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Women's Authority, Power and Freedom

Papers of the Mercy Higher Education Colloquium: Unlocking the Legacy

Fall, 1995

Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

I am quite happy these days not to have to stand in the shoes of presidents at Catholic colleges and universities. Catholic educational institutions in this country must acknowledge that a growing tension exists between acknowledging the religious authority of the church's hierarchy and observing the political and legal demands of participative democracy. The instinct of many women, and I feel it myself, is to withdraw from the fray, find shelter, and reduce visibility. No one really wants to be a victim soul except those anonymous exemplars from the romantic, devotional literature of the last century whose sentiments, somewhat like the patriotic fervor that inspired thousands to sign up to fight in WWI, were cited in our spiritual reading books prior to Vatican II.

"Wake me when it's over," could be a healthy, astute strategy for a time of siege, aimed at drawing no fire, prolonging our professional effectiveness, and safeguarding the reputation of our institutions. This atmosphere leads many women to take on volunteer jobs from which they cannot be fired, or to find needed sorts of social service which lie beyond an episcopal or papal firing zone, at least for the present. My version of freedom amidst the fray is a sort of "peasant wisdom" mantra which I am fond of repeating: the Pope doesn't tell me how to brush my teeth. Going about our ministry effectively and our commitments quietly, without tripping other people's triggers, would be an enviable achievement, were it a long-lived, fail-safe *modus operandi*. I admire people who can do this, who have the energy for tireless work and gifts for diplomacy that insure their uninterrupted, welcome life in the public eye. Many Sisters of Mercy have in fact managed this delicate balance, a kind of miracle of sustaining relationships with diverse sorts of people both within the faith community and those with other religious traditions. For many serving in education, health services, politics or community organizing, the experience of ministry in the public arena falls somewhere on a continuum. On one pole is a delightful exhaustion even from taxing demands on one's energy; it is deeply meaningful and obviously effective work. At the other pole is an endless martyrdom of soul, emotions and intellect from facing wave after wave of problems for which there is no lasting solution. Both the exhausted worker and the courageous martyr sustain their presence to many issues over which they have no control.

I usually find occasion to tell my own college students, at some inspired moment during a typical year, that maturity means you realize how little control you actually have; that most of life lies outside our control. I describe more and more of my own ministry in fighting the rising tide of biblical illiteracy as "entropic" work, that sort of labor women know very well as traditionally "women's work." This is the sort of daily work that has to be repeated again and again because there is always a mess, usually just after you cleaned up the one before. When is there ever an end to changing diapers, washing dishes, mopping a dirty floor, shopping for groceries or preparing meals? When do all Christians understand the scriptures adequately? When are all sick people finally healed? When do all students finally understand the lesson? When do the poor finally have the advantages the rich, the mobile, the well-born and well-spoken do? When are the war-torn all safe from harm? When are the unjustly compensated all given a living wage? When are all complaints finally attended to and all correspondence answered? For any of us, when have we finally done enough to meet the claims of mercy and compassion on us?

The essays in this issue are a tribute to the freedom, authority and power of Mercy women, all along the pole of the exhausted workers and the martyrs to public life. The miracle of all these good works, sustained by the energy of women of all ages in the tradition of Mercy, should be enough for Catherine McAuley's canonization. I fantasize that Catherine is holding out on Roman procedures, waiting for the entire church to recognize that the only miracle needed is right here, witnessed by women who speak with authority like these. It is undeniably a work of God that women who follow after Catherine the Venerable go on, in the face of many difficulties, doing such hidden good and powerfully public good today in the tradition of Mercy.

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The 1979 Papal Greeting Fifteen Years Later: A Reflection

Theresa Kane, R.S.M.

I was invited by my community to offer some reflections on the greeting I extended as President of the LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious) to Pope John Paul II at the Immaculate Conception Shrine in Washington, D.C. in October, 1979.[1]

After I received a phone call from the Shrine authorities informing me that I was to extend a very brief greeting, I remember concentrating on formulating four messages into my text: welcoming the Pope in the name of U.S.A. women religious; desiring to acknowledge the extraordinary contribution women religious had made to the development of the U.S.A. Church; expressing solidarity with the Pope in his strong concern for the world's poor and finally, wanting to direct the Pope's attention to the issue of women being in all ministries of the Church.

I focused my energy on trying to write a greeting which would include the above four areas, yet be succinct, welcoming and respectful. The final section of my greeting regarding women being in all ministries of the Church became widely publicized and debated through the years. October, 1995, marks fifteen years since that moment. I continue to receive mail, phone inquires and requests for interviews about what and why I spoke about women being in all Church ministries and the importance of the issue.

In highlighting a concern about women in the Church, I was being faithful to the LCWR direction taken through the 1970's. Beginning in 1971, the LCWR annual assembly addressed the issue each year. LCWR also devoted energy to education for its members, engaging in research and study, as well as extensive education through materials, packets and workshops. At the LCWR 1975 annual meeting in Houston, a resolution was overwhelmingly endorsed which contained almost the exact wording of my text, "women are to be included in all ministries of the Church." The Sisters of Mercy of the Union had also approved a similar statement at their 1977 General Chapter. For me not to have addressed the concern about women being included in all ministries would have been unfaithful to the spirit of a growing number of women religious and women throughout the country. I realized clearly that I was not speaking for all women religious. However, I was confident that I was expressing the sentiments of a significant number and those sentiments were becoming stronger.

I am often asked whether I would do it again. Yes, I would do it again and would attempt to articulate my message with much greater urgency. When I expressed the concern about women in 1979, I had a strong personal sense of the issue and knew LCWR did also. Following the greeting, through thousands of letters, many phone calls, and after many personal and group conversations I realized how critical the issue was and is to legions of women—to Catholic women, to women of other denominations and religions, to women's organizations, and to concerned men also. One of the Catholic bishops in an interview some years ago, identified the issue of women in the Church as pivotal to its future. He predicted it would be a lasting issue into the twenty-first century. It has indeed been an enduring, engaging and focussing issue, topic and concern of my life through these years.

Recently, I was privileged to pursue and obtain a second graduate degree—in Women's History. The studies deepened an appreciation for the centrality of the issue of women. It also contextualized the issue of women and Church as part of a universal agenda concerning women in religion and society. Women comprise 53% of the population world-wide. Thus, the issue of women is by no means a "minority" issue or agenda. Concentrating on women's history has given me some grasp of women's world-view and their real-life situations. Because of these studies, I continue to forge ahead with legions of women who are convinced and convicted that, at this moment in time, God has once again broken into history and this moment has become, for women, the fullness of time.

As we close this twentieth century in a few short years, we complete another one thousand years of time. The twenty-first century is significant not only because it begins the next hundred years. It also begins the next thousand years of life and history. The concern, the debate, the controversy, the challenge and the newness of life surrounding the realities of women being in all ministries of the Church and in all spheres of society is a world agenda for our times. The twentieth century has been described as a major social revolution for women. I believe it has been the beginning of a continuing revolution which will dramatically change the course of events in the twenty-first century. God does indeed speak to us through the signs of the times. That women are pivotal in shaping and directing religion and society is a manifestation, I believe, of God. Nothing is impossible with God.

Footnote

1. This reflection was presented at the New York Regional Community meeting in May, 1994. It was edited by Theresa Kane in summer of 1995 for inclusion in the MAST Journal.

Freedom in the U.S.: Signs of Hope and A Prophetic Word

Mary Rose Bumpus, R.S.M.

Freedom is a word which brings to mind all kinds of images, meanings and stories. For some, freedom suggests the U.S. flag, the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War. For others, freedom means the coming down of the Berlin Wall, a sign of a nation and a world divided for almost half a century. Perhaps for Nelson Mandela, freedom meant spending twenty-seven years in a South African prison and being accused of high treason for speaking out and demonstrating against the unjust system of apartheid.

Freedom, for many, means being treated with equal dignity and respect, having the opportunity to give voice to their thoughts and concerns, and being able to share their gifts in relationships of mutuality and solidarity with others. For still others, freedom means having enough to eat so that one is free from hunger; having decent shelter so that one is free to make a home for self and family; having the kind of clothing which protects and frees from the perils of weather; having the kind of health care which frees one from illness, disease and early death; having employment which empowers one to make a contribution to family and society; and having an education which frees one *from* ideological fears and superstitions and frees one *for* knowledge, the development of skills and the opportunity to see life's broader horizons.

. . . freedom . . . "perhaps the most resonant, deeply held American value."

It is obviously impossible in one article such as this to address the various meanings ascribed to the word "freedom." It is also impossible to explore the surrounding issues and implications of freedom from the various socio-economic, political, cultural, psychic or social perspectives. Consequently, I am limiting the exploration of freedom in this article to the interrelationship of two realities, and in so doing, I will address the following questions: 1) Is the New Testament tradition of freedom, specifically that of the Pauline and Johannine heritage, a *living* tradition in which the contemporary Christian community can stand? 2) If so, what Word do these traditions speak to U.S. Christians as they struggle to deal with a specific heritage of freedom — its legacy, contemporary understandings and manifestations?

Freedom in the U.S.: The Language of "Freedom From"

It is important to acknowledge at the outset that the history of freedom in the United States is a complex one. Moments of genuine understanding of the nature of freedom have given rise to such documents as the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. On the other hand, a distorted understanding of the nature of freedom has given rise to a constitution which permitted slavery and to laws of segregation between blacks and whites. This provides ample evidence for the fact that in any given period of U.S. history, individuals and communities have brought various experiences and understandings of freedom to the nation.

Between 1979 and 1984, Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swindler and Steven M. Tipton engaged in a study of the "dominant" U.S. culture. They began by interviewing 200 persons, some several times, who were primarily white and middle class. They chose this particular group because of budgetary resources and because they believed it represented the predominant culture in the U.S. at that time. The results of their study and reflections were published in 1985 in what became a national best selling volume entitled *Habits of the Heart*.[1]

Habits of the Heart describes freedom as "perhaps the most resonant, deeply held American value."[2] It is the value which often defines what Americans consider to be "the good" in both their private and public lives. When those surveyed were asked to describe what freedom means, they spoke of it in this way. Freedom means being free from any outside arbitrary authority whether in one's work life, family life or political life. It means choosing a place to live and doing what one wants to improve the material circumstances of life for self and for family. Freedom means being completely responsible for oneself. That is, human beings are expected to define themselves, choose their own values, and determine what they want from life free of conformity to family, friends or community. In order to do this, individuals must separate themselves from the values of their past.[3]

Even from a more political and social perspective, freedom is described in terms of self. Freedom means that individuals are free to speak out, to participate freely in the life of their community, and to have their rights respected by others.[4] This way of speaking about freedom, what Bellah et al. call the primary language of Americans, is the language of radical individualism. This language of individualism has both

evolved from and helps to shape Americans' understanding of themselves and their relationship to others. It is a language that has a much greater capacity to describe what individuals want to be freed "from" than what they hope for be freed "for."[5]

In addition, because values are those freely chosen by the individual without external influence and without roots in tradition, freedom appears to be contentless.[6] In other words, there is nothing which defines and gives shape to the authentic nature of freedom. When freedom becomes contentless, then there is no way to talk about what understandings of God, self, and others, what choices and what actions are genuinely freeing. This is freedom "without its foundation in truth."[7]

The Present Content of Freedom: Autonomy

However, there is really no such thing as contentless freedom. Because people in the U.S. tend to understand and define freedom primarily in terms of the self, they tend to see the self as the center of reality. And it is also true that when human beings tend to see the self as the center of reality, they tend to define freedom primarily in terms of the self.[8] This is how many persons in the U.S. have come to understand freedom as self-determination and as autonomy.

Self-determination means that individuals make choices according to their own mind, will, inner wants, desires, needs and feelings, without outside influence.

Self-determination means that individuals make choices according to their own mind, will, inner wants, desires, needs and feelings, without outside influence. Autonomy means that individuals function independently and basically govern themselves. It is worth noting here that the word autonomy is used in the biological sciences to refer to green plants or bacteria which engage in the process of photosynthesis or chemosynthesis.[9] In other words, they make their own food. Members of the dominant U.S. culture tend to act as though they not only can, but must, nourish, provide life for, and free themselves.

