive, and ultimately as a way to understand for ourselves and articulate for our world the meaning of discipleship of Jesus Christ." [1]

The Initiative rests on the conviction that "Jesus Christ, present in Scripture and sacrament, is central to all that we do; he must always be the measure and not what is measured."

There is much more that can be said about the work of the Initiative over the years and its present relevance. The reader may want to consult the website, www.catholiccommonground.org, for a list of current activities and resources. However, I

think the spirit of the Initiative is best captured by citing the Principles of Dialogue which are included in the founding statement. What follows are the seven Principles.

1. We should recognize that no single group or viewpoint in the church has a complete monopoly on the truth. While the bishops united with the Pope have been specially endowed by God with the power to preserve the true faith, they too exercise their office by taking counsel with one another and with the experience of the whole church, past and present. Solutions to the church's problems will almost inevitably emerge from a variety of sources.
2. We should not envision ourselves or any one part of the church as a saving remnant. No group within the church should judge itself alone to be possessed of enlightenment or spurn the mass of Catholics, their leaders, or their institutions as unfaithful.
3. We should test all proposals for their pastoral realism and potential impact on living individuals as well as for their theological truth. Pastoral effectiveness is a responsibility of leadership.
4. We should presume that those with whom we differ are acting in good faith. They deserve civility, charity, and a good-faith effort to understand their concerns. We should not substitute labels, abstractions, or blanketing terms— "radical feminism," "the hierarchy" "the Vatican"—for living, complicated realities.
5. We should put the best possible construction on different positions, addressing their strongest points rather than seizing upon the most vulnerable aspects in order to discredit them. We should detect the valid insights and legitimate worries that may underlie even questionable arguments.
6. We should be cautious in ascribing motives. We should not impugn another's love of the church and loyalty to it. We should not rush to interpret disagreements as conflicts of starkly opposing principles rather than as differences in degree or in prudential pastoral judgments about the relevant facts.
7. We should bring the church to engage the realities of contemporary culture, not by simple defiance or by naïve acquiescence, but by acknowledging, in the fashion of Gaudium et Spes, both our culture's valid achievements and real dangers.

These principles still challenge us thirty years after their publication. Implicit in them is not only a style of theological reasoning, but also, and primarily, a spirituality. They require a stance of humility before the untapped riches of revelation and a willingness to be taught by others and to admit one's own shortcomings. While the Principles were crafted for dialogue within the church. It would not be hard to imagine similar principles for political and cultural dialogue in today's world. ◆

Endnote

[1]The quotation and all that follow are taken from the founding statement of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative, "Called to Be Catholic. Church in a Time of Peril."

Spirituality of Latina Women: Sacred Spaces, Sacred Voices

Ana Maria Pineda, R.S.M.

Corazón del Cielo, Corazón de la Tierra

In January 1996 I had the good fortune to be invited to Oaxaca, Mexico to participate in a Maryknoll gathering with indigenous women of Latin America. It was an invitation that proved to be a profound encounter with the sacred Cosmovision of my ancestors. The voices of the ancient ones had been preserved in the indigenous women. Throughout ten days they accompanied us with their wisdom, their prayer and their passion for the sacred. A poignant phrase gave expression to the bountiful embrace of the divine..."Heart of the Heavens and Heart of the Earth" (Corazón del cielo, Corazón de la Tierra)[1]

In the days that followed, I found myself being led into a mystical world where flowers, song, incense, water, fire and "plegaria"[2] *took me into communion with God, with the divine.*

Guided by these indigenous women I greeted the rising sun at Monte Alban, a sacred mountain of the ancient people of Mexico. In the passionate word of these women flowed the Spirit of God.

They spoke of their struggle to rediscover the spirituality inherent in the gift of Mother Earth (*Madre Tierra*), and the determination to revive their native language and the dignity of their people. They spoke of the creation of the world and human beings, and the sacred myths of their people that celebrate the gifts of the Creator. Revealed in these sacred accounts was the rediscovery of the importance of women and the acknowledgment, once more, of the essential need for women's voice in the universe. Still unfinished is the dream and "plegaria" of the ancients for their daughters. "Listen. Much do I want you to understand that you are noble. See that you are very precious, even while you are still only a little baby. You are a precious stone, you are a turquoise. You have been formed, shaped; you have the blood, the color; you are the offshoot and the stem; you are a descendant of noble lineage."[3]

They spoke of the creation of the world and human beings, and the sacred myths of their people that celebrate the gifts of the Creator.

The memory of that encounter, the music of that ancient word, the power of that experience has remained with me. It is a reminder of the need to continue to create spaces where women's voices can find the divine which is so deeply rooted in their mestizo identity. The Indigenous and the Spanish religious traditions that have come together and are braided within us Latina women as part of our Latina Catholic heritage. As a *mestiza*[4], a Latina[5] born in El Salvador and raised in the United States, my spirit resonates with the indigenous women in Oaxaca and their search to reestablish their place in the universe; a search to retrieve one's voice.

The experience of reviving the richness of my Latina spirituality has been a journey for me as it has been for many Latinas. The journey takes me back to the reality of my birth, to who I am and how I understand myself to be. I acknowledge my parental roots and I establish myself as the daughter of José Antonio Pineda and María Matilde Escamilla de Pineda. My grandparents were Ernestina Pineda, Abelindo Salas and Paz y José Antonio Escamilla.[6]

My Origins

I was born in El Salvador and at the age of two I emigrated to the United States with my mother and older brother José Antonio, to join my father. We arrived at the Spanish-speaking *barrio* of San Francisco familiarly referred to as the "Mission." In this home away from "home," life began to unfold for me. *El sabor Latino*, the Latino flavor of my up-bringing, was undeniable. The customs, the practices I engaged in as a child within that home, within the

neighborhood community have marked me for life. The way I live life, the way I understand the world, the way I engage with life, with persons and my surroundings, come from that Latino context of life and of culture.

I am Roman Catholic. As a child, I was nourished by many of the devotions practiced by my mother such as the rosary, prayers and the religious customs associated with each liturgical season. Each cycle of the year had its own particular customs and rituals: Lent, Christmas, the feasts of the extended family members, and the devotion to the Santos.

I was nourished by popular practices and the expressions of the faith, particularly those associated with "Good Friday."[7] The Stations of the Cross brought me into solidarity with the "Suffering Jesus" and gave meaning to my own personal sacrifices. There is a special memory that I carry with me even to this day. It is often a part of my writing and my own spiritual understanding. It is a memory from my childhood rooted within our neighborhood Church. At the back of the dimly lit St. Peter's vestibule hung a large cross with the crucified body of Jesus. The image drew many of the Latino parishioners to stop there to reverence the pierced feet of the Crucified Jesus. It was the practice of the entire Latino community to reverence the Crucified Jesus by placing a kiss upon his wounded feet. This gesture of kissing the wounded feet of the battered and crucified Jesus somehow helped all of us to intuitively understand that to touch the wounds of that Crucified Jesus was to deeply touch the suffering of humanity. Doing so, we found ourselves growing into solidarity with the suffering of others.

In the neighborhood of my childhood, I heard the tones, the variations of Spanish and I understood the rich and extended Latino reality. Besides sharing a similar language, culture, and religious tradition, we also shared the common experience of dislocation and unfamiliarity with this "new world." This life experience, along with others, gave us a particular sensitivity to the stranger, to the needy.

Liturgical Traditions

Along with the devotional practices, our homes taught certain cultural values. Respect was due to others; it was imperative to always greet the guests who entered our home. It always took priority regardless of whatever activity engaged our attention. The celebration of *Las Posadas*[8] every December made profound sense. We were invited to recall the Scripture story of Joseph and Mary as they traveled from inn-to-inn in Bethlehem looking for lodging. This devotional celebration invited all of us to look for the strangers in our midst and to find ways to bring them into the warmth of community, to give them an a*cogida*,[9] to gather them into the extended family of humanity. Through all of this lived spirituality, the presence of God was discovered in all human activity, life experience as well as death.