Freedom is a very important value in many respects, and we do not wish to lose sight of this; nonetheless, when freedom becomes contentless or when the content becomes determined solely by the individual self, the human community loses a great deal. First, the real individuation of persons is thwarted as the formation of one's identity is always relational and rooted in particular communities and traditions. Second, a kind of "anxious conformity to the opinions" of those who are generally like oneself arises.[10] Third, there is no basis, apart from personal desire, for maintaining commitments to others whether in interpersonal or communal relationships. Finally, and possibly most significantly, this notion of freedom provides no basis for any real sense of the "common good." This places the human community at great peril.

Freedom in the New Testament

Is it possible for Christians in the U.S. to look to the New Testament as a resource and a place from which to stand when dealing with the cultural attitude which has been described above? I think so. In the first place, the power to choose and to accept the responsibility for one's choices is assumed in the New Testament.[11] In the letter to the Galatians, Paul seems well aware that the Galatians may, albeit unwisely, choose to submit to circumcision and the law. While Paul seems to have great hope that his words will persuade them to do otherwise, there seems to be no doubt that the choice is theirs and that the Galatians will have to accept the responsibility for their choice. Similarly in the Gospel of John, human beings are called or invited by God to relationship with God, but they always have the freedom to accept or to refuse the invitation to "Come and see" (1:39).

There is probably no more eloquent testimony to the freedom of choice in this century than that given by Jews and others who lived under the repressive regime of Adolph Hitler. Despite the extreme externally imposed limitations on the freedom of the individual, there were men and women who chose how they would *be* in relationship with God, others, and self in this dire situation.

'Bearing the unchosen "with grace"' is the way Etty Hillesum, a twenty-seven year old Jewish woman who died in Auschwitz, described something of her inner life as she prayed that God might allow her to be the "thinking heart" of the barracks of the Westerbrook Camp.[12] Such an attitude points to the possibility and to the potential of choice for the liberation of the human spirit. And this is the formal freedom that the New Testament assumes.

However, as human beings, we know that both our formal and our existential freedom is limited by our physical and our social world.[13] In addition, this freedom is also limited by that which we desire and choose as we respond to the many conflicting voices within. Yet we also know that these very *limitations* may become *invitations* to acknowledge our need for one another, to love and to be loved, to empower and to be empowered. Thus the limitations of human freedom have great potential for the actual experience of freedom and grace. This is attested to again and again in the New Testament stories of healing, empower-

ment and forgiveness of sin.

While freedom is *limited* by limitations, freedom is *bound* by sin. Sin may become so prevalent in a given nation or society that it becomes objectified in structures. This is what is known as social or structural sin.[14] Social or structural sin limits formal and existential freedom. For example, a black person born south of the Mason-Dixon line in the United States in the early 1800's was, by virtue of skin color, a slave. The structure of slavery severely limited the formal and existential freedom of the person of color. At the same time, the structure of slavery limited the authentic freedom of the "white" slave owner.

While the Pauline categories of social sin come from a significantly different world view than the one the human community has today, nonetheless Paul does describe the power of sin that exists when it is more than personal sin. In the letter to the Galatians, for example, Paul reminds the Galatians how they were formerly enslaved to the elemental powers of the world, to sin and death, to social, racial, socio-economic and sexual discrimination. In addition, Paul speaks of his own astonishment at the Galatians who are about to choose to become enslaved to the structure of the Law. Thus it seems clear, whether one is talking about the reality of the early Christian community or the reality of present-day communities of Christians, that sin is both personal and structural in nature.

In terms of the actual experience of sin, sin can be described as that which is alienating, causes estrangement in, or distorts the relationship of the person to God, others, and self. It may also be described as that which exploits or oppresses those same relationships. Experience of sin, then, may be described in general as that which is alienating and enslaving. Thus in both the Pauline and the Johannine tradition, sin is characterized as the antithesis of Christian freedom.

Finally, the most significant contribution that the New Testament tradition of freedom makes toward an appropriate understanding of freedom in contemporary life is that it provides the value of freedom with its *content*. For Paul, the life of authentic Christian freedom begins with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, i.e., the Christ Event. As the Son of God who loves all of humanity and gave himself up for all of creation, Jesus Christ is the liberator, the one who "sets us free" (Gal. 5:1). In and through his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ ushered in a new age in human history in which a new life lived according to the Spirit, in Christ, and for God has become possible for all.

The freedom of the community empowered by the Spirit of Christ is discernible, according to Paul, in two primary ways. In the first instance it is seen in that which the community has been "freed from." This means that freedom exists in the Christian community to the extent that there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, black nor white, poor nor rich. In the second instance, the freedom of the community is discernable to the extent that it has been "freed for" love. For Paul, love is the law of freedom. When human beings "suffer with," "build up" and "give themselves to" the Body of Christ, true freedom in the form of reconciliation, restoration, creation and transformation is experienced. However, Paul also recognizes that life lived in the Spirit, a life of freedom in love, is in various and many ways incomplete. Thus it is imperative for the Christian community to wait in hope for the future fulfillment of freedom, being drawn forward by this hope, and empowered by it to imagine new responses of love in concrete historical situations.

. . . freedom is a gift given which must be freely received, and it comes to those who live a believing and loving life.

In the Gospel of John, freedom is a gift given which must be freely received, and it comes to those who live a believing and loving life. This way of life is characterized by an enduring commitment to the person and word of Jesus Christ and by a continual willingness to receive and affirm Jesus Christ as the revelation, the Way, the Truth, the Life of God. For John, when human beings "remain in" this Word who is God's love and love one another "even unto death," true freedom in the form of forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, compassion, mercy, justice and peace are known. For both John and Paul, freedom cannot exist apart from God's love for humanity nor apart from the love of human beings for one another.

Peter Hodgson, a contemporary philosopher-theologian, suggests that there are three essential structures which constitute human freedom: the subjective structure or personhood, the intersubjective structure or community and the transubjective structure or openness. The latter is described by Hodgson as "the most distinctive and essential structure of human existence" as it is this structure which enables human beings to be present to God, to future possibilities, to the world, to others and to self.[15] Christian freedom is possible only when these structures are appropriately integrated and when their specific content is provided by the message of the Gospel. In Pauline terms, this means that it is only when human beings live in "right relationship" to God, others, and self that authentic freedom can be experienced. What is known via human experience, however, is that the structures of freedom are never perfectly integrated and that their Christian content is vulnerable to denial, distortion and

misrepresentation. Nonetheless, there are moments when the structures of freedom are more rather than less integrated and when their content has been genuinely determined by the message of the Gospel. In these moments of right relationship, freedom is known.

These voices and stories . . . are important resources for contemporary U.S. Christians as they struggle with the question of right relationship to God, others and self.

In the history of the United States, there have always been voices and stories which articulated an understanding of freedom that maintained the greatest respect for the rights and dignity of the individual. At the same time, these same voices placed the dignity of the human person in the broader contexts of the human community and the life of God. In large measure these persons and their stories appealed to both the Gospel message and to the authentic heritage of freedom in the United States. These voices and stories, whether individual or communal, whether representative of many or few, are important resources for contemporary U.S. Christians as they struggle with the question of right relationship to God, others and self.

While the voices and stories are many, and the issues they have dealt with are varied and significant, this discussion will focus on the issues of slavery, segregation and discrimination, and will be limited to three spokespersons: John Woolman from the eighteenth century, Abraham Lincoln from the nineteenth century and Martin Luther King, Jr. from the twentieth century. Slavery and segregation have been major ways in which persons in the United States have absolutized the subjective structure of freedom, defined it as success or wealth, and have maintained their understanding of freedom at the obvious expense of the freedom and dignity of others. In hearing about and from John Woolman, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, it is hoped that U.S. Christians will see, hear and discern in these voices and stories a word or deed which speaks to them about authentic freedom today.

John Woolman

John Woolman was born in Northampton, in Burlington County, West Jersey in 1720. He died in 1772 before the birth of the United States as a nation.[16] At the time of Woolman's birth, the institution of slavery already had a history in the colonies, and during his early years, Woolman was aware of slave insurrections as well as the cruelty with which some slaves were treated.[17] As an adult, Woolman took an active stance toward the abolition of slavery and was later recognized as "one of the most significant Quaker abolitionists of the eighteenth century."[18] However, Woolman's active participation in the abolition of slavery was a stance which evolved during his lifetime. This can be clearly seen from an account in Woolman's Journal.

> My employer, having a Negro woman, sold her, and desired me to write a bill of sale, the man being waiting who bought her. The thing was sudden; and though I felt uneasy at the thoughts of writing an instrument of slavery for one of my fellow-creatures, yet I remembered that I was hired by the year, that it was my master who directed me to do it, and that it was an elderly man, a member of our Society, who bought her; so through weakness I gave way, and wrote it; but at the executing of it I was so afflicted in my mind, that I said before my master and the Friend that I believed slave-keeping to be a practice inconsistent with the Christian religion. This, in some degree, abated my uneasiness; yet as often as I reflected seriously upon it I thought I should have been clearer if I had desired to be excused from it, as a thing against my conscience; for such it was.

The next time that Woolman was approached to write a bill of sale for a slave, he graciously refused to do so.[19]

John Woolman brought to the Quaker community and others an understanding of the love, justice, and mercy of God which was incompatible with the institution of slavery. He was able to do so because he lived his life rooted in his relationship with God and in the Christian community of the Society of Friends. During his life, Woolman turned time and again to the Light, the Truth, and the Power which he believed dwelled within him. And it is this Source of Love which motivated Woolman's commitment to the abolition of slavery as well as his commitment to pacifism, to the poor and oppressed and to simplicity of life.[20]

There are three things that seem to stand out in what has been written by and about John Woolman in relationship to slavery and freedom. First, he saw the slave as a human being who deserved to be treated with respect, dignity, and compassion. Woolman was aware of the kinds of stereotypical judgments that were formed about people of color in the years before the birth of the U.S. as a nation. In essays against slavery, Woolman tried to combat this way of viewing blacks by asking his readers "to calmly consider the circumstances of slaves and to enter into their sufferings."[21] Thus Woolman encouraged Christians to "suffer-with" those who were oppressed.

Second, Woolman recognized the ways in which slavery oppressed the oppressor. In his essay entitled "Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes," Woolman appeals to commonly held Quaker values and to the parental instinct in slave owners to speak to this issue. In this essay, Woolman states his concern about the children of wealthy slave owners who are "easily tempted to idleness and exaggerated self-importance and thus are unable to appreciate the importance of work and humility in achieving true happiness." Thus, wealthy slave owners were depriving their children of the promise of eternal life.[22]

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal . . .

While he was totally opposed to slavery, Woolman approached slave owners about giving up their slaves with great compassion. Woolman believed that he was being urged by God to bring to the attention of others the plight of the slaves. He also readily spoke to the fact that slavery was inconsistent with Christianity. However, Woolman did not see it as his work "to convert" others to the truth. Ultimately, Woolman relied on the Spirit of Truth to convert and transform others.[23] He trusted the creative and transforming power of the Spirit at work "in" and "with" the human community. He spoke what he believed to be the light of the Spirit of Truth only when he felt urged by the Spirit to do so, and he trusted that this same power was at work in the hearts and lives of others.

Third, Woolman recognized the interrelationship of all things. He believed that slavery was basically motivated by comfort and wealth.[24] Hence, he lived and encouraged his fellow human beings to live a simple lifestyle which he believed to be in accord with the Christian message of the Gospel.[25] Woolman also believed that the continuation of the institution of slavery would bring serious consequences in the future.

> I saw . . . so many vices and corruptions, increased by this trade and this way of life, that it appeared to me as a dark gloominess hanging over the land; and though now many willingly run into it, yet in future the consequence will be grievous to posterity.[26]

In a highly significant way, Abraham Lincoln became the inheritor of the consequences of slavery which Woolman believed would be "grievous to posterity" and, in fact, became so.

Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin near Hodgenville, Kentucky on February 12, 1809, and he was assassinated on April 15, 1865 during his second term as President of the United States.[27] Lincoln was a complex person and figure in U.S. history. While there seems to be little doubt that Lincoln was committed to the truth of Scripture and was open to God as he understood God, he was equally committed to the principles and foundations of the U.S. as a nation and, in fact, believed that the Declaration of Independence was rooted in divine authority. It was out of this dual commitment that Lincoln tried to identify, promote, and encourage authentic freedom. It was also out of this dual commitment that both Lincoln's strengths and weaknesses were manifested.

While Lincoln seems to have been opposed to slavery, his debates with Stephen Douglas make it abundantly clear that he was far from free of racial prejudice. In addition, Lincoln seemed to be publicly indifferent to the issue of slavery until such time as it became politically expedient to take a public stance. However, like John Woolman, Lincoln was able to "transcend" earlier views and to grow in awareness of the appropriate course of action.[28]

Abraham Lincoln's eventual understanding of what constituted authentic freedom in the U.S. has two major contributions to make to Christians today. First, Lincoln came to understand that personhood, community and openness to the Transcendent were necessary for freedom and that these structures had to be integrated appropriately.

In terms of personhood, Lincoln was morally committed to what he believed to be the truth of the Declaration of Independence:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.[29]

Not unlike Paul in his letter to the Galatians, Lincoln appealed to Scripture, to the tradition, to the experience of the people of the U.S., and ultimately, to the argument from freedom itself to assert that people of color are human beings and that they have the right to basic human freedom.

In terms of communion, Lincoln was morally committed to the preservation of the union. He did not want to see the nation torn asunder by war and hatred. He was initially willing to let the constitutional right to own slaves in the southern states stand in order to prevent the dissolution of the union. Lincoln's First Inaugural Address speaks eloquently to this commitment.

> In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. . .You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to `preserve, protect, and defend' it.[30]

In terms of openness to the Transcendent, Lincoln was committed to the will of God and the truth of Scripture. However, it took time for Lincoln to come to understand that this structure of freedom is the one which allows for the appropriate integration of the other two. "The paradox that man is most free when he is most guided" was something that Lincoln had to come to over time.[31] It was this third commitment, however, that determined Lincoln's final stance toward freedom and the preservation of the union.

This becomes apparent in Lincoln's annual message to Congress delivered on December 1, 1862. He begins this address with a statement which reveals his belief that it is God who will grant "a return of peace," that the Congress and the nation are guided by the "best light He gives," and that it is necessary to trust in God's "good time, and wise way" and "all will yet be well." In the same address Lincoln states:

> In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free- honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last, best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just - a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.[32]

Lincoln's second major contribution to an authentic understanding of freedom came in the Gettysburg Address and in the Second Inaugural Address. For it is in the final years of his life that Abraham Lincoln comes to see the U.S. as a "nation under God."[33] This understanding leads Lincoln to articulate the "grounds for reconciliation" which are necessary for the nation to become genuinely united after the civil war.[34]

In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free . . .

Not unlike Paul, Lincoln understood that the self-righteous attitude of many in the North at the end of the Civil War could do as much to damage and divide the community as the actual war itself had done. While Lincoln believed that the North had been waging a just war, nonetheless he came to see that both the North and the South were "unjust in the eyes of God."[35]

The common ground for reunion for Lincoln became God's justice, and it was imperative that people in the U.S. understand that equality of persons stems from the fact that all stand equally under God's justice. As such, people of the U.S. were all responsible for injustice, all were sinners, and all were "capable of repentance."[36] It was from this theological perspective that Abraham Lincoln was able to provide the grounds for reconciliation of the divided, war-torn nation.

> With malice towards none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan - to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.[37]

Thus Abraham Lincoln articulated in the concrete historical reality of a war-torn divided nation, the "law of freedom."

While the institution of slavery came to an end in the United States with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution which was skillfully guided through Congress by Lincoln, this amendment did not put an end to the racism which led to segregationist laws and discrimination against blacks. This aspect of the issue was that with which future generations would have to deal.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

In the twentieth century, there has been no more articulate spokesperson for an end to the bondage of segregation, discrimination and racism than Martin Luther King, Jr. Martin Luther King preached and addressed the Gospel of freedom to the twentieth century American culture out of his own and others' experience of oppression, out of a deep faith life and tradition, out of a growing understanding of the meaning of the Gospel message of justice, peace, love, and hope, and out of a deep reverence and respect for the rights and dignity of each person.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1929, King understood the meaning of racism, and from the earliest years of his youth, he experienced its power to alienate. Describing this reality in *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*, King states:

> As a teenager I had never been able to accept the fact of having to go to the back of a bus or sit in the segregated section of a train. The first time that I had been seated behind a curtain in a dining car, I felt as if the curtain had been dropped on my selfhood. . . . I could never adjust to the separate waiting rooms, separate eating places, separate rest rooms, partly because the separate was always unequal, and partly because the very idea of separation did something to my sense of dignity and self-respect.[38]

This experience of injustice and his deep roots in the Christian tradition gave King an understanding of the nature of true justice which provided the foundation for future thinking and acting.

For much of his adult life, King was the leader of

a community which was fighting against the racial injustice which eats away at the dignity and self-respect of the individual. At the same time, however, King was well aware that a "fight" to free persons *from* racial injustice could not be entered into, justified, or conducted without a clear sense of what it was that the community was fighting *for*.[39] In addition, King believed that it was important to know how the fight was to be conducted. Otherwise, the "fight" for freedom and justice would simply become one more struggle in human history which would grow in violence and leave the human community once again deprived of true reconciliation and peace.

John Woolman, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King were all aware that slavery, segregation, and discrimination are, in part, caused by the desire for comfort and the desire for wealth.

For King, the legitimate *goal* in the struggle for freedom and equality was the "creation of the beloved community." King believed that true freedom was possible only when human beings lived as a community in which all were sisters and brothers to one another and daughters and sons of God. The appropriate *way* to work toward the creation of the beloved community was through the use of non-violent resistant love.[40]

> Love may well be the salvation of our civilization . . . . It is true that as we struggle for freedom in America, we will have to boycott at times. But we must remember . . . that a boycott is not an end in itself. . . . But the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community.[41]

For King, this "law of love" was the genuine source of freedom.

However, the more King struggled against the injustice of racism, the more he came to realize the larger complexity of the issue. In his later years, King was strongly influenced by his own struggles against a kind of racism in Chicago that was "more destructive to human personality and also more deeply embedded in the sociopolitical structures than what he had seen in the South."[42] In addition, the black power movement as well as the escalation of the Vietnam War and its consequent domestic budget cuts led King to a deeper analysis of the causes of racism and discrimination. At this point, King became acutely aware of the connections between racism, poverty, and war. Between 1965 and 1968, King began to speak with a "prophetic passion" which led him to be highly critical of the Vietnam war and the general failure of the United States to "use its vast economic resources for life rather than death."[43]

In addition to his deeper understanding of the causes and nature of racism, King was also deeply affected by the suffering and disappointments associated with the civil rights movement itself. In a 1965 interview King stated:

> The most pervasive mistake I have made was in believing that because our cause was just, we could be sure that the white ministers of the South, once their Christian consciences were challenged, would rise to our aid. . . . I ended up, of course, chastened and disillusioned.[44]

There were other moments of discouragement for King as well, and yet King seemed to have the kind of eschatalogical hope that was the mainstay for Paul and the early Christian communities. It is this kind of hope which is with the community in the midst of the struggles and yet which also draws the community forever forward. King describes it thus:

> Sometimes I feel discouraged. . . . Living everyday under the threat of death I feel discouraged sometime. Living everyday under extensive criticism, even from Negroes, I feel discouraged sometimes. Yes, sometimes I feel discouraged and feel my work's in vain, but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again. There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole.[45]

In working for the freedom of the sons and daughters of God, King lived his life in the shadow of the cross. Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968.

John Woolman, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King were all aware that slavery, segregation, and discrimination are, in part, caused by the desire for comfort and the desire for wealth. U.S. Christians today are living in a culture which characteristically understands freedom as the self-determining will to succeed or to be self-fulfilled. Woolman, Lincoln, and King all relied on the message of the Gospel to proclaim a different understanding of the nature of authentic freedom and to provide the people of the United States with an understanding of what the "law of love" demanded in specific, concrete historical circumstances.

What can be said about the nature of freedom and its "law of love" to Christians living in the U.S. today who are dealing not only with the reality of multiple forms of injustice but also with a cultural vision of freedom that militates against the appropriate integration and understanding of the structures of freedom?

In other words, how can the Christian understanding of freedom, informed as it is by the "law of love," enable U.S. Christians to live "in" their present historical reality without becoming "bound" by it?

Being a person of faith means to break from neutrality and *to decide* to stop "enduring the violation of the human dignity of the person who stands" next to one.[46] Faith means having a deep trust in the liberating activity and power of God in life itself. It means knowing that human beings are capable of choosing and acting. It means being willing to participate in the struggle for peace and a just life for all. Human beings need one another in order to have this faith and to fight against the objective cynicism which can easily settle in the human heart. When human beings share this faith and courage, they "expand the other person's area of freedom," they help to change previous perceptions and interpretations of self and others.[47]

Being open to the God of liberation means "seeing," "hearing," "choosing," and "acting." It means accepting responsibility for engaging in the transformation of the world and making use of imagination and spontaneity to change things. Faith, which chooses and lives from a well-spring that is comprised of fidelity to the Word and its imaginative and creative application, inspires new freedom.[48]

Footnotes

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Women's Power and Political Action

Kathy Thornton, R.S.M.

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I. Introduction

I am interested in the topic of women and political action from three different perspectives: as a Sister of Mercy concerned about ministry to the poor to which we are committed through our Direction Statement: as a delegate who went to the Institute Chapter interested in using our corporate power and resources to engage in systemic change, and as National Coordinator of NETWORK an organization committed to political ministry. I work to create conditions for people to grow by influencing formation of public policy, i.e. by creating structures and systems that are just.

I am aware of the complexity of the topic with its multi-issue connections. My own approach to complexity is more exploratory than definitive. I hope we can move a little further along the exploration of how religious congregations can exercise power and influence within the public arena. I do believe we have such power. My approach is (1) to look at some of the scriptural, theological traditions of political ministry, the ministerial experience of women religious, especially Mercies; (2) to look at the current national situation in which we as a country find ourselves; and (3) to begin to put those realities together as a framework for discovering ways to exercise our power as women religious in the public arena.

A poem by Marge Piercy represents what I believe is one of the most powerful gifts we have for the public arena—hope.

Stone, Paper, Knife

Who shall bear hope, who else but us?...
We must begin with the stone of mass resistance,
and pile stone on stone on stone,
begin cranking out whirlwinds of paper,
the word that embodies
before any body can rise to the dance of the wind,
and the sword of action that cuts through.
We must shine with hope,
stained glass windows that shape light into icons,
glow like lanterns
borne before a procession.
Who can bear hope back into the world but us...
all of us who have seen the face of hope at least once
in vision, in dream, in marching,
who sang hope into rising like a conjured snake,
who found its flower above timberline
by a melting glacier.
Hope sleeps in our bones like a bear waiting
for spring to rise and walk.
Who shall bear hope,
who else but us?
Therein lies our power!

II. Scripture, Church Teaching and the Spirit of Mercy

As people of faith we are called to participate in shaping a new social order to foster the coming of the Reign of God. The documents of Vatican II, the Synod of 1971, social encyclicals, and pastoral letters of episcopal conferences especially in Latin America and the United States challenge us as to reconstruct the social order. The theological and pastoral developments that I sketch here provide a brief overview of what supports my belief that religious communities ought to be involved in public life and in particular political ministry.