While life is celebrated in a myriad of traditions and devotions in the Latino homes, the dead are also remembered and made present to loved ones. The month of November was the time to celebrate *El Dia de Los Muertos*[10]--the day when loved ones who have died are remembered and brought into the company of family and friends. In homes and in parish communities the ancient ritual of storytelling is practiced. By remembering the dead, they are brought back into the life of the community. As they celebrate the memory of loved ones who have died, the old and young of family and community are brought together. The Latino neighborhoods seem to be aware of a time especially set aside for this ancient ritual. The church bells ring throughout the day as families gather to celebrate the Eucharist in memory of a deceased child, parent, spouse, relative, or friend. During the liturgy, the priest speaks the names of those who have died, and the deceased are remembered again in the litany of names read aloud as the community prays. In churches and homes, the "altars" for the dead are set-up. They are adorned with candles, flowers, and countless photos of deceased loved ones. In the company of loved ones, other companions occupy places of honor, e.g., Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez,

Mother Teresa, Archbishop Romero, and Our Lady of Guadalupe. The custom returns me to the circle of women in Oaxaca and links my past with the present. It connects me to the Indigenous religious tradition that is joined to the Christian practice of All Saints and All Souls Day. In the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar, this November celebration is a way of insuring that the dead will continue to be present to the living. For Latino Catholics the ritual draws them into the reality that death and life are inseparable. In order to truly live, one must remember the dead: the example of their lives, the wisdom of their words, the treasure of their struggles, joys, sorrows, and triumphs. It is especially important for Latinas to honor the women who have died, women whose lives provide us with ample examples of courage, persistence and wisdom.

Father Virgilio Elizondo, noted Mexican-American theologian, reminds us that for the Latino there are three phases of death.[11] The first is of physical death. The second is burial. The last and most difficult is the moment when the dead are no longer remembered, when family or friends no longer speak their names. Then they truly cease to exist. The devotional practices and rituals celebrated for the dead in the Latino Catholic world preserve them from being erased from our memory.

Besides the practice of *El Dia de los Muertos* and the creation of home altars,[12] the nine-day novena or *novenario*[13] follows the burial. For nine days, family and friends gather to accompany those who grieve and mourn the loss of a loved one. Latinas have a special role in this practice as they are the ones who gather and facilitate the recall and celebration of the memory of the loved one.

The Latina woman is the one who sees the value in life and who intuits the precious gift of life that is given by God. *Lo coditiano*[14] is treasured. The importance of *lo coditiano*, of everyday life is cherished by Latinas. In caring for the memory of the deceased, Latinas embrace the Communion of Saints, the living as well as those who have died. At the gathering of the *novenario*, the women invite all and encourage them to tell stories. They invite those assembled to laugh, to cry and to celebrate the life of the one who has died. It is the women who traditionally prepare the "altars" for the dead in the home around which all are gathered. It is here that God is sensed and touched.

Traditionally, devotion to Mary, the Mother of God has been essential to Latina Catholics. Here in the U.S., love for Our Lady of Guadalupe[15] is especially poignant. Her name is the one that is most familiar in the home and in the religious sentiments of numerous Latinos and Latinas. Women especially find in her a deep hope for their lives. Guadalupe is often the friend in whom they can confide and with whom they share their troubles and worries. She is the one to whom they turn to ask for help and guidance in the journey of life. Today her image is found in countless homes. The beloved traditional image is a magnet for the artistic imagination of Latinas. Latina women of different generations imagine her in diverse ways. Each artistic rendering of Our Lady of Guadalupe tries to evoke the variety of meanings which she holds for young and old. Regardless of artistic renderings, it is true to say that Guadalupe continues to be central to the spirituality of Latinas.

The Latina woman is the one who sees the value in life and who intuits the precious gift of life that is given by God.

Mural Art

Another aspect of spirituality can be found in neighborhood mural art.[16] This kind of popular art offers a glimpse into other dimensions of everyday spirituality. Artistically the murals depict women engaging in life through their work and in their care for others. The Mission district where I grew up has become known for the countless scenes that are painted on neighborhood walls. Two murals are particularly significant in reference to Latina spirituality. On the side wall of La Palma [17]market is painted a scene of women working in the lettuce fields.

The women are bent over picking lettuce to provide for their families. They are tending the land and touching into the source of life and nourishment.

One of the women is heavy with child and the artist has indicated this by depicting her stomach with the same transparency of the lettuce leaves that she is picking. The child she carries can be seen curled up within her womb. Another mural painted in the well-known Balmy Alley[18] of the Mission depicts the Mothers of the Disappeared in Argentina. They are dressed in black, gathered in a town square; in their hands they hold pictures of their loved ones: the disappeared men of their families. These are women who cry out against injustice and defy the brutal assaults on life. Women work to transform a society of injustice and to protest its abuses. Women continue in the struggle to find a space for themselves, and mural art often communicates the many creative ways in which struggles are lived.

Pilgrimages

There is one yet final expression of spirituality which I wish to address. It is the tradition which retrieves the importance of "pilgrimage" in the lives of women. Pilgrimage is the ancient practice of traveling to holy places throughout the world.[19] In the life of the Church, pilgrimages to the Holy Land became popular as a way of retracing the steps of Jesus. Over time, other sacred sites became places of pilgrimage. In our time, sacred sites such as the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Shrine of Chimayo have become popular for Latino families. At these sites, women find a special connection to the sacred allowing them to touch into the ancient sacramentality of our *mestizo* identity. Other more personal sites also bring Latinas into contact with the sacred: the land of their ancestors, the family home, the burial places of loved ones whether it is a family member, a friend or a site where a heroine or hero is buried. As a way of inviting you to discover the significance of "pilgrimage" for yourself, I would like to share my recent experience of pilgrimage.

In March of 2005, on the 25th anniversary of the martyrdom of Monseñor Romero,[20] I traveled to El Salvador. On this personal pilgrimage[21] I visited the places where Monseñor Romero lived, worked and died. On the grounds of the hospital, La Divina Providencia, I went to the casita where Romero lived. The simple house situated not far from the main entrance of the hospital grounds is a holy place. Romero's heart is buried in the garden beneath the statue of Mary. The clothing he wore the day he was murdered hangs in a glass display case inside the *casita* where other personal items are preserved: books, Episcopal garb, photos, and radio and personal belongings. Outside, brick blocks frame a small patio which preserves testimonies to miracles attributed to Romero. A sacred aura is felt throughout the *casita*. This place of pilgrimage invites many to come in contact with the life of a committed Christian who lived and died in the struggle to achieve justice for all, especially the poor and marginalized.

Touching the Sacred

Each of us can identify places of sacred pilgrimage[22] where we can experience the sacred and discover our Latina spirituality. In the spirit of pilgrimage, let me end by returning to the story with which I began. I return to the indigenous women of Oaxaca where I was led into a mystical world. where flowers, song, incense, water, fire, and *plegaria* brought me into communion with the divine. At that sacred site, the rich treasury of symbols, sacred imagery, music and ritual reminded me that it is possible to touch the sacred. It is in and through religious practices which are repeated over our life time that we learn how to become women of faith and action. In time such practices become a habit of the heart. It is through the tangible, through the senses, that Latina Catholics have touched the sacred, the divine. It is through the senses and by participating in the concrete realities of life that Latinas have come to recognize the face of God. It is through the ritual of daily living, in caring for their families, in

accompanying those in need, in celebrating the defeat of injustice, in speaking a word of life to others that Latinas enter into relationship with God. And in all of these concrete realities, the world of the mystical, of contemplation is alive. ◆