In its historical development Roman Catholic theology has taken the stance that the world is a place where the work of creation and redemption is being carried on and where human beings are called to involvement in that activity. The transformative nature of that stance has been expressed by Christians in a variety of ways down through the centuries. There has been continual dialogue within the Christian community in coming to an appropriate balance between involvement in or isolation from the affairs of the world and affirmation or critique of those affairs. Part of that dialogue includes discussion of the church's own self-definition, whether it is a community/institution over-against the world or one immersed and engaged in the world. This latter definition seems to be struggling to emerge from the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council. Whatever that definition becomes, there is need for both affirming and critiquing the political, economic and social structures in the world. I believe it is an expression of hope to engage in those activities.

The prophetic tradition in the Hebrew Scriptures calls people to care for the poor and the suffering in order to be faithful to the Lord. It is in line with that tradition that Jesus describes his ministry:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore, he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord (Lk.4:18-19).

Jesus' life and ministry revealed the presence of God's saving life and justice in the midst of humankind, calling persons to conversion and a new relationship to God and to each other. This unusual love for one another became the hallmark of the early Christians and becomes the cornerstone for our contemporary relationships and structures facilitating the

way we are with one another in daily life. Jesus explicated the social dimension to the expression of love through filling basic needs for all in society when he described the reign of God as that gathering where the hungry were fed, the naked clothed, and the jailed tended to (Matt:25:31-46).

Francine Cardman and Margaret Farley, R.S.M., describe the heart of Christian faith as: a call for a loving, hopeful and transformative relationship to the world. There is, however, a note of caution to this call as well: no social arrangement, no institution, no political movement can be identified with the reign of God that Jesus proclaimed and made present. Christians thus take a stance of critical distance from all structures and powers, testing the spirit of each against the Gospel call to the faithful living of love through the doing of justice.

The work of justice is no longer limited to action by a few of the laity, but is integral to the faith life of every Christian.

I remember in high school being taught it was primarily the responsibility of lay people to carry on the Christian tradition of transforming the social order by engagement in the public arena. Then in 1971 there was a coalescing of thought within the Catholic community that was reflected in the document Justice in the World (De Iustitia in Mundo) published by the Synod of Rome that year. This document brought to center stage in Christian life what had previously been present but peripheral. John XXIII, the Second Vatican Council, and Paul VI in a variety of documents Gaudium et Spes or The Church in the Modern World (1965) Dignitatis Humanae or the Declaration of Religious Freedom (1965) Mater et Magistra (1961) Populorum Progressio (1967) and Octogesima Adveniens (1971) had laid the groundwork for the 1971 statement which distinguished between love and justice, but articulated the inseparable link, with the demand that love be expressed in action to effect justice.

> Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and right's of one's neighbor. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love .

Furthermore the Bishops argued that such action is part of the mission of preaching and thus mandated by the Gospel itself:

> Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.

These statements represent a watershed in the Church's understanding of justice. The work of justice is no longer limited to action by a few of the laity, but is integral to the faith life of every Christian. This document, Justice in the World, challenges religious communities, be they parishes, dioceses, or vowed communities, to engage in activity within the public arena.

There are a number of other significant documents issued by the Latin American and U.S. Bishops. In particular there are the documents of Pueblo and Medellin in which the notion of the "preferential option for the poor" was affirmed; and the U.S. Bishops economic pastoral Economic Justice for All (date). These documents challenge religious communities to address the injustices that dominate many of national and global economic arrangements. In so doing they are underscoring the necessity for people of faith to bring that faith to bear in the public arena.

In an article commemorating NETWORK's tenth anniversary of engagement in political ministry, Francine Cardman and Margaret Farley, R.S.M., state that there were five major developments in Roman Catholic theology and social theory in the 20th century leading to this interpretation of the Gospels by the Bishops. Those five developments were:

1. A shift from an individualistic to a social focus in the understanding of the human person. Full human development had to take into account the other or neighbor.
2. A growth in the understanding of human rights with the realization that in some sense one person can place a claim on the another, a claim of justice.
3. An acknowledgement of the importance of structures—social, political and economic—in creating and maintaining just relationships among and between peoples.
4. A deepening commitment to the importance of historicity and a sense of change in human life. This engenders a new dimension of hope in changing oppressive social, economic and political structures.
5. The recognition of the need for political action to temper economic power when it exercises undue control and oppressive regulations over peoples lives.

As well as the development of Catholic social teachings during the twentieth century, there was a direction within Religious congregations which sup-

ported and gave expression to those teachings. Congregations began a renewal process that expressed an attitude of respect for and engagement in the world. This contrasted with an attitude of withdrawal. Many congregations evaluated their ministries and committed themselves to even greater care for the poorest and marginalized in our society. Challenged to read the signs of the times, members became educated in social theory and other disciplines. Their experience in direct service to the poor generated many questions among women religious about why people are poor and marginalized. Being challenged to follow the spirit of their founders, women religious rediscovered their original charism and for many that meant responding to the needs of the oppressed. They began to engage in various forms of ministry including political action. There was greater outreach from established educational and medical institutions to poor neighborhoods, battered women, prisons, and immigrants.

Religious congregations reidentified their purpose, moving from an emphasis on personal salvation to ministry. Mercy Sisters reexamined the early Guide to our constitutions and found directives for our ministry that stated: "Mercy responds to need that's known," and "Mercy is expressed in proportion to the misery that calls it forth." Our Constitutions declare that we are to speak a corporate word of hope in a discordant society, and that "we rejoice in the continued invitation to seek justice, to be compassionate and to reflect mercy to the world". It further states, "Through direct service and through our influence we seek to relieve misery, to addresses its causes and to support all persons who struggle for full dignity." The document calls us to systemic change and collaboration in our ministry. Today, our direction statement as Sisters of Mercy of the Americas urges us:

> to commit our lives and resources to act in solidarity with the economically poor, especially women and children, with women seeking fullness of life and equality in church and society, and with one another as we embrace our multi-cultural and international reality.
>
> This commitment will impel us to develop and act from a multi-cultural, international perspective; speak with a corporate voice; work for systemic change; and call ourselves to continual conversion in our lifestyles and ministries.

These words which we have chosen to guide our lives, and which have the approval of Rome, further the justice tradition within the church and reflect the desire of our hearts to be involved in creating structures of justice. Such movements toward active engagement in the public arena are developing in religious communities throughout the nation. Members of religious communities are being challenged by the Church, by themselves, and most especially by the poor to engage in systemic change and action on behalf of justice. One such response by women religious to that challenge is the organization with which I am closely associated, NETWORK. Our story is a model of how religious communities can be involved in the political dimension of the public arena. Elizabeth Morancy, R.S.M., and Mary Reilly, R.S.M., both from Rhode Island, were among the founding members of NETWORK. Margaret Farley, R.S.M. (Detroit) was board president; Mary Schmuck, R.S.M. (Cincinnati) a board member and there have been other Mercies on staff.

NETWORK was founded in 1971 by women religious in order to influence the formation of public policy. In October 1971, at a board meeting of the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry (CCUM), Marjorie Tuite, O.P., founder of the National Assembly of Women Religious (NAWR), and Monsignor Geno Baroni, director of the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs, along with CCUM members Mary Reilly, R.S.M. and Claire Dugan, S.S.J. proposed convening a meeting in Washington, D.C. for Catholic Sisters interested in bringing about social change through the legislative process.

December 17-19, 1971, forty-seven women religious from around the country came to Washington, D.C. Most of the participants were in direct service to the poor. NETWORK was born out of the reflection by these women religious on their experience and their recognition that more needed to be done to relieve the suffering of the poor. Structures and systems that keep people poor needed to be changed. Much of the plight of the poor was not due to lack of initiative or personal responsibility on the part of individuals, but was caused by the economic, political and social arrangements established as a matter of public policy. Having an impact on the formation of public policy was needed to serve the needs of the poor effectively.

From the beginning NETWORK has lobbied on behalf of the poor, creating a place at the public policy table for the poor and marginalized. NETWORK is a multi-issue lobby concentrating its efforts on re-ordering federal budget priorities, securing just access to economic resources for all and transforming global relations. We use the life experience of the poor, a feminist perspective and the lens of Catholic social teachings for the analysis of issues and the foundation of our positions. The vision of a just society which we pursue is based on the Gospel message.

NETWORK has four goals:

- developing and proclaiming a value-based vision of justice and peace,
- lobbying and organizing for socially just legislation,
- educating on legislative issues and on the political process for structural changes in society,
- integrating faith, experience, and reflection with political activity and an ongoing search for a just world.

III. Contemporary Situation

Another area to address is the current social environment. We can identify some of its needs that call to us for a response. My description is brief, biased and bleak. Brief, because we do not have time to do a complete social analysis of the condition of the United States. Biased, because it is from my perspective which is that of a middle class woman religious who is actively engaged in the political process with a commitment to the participation of all, especially the poor and marginalized, in the formation of public policy. Bleak, because as a country we are in the midst of a major economic, political and social shift and we're not shifting very well!

In this post-Cold War era there are no longer two super powers who are influencing global economics and politics.

In this post-Cold War era there are no longer two super powers who are influencing global economics and politics. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the indication that even China is moving toward a market-based economy, there is no strong alternative to capitalism. Politically the United Nations is not as strong as it should be, and the United States is not yet certain how to exercise significant political and diplomatic leadership in the world without a major enemy.

John Paul II in Centesimus Annus (1991) describes some of the negative elements of capitalism that are influencing the social order today. This description, although made in 1991, still applies. John Paul II lists consumerism (acquisition), materialism (tangible, physical reality of primary importance), alienation (from self, others, planet, lack of integration and harmony), environmental damage (destruction of the planet), deterioration of social bonds (diminishment of communal dimension of human life) as those factors which have a negative effect on our relationships with one another, inter-personally, nationally and globally. These factors seem to be eating away at the maintenance of positive cultural and social relationships. They tie us into a focus that moves us away from concern for the common good, the dignity of the individual person, and harmony with nature. The national picture is no brighter. It is characterized by an anti-government sentiment, confusion about personal and national values, and financial insecurity.

This anti-government sentiment has been growing for some time. A major expression of it was seen in Ross Perot supporters, many of whom are active. They did not necessarily have clear goals, but they knew they were dissatisfied with government as usual, and they were willing to vote their dissatisfaction by ushering George Bush out of office. In 1994 dissatisfaction with the government continued and voters, even though only 39% of those registered, took the majority from the Democrats in both the House and the Senate and gave Governors' mansions to the Republicans in increasing numbers. They threaten to continue electing new officials in 1996 if those in power don't effect more changes.

The significance of this shift in majority control is evident in the legislation that is proposed and has come forth from the 104th Congress. The Republicans were well prepared for this reality. They did not believe they would have such a strong majority and in both Houses, but they nevertheless had anticipated the possibility. They had a plan, a leader in the House, and troops that would follow: the Contract with America, Speaker Newt Gingrich and the Republican signers of the Contract. All of this was very appealing to those who thought government wasn't doing its job. However, the more we analyze the proposed legislation the greater our concern grows.

The legislation reflects the Republican philosophy that the government that governs least governs best. Individuals are responsible for themselves and their dependents and should be left as free as possible to make their own choices. They further believe that trickle-down economics and the free market are the most effective means to insure economic stability. Yet it was during the Reagan/Bush era that the national debt rose to over 3 trillion dollars.

The Contract calls for deregulation to support the autonomy and development of big business. The Contract reduces the involvement of the federal government in welfare assistance and other social services to funding only, while putting major program responsibility in the hands of the states. Furthermore, the Republicans have as their criteria for all legislation the elimination of the deficit. All programs are evaluated first in relationship to deficit reduction. Military programs and social security seem exempt.

Now this is not all bad. We need some government overhaul. We need greater fiscal responsibility. Until we see the actual outcomes of the Contract we must wonder whether its strategies to achieve these goals will threaten the lives and well being of U.S. citizens (clean air, water, disabilities act) especially the poor. 69% of the budget cuts proposed in the Contract will come from programs that affect low-income people.