Endnotes

[1] The phrase is used by the indigenous people in Guatemala when they address the divine.
[2] *Plegaria* is a Spanish word meaning prayer.
[3] Miguel Leon-Portilla, ed., *Native Mesoamerican Spirituality* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980):64.
[4] The term *mestiza* means mixed-blood. I use it to refer to my Spanish and indigenous heritage.
[5] The terms Hispanic, Latino and Chicano are problematic. No single term defines either the reality of a people with roots in a Spanish-speaking country or those born and/or raised in the U.S. with Latin American heritage. In this article I use Latina to describe myself since that was the familiar term used in the "barrio" of the Mission District of San Francisco, California neighborhood where I grew up as a child.
[6] My grandparents and parents were born in El Salvador, Central America. My mother's side of the family had direct Spanish ancestry while my father's was more clearly mestizo.
[7] See Karen Mary Davalos, "The Real Way of Praying," *Horizons of the Sacred*, ed. Timothy Matovina and Gary Riebe-Estrella, SVD (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002): 41-68. A description of a contemporary celebration of Holy Friday as celebrated in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois.
[8] Ana María Pineda, *"Hospitality," Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass and Simon & Shuster, 1997):38-56. See Miguel Arias, Mark R. Francis, Arturo J. Pérez-Rodríguez, *La Navidad Hispana at Home and at Church*, (Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgical Training Publication, 2000).
[9] This word can mean to greet or to make welcome, but it signifies much more. It also conveys to be welcomed as a friend, as a family member with a warm embrace.
[10] See Mary J. Andrade *Through the Eyes of the Soul, Day of the Dead in Mexico* (San Jose, CA: La Oferta Review Newspaper, Inc., 1996). This is the first book in the series of five written by Mary J. Andrade. The photos and the text reveal the practices of Day of the Dead in different parts of Mexico. See also, Lara Medina and Gilbert R. Cadena, "Dias de los Muertos: Public Ritual, Community Renewal, and Popular Religion in Los Angeles," Horizons of the Sacred, ed. Timothy Matovina and Gary Riebe-Estrella, SVD (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002): 69-94.
[11] I have heard Elizondo often present these three moments or phases of death in public presentations.
[12] See C. Gilbert Romero, *Hispanic Devotional Piety* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991): 83-97. Romero writes on the significance of the home altar in the Hispanic religious tradition.
[13] See Mark R. Francis and Arturo J. Pérez-Rodríguez, *Primero Dios: Hispanic Liturgical Resource* (Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 1997): 119-145.
[14] See Espín and Díaz, eds., *From the Heart of Our People* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999) 262. The glossary defines lo cotidiano as a Spanish-language expression that refers to daily life experience, or to reality as it is experienced in daily life. This expression means "the daily."
[15] See Virgil Elizondo, *La Morenita: Evangelizer of the Americas* (San Antonio, Texas: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1980). Also: Jeanette Rodriguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican American Women*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).
[16] See Ana María Pineda, "The Murals: Rostros del Pueblo," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 8, no. 2 (November 2000):5-17.
[17] *La Palma* started as a small family run market selling Latino food items in the 1950's in the Mission District. Its official name is *La Palma* Mexicatessen. Today many of its Mexican food items are sold in supermarkets across the country.
[18] The length of Balmy Alley is filled with colorful murals. A car ride or a walk down the alley is an invitation to see beautiful, provocative neighborhood art.
[19] See Ana María Pineda, "Shrines and Pilgrimages," *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines*, ed. Peter Phan (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2005):151-162.
[20] See Monsignor Romero: *A Bishop for the Third Millennium*, ed. Robert S. Pelton, C.S.C. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004) This is a collection of speeches given at Notre Dame in honor of Archbishop Romero.
[21] See Ana María Pineda, "A Pilgrim's Journey Home," *U.S. Catholic* 70, no.7 (July 2005): 34-35. I wrote a short article on my experience of pilgrimage on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Archbishop Romero's death.
[22] James S. Griffith, *Beliefs and Holy Places* (Tucson & London: The University of Arizona Press, 1992).

Welcoming the Stranger: Reflections on the Care of Persons with Dementia

Sharon Kerrigan, R.S.M.

America's greying population is expected to increase from 35 million to 70 million by 2030.[1] This portion of the population will experience some level of forgetfulness. Infections, strokes and head injuries may cause temporary and/or permanent loss of one's mental capacities.

Analysts predict 50% of those over 85 will be diagnosed with some form of dementia by 2025.[2] Dementia is the rapid, progressive and permanent loss of one's mental capacities and is feared by many Americans more than cancer.[3] Why do so many people fear dementia?

One explanation is that Americans assume the mind is the essence of a human person.[4] This was an assumption held by some philosophers and theologians throughout history. John Locke defined a human person as a thinking individual,[5] while Thomas Aquinas taught the image of God is reflected in the mind of rational creatures.[6]

Since people with dementia lack some mental capacities, society seems to undervalue their existence. This position appears to be contrary to our contemporary theology of personhood. Therefore, this article will propose an alternative understanding of the human person and its impact on the care of people with dementia.

> The physical sufferings of both Jesus and those with dementia are obvious, but their spiritual pain is less visible.

An Emerging Paradigm

Contemporary psychologists and theologians are beginning to explore an alternate way of defining the human person. Tom Kitwood, a psychologist, believes the medical model which separates the mind and body is no longer adequate to define a person.[7] The medical model is being replaced by a more wholistic approach. This hypothesis affirms the unity of the mind and body. A similar assumption has been expressed by theologians.

Xavier Leon-Dufour suggests a biblical anthropology. In the Bible, the elements are given different activities such as "the soul, heart, flesh, body and spirit."[8] Unlike Thomas Aquinas, Leon-Dufour defines the human person with a mind-body unity.[9] His thesis is similar to Walter Kasper's description of the Trinity.

Kasper says the message within the New Testament can be summed-up in one sentence. That summation reads: God is love and the Lord bestows that gift upon others (1 Jn 4:8,16).[10] "As self-radiating love, the one God is at the same time triune. From eternity He has a beloved and co-beloved. He is thus God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit."[11] The scriptures seem permeated by Walter Kasper's theological perspective.

A Biblical Anthropology

To be human implies we are in relationship with others, and the scriptures tell us that we belong to God.[12] We were created in God's image (Gen 2), unconditionally loved by the Lord and nothing can ever separate us from God's love (Rm 8:38-9).[13]

People with Dementia Reflect the Sufferings of Jesus

Like all humans, Jesus experienced physical and spiritual suffering. He suffered physical pain throughout his passion and death on the cross. People with dementia also sustain physical pain. They often cannot walk, talk or eat. The physical

sufferings of both Jesus and those with dementia are obvious, but their spiritual pain is less visible.

Jesus experienced spiritual suffering from several sources. He was rejected by his native countrymen (Mk 6; Lk:4), betrayed by Judas (Mk 14:10), disowned by Peter (Mk 14:66-72), mocked by the soldiers (Mk 15:65), and abandoned by his disciples at the crucifixion (Mk 15:33-41).

Like Jesus, people with dementia encounter loneliness and a sense of abandonment because their family and friends frequently do not visit them.[14] For example, a young man severed ties with his father when his dad could no longer recognize him. Abandonment is a major form of spiritual suffering, but Jesus' life and ministry can teach us how to relate to suffering people.

Jesus the Healer

Jesus healed the whole person (Jn 5:6). He healed all those who were ill (Mk1:34), the leper (Mk 1:40-43), the blind (Jn 9:1-8), and those possessed by demons (Mk5:1-20). After each healing, Jesus returned the individual to his/her community. Being in relationship with others implies recognition. Jesus' ministry models for each of us a way to relate to others.

People suffering from dementia can face their diminishment if they know God, family and friends remember them. God is always in relationship with them, and remembers them as they are, not as they were.[15] The Lord also continues to invite each of us to welcome everyone into our lives. This invitation includes strangers, and the scriptures demonstrate a way to be inclusive.

People suffering from dementia can face their diminishment if they know God, family and friends remember them.

Welcoming the Stranger

Both the Hebrew and New Testaments emphasize welcoming strangers. The Israelites were instructed to harvest the land for 6 years, but leave it unharvested the 7th year so the poor might eat (Ex 23:10-2). In the New Testament Jesus directs his disciples to feed the hungry and welcome the strangers (Mt 25:37-38).[16] Today's newest strangers are those suffering from dementia. Like Jesus' disciples, we too are called to care for others (Lk 9:1-6).

As Christians, we must change society's perception of dementia by offering spiritual healing to them.[17] How might we provide this service? Since people with dementia are already excluded from society, visiting them is essential.[18] However, one's way of relating and communicating with them will be different.

During a visit, professionals advise calling the person by his/her name because naming identifies one.[19] For example, God has various names in the Psalms, and is referred to as Creator and Lord, (Ps 147:4). A change of name implies new responsibilities. God changed Abram's name to Abraham when he was appointed the father of the nations (Gen 17:5).[20] I witnessed recognition of one's change of name to reflect a person's sense of identity when I was working with a dementia resident. At first, the resident answered to her name prior to entering religious life. As the disease progressed, she responded to her religious name because this was her current identity.

In addition to calling the person by a preferred name, other ways of communicating with a person suffering dementia can be adopted. Touch may be helpful because it provides a person with a sense of security.[21] When speaking with such a person, it is best to use short sentences and end the conversation with a yes/no question to ensure the person has understood you. If your visit includes prayer, professionals recommend using traditional prayers and hymns.[22] Using familiar music often evokes a feeling associated

with it and enables the person to encounter the emotion again.

The visits, the touch, the conversations, the prayers and use of music are all part of the sacrament of presence and our ministry of healing given to us by Jesus (Lk 9:1-6). A variety of forms of communication also serve as a way of letting a woman know that she is still loved by God and a man know he is still loved by us. We are the contemporary Simons and Veronicas who minister to Jesus through others.[23]

Summary

Dementia is rapidly affecting a significant number of people and feared by many Americans. Society fears this disease because they believe losing one's mental capacities means forfeiting one's personhood. Contemporary psychologists and theologians are beginning to dispute this assumption.

Using an approach that reflects a biblical perspective, we emphasize that God created us in the Lord's image and nothing will ever separate us from God's love. People with dementia have lost some of their mental capacities, but not their ability to feel emotions. As Christians we have the opportunity to be creative in ministering the "sacrament of presence" to them.

If we continue to remember, respect and walk with those suffering from dementia, we may be able to change society's perception of this disease. ◆

Endnotes

[1]Karger Publishers, "Prevalence of Dementia in the United States: Aging, Demographics and Memory Study," *Neuroepidemiology* (29 November, 2007) pp. 125-32.
[2]Tim Unsworth, "Theological Disease Teaches About the Love of God," *National Catholic Reporter* (17 December 1999).
[3]John Dunlap M.D., "God Will Keep You Through Dementia," *Desiring God (*13 October, 2017) pp. 1-3.
[4]John Swinton, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Co., 2012): 63.
[5]Ibid., 123.
[6]Margaret Goodall, "Caring for People with Dementia: A Sign of the Kingdom," *Journal of Practical Theology (*1 December, 2014) p. 252.
[7]Swinton citing Kitwood. See *Dementia,* 73-75.
[8]Xavier Leon-Dufour, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973): 328.
[9]Ibid.
[10]Walter Kasper, *Mercy* (New York: Paulist Press, 2013): 91.
[11]Ibid., 92.
[12]Michael Downey, ed., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993): 48. See also Richard O'Brien, "Theology of Human Existence," *Catholicism* (San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1981):141-5.
[13]Goodall, 254-55.
[14]Rabbi Dayle Priedman equates the feelings of abandonment with those wandering in the wilderness. See Mary Hinkle Shore, "Jesus Remember Me: Biblical Imagination and the Experience of Dementia," *Word and World* (Summer, 2014), p. 265, footnote 2.
[15]Swinton, 184-85.
[16]Ibid., 270-76.
[17]See Erika L. Sanborne, "Praying with Those Who Might Forget," *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Fall, 2008) pp. 207-17.
[18]Goodall, 257.
[19] Swinton, 254. See also Maria Bons-Storm, "Where is God When Dementia Sneaks into Our Home?" *Theological Studies* (31 May, 2016) pp. 1-8.
[20]Leon-Dufour, 377-79.
[21] Karen Love and Elia Femia, "The Comfort of Touch," *Health Progress* (November-December, 2014) pp. 29-31.
[22]Holland Homer, "Christian Worship Experience for Persons with Dementia," Lecture given on 27 September, 2012 for the Calvin Institute of Christianity at the Calvin Theological Seminary.
[23]Sister Peter Lillian DiMaria and Alfred Norwood, "A Meditation on Suffering," *Health Progress* (November-December, 2014) p. 26.

The Usefulness of *Cor Orans* Addressed to Contemplative Nuns for All Religious Institutes

Nancy Bauer, O.S.B.

Introduction

In 2016, Pope Francis issued the apostolic constitution *Vultum Dei quaerere* in which he promulgated new papal legislation applicable to monasteries of contemplative nuns. The new norms cover twelve specific matters identified by the pope as requiring renewed attention: formation, prayer, the word of God, the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation, community life, autonomy, federations, cloister, work, silence, communications media, and asceticism.[1] In 2018, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) issued the instruction *Cor Orans* on how to implement the new regulations.[2] I offer this reflection on how the criteria in *Cor Orans* for assessing the viability of monasteries of nuns are useful for all Religious Institutes.

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The decline in the number of nuns is one of the reasons that contemplative monasteries have attracted the attention of Pope Francis and CICLSAL. There are about 4,000 such monasteries around the world, with a total membership (in 2014) of about 39,000, with 23,000 of those in Europe.[3] Within a ten-year period beginning in the mid-1990s, there was a decline of about 10,000 nuns.[4] Some monasteries that have been in continuous existence for centuries now have only a few members, as few as three or four.

Among other things, *Vultum Dei quaerere* and *Cor Orans* establish norms and procedures for addressing the dilemma of small monasteries that need to be revitalized or are, in reality, no longer apostolic institutes of women religious, there are aspects of it that are useful in assessing some of the same realities in these institutes.[5] In particular, *Cor Orans* provides criteria for discerning the vitality and viability of a monastery that could be applied, mutatis mutandis, to apostolic congregations and/or their provinces and houses. This paper will address those criteria.

Background on the autonomous nature of monasteries of nuns

Monasteries, whether of monks or nuns (*moniales*) or of sisters (*sorores*) who identify themselves as monastic,[6] have always claimed and cherished canonical or legal autonomy. Legal autonomy means that the members of each individual monastery elect their own superior who is a major superior with all the authority necessary to direct the members in the pursuit of their vocation according to the proper law and charism of the community.[7] It also means the monastery has its own novitiate and formation and admits its own members without the need for approval from a higher superior outside the monastery.[8] A monastery with legal autonomy also enjoys a sense of stability or permanence.[9] The members can reasonably expect to live out their vocations in that monastic house until death and cannot be transferred by a superior to another monastery. Finally, an autonomous monastery is a public juridic person which acquires, possesses, administers, and disposes of its own temporal

goods.[10] The temporal goods belong to the monastery itself, even if the monastery is joined to a federation.

When a monastery is part of a federation, the federal president has no jurisdiction over the individual members of the monastery and usually very little jurisdiction over the monastery as a corporate entity. This typical monastic system differs from the traditional organizational structure of apostolic congregations that are divided into provinces and houses with superiors at each level and a supreme moderator overseeing the whole and with members moving from house to house.[11]

Cor Orans recognizes that legal autonomy enables a monastery of nuns to "enjoy its own discipline . . . to preserve its character and protect its identity."[12] It also "favors stability of life and the internal unity of each community, ensuring the best conditions for the life of the nuns, according to the spirit and the nature of the Institute to which they belong."[13] On the other hand, the instruction distinguishes between legal or juridical autonomy and "real autonomy of life," which is "the ability to manage the life of the monastery in all its dimensions (vocational, governmental, relational, liturgical, economic...)."[14] In other words, real or genuine autonomy of life means that a monastic community is actually "alive and vital."[15] According to *Vultum Dei quaerere*,

> Juridical autonomy needs to be matched by a genuine autonomy of life. This entails a certain, even minimal, number of sisters, provided that the majority are not elderly, the vitality needed to practice and spread the charism, a real capacity to provide for formation and governance, dignity and quality of liturgical, fraternal and spiritual life, sign value and participation in the life of the local Church, self-sufficiency and a suitably appointed monastery building. These criteria ought to be considered comprehensively and in an overall perspective.[16]

Cor Orans provides more specific criteria for assessing the real autonomy of a monastery and it is these criteria that can be informative for other institutes of women religious when assessing their own vitality and viability.

Criteria for Maintaining Real Autonomy of Life

As already noted, a community that has real autonomy is one that has the ability to manage its own vocational, governmental, relational, liturgical, and economic dimensions, as well as any other dimensions of religious life that are constitutive of its particular charism, that is, aspects of the life that are reflective of "the mind and designs of the founders regarding the nature, purpose, spirit and character of the institute . . . and its sound traditions."[17] For an apostolic institute, that would include, for example, its proper apostolate.

Communion is a "reflection of God's own way of being" and communion among the members of a religious community is "a graced reflection of the God who is a Trinity of Love."