The Democrats on the other hand, the majority party in the House for forty years, have been the party of the common people and believe that the role of government is to be engaged in creating social structures and systems that provide for the well being of all. They want to eliminate the inequalities that result from unregulated structures. Attention to the common good by supporting the interaction of individuals with social agencies is an important function of government. The

Democrats don't agree among themselves on an approach to the country's problems and the last election proved that there was sufficient voter dissatisfaction that they were taken out of the majority. If the anti-government sentiment continues, the common good may be threatened. Then, the plight of the poor increases as do their numbers, and we could begin to decay as a democracy. Who will call us to citizenship? Who will remind us that we are more than taxpayers? Can it be that women religious have a role in doing this?

Another conflictual element in our society today is a crisis in values. Some suggest this was brought on by the demise of the American Dream. In the past the American Dream included a good paying job secured through college education or technical training. This job enabled an individual (usually male) to get married, have a family, own a home, a car or two, maybe a boat, but for sure take an annual vacation and live with relative financial security in old age. Now, corporations are down-sizing or "right-sizing" and well-educated, experienced executives and middle management personnel are finding themselves unemployed, with home mortgages and kids living at home after college because jobs are not available for them. No environment is drug free or violence free. Inner city, rural and suburban neighborhoods and schools are infiltrated with gangs, drugs and guns. People believe they can't protect themselves or their families physically or financially.

Another conflictual element in our society today is a crisis in values.

People look around and see social decay. The medically uninsured number 40,000,000. Health care costs are escalating. Domestic violence is rising. More people are in need of subsidized housing. More and more youth are involved in gun related crimes. Sexism and racism grow instead of diminish. Family structures and sexual mores are changing. Mainstream churches are losing numbers, while conservative, politically motivated religious groups are increasing in number.

People are searching for values and meaning. Hillary Clinton in an interview with Tikkun magazine a couple of years ago spoke about the need for a politics of meaning for our nation. One of NETWORK's lobbyists, Catherine Pinkerton, serves on an active White House committee whose task it is to promote interaction with the religious communities throughout the country. The White House is interested in supporting the religious dimension of citizens' lives. I attended a breakfast at the White House for leaders of religious organizations. Ministers, rabbis, priests, bishops, women religious were all invited. President Clinton was quite taken by Stephen Carter's book The Culture of Disbelief.[1] As a nation we are engaged in a search for values and meaning. Jim Wallis, a writer and activist, acknowledges this crisis of values. In his recent book The Soul of Politics, he writes:

> Our intuition tells us the depth of the crisis we face demands more than politics as usual. An illness of the spirit has spread across the land, and our greatest need is for what our religious traditions call "the healing of the nations". The fundamental character of the social, economic, and cultural renewal we urgently need will require a change of both our hearts and our minds. But that change will demand a new kind of politics - a politics with spiritual values.[2]

In the May/June, 1995, issue of Tikkun magazine, Judith Plaskow writes about the need to create a world environment where spirituality is valued.[3] Phrases such as "family values," "relieving the financial burdens for our children and grandchildren," "military preparedness," and "personal responsibility" are used both in the Contract with America and by the Christian Coalition. Who will call us to the virtues of compassion, generosity, inclusivity, courage, service, justice and love? Who will challenge us to achieve the fullness of humanity for which we are made? Who will remind us that the good of each individual is intertwined with the good of all? Can religious women speak to these values?

The third element of our bleak national scene is the increasingly financial insecurity felt by many. Over the last twelve to fifteen years the gap between the rich and the poor in our country has grown dramatically. In terms of national income the lowest fifth of the population receives 3.6% of the national income, while the highest fifth of the population receives 48.2% of the income. Fifteen percent of the population lives below the poverty line, i.e. $11,522 per year for a family of three (1993). An analysis by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities projects that 69% of the budget cuts outlined in the Contract and the proposed budget cuts will come from programs that affect low-income people. According to 1993 statistics, 39,265,000 people lived in poverty, and unemployment was at 6.8%. Our population is 250 million. A job is the main means most people have for involvement in the political, economic and social fabric of our country. People need access to jobs which provide a living wage. Currently, the minimum wage is not a living wage at $4.25 per hour. The work force itself is also changing.

Labor Secretary Reich describes our three-tiered labor force. At the top are highly educated, skilled corporate work force earning high salaries. A middle

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the public arena? I have identified eight elements of the treasury of gifts we have to bring.

1. Rich experience of direct service. We know people who are poor, we work with them in their suffering, we listen to their stories, we stand with them as they create alternatives and/or live through the oppression they bear, and we have created systems and structures to move people out of poverty and ignorance — hospitals, schools, social services, shelters. We have a strong reputation for excellence in education, health care and social services.
2. Faith basis for our lives. We have a respect for and a familiarity with the spiritual dimension of the human person. We believe in that aspect of humanity and we have grounded our lives in a faith perspective. We can touch that dimension in others and their hunger for meaning and values. We can help satisfy the hunger for values eating away at people these days.
3. Educated, analytical people. We can do analysis, make distinctions and create alternatives. We are respected because of our education and professional competence.
4. Care for women. We know first hand that women are fully capable of participating in all of life's tasks and challenges. We as women have the experience of oppression and movement to liberation, enabling us to be in solidarity with others who are oppressed.
5. Commitment to the poor. We do not have a self-interested agenda. We use our voices, education, skills on behalf of others. We struggle to understand and take unto ourselves "a preferential option for the poor." We have this compassion in our souls which cries for expression.
6. Peace and justice committees. Women religious have been involved in a concerted effort for peace and justice for many years. We have established peace and justice committees in our congregations and in parishes. We have established procedures for taking a corporate stance and speaking with one voice. We know the charismatic dimension of the movement for peace and justice.
7. Personal and corporate experience in structural and systemic change. Over the last thirty years, religious congregations have moved from authoritarian structures to ones which promote personal responsibility and interdependence. We have moved our institu-

model for other values-oriented people, an alternative to the status quo where people share financial and personal resources and are committed to ministry.

What are some obstacles in our path to involvement in the public arena?

There are factors which interfere with our good work. Various obstacles block our contributing fully to the changes needed in social policy. Within religious communities there are vestiges of self-negation and false humility that keep us from acknowledging our goodness and acting with the skills we have. We have strong ties to a church steeped in misogyny, conservatism and authoritarianism. Often these three dynamics can overshadow the charismatic quality of our relationship with the Church. They often are reasons for other social groups to ignore us and minimize the ability of religious orders to contribute to society. The memory of the New York Times ad calling for continued discussion of the abortion issue lingers. It prevents many women religious from engaging in the public arena. A concern about the preservation of the institutions in which we currently operate keeps some women from participating in activities outside those institutions. Perceived constraints in canon law, such as holding public office, are only one part of influencing the public arena. Advocacy on various levels is needed. Middle class values and overemphasis on professionalism can also slow action so that religious women are unable to critique the status quo or create alternatives. Whatever the obstacles, however, there is no essential reason women religious cannot act in the public arena. Our national citizenship and religious tradition demand it.

. . . there is no essential reason women religious cannot act in the public arena.

What more do we need to empower ourselves to fuller participation in the public arena? What more do we need to equip ourselves to be effective agents of systemic change on behalf of the poor? What are we doing at the local, state, national and international levels? We are living and working in all those arenas. What are we saying and doing there? What is included in our formation processes? Do we teach the skills for systemic change? What preparation for ministry do we include? Do we rely solely on the professional skills women and associates bring? We have created cadres of educated, skilled people to staff our educational and medical systems. We include training for participation on our boards. Is it time to create a cadre of people educated and skilled in the political arena? We need to know the strategies for working in politics, where the rules assume acknowledgment of pluralism and compromise. We need to differentiate between promotion of the common good and single-issue politics.

As congregations we have established procedures by which we can take a public stance together on specific issues. How effective are those procedures? Have we doomed ourselves to silence and ineffectiveness by insisting that the majority or in some cases all members of the congregation be in agreement before we speak? Perhaps as an Institute we could empower the Institute Leadership Team to speak in our name, to create pockets of people who are committed to an issue or two, have them steeped in social justice teachings and entrust to them the formulation of our positions, and have those positions endorsed by Institute Leadership council. The paper entitled Winds of Challenge: Calls From Our World, delivered by Amata Miller, I.H.M. at the 1994 Leadership Conference of Women Religious would be good common ground for discussion of our engagement in the public arena. Mercy theologians could explore participation in The Interfaith Alliance, a non-partisan, ecumenical organization committed to promoting the positive role of religion as a healing and constructive force in public life, encouraging the renewal of values within our families and communities and providing people of faith with an alternative voice to that of the radical religious right.

These are some of the questions with which we must grapple to understand and act on our power as women religious in the public arena today.

Footnotes

1. Stephen Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Doubleday, 1993).
2. Jim Wallis, *The Soul of Politics: A Practical and Prophetic Vision for Change.* New York: New Press/Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994.
3. Judith Plaskow, *Tikkun* (May/June, 1995):
4. David Hollenbach, S.J., *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition.* New York: Paulist Press, 1979.

The Internet: Access, Voice, Power, Freedom

Jackie Hittner, R.S.M.

Access, voice, power, and freedom are concepts connected with many disciplines—social work, education, government, and business to mention a few. These concepts can also be applied to the informational sciences. Traditionally, information services were provided by librarians. Today almost all workers handle information and informational services are provided by librarians, data processing/MIS personnel, public relations departments, travel agents, medical records departments in hospitals and a myriad of others.

Those who provide informational services today depend heavily on computers. Computer networks are used to provide all types of information from plane schedules and fares to patient medical data, to phone numbers to credit card approval to weather projections to journal articles. With a couple of strokes on a computer keyboard, one can retrieve all types of information via a computer terminal. While some networks are contained (for example, a hospital's database with patient information), many networks are being connected to the Internet and therefore open to millions of users.

The Internet

For most of us, the Internet exploded into our reality two years ago. However, the Internet has been evolving since the late 1960's when it was a Defense Department experiment. In the 1980's, scientists began using the Internet to share information. When the National Science Foundation, which built the largest part of the Internet, lifted restrictions on its commercial use in 1991, the Internet became available to private users. During the 1992 presidential campaign, then vice-presidential candidate Al Gore referred several times to the information superhighway. In 1995, anyone with a personal computer, modem, phone line, and access can travel the information superhighway.

The Internet is a loosely organized computer communications network which connects "millions of computers . . ."

The Internet is a loosely organized computer communications network which connects "millions of computers located at educational institutions, government agencies, commercial firms, military sites, network centers, and private organizations throughout the world."[1]. Over 20 million people have access to the Internet and this population increases 10 percent every month.[2] No one person or group controls the Internet. Thus, the Internet is not organized, quality filtered, easy to use effectively, or comprehensive. Though this might sound chaotic, the Internet presently has features which makes it a useful tool for students, teachers, executives, business people, and even Sisters of Mercy to find information and to connect with one another.

Access

Access to the Internet can be obtained in many ways. Most institutions of higher education offer access to their students and faculty members. Businesses are quickly connecting to the Internet. For most, access is via a commercial online service, e.g., America Online, CompuServe, and Prodigy.

After one is connected to the Internet, then the question becomes what a person can do on the Internet. One of the most important features is the ability to connect with others who typically live at a distance. This connection occurs through e-mail (electronic mail), list serves, and chat options. E-mail is a good place to start. E-mail allows Internet users to communicate with each other quickly and inexpensively in written form, at far less than the cost of telephoning them. I hear more often from friends who are on the Internet than from those who do not have access. Using Internet e-mail, I am in touch with Sisters I went through the novitiate with, other Sisters of Mercy I have met on the Internet, other librarians within the Sisters of Mercy- St. Louis Health System, and hundreds of people who are on the discussion lists I subscribe to.

List serve or discussion lists are another way to connect with people who have a common interest. There are over 3000 discussion lists on a wide range of topics, from educators who teach math to physicians whose specialty is oncology to people who are interested in discussing topics connected with the second Vatican Council. Two discussion lists of interest to many sisters are SISTER-L and MERCY-L. SISTER-L is a list for people interested in religious life. While most subscribers are religious women, many lay people have joined the list, creating a wide-ranging discussion. Topics discussed have included various forms of membership, why sisters stay in community, prayer, and current news of the church. Through discussions on this list, the idea came to place an advertisement in National Catholic Reporter showing support for Carmel McEnroy, R.S.M., a tenured faculty member who was fired from her position at St. Meinrad Seminary in Indiana because she had signed a previous statement in NCR calling for continued discussion of issues around women's ministry in the

Church.

MERCY-L is a list for Sisters of Mercy and Mercy associates. This list, founded by Julia Upton, R.S.M., has become a place to discuss issues of importance to those associated with Mercy. Another way to use list serves is to keep up on professional fields. As a medical librarian, I subscribe to the MEDLIB list serve which is a forum for medical librarians to discuss and exchange information related to our profession.

Chat options allow people all over the world to converse in real time on any topic of interest. One of the off shoots of SISTER-L is a chat, which allows participants to type messages to each other, as though it were a conversation, with the text of the chat read by all taking part. A chat time will be announced on the discussion list and anyone interested can join the conversation. After a chat, someone usually posts a summary of the conversation on SISTER-L.

Other uses of the Internet include news services, file transfer, telnet, gopher, and classroom connections. Internet users can tap into services and read AP news and news from the White House and Congress. File transfer allows files to be transferred from one computer to another. Examples of file transfer include computer software, graphics, and full text of books and documents. Telnet allows users to "login" or enter another computer and then to access other databases, libraries' card catalogs, and even gopher services. A gopher is a menu-driven interface which lets users go from computer to computer easily and automatically. One of the more creative Internet uses is connecting classrooms. This connection helps students learn about events occurring a half a world away and to understand the impact these events have on an individual.

. . . we are beginning to live in a society of those who have access to the Internet and those who do not.

Access to the Internet can be costly. Some individuals never pay a user's fee because the university or business is absorbing the cost. However, we are beginning to live in a society of those who have access to the Internet and those who do not. Articles have begun to appear asking the question who will provide access, especially to students in school districts where funds are already tight. In some fields, an ability to navigate the Internet is a requirement. Some have argued that public libraries should provide access but these institutions are already cutting hours and staff to stay within their budgets. The question we might need to be asking is how do schools, government, and businesses creatively work towards providing access for those who want it at an affordable cost?

VOICE

Voice, in Internet discussions, has two levels: who has a voice and how is the voice used? One has a voice if one has access to be heard. The lack of access excludes many voices especially those with limited income and those without computer knowledge.This exclusion of so many means the forming of the Internet is being done by a comparatively small group. These few determine what information is loaded on to the Internet.

Studies show cyberspace (another name used for the Internet) is a man's world. Estimates are that 10 to 35 percent of participation is female. While many do not like the online characteristics developed for male and female users, my limited experience agrees with the following list.

MEN	FEMALE
In majority	In minority
Flamers	Flamees
Likely to counterflame	Likely to logoff
Quick to Yo	Quick to say sorry
Apt to dive in	Apt to lurk
Wordy	Brief
Frequent posters	Occasional posters
Proprietary	Inclusive

Internet lingo translates as the following:
Yo — greeting used to signify sender feels the message is important.
Lurk — to subscribe to a discussion list but not post messages. In other words, the subscriber reads the messages but does not contribute to the discussion.
Flame — post a message which is an insult usually to someone who has posted a message.[3]

These characteristics show how voice is used. Some choose not to use their voice at all. Others can be obnoxious with their voice. Women's voices are barely being heard. One person who believed women were not participating enough founded Women's Wire as a safer place for women to express their views. If women voices are going to be heard on the Internet, then we will need to become risk takers and put our views into cyberspace. Some assertiveness would help also.

The environment shapes the voice which shapes the environment. For example, on the SISTER-L, discussion is dominated by women. Postings are inclusive and many times clarification will be asked for if there is doubt on what another is trying to communicate. This is a friendly environment where everyone's views are respected.

FREEDOM/POWER

Freedom and power compliment each other on the Internet. Anyone with access can contribute whatever

one wishes on the Internet. This type of freedom has allowed many different view points to surface to a broader audience. In the past, someone might choose to write a letter to a newspaper editor and then another decided if the view point would be printed. With the Internet, the sender decides if the viewpoint will be heard.

The Internet reflects the real world.

This freedom to send one's views or other material has also caused some to abuse this power. The Internet reflects the real world. People are caustic in both. Recently, debates have occurred on whether the Internet should be censored. A small vocal group has drawn attention to pornography on the Internet. Just as in print publication, pornography is available and users have to make decisions about accessing or excluding it.

Esther Dyson's New York Times Magazine article on the Internet states these concepts best. "What's unique about cyberspace is that it liberates us from the tyranny of government, where everyone lives by the rule of the majority. In a democracy, minority groups and minority preferences tend to get squeezed out, whether they are minorities of race and culture or minorities of individual taste. Cyberspace allows communities of any size to flourish; in cyberspace, communities are chosen by the users, not forced on them by accidents of geography. This freedom gives the rules that preside in cyberspace a moral authority that rules in terrestrial environments don't have. Most people are stuck in the country of their birth, but if you don't like the rules of a cyberspace community, you can just sign off."[4]

Mercy and the Internet

The Internet holds many possibilities for a religious community. This could be one of the tools which brings Institute members closer together. Creative ways to use the Internet could include:

1. A ministry database which could facilitate sisters moving from one region to another.
2. A way to communicate with each other which would be quicker and cheaper than the present systems. Newsletters, correspondences, regional phone directories could all be on the Internet.
3. An instrument to affect social policy and to get those who are voiceless heard. Today, many of our representatives can be reached via e-mail, including the offices of the President and Vice-President.
4. A way to obtain a voice to tell others the atrocities of a certain place. The peasant revolution in Chiapas, Mexico, came to world attention because of the Internet.
5. A vehicle to spread who the Sisters of Mercy are. A generation of young people use computers — like radios, television, and telephones— as a primary way of finding information.

The Internet is an exciting new world. For those of us who have access, there is no turning back. As one person posted on MERCY-L, "Having access is a gift, using it for the common good is grace."

Footnotes

1. M. Youngkin, " The Electronic Corner," *MCMLA Express* 17:1 (Winter, 95): 14.
2. M. Antonoff, "The Complete Survival Guide to the Information Superhighway," *Popular Science* (May, 1994): 102.
3. N. Cobb, "Gender Styles Clash on the Internet," *St. Louis Post Dispatch* (June 7, 1995), E1.
4. E. Dyson, "If You Don'T Love It, Leave It," *New York Times Magazine* (July 16, 1995): 27.

Note: For a free start-up kit and trial membership to America Online or CompuServe write to the following address:

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8619 Westwood Center Drive
Vienna, VA 22182-9806

CompuServe
5000 Arlington Centre Blvd.
P.O. Box 20961
Columbus, OH 43220-9910

Include your name, address, city, state, zip, daytime phone and if your computer is using Macintosh software or Windows 3.5.

Comments about this article can be sent to the author via e-mail at: JHITTNER@LIFE.JSC.NASA.GOV

"Emerging Themes for Catholic Higher Education"

Kathleen Maas Weigert

Introduction

Those of you who notice the way people structure their comments will pick up that I am a Trinitarian—I love the number three. It seems to me that one of the most troubling aspects of public and private conversations today is the insistence on dichotomizing or making polarities of things that are way too complex to be so captured. The number three is for me at least a more fruitful way of depicting the rich reality we live in. This study is divided into three parts. The first part will be the shortest. I will cite some of the information that describes Catholic higher education in the United States in the 1990's. Who are we? What do we look like? The second part will focus on some ideas from Pope John Paul II's important document, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, "The Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities," which was released on September 25, 1990 and whose norms became effective the first day of the 1991 academic year. Building on ideas from these two, the third part will pose what I think are shared questions that highlight some, though by no means all, of the emerging themes for Catholic higher education today.

Catholic Higher Education in the United States in the 1990s[1]

Since I am married to an ex-Jesuit, I feel compelled to note that Catholic higher education in the United States traces its roots to the founding of Georgetown University in 1789. Today there are 230 some Catholic institutions of higher learning, making up over 40 per cent of all church- related colleges and universities. As you all know, nineteen of these institutions are sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy—your colleges and universities educate almost 36,000 students in fourteen states, from Mercy College of Northwest Ohio to this school, the University of Detroit Mercy. What a tribute to your founder, Catherine McAuley, and to the "feisty young Irish woman," Mary Frances Warde! If you will permit a personal aside: I am a product of Catholic education from grade school through the first two years of college. I actually spent two years in the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the community who had educated me in one of their all-girl high schools. I am forever indebted to those women and their colleagues for the expansive vision, the lived commitments, and the empowering belief that each of us can and must make a difference with our very lives in this God-filled world. My hope is that in acknowledging that debt today, I speak for the thousands you and your colleagues have so influenced as well.

Diversity is a word that characterizes the American Catholic colleges and universities; it is a word I will come back to in the third section of my talk. Here let me draw your attention to these facts: 91 Catholic institutions are predominantly undergraduate liberal arts colleges; 40 are women's colleges; 12 are two-year colleges and there is one historically black university. There are approximately 620,000 students enrolled in Catholic colleges and universities, with nearly 40 percent of them enrolled part-time.In 1990 over 22 percent of these students were minorities, compared with 20 percent at all independent institutions and 19 percent for four-year state schools. Over 39 percent were first generation college attendees compared with 30 percent at all other independent four-year colleges and universities, and 41 percent at state four-year institutions.

How do these institutions survive financially? Nearly 60 percent of revenue (excluding Pell grants) comes from tuition and fees; this compares with 45 percent for all independent four-year institutions and 16 percent for state four-year institutions. If we combine all federal, state and local government appropriations, grants and contracts, the total is under12 percent of all revenue; the comparable figure for all independent four-year institutions is 17 percent. While endowment income for Catholic colleges and universities is just under 3 percent, it is just over 6 percent for all independents. The amount of money contributed by women and men religious and diocesan priests on faculties (for the 112 schools for which we have data) totaled over $30,000,000.

From the Heart of the Church: *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*

I turn now to the document *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, in the spirit of Sister Alice Gallin, O.S.U., the former Executive Director of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, who wrote at the time the document was released, "The document is a call to renewal for those who believe in the distinctive character of a Catholic university or other institution of higher learning."[2] I will not provide an in-depth analysis of *Ex Corde* but will instead point to some key ideas rooted in it that relate directly to the third section of my talk on "emerging themes."

The apostolic constitution was a work in progress from the year 1985 when the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education initiated an official consultation on a proposed schema for a pontifical document on Catholic universities. Without detailing the developments of the ensuing years, suffice it to say that the consultative process was "exciting." In the final document, the Pope (not being as wedded to the number three as I am) divided the document into two major sections: the first on "Identity and Mission," the second on the "Norms" (both general and transitional). I want to draw your attention to two challenges from

that document that I find, in one way or another, to be alive and well on many Catholic campuses. They can be stated as questions: first, What are we saying when we say a college or university is "Catholic?" And, second, What is the mission of a Catholic college or university?

So what is a "Catholic" university or college?

So what is a "Catholic" university or college? The Pope chose to initiate his answer by looking at each of the words, Catholic and university. He began with the latter by drawing on an idea from the 1988 document, The Magna Carta of the European Universities. The Pope wrote, "Every Catholic university, as a university, is an academic community which, in a rigorous and critical fashion, assists in the protection and advancement of human dignity and of a cultural heritage through research, teaching and various services offered to the local, national and international communities" (# 12). He turned to the former (that is, the word"Catholic") and reiterated ideas found in the 1972 document, *The Catholic University in the Modern World.* There are four "essential characteristics" of every Catholic university as Catholic:

1. A Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as such.
2. A continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research.
3. Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the church.
4. An institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life" (# 13).