For a new monastery to obtain legal autonomy, it must first demonstrate that it has achieved real autonomy of life. *Cor Orans* §39 addresses four categories of criteria for assessing real autonomy, beginning with the relational dimension. A community must, first of all, give "good testimony of fraternal life in common," which includes "the necessary vitality in living and transmitting the charism."[18] In *Vultum Dei quaerere*, Pope Francis notes that life in community in which the members seek to become "one heart and one soul" is an essential element of religious life in general.[19] Communion is a "reflection of God's own way of being" and communion among the members of a religious

community is "a graced reflection of the God who is a Trinity of Love."[20] Communion includes the ability to share goods and to engage in "shared projects and activities."[21] It requires the participation of all and a sense of belonging on the part of all.[22]

While true communion can be achieved by even a very small community, *Cor Orans* requires a specific minimal number in order for a monastery to be granted legal autonomy. There must be at least eight members in perpetual profession "as long as most are not of advanced age."[23] Note that the criteria reflect the necessity of a critical mass of stable members, that is, those who have made a lifetime commitment, and an adequate number of stable members who are young enough to fulfill offices and tasks necessary to sustain vital community life and, although it is not mentioned, perhaps also to have intergenerational living. For a monastic community, it is also necessary to have enough members to pray the daily Liturgy of the Hours in a dignified manner and to have eucharistic celebrations that are "prepared with care, dignity and sobriety" and in which all take part "fully, faithfully and consciously.[24]

An apostolic congregation may not sense the effects of the loss of a few members in the same way, but it would be a useful exercise for congregations to reflect on how many members are necessary to live and transmit the charism.

In accord with *Cor Orans*, if the number of nuns in perpetual profession drops to five, procedures are initiated to review the ongoing viability of the community.[25] Of course, the number of members necessary for vitality and viability varies from institute to institute. Even vital and viable monasteries of nuns tend to have fewer members than apostolic congregations; therefore, a decline of just two or three nuns can mean the difference between stability and uncertainty. An apostolic congregation may not sense the effects of the loss of a few members in the same way, but it would be a useful exercise for congregations to reflect on how many members are necessary to live and transmit the charism.

The second criterion for a viable and vital contemplative community is that, besides an adequate number of total members, it must have individual members with special skills, in particular, to fulfill three offices: overall leadership (superior), formator of members in initial formation, and financial administrator.[26] Other kinds of religious institutes will require members with skills in addition to leadership, formation, and finances. For example, monastic communities of sisters usually have directors of liturgy and hospitality. Non-monastic communities may require members to direct and staff apostolic endeavors. Each institute must identify its essential personnel needs and see to the proper training of members to fulfill those needs or discern which offices can be held by non-members. In some cases, both monasteries and apostolic institutes can share personnel and other resources. For example, *Vultum Dei quaerere* and *Cor Orans* require federations to assist with the formation of formators of the member monasteries and provide for the possibility of common houses of formation.[27] However, when an institute can no longer provide for key offices from among its own members, it is time to assess its ongoing viability.

The third criterion for maintaining real autonomy is that the community have a suitable physical plant, that is, "a suitably appointed monastery building."[28] This includes "rooms adapted to the lifestyle of the community, to ensure that the nuns can regularly lead the contemplative life according to the nature and spirit of their Institute,"[29] The necessary "rooms"

for a monastery of nuns include, for example, an oratory, kitchen, dining area, parlor, library, community room, offices, bedrooms, work spaces, etc., along with private outdoor space. Other kinds of communities must assess their own building and space needs, but even apostolic communities are required by canon law to reserve in their houses some areas that are off limits to non-members.[30] In addition to having a suitable physical plant, the community must be able to manage it, which includes not only keeping it clean, but also keeping it functional, that is, in good repair.

The fourth and final criterion mentioned explicitly in *Cor Orans* as necessary for real autonomy of life consists of "economic conditions that guarantee the community itself can provide for the needs of daily life."[31] In other words, the community must be financially self-sufficient.[32] While many monasteries of nuns rely primarily on donations, some engage in external works that generate modest incomes. More and more, the largest budget items for monastic and apostolic religious institutes include health care for elderly members and employment of lay persons in jobs that were formerly carried out by members. At the same time, the number of members capable of earning salaries may be declining. In the United States, the National Religious Retirement Office can assist institutes in assessing their financial viability.[33]

Cor Orans provides three options for a monastery of nuns whose future is precarious: affiliation with another monastery; transfer to a different geographical location; or suppression.[34] Other institutes will follow procedures established in their proper law or solutions proposed by canonists who are developing options for communities that are coming to completion.

Conclusion

Canonically, *Vultum Dei quaerere* and *Cor Orans* apply only to monasteries of contemplative nuns. However, the criteria given in these documents regarding the real or authentic autonomy of such monasteries is useful for other institutes of women religious which are at a stage in which it is necessary to assess their own vitality and viability into the future. The categories for assessment addressed in *Cor Orans*—community life, capacity for fulfilling necessary offices, a suitable physical plant, and economic self-sufficiency—are equally applicable to apostolic congregations, although such congregations will also have to assess their ability to continue their apostolic works. As noted in *Vultum Dei quaerere*, "these criteria ought to be considered comprehensively and in an overall perspective."[35] No one criterion can independently indicate that a monastery or a congregation is on the verge of extinction.

Perhaps what is most important to keep in mind is that, whether we are primarily contemplative or apostolic, we are all sisters and many of us seem to be in the same boat of insecurity regarding the future. Current circumstances call for implementing what I refer to as the good "C" words—compassion, cooperation, communion, and collaboration—while avoiding the dangerous "C" word—competition. ◆

Endnotes

[1] Pope Francis, apostolic constitution Vultum Dei Quaerere [hereafter VDq], June 29, 2016 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2016).

[2] Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, instruction Cor Orans [hereafter CO], April 1, 2018 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018). An instruction has a specific purpose as defined in canon law: "Instructions clarify the prescripts of laws and elaborate on and determine the methods to be observed in fulfilling them. They are given for the use of those whose duty it is to see that laws are executed and oblige them in the execution of the laws." See Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983) [hereafter 1983 CIC] c. 34.

English translation of canons from this code are from Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition: New English Translation (Washington, DC: CLSA, 1998). Cor Orans was mandated by Pope Francis to help monasteries of nuns implement the new regulations given in Vultum Dei quaerere. See VDq Conclusion and Regulations Article 14 §1 and CO Introduction.

[3] Carol Glatz, "Pope issues rules to help contemplative women be beacons for world," Catholic News Service, July 22, 2016. Accessed November 6, 2019 at https://cnstopstories.com/2016/07/22/pope-issues-rules-to-help-contemplative-women-be-beacons-for-world/.

[4] Ibid.

[5] For the sake of clarity, this paper will use the general descriptors "contemplative" and "apostolic" to distinguish institutes of women religious, while acknowledging that many institutes defy such classification. The Code of Canon Law describes two basic categories of institutes: those that are "entirely ordered to contemplation (c. 674)" and "institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate (c. 675)." Cor Orans §4 defines "nuns" as women religious who live a "canonical contemplative life," which means "their whole life and all actions" are ordered to interior contemplation.

[6] As noted in the previous footnote, nuns (moniales) are women religious who observe a "canonical contemplative life." There are also communities of sisters (sorores), such as many of the monasteries of Benedictines in the United States, who identify themselves in their Constitutions as monastic, but are not canonically recognized as nuns because they have not maintained the stricter forms of enclosure required of nuns and have historically engaged in external works. Vultum Dei quaerere and Cor Orans apply only to monasteries of nuns, not to monasteries of sisters. Nonetheless, monasteries of sisters, just as those of monks and nuns, are autonomous.

[7] CO §15.

[8] Ibid.

[9] CO §§16-17.

[10] CO §15.

[11] The supreme moderator of a religious institute is a major superior who "holds power over all the provinces, houses, and members (c. 622)." The superior, often called president, of a monastic congregation or federation does "not have all the power which universal law grants to major superiors (c. 620)."

[12] CO § 16.

[13] CO § 17.

[14] CO§ § 18.

[15] Ibid.

[16] VDq Conclusion and Regulations Article 8 §1.

[17] 1983 CIC, c. 578.

[18] CO § 39 a).

[19] VDq §24.

[20] VDq § 25.

[21] VDq §24.

[22] VDq § 27.

[23] CO §39 a).

[24] VDq §22 and Conclusion and Regulations Article 6 §3.

[25] CO §45.

[26] CO §39 b).

[27] VDq §30 and Conclusion and Regulations Article 3 §§2-3, 7; CO 118.

[28] VDq Conclusion and Regulations Article 8 §1.

[29] CO §39 c).

[30] According to canon 667 §1, all houses of religious institutes must have "cloister adapted to the character and mission of the institute . . . with some part of a religious house always reserved to the members alone." Stricter forms of enclosure are required for monasteries ordered to contemplative life (c. 667 §§2-3). Cloister observed by apostolic institutes is sometimes referred to as "common enclosure," while the stricter forms for contemplative monasteries are categorized as papal, constitutional, or monastic enclosure.

[31] CO §39 d).

[32] VDq §Conclusion and Regulations Article 8 §1.

[33] The National Religious Retirement Office and the Retirement Fund for Religious are sponsored by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious, Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The office raises funds for retired religious; helps religious institutes realistically assess their current retirement needs and implement planning; educates religious institutes to allocate assets realistically; and develops educational tools, programs, services and resource materials that enable religious institutes to address retirement wisely. See "National Religious Retirement Office," accessed at http://www.usccb.org/about/national-religious-retirement-office/.

[34] CO §54-73.

[35] VDQ Conclusion and Regulations Article 8 §1

Gratitude and Blessings on Thanksgiving, November 28, 2019

Rabbi Jaymee Alpert

In this past Sunday's *New York Times*, David DeSteno wrote an opinion editorial entitled, "Why Gratitude is Wasted on Thanksgiving." DeSteno, a psychologist who has spent years studying how gratitude shapes people's lives, writes the following:

> Truth be told, gratitude is wasted on Thanksgiving. Don't get me wrong: I love the rhythms and rituals of the day as much as anyone. It's just that the very things that make Thanksgiving so wonderful — the presence of family and friends, the time off from work, indulging in that extra serving of turkey — also make gratitude unnecessary.

DeSteno's basic premise is that gratitude drives us to form strong bonds with one another. It encourages us to be honest and to have self-control. Gratitude motivates us to be more productive and to reduce materialism. DeSteno argues that on Thanksgiving the things that drive gratitude aren't necessarily present, because most often, we get together with already loved ones – not with people we hardly know. We help ourselves to plenty of pie. Self-control is not really a tenet of Thanksgiving, and neither is reducing materialism since Black Friday now starts around 5 p.m. that afternoon.

Sincere gratitude enables us to uncover the blessings in our lives. And when we hold up those blessings and count them, we also notice how many people in our world and in our community do not have them.

Maybe this is so. But I take a different approach to Thanksgiving. I believe that Thanksgiving provides us with dedicated time to count our blessings. We have a whole day to take a break from the rest of our stressful lives. With time to slow down, we have more bandwidth to offer words of appreciation for the friends and family members around the table, for the food that we eat, for the opportunity to deepen and strengthen our bonds with one another – whether that happens watching or playing football, taking a walk around the block, indulging in pie, heading to the sales, or whatever your Thanksgiving tradition might be.

What Gratitude Means

Gratitude, real gratitude, however, goes deeper than saying thank you and "feeling" appreciative. Sincere gratitude enables us to uncover the blessings in our lives. And when we hold up those blessings and count them, we also notice how many people in our world and in our community do not have them. Not everyone can afford Thanksgiving dinner. Not everyone will be going to a warm, dry house to share in a festive meal. Not everyone has a heavy coat to wear on chilly days.

Gratitude means sharing our blessings with one another. In this way, gratitude requires action. In a few minutes, we will have the opportunity to act. This year, the Thanksgiving Offering will be donated to West Valley Community Services, whose mission is to unite the community to fight hunger and homelessness. The donation also goes to the Saratoga Rotating Safe Car Park, which provides people living in their cars a safe place to park overnight, so that they can sleep without fear of violence and harassment. If you are able, please contribute. As author Firoozah

Dumas writes, "When you have what you need, use the rest to bring joy to someone's life."

Back to DeSteno's point – although I disagree with his premise that gratitude is wasted on Thanksgiving, I do think he raises an important question, which is: How will we show our thanks not only today, when we have time set aside, but tomorrow? And the next day? How will we express gratitude on the other 364 days of the year that are not Thanksgiving? When the day-to-day pulls at us – when we're running late, and we've spilled our coffee as we brace ourselves to sit in an hour of traffic to travel a distance that at another time of day would take 15 minutes. How do we access our gratitude in those moments?

Gratitude in Jewish Tradition

The Jewish tradition has a practice of striving to recite 100 blessings every day. The practice goes back to the Talmud – about 2000 years, when the early rabbis began reciting blessings over seemingly mundane things. There are blessings for waking up in the morning, a blessing for putting on clothes, a blessing for seeing lightning, for hearing thunder, for seeing a friend for the first time in a month, yes, even going to the bathroom. There is a blessing for every type of food that we eat and blessings for when we have finished eating.

Ancient rabbinic wisdom understood that without taking a moment to recite a blessing, days might pass by without our taking time to wonder at the world. To behold all that is majestic and magical around us and to express our appreciation.

Blessings help us focus on what we are grateful for. They keep us focused on what we have, rather on what we wish we had, or what we think we wish we had. Blessings add holiness to otherwise ordinary moments. It is miraculous that we wake up each morning, but how many of us take time to notice? Do we take even a split second to say, thank you God for allowing me to wake up, revived from a night's sleep? Or do we mutter something to the alarm as we hit snooze?

Blessings ground us in what the 20th century theologian and philosopher Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel calls "radical amazement." Heschel writes, "Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement. Get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed."

Thanksgiving might be the day our country has set aside to offer thanks, but we have the ability to offer our gratitude every single day. And if we live in radical amazement – if we see everything around us as incredible and phenomenal, then we will have no choice but to offer blessings and words of thanks.

I mentioned a moment ago that the Jewish tradition asks us to say 100 blessings a day – this practice keeps us open to radical amazement. One of my favorite blessings is the one for when we do something new or when we celebrate something we haven't celebrated in a year. This is the same one that can be said when we see a friend for the first time in a while. The *Shehecheyanu* thanks God for granting us life, sustaining us, and enabling us to reach this day. I am so grateful for this time together, so grateful to have Thanksgiving as an opportunity to come together in radical amazement, grateful for the gift of life and for the gift of community.

When we come together with our differences and our similarities, we encounter each other's humanity, as well as the spark of the Divine implanted within us.

How beautiful, how phenomenal to celebrate this day. When we come together with our differences and our similarities, we encounter each other's humanity, as well as the spark of the

Divine implanted within us. We create holy space and holy time on this day, by offering sincere words of thanks. Particularly at this time in our history, when our country feels so divided, at a time when hate crimes are on the rise, it is a blessing – it is holy, to bring our houses of worship together and to feel the power that comes from being in each other's presence.

Personally, I will admit that before attending this service for the first-time last year, Thanksgiving had been a nice day to hang out with family, but I had never considered it to be a holy day. This service has changed my experience, and I thank you for that.

I would like to invite you to recite the *Shehecheyanu* blessing with me. It is in your program on page 8. Let us offer thanks for the ability to come together in holy community.

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, she-he-cheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higi-anu la-z'man ha-zeh.

Praised are You Lord our God, who rules the universe, granting us life, sustaining us, and enabling us to reach this day. Amen. ◆

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Lectures for an Eight Days' Retreat: "On the Importance of a Retreat"

Mother Mary (Theresa)Austin Carroll, R.S.M.

First Day: First Lecture: On the Importance of a Retreat

Dearly Beloved Sisters: The subject I propose for your consideration in this instruction is the great importance of the spiritual exercises you have just commenced, and the use you should make of them. If you reflect a little you will see that the grace of making a retreat is a special favor, granted to you in preference to thousands of sinners who would probably be rescued from impending perdition if such a grace were given them. Were it in my power to place a hundred of the greatest sinners in retirement, and cause them to rise early and make such meditations as you will make, assist at Mass daily, make numerous considerations and examens, receive the sacraments, and fulfil all the various conditions a retreat requires, they would, in all probability, be thoroughly converted and saved from the dreadful, eternal consequences of unrepented sin.

Numberless graces have been given you, good measure, pressed down, overflowing; see how you have acted on your side.