The second question concerns the mission of a Catholic college or university. Pope John Paul began his answer with this statement: "The basic mission of a university is a continuous quest for truth through its research, and the preservation and communication of knowledge for the good of society. A Catholic university participates in this mission with its own specific characteristics and purposes" (# 30). The Pope explicated that idea in a variety of ways; here let me mention just one. In paragraph 34, he says, "The Christian spirit of service to others for the promotion of social justice is of particular importance for each Catholic university, to be shared by its teachers and developed in its students." So, searching for truth, preserving and communicating knowledge for the larger good, serving others to promote social justice—all are integral to the mission of Catholic institutions of higher learning.What I want to do now is keep those ideas, along with the kind of demographic sketch I gave in the first section, as a backdrop to the shared questions that reveal some emerging themes for Catholic higher education.

Shared Questions: Emerging Themes

The emerging themes are nested in shared questions that focus on three topics: the world, our students and our institutions. Let me list the questions here and then examine each separately: 1) How do we see the world and our relationship to it?; 2) What are our students like and what difference does that make?; and 3) How is our home institution "Catholic" and what does that mean?

How do we see the world and our relationship to it?

To the first question. How would you describe the world? What are some of "the signs of the times?" Here are some possible answers.[3] Some people might choose to mention a few basic "facts": "It is the home to many different species including more than five and a half billion people who practice many different religions, speak thousands of different languages, and who live in almost 200 political entities we call nation-states." Others might opt for a description like this: "It is a sad and violent place where wars occur all too often (from the former Yugoslavia to Rwanda), apparently home-grown terrorism occurs in our very midst (as in Oklahoma City), 800 million of our sisters and brothers go hungry, and 34,000 children die daily from malnourishment and illness." Still others might say, "The world is an incredible place where ordinary people create homeless shelters, clean up polluted sites and join with thousands of others in nonviolent movements for positive social change."

Now, I happen to agree with much in those statements. I hasten to add that, clearly none of these answers is complete in and of itself, and yet each of them contains a grain of truth. "Truth." Growing up in the pre-Second Vatican Council Catholic world, I thought we, the Catholics, "had" the truth. It was "ours" and we hoped mightily to share it with others or as some saw it to force them to accept it or be forever abandoned in this life and the next. Among the many wonderful things that have happened in these past 30 years is the realization that many people have and seek "truth." It can only be in a spirit of humility that we who are Catholics share what we have and are open to what others have to share with us.

It has to be noted, too, that we do such sharing as people of faith who are also people of a particular city or town, county, state and a particular nation, namely the United States. These civic realities make demands

on us as well. One of the contemporary ways this issue gets framed is in terms of"discipleship and citizenship." As a peace educator, I must admit that I have deep concerns about the term "citizenship," but for the moment I want to set that aside and simply affirm what all believers know: that our faith-identity is most assuredly not a totally overlapping one with our civic identities. I learned this most dramatically when I was 21 and about to participate in my very first presidential election. I had decided to vote for Barry Goldwater. A priest acquaintance of mine was horrified and stated in no uncertain terms, "A good Christian cannot vote for Senator Goldwater." Ever since that moment, I have tried to keep clear that the kingdom of God is not co-terminus with any political party. But I also believe that I cannot abdicate this and other basic civic duties just because the available candidates or parties do not share all of my beliefs. How is it that people of faith can work with people of other faiths (or of no faith) to work for the common good? What happens when there are conflicting demands made on us, stemming from those various identities?

"How do we see the world and our relationship to it?"

I return to the original question: "How do we see the world and our relationship to it?" In beginning to answer it I have actually touched on what I see to be two of the emerging themes. The first has to do with truth. Seeking the truth about this world of ours is an imperative of all institutions of higher education, and thus quite obviously, of Catholic colleges and universities. But for Catholic institutions, the world, as the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins so eloquently wrote, "is charged with the grandeur of God." There are for me, then, two implications of these ideas about truth. First, we have to start with the world in the sense of garnering the best empirical evidence we can about that world, from population issues to environmental ones, from the economic arena to the political—we cannot stick our heads in the sand or back away. It was the powerful Vatican II document Gaudium et Spes that helped us see so clearly that we have much to learn from the world. Second, we are an incarnational people and so we take that evidence, that "truth," and examine it in the light of faith, with others of the same faith, different faiths and no faiths. As Pope John Paul wrote in *Ex Corde*, "By means of a kind of universal humanism, a Catholic university is completely dedicated to the research of all aspects of truth in their essential connection with the supreme Truth, who is God" (# 4). The challenge then becomes how to create vehicles for seeking truth about the world with other people of different religions, of different cultures, of different sexes, of different sexual orientations—of whatever "differences" there are in our communities so that our struggle might be more authentic and bring us ever closer to "truth."As the Pope stated in *Ex Corde*, "A Catholic university must become more attentive to the cultures of the world of today and to the various cultural traditions existing within the church in a way that will promote a continuous and profitable dialogue between the Gospel and modern society" (# 45).

That leads directly to the second theme: active involvement in this world of ours. If faith does not dictate political party choice neither does it free us from working to create a more just and humane society. So many in our world are in pain and their cries cannot be ignored, least of all by those of us in Catholic institutions of higher learning. In his wonderful book on Catholic higher education, titled *From the Heart of the American Church*, historian David O'Brien recounts a story about Cesar Jerez Garcia who was the Provincial of the Jesuits in Central America in the late 70's. In his 1978 commencement address at Canisus College, Reverend Garcia asked the graduates:

> Do you plan to use your degree for your own profit, be it profit in the form of money or power, status or respect?
> Will you end up with General Motors or Morgan Trust, with Chase Manhattan or Abbot Laboratories, with Goodyear or Boeing....
> Will you become people who use your knowledge for the furtherance of justice...or live the good life of manipulated, unconcerned people in suburbia who grant honorary degrees to people from the Third World but refuse to join them in the fight for justice and liberty for the poor of the world. (p.188)

Hard words to hear (we have a daughter, by the way, who works for Goldman Sachs!), but necessary as well in this time of seemingly greater individualism in our personal lives and greater isolationism in our national life. A colleague of mine says that at Notre Dame we are "reproducing privilege."Part of our mission as Catholic institutions of higher learning is to contribute to the common good. To be more than simply a juridical category, the word "Catholic" must, at least in some ways, issue forth in action on behalf of justice and peace in this world of ours. But in doing so, we need to know more about our students and about our institutions— which leads me to the next topic.

What are our students like?

What are our students like? Perhaps the shortest answer is, "Different from many of us." My story may

be like many of yours: I am a product not only of Catholic schooling and of a traditional Catholic family (where my father worked outside the home, my mother worked within it) but also of a particular period in our history. I was a senior at the mostly all-white Our Lady of Peace High School in St. Paul, Minnesota, when JFK was elected President in 1960. I was at the mostly all-white, all women's College of St. Catherine when he was assassinated in 1963. I transferred to the much more diverse, great state University of Minnesota in the heyday of the Civil Rights movement and organized with a friend a five-day bus trip to Chicago so we could learn more about social change agents like TWO (The Woodlawn Organization). And I can still remember the phone conversation with that friend when, after agonizing for days, I told him I was not going to go to Selma. I was in graduate school at the University of Notre Dame (which, at that time, was still all male at the undergraduate level) when the Vietnam War exploded on campuses around this country. My life was framed by the troubles and challenges of my nation and world. And through it all, to be truthful, I never worried about getting a job; I just assumed I would find a wonderful one.

. . . our students live in a different world from the one I grew up in—from family and schools to jobs and society.

I recount that story as a prelude to this point: our students live in a different world from the one I grew up in—from family and schools to jobs and society. "The times," as Bob Dylan sang then and could sing now, "they are a-changin'." For many, today's world is a post-modern one and college students have different fears and opportunities. Let's take a look at some of the available data on today's college students. Every year since the mid-60's, Alexander Astin at UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute has been gathering information from incoming freshmen at colleges and universities participating in the study. Some of the data from the students who entered college last fall is indicative of changes.

Nearly 240,000 students from 461 higher education institutions participated in Prof. Astin's survey. One section of the survey lists 19 statements and ask students to indicate the importance to them personally of each; the response categories are "not important," "somewhat important,""very important" and "essential." "Attitudes of the 1994-1995 College Freshmen" are the four items with the highest percentages (using the combined categories of "essential" and "very important"). In order they are: being very well-off financially; raising a family; being an authority in one's field; and helping others who are in difficulty. That number one item is borne out for me in our two daughters, the Goldman Sachs employee, who graduate from Notre Dame two years ago, and one who just completed her junior year there this spring. Both of them are very concerned about financial security. They have grown up in a world where massive layoffs are common, recessions are frequent, good jobs are disappearing and families they know have unemployed fathers or mothers. It's a scary kind of world to them and having financial security is one way of facing that world.

The next three items—raising a family, being an authority in one's field and helping those in difficulty—make an interesting array of concerns from personal satisfaction to professional competence to caring for others. Look a little more closely at the last item (helping others). There is almost a 20 percentage point difference between men and women: 51 percent of men versus almost 71 percent of women said "helping others in difficulty" was either "very important" or "essential." I think we must be doing something right with our females but we need to do more with our males!

Five other items speak to some of the issues from the *Ex Corde* selections I noted and from the topic of discipleship and citizenship. These five are what I would consider to be indicators of involvement in the public arena in general and the political arena in particular. None of these items elicits the degree of support the top four drew. 31.9 percent for the item "keeping up with political affairs" is actually the lowest recorded in the 29-year history of this annual survey. And there is a companion item from a different part of the instrument that asks about discussing politics; a mere 16 percent said they "frequently" discussed politics—that figure is the lowest ever as well. In discussing these findings, Prof. Austin is quoted as saying, "There seems to be a massive disengagement from politics."[4] We know that the exception of the 1992 election, that we have had a steady decline in turnout among 18-to-24 year-olds since the voting age was lowered to 18 in the year 1972. For the election of 1994, by the way, 16 percent of voters ages 18 to 24 voted compared with a national average of 39 percent. While their political involvement is low, it is important to note that nearly 60 percent said they did some volunteer work the previous year (although it is also true that under 20 percent indicated that they will get involved in such work in college).

On behalf of the ACCU I am working with some colleagues to analyze data on graduating members of the Class of 1994. While all ACCU members were invited to participate, about fifty actually did so. We decided to include just those schools where the response rate was 50 percent or higher. As a result, we have a sample of almost 7,000 students from 24

schools. Let me describe the students in general and then highlight just a few of the preliminary findings.Who are these students? They are mostly white (84 percent), female (62 percent), Catholics (two-thirds) who were enrolled full-time (90 percent), and who had part-time jobs, with two-fifths on campus and almost three-fifths off campus.

What are they like? I want to answer this question in two ways: first by comparing their answers to some of the same items I used to describe the students in Prof. Astin's study; and then by examining their answers to questions my colleagues and I developed to get a picture of their experiences in terms of the Catholic character of the school.

This next overhead takes seven items and compares the incoming freshmen in the Higher Education Research Institute study with the graduating seniors in the ACCU study. Let me repeat so there is no mistake: there are first year students in the HERI study and last year students in the ACCU study so they are not truly comparable, but I think they provide some interesting differences.

Let's look at the top four objectives for the HERI study. Clearly, if we were to put the percentages in order of top to bottom for the ACCU participants, this would be the order: raising a family (78%), helping others who are in difficulty (73.5%), being an authority in one's own field (69.1%) and being very well-off financially (61.5%). The financial item is quite telling: it is in first place for the HERI data and in last place for the ACCU data. On the second set of items, the order is the same for both studies but the percentages are much higher for the ACCU students. What can we conclude from these data?Since this is preliminary work, not much yet! But certainly, the direction of the differences is what many of us would hope for, I think, if we value involved, caring, competent citizens graduating from our schools.

. . . first, the students aren't like what they used to be and that makes all the difference for what we do.