God gives you this particular grace denied to so many. Not content with bestowing on you what is necessary for your salvation, he has called you from a world where sin holds sway and iniquity abounds. He has snatched you as a brand from the furnace and placed you in his own sanctuary. And, as if this were not enough, he now summons you even from your ordinary duties, holy and perfect though they be, that you may reflect on the daily routine of your lives and find out whatever is defective in you. Numberless graces have been given you, good measure, pressed down, overflowing; see how you have acted on your side. Remember that in the spiritual exercises you are now making you have a most efficacious means of correcting your defects and planting the germs of every virtue in your souls.

Why We Need a Retreat

But, dearly beloved Sisters, one might think that the sanctity of your calling, the holiness of your various avocations, the edifying example of the community, would suffice to keep you free from sin and imperfection. Not necessarily. The angels sinned in heaven and our first parents sinned in paradise. You are even in more danger of becoming accustomed to holy things than seculars, and from custom may spring a certain familiarity which is one of the most dangerous feelings a Religious can experience. If persons living in the world go to Confession or to Mass they must leave their own houses, and the contrast between their usual business and that which engages them when they perform any spiritual function is so great that even it inspires reverence. But Religious are surrounded by things sacred. The very building in which they live is consecrated. Their habits are blessed before they put them on; everything about them is invested with sanctity. Religious need not leave their houses to worship the Incarnate Lamb, to assist at the tremendous Sacrifice, to receive their God into their hearts. For them every duty is regulated with the exactness of the ceremonies of the Church. They daily move in an appointed orbit, wherein I may say they continually revolve around the Blessed Sacrament. By their contiguity to it, and to every other means of perfection, it is possible that their reverence may be lessened.

When first God enlightened you on the vanity of this world and gave you the blessed desire of

consecrating yourselves irrevocably to his blessed service in this holy Sisterhood, fear of God's justice, reverence for what is sacred, love for the divine goodness, and gratitude for God's mercies were the sentiments dominant in your minds. And if you still preserve these holy dispositions it is because you have, by daily meditations and examens by exactness to the smallest observance, by fidelity to grace, and by making a right use of retreats, counteracted the inherent corruption and inconstancy of your nature. Without this, in spite of rules, enclosure (save for performing the works of mercy), and even vows, you are not proof against the evil tendencies of fallen nature.

The greatest saints felt this and prescribed occasional retreats as the best, if not the only remedy. St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales, St. Ignatius, and St. Alphonsus are all eloquent in recommending to clergy and Religious the frequent and periodical use of the spiritual exercises to save them from the numberless perils to which they are exposed when they run on blindly towards eternity without considering their paths. And we have a still higher example. Had no saint ever recommended or practiced retreat we have the example of the Son of God, who, before he began his public life, fled to the desert for forty days, which he dedicated to prayer and fasting. Not that he required to be strengthened or forewarned of approaching danger, but for our instruction and example, and to show us that the most holy and perfect cannot be dispensed from these exercises.

It is not enough that you avoid evil; you must also bear fruits of holiness.

Face Faults, Account for Spiritual Progress

You have now, dear Sisters, flown to the wilderness. Separate yourself, then, from all things; go through these days of benediction with solitude of heart; forget anxieties, troubles, attachments, studies, occupations, that you may be alone with God alone. Say to him with the Spouse of Canticles: "My Beloved to me and I to him." If you now fail to listen to his voice, it may never again sound in your ears. Beseech the Holy Spirit to show you in the clearest manner the real state of your soul, and prepare to render an account of your spiritual stewardship. I do not suppose that you have great sins to bewail. I trust by God's mercy that you have been forgiven the graver offenses committed in the ignorance of willfulness of youth.

But, looking back on the past since your last retreat or since your entrance into religion, is there not much over which you have cause to shed bitter tears? Have you not faults to atone for which might appear slight in seculars, but may have been weighty offenses in you? Has your intention always been upright before God? Have you never given way to disgust or disrelish for prayer or the sacraments? Have you never been, for ever so short a time, willfully distracted at prayer? Have you kept due guard over your senses? Have you given way to tepidity of heart or dissipation of mind? Has your obedience been prompt and accompanied with the dispositions which render obedience perfect? Has your charity toward your neighbor been all that God requires? Has your resistance to temptation been prompt, and as much as lies in you, effectual? See if some worm or canker has not been eating away the precious fruit of your labors; if you are not like those apples of the East which outwardly seem fair and lovely, but within are only ashes and corruption. Perhaps while you are lauded within and without your convent your hands are empty before God. See what the obstacles to your perfection are, and cast them from you. Remember the dread alternative: If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out; if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. For it is better to go into heaven maimed than to have two eyes and two hands in hell.

Besides reviewing your faults, you should examine what progress you have made in virtue. It

is not enough that you avoid evil; you must also bear fruits of holiness. How long has the Master of the vineyard been seeking the fruits of justice in you? How long will you appear as the barren fig tree? In what spirit have you discharged your duties? Do you possess the virtues of humility, obedience, patience, desires of God's glory, essential to your state? Have you that sincere desire to mortify self-will, that resignation under crosses, that thorough detachment, without which you bear only the name and habit of religion? Do you cultivate that disengagement from all created things essential for those who have taken God alone for their portion? Have you that zeal for God's honor and your own and your neighbor's salvation required by the great precept of the New Law: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and thy neighbor as thyself for the sake of God? Are you satisfied you have done (I will not say what the saints have done) but what might reasonably be expected of you? Would you be content with yourselves were you now called to render an account of your stewardship?

Have you that zeal for God's honor and your own and your neighbor's salvation required by the great precept of the New Law: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and they neighbor as thyself for the sake of God?

The special end of this retreat is to correct whatever is defective on this points: and if you beg of God in the sincerity of your hearts to show you all that displeases him in you, he will make known to you why so many good works, prayers, reciting of the Office, meditations, examens, works of mercy, spiritual and corporal, have been almost fruitless. Every one of these should be a link of gold to bind you to God and make you ascend the mysterious ladder which reaches from earth to heaven. What reason have you not for shame and confusion in God's presence? What bitter tears should you not shed for such abuse of time and grace! Pour out your whole hearts before him, apply your mind to rectify the disorders of the past, and God will shed upon you the purifying waters of his mercy—even the living waters of which is the fountain; and your soul, now a useless desert, will "blossom like the rose."

Listening to God, Correcting Bad Tendencies, Fostering Virtues

The mere performance of the exercises will not suffice; you might pass these days in a very edifying manner and go through the appointed holy duties, and yet not gain the true objects of retreat. The pious practices of this periodical solitude, though good in themselves, are only *means* to obtain the great object of your lives—the eradication of faults and the planting of virtues in your soul. Apply in good earnest to this. Let it be the point of all your prayers, meditations, and solitary communings with self. Remember you must strive to uproot evil tendencies not merely in part, but utterly and irrevocably.

The more searching and practical your examens are the more useful and effectual they will be. See if you have not begun these holy exercises without relish, through mere custom, to avoid singularity, or with dissatisfaction at being removed for some days from occupations to which you feel attached. Lay open your hearts before God; ask pardon for receiving so great a grace with imperfect dispositions. This may be your last retreat. This has been said to you before, and has not come true, but it is nearer the truth now than it ever was before. In any case do you act as though you were certain a similar favor should never more be accorded you. That is the best way to profit by present grace.

Listen, then, to the voice of God calling you to solitude: I will allure her; I will lead her into

the wilderness and speak to her heart. Reply with the prophet: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready." "Who will give me the wings of a dove, that I may flee from created things and rest in thy bosom?" Cleave now to him with such affection that you may be able to say with the great apostle: "Who, then, shall separate me from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, persecution or the sword? For I am sure that neither life nor death, nor any creature whatsoever, shall separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus."

If you do your part, God will not fail to do his. But, remember, the removal of one evil tendency, particularly a predominant one, or the weakening of it, will profit you more than the most rapturous contemplation on the sublimest mysteries. There may be delusion in contemplation, but there can be none in rooting out bad habits and planting virtues in the soul. ◆

"Who, then, shall separate me from the love of Christ?

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Discussion Questions

(**Austin Carroll**) "Besides reviewing your faults you should examine what progress you have made in virtue. It is not enough that you avoid evil; you must also bear the fruits of holiness."

How you would translate into your present spirituality this counsel? What in Mother Austin Carroll's introduction for a retreat can you affirm as written?

(**Alpert**) "I believe that Thanksgiving provides us with dedicated time to count our blessings."

How would you distinguish your personal blessings from "our blessings"? Do you have a daily or periodic "gratitude practice" and a rationale for it?

(**Bauer**) "The categories for assessment addressed in *Cor Orans*—community life, capacity for fulfilling necessary offices, a suitable physical plant, and economic self-sufficiency—are equally applicable to apostolic congregations, although such congregations will also have to assess their ability to continue their apostolic works."

How do you describe your apostolic congregation's vitality and viability, according to these criteria?

(**Gottemoeller**) A "robust list" of theological and moral issues, pastoral and social concerns, church organization and liturgical practice includes same-sex marriage, abortion and reproductive rights, woman's ordination, clerical sex abuse, restoration of the Latin Mass, divorced receiving Communion, Rome's perspective on U.S. nuns.

What issues would you add to topics that would benefit from Common Ground's principles of civil, respectful and inquiring discourse?

(**Kerrigan**) "Since people with dementia are already excluded from society, visiting them is essential. However, one's way of relating and communicating with them will be different."

With your own relatives, community members and neighbors who suffer Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia, what ways have you found to relate and communicate that seem to be effective ways of assuring and connecting with them?

(**Pineda**) Following the lead of this narrative, how is your personal story shaped by the unwritten, mystical traditions of your ancestors, by the place you were born, by your first language, by the historical events occurring at the time you were born, by your family members, by ways their faith was expressed, by the cultural practices of your ethnic community, its artistic expression, its "sacred sites" for pilgrimage and its memorials to injustice and justice?

Contributors

Mother Mary Teresa Austin Carroll, R.S.M. (1835-1903). Born in Ireland in County Clonmel, County Tipperary, she entered the Sisters of Mercy in Cork where the novice director was Mother Mary Josephine Warde, one of Catherine McAuley's early co-workers. She received training in teacher-education at Clonmel National Model School, and had a talent for languages, particularly French. In 1856, she volunteered for the U.S. missions in Providence, Rhode Island, where Mother Mary Francis Xavier Warde was superior. In 1866 she was sent to St. Louis, where she published a biography of Catherine McAuley, based on accounts she had gathered from Sisters who had known the foundress. In 1869 she arrived in New Orleans to start a foundation there. In the post-Civil War era, she established schools for black children throughout the south—in Biloxi, Mississippi, in Pensacola, Florida, and St. Martinsville, Louisiana. She opened a mission in Belize. She experienced ongoing conflicts with bishops in New Orleans who challenged her leadership and sought to unseat her, despite her popularity with her Sisters. She defended the community's charism to Rome. She recruited novices from Ireland. She took care of the health of her Sisters. She enjoyed friendship with Mother Baptist Russell in California and their common commitment to serve the poor. She was a prolific writer-- about women religious in the South; about Spanish and French historical sites; she adapted stories of famous women of history for high school girls; she translated French and Spanish spiritual volumes into English; she was collector and editor, notably of four volumes of *Leaves of the Annals*. After a series of strokes, she died in 1909, on mission in Mobile, Alabama.

Rabbi Jaymee Alpert is the Senior Rabbi at Congregation Beth David of Saratoga, California, in the conservative tradition. She was ordained by The Jewish Theological Seminary, and holds two Master's degrees. Prior to her appointment in California, she spent 13 years as the Rabbi at Congregation Kneses Tifereth Israel in Port Chester, New York. She cares deeply about interfaith relations and was a founding member of the Port Chester Interfaith Clergy Group. She served as the chaplain for the Port Chester Police and Fire Departments. Rabbi Alpert is a past president of the Westchester Board of Rabbis and served on various local boards and committees, including the Port Chester Board of Ethics. She was a member of the inaugural cohort of the UJA Federation of New York's Rabbinic Fellowship for Visionary Leaders, and is proud to be a Rabbis Without Borders Fellow. Rabbi Alpert is the co-creator of *Neshama Body and Soul*, a practice that combines exercise with prayer, in an effort to help participants connect their bodies to their souls. During the COVID-19 shut-down, she initiated on-line worship services, lectures, study sessions and wine-socials for her congregation through ZOOM, Facebook, and conference call connections.

Nancy Bauer, O.S.B. is a member and former prioress (2005-2011) of St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, MN. She is presently Assistant Professor of Canon Law, specializing in consecrated life, at Catholic University of America. Her B.A. is in photojournalism from the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis; her M.A. in theology from St. John's in Collegeville, MN. Her J.C.L and J.C.D. are from Catholic University of America. With her background in journalism she worked as reporter and photographer and later editor for another 10 years for the *St. Cloud Visitor*—then the newspaper of the Diocese of St. Cloud, MN. For the Federation of St. Benedict, a consortium of 11 monasteries, she was delegate to the chapters of 1994 and 1997; she served on the Council

of St. Benedict's Federation (2003-2009) and on the Federation's Juridic Committee (2011-2017). She was a delegate to the international *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* from 2008-2010.

Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M. (South Central) was elected the first president of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, with a long history in elected leadership at the local and provincial levels. Subsequently, she was senior vice-president for Mission Integration at Catholic Healthcare Partners, a multi-state health system. She has served on many boards of trustees. She holds a Ph.D. in theology from Fordham University in New York, focused on ecclesiology in the work of Yves Congar, O.P. She is widely published on themes of religious life, spirituality, and renewal. She co-edited, with Denise Colgan, R.S.M., *Union and Charity: The Story of the Sisters of Mercy of the America*s, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Institute. She is a member of the editorial board of *The MAST Journal*. In 2018, she was honored with the Bernadin Award, presented to her in Chicago at Catholic Theological Union, as one of the founding members of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative.

Sharon Kerrigan, R.S.M. (West Midwest) holds a Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Foundation, a D.Min. from Chicago Theological Seminary, and an M.A. from Loyola Universty in Chicago. She has been a professor of social science and religious studies, as well as an administrator in college and university settings. She served as adjunct professor at St. Xavier University and System Director of Mission and Spirituality for Provena Health and Provena Senior Services. She is currently Assistant Administrator at Mercy Convent in Chicago, and services as a personal contact person for West-Midwest community members. A companion and friend to many retired sisters, she is regularly their end-of-life advocate and funeral coordinator. She is a frequent contributor to *The MAST Journal* and serves on the editorial board.

Ana Maria Pineda, R.S.M. (West Midwest) is presently vice-president of the West Midwest leadership team in Omaha, NE. She holds an S.T.D. in Pastoral Theology from *la Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca en España*. Prior to her election to community leadership, she was and still holds the position of associate professor of theology at Santa Clara University in California. At the annual colloquium of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States, she was presented with the *Virgilio Elizondo Award* in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She has received many other honors: Honorary doctorate from St. Xavier University in Chicago, the *Yves Congar Award for Theological Excellence* from Barry University and *The Oscar Romero Founder's Award* from Catholic Theological Union (Chicago) for establishing the Oscar Romero Scholarship Program. She is a former president of ACHTUS and one of the founding members of the Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI). Mentoring others has been important to her. She was the first Latina to serve on the board of the Louisville Institute, where she assisted in the development of the Minority Scholars Consultation. Her publications include her recent book, *Romero & Grande: Companions on the Journey* (2016); and an anthology, *Dialogue Rejoined: Theology and Ministry in the U.S. Hispanic Reality* (1995), co-edited with Robert Schreiter.

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. Julia Upton, R.S.M., currently serves as MAST'S Executive Director. **Because control of the virus pandemic has resulted in travel restrictions, and shelter-in-place orders extending into May 2020, and possibly beyond, throughout the U.S., MAST has cancelled its Annual Meeting at Mercy Heritage Center in Belmont, N.C. MAST will NOT meet June 19-21, 2020. The program will be transferred to June 2021.**

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, Julia Upton, R.S.M. by e-mail at uptonj@stjohns.edu or by mail at St. Mary of the Angels Convent, 600 Convent RD, Syosset, NY 11791-3863.

Dues can be paid by check, payable to MAST and sent to association Treasurer, Katherine Doyle, R.S.M., Holy Spirit Convent, 3920 West Land Park Drive, Sacramento, CA 95822-1123. E-mail is mkdoyle@mercywmw.org.

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

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