Finally, we can consider seven items from the special set of questions we asked participating ACCU schools to use. All of them have to do with the broadly conceived area of service to Church and society. I have organized them into two categories: "faith and social issues" and "faith and this college/university." Of interest are three items in the "faith and social issues" category and the percentages of those who checked either "agree" or "strongly agree." First, "It is the Church's business to help believers form their consciences on the moral dimensions of economic decision-making, for example, in the areas such as unemployment, poverty,immigration policy, national spending priorities, etc." (31.6%) Second, "My faith encourages charity to the poor more than challenges to social structures." (37.5%) Third, "Peacemaking is not an optional commitment; it is a requirement of our faith." (62.7%) Now, again cautioning that this is a first glance at the data and also acknowledging that this is the first time we have used these measures for students at Catholic colleges and universities, I think I am personally happiest about the third item. But even on that one, I would want 100% agreeing! (Parenthetically, for those of you who are lovers of the Bishop's peace pastoral, as I am, you know that the item is taken verbatim from that document.)

Considering the set of items I have called "faith and this college/university,"what do we find? If we take just the first two: about 24 percent agreed that "The Catholic identity of this college/university should be more widely integrated into course work and academic efforts" and almost37 percent agreed that they "have been personally helped by faculty and staff members while in college to relate" their "faith to contemporary moral issues." As any of you who have tried to design questions know, it is not always a successful effort! Both items can be interpreted in at least two different ways. On the one hand, it can mean that the school (on the first item) and the faculty/staff (on the second) already do such a good job that comparatively few students think this needs to be done. Or, on the other hand, it could mean that the students really don't value that the Catholic identity be manifested in a curricular/academic way or that faculty/staff get involved in relating faith to contemporary moral issues. Until we do more analysis, I can't say much more about these items.

We know that between 40 and 50 percent assess positively the school's contribution to the student's growth in knowledge about the Bible and Catholic teachings and doctrine. Should it be higher? I would like to see higher figures, but that's because I think these items speak at least in part to what a Catholic college or university should be about.

While these portraits give us some information, each of us has to examine the students at our own institutions to learn about the parameters of their involvement in our schools. Do they work part-time? Are they from disadvantaged backgrounds? Are there more women or men? Do they identify as Catholic Christians and what is their understanding of that tradition? To be the kind of educators we want to be, we have to "be attentive," as the Pope phrased it, to the various worlds of our students. Once we get a good handle on what our students and their lives are like, we are back to the issues of that larger world and educating them about and for it.

Emanating from this discussion of students are

what I think are two more emerging themes: first, the students aren't like what they used to be and that makes all the difference for what we do. With a more diverse student body, the seeking of truth is more complicated but also richer if we are more open and more humble wayfarers. Second, even for those who identify as Catholic, what does that mean in terms of their knowledge about the traditions and their participation in the practices? Curricularly and extra-curricularly, what do we offer them to deepen their knowledge and practice? And for members of other faiths, how do we acquaint them with rich traditions that we have? This leads me to my third topic.

How is our home institution "Catholic" and what does that mean?

Each of the institutions that claims a "Catholic" identity does so in various ways. What does the word "Catholic" mean at each of our institutions? I want to highlight just two of the ways in which institutions manifest the claim of being Catholic. The first is in a "Mission Statement." I had the opportunity to read the Mercy institutions' mission statements and noticed both the common threads and the unique elements. As a member of the recent Mission Statement writing team at Notre Dame, I had the very personal involvement in crafting ours—and of knowing what you get and what you give in creating a communal document. Do such statements"matter?" Certainly at one level they do: they announce to the various publics we serve what the institution claims as its purpose. That is, to be sure, one of the obligations *Ex Corde* imposes: "Every Catholic university is to make known its Catholic identity either in a mission statement or in some other appropriate public document, unless authorized otherwise by the ompetent ecclesiastical authority" (Article 2, # 3).

Do such statements matter within our institutions, let's say to the faculty? Well, that depends both on the process of generating the statement and on the purposes for which it is used. In my own institution, there were literally six of us who were charged with the writing. Now it is true that we solicited input from others and went through a number of drafts. But it is also true that not every member of the University community (from faculty to administrators to trustees) was involved. How then do they "own" it in the same way that the six of us do? My short answer is, "They don't."

What then can we do with such statements? Several things. First, we can initiate newcomers into the community in part by sharing the document with them. *Ex Corde* states, "All teachers and all administrators, at the time of their appointment, are to be informed about the Catholic identity of the institution and its implications, and about their responsibility to promote, or at least to respect, that identity" (General Norms, Article 4, # 2). Second, we can have conversations—from very formal, college-sponsored ones to the more informal kind—with other members of our institutions to hear their views and their concerns. If the documents are to "live," they cannot simply sit on shelves or be reprinted in our bulletins of information. Third,we can "use" them in the sense of letting them serve as a challenge when we undertake such important tasks as reviewing our curriculum or creating new programs. Not that there is an automaticity in such use. Instead, there should be conscious attempts to think about the mission in the dailiness of the institution's life.

From the mission statement (and explicitly found in at least some statements) we move to a second way in which a Catholic institution claims the label "Catholic": namely, in and through its people, especially the faculty. A host of questions arises. What is the role of the founding order? What is the place of academic freedom? Who and how many people carry the Catholic identity for the institution? I think of a friend of mine who has been at Fu Jen University in Taiwan these past 20 years—a "Catholic" university where there are but a handful of Catholics on the faculty and in the student body. Notre Dame's mission statement speaks of "the continuing presence of a predominant number of Catholic intellectuals." That idea is clearly articulated in *Ex Corde* as well: "In order not to endanger the Catholic identity of the university or institute of higher studies, the number of non-Catholic teachers should not be allowed to constitute a majority within the institution, which is and must remain Catholic" (Article 4, # 4).

This issue is a difficult one and depending on how it is broached it can either be a force for community building or community splitting. If it becomes a battering ram against the alleged "forces of secularization" that "threaten" our institutions, it can be viewed as an instrument of oppression by many, including Catholics. If it is seen as a very real issue that must be addressed by all who are part of the institution, then it has the potential for being a vehicle for enhancing community. If we do not have at least some significant number who can speak about and from Catholic intellectual traditions, then what is our claim to be "Catholic" on this dimension?

Nested within this discussion of our home institutions are my final two emerging themes. First, how is it that we make real our Catholic identity and mission to members inside as well as outside our institutions? Second, how do we increase the likelihood that Catholic intellectual traditions are preserved, communicated and contributed to, in ever more inclusive ways, by our faculty, students, administrators, staff and trustees?

Summary and Conclusion

Let me simply restate the six emerging themes for Catholic higher education that I have focused on .

A) Related to the world:

The first theme: In seeking truth a Catholic college or university is open to the world, eager to discover and communicate the best available knowledge about it, and committed to examining that knowledge in the light of faith in ways that foster a continuous dialogue among all interested parties.

The second: To claim to be a Catholic institution of higher learning means at least in part to hear the cry of the poor, to seek justice, to work to enhance the dignity of each in striving for the common good of all.

B) Related to our students:

The third theme: The students in our schools are who they are,and we have to be attentive to the worlds in which they live as we strive to contribute to their education and accompany them in their journeys.

The fourth: The students—Catholics and members of other faiths alike—need curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to learn more about the richness of Catholic traditions and to have available a variety of opportunities to live out that richness.

C) Related to our institutions:

The fifth theme: We need creative ways to make the Catholic identity and mission of our institutions real and ever more inclusive, both in words and in deeds.

The sixth: The heritage of Catholic intellectual traditions will be both honored and developed only if we have "some" people committed to doing so and all people respecting such work.

In conclusion, I want to affirm the good work being done by Catholic institutions of higher learning, including those sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. The emerging themes I have highlighted challenge all of us, as we fast approach the millennium, to reach farther and dream bigger in responding to our call—indeed, our sacred vocation—as Catholic institutions of higher education: to seek and communicate truth and to reach out through service to justice in this troubled yet God-filled nation and world of ours.

Footnotes

1. Much of this information comes from Frances Freeman's 1993 booklet, "Catholic Higher Education: An American Profile," written for the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities.
2. *Origins*, Vol. 20: No. 17, October 4, 1990, p. 270.
3. The data comes from Ingomar Hauchler and Paul M. Kennedy, eds., *Global Trends: The World Almanac of Development and Peace* (New York: Continuum, 1994).
4. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 13, 1995: A29.

Attitudes of the 1994-1995 College Freshmen

Source: Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA

Number: 237,777 students enrolled at 461 colleges, universities

Top Four Objectives (out of 19) considered "essential" or "very important" for all students, for men and for women

Item	Total	Men	Women
1. Being very well-off financially	73.7%	76.3%	71.5%
2. Raising a family	70.6%	69.3%	71.7%
3. Being an authority in own field	65.2%	66.8%	63.8%
4. Helping others who are in difficulty	61.7%	51.1%	70.6%

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Selected Other Objectives considered "essential" or "very important" for all students, for men and for women

Item	Total	Men	Women
1. Influencing social values	40.2%	38.4%	45.2%
2. Helping to promote racial understanding	35.8%	31.0%	39.8%
3. Keeping up to date with political affairs	31.9%	34.1%	30.1%
4. Becoming a community leader	31.0%	31.5%	30.5%
5. Participating in a community-action program	24.4%	20.2%	27.9%

Attitudes of Graduating Seniors (ACCU Study)
Compared with Entering Freshmen HERI National Study)

Sources: ACCU Study of 1994 Graduating Seniors
Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Study of 1994 Incoming Freshmen

Top Four Objectives: considered "essential" or "very important"

Item	HERI Freshmen (n=237,777)	ACCU Seniors (n=6,818)
1. Being very well-off financially	73.7%	61.5%
2. Raising a family	70.6%	78.0%
3. Being an authority in own field	65.2%	69.1%
4. Helping others who are in difficulty	61.7%	73.5%

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Selected Other Objectives: considered "essential" or "very important"

Item	HERI Freshmen	ACCU Seniors
1. Influencing social values	40.2%	51.7%
2. Helping to promote racial understanding	35.8%	41.9%
3. Participating in a community-action program	24.4%	34.7%

Catholic Issues and Members of the Class of 1994 from Various Catholic Colleges and Universities

Source: ACCU study of 1994 graduating seniors

Total Number: 6,818 students enrolled at 24 colleges, universities

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A. Faith and Social Issues:	**Agree/Strongly Agree**
1. It is the Church's business to help believers form their consciences on the moral dimensions of economic decision-making, for example, in the areas such as unemployment, poverty, immigration policy, national spending priorities, etc.	31.6%
2. My faith encourages charity to the poor more than challenges to social structures.	37.5%
3. Peacemaking is not an optional commitment;	62.7%

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B. Faith and This College/University	**Agree/Strongly Agree**
1. The Catholic identity of this college/ university should be more widely integrated into course work and academic efforts	23.9%
2. I have been personally helped by faculty and staff members while in college to relate my faith to contemporary moral issues.	36.6%

How would you evaluate the contribution this college/university made to the growth of your knowledge:	**Good/Very Good**
3. about the Bible?	43.5%
4. about Catholic teachings and doctrine?	47.5%

The Enduring Power of Vision: Pathway to the Future

Mary Therese Antone, R.S.M.

I begin by sharing a reflection given by astronaut Rusty Schweickeart. Rusty flew Apollo 9 in March, 1969. In his reflection he shares his experience by describing what it was like to orbit the earth—as if you and I, the listeners, were there with him. This is to help us to put what we do in perspective and also to help us to realize how great the challenges that lie ahead really are!

> Up there you go around every hour and a half, time after time after time. You wake up usually in the mornings. And just the way that the track of your orbits go, you wake up over the Mideast, over North Africa. As you eat breakfast you look out the window as you're going past and there's the Mediterranean area, and Greece, and Rome, and North Africa, and the Sinai, the whole area. And you realize in one glance that what you're seeing is what was the whole history of man for years—the cradle of civilization. And you think of all the history you can imagine looking at that scene.
>
> And you go around down across North Africa and out over the Indian Ocean, and look up at that great sub-continent of India pointed down toward you as you go past it...And you finally come up across the coast of California and look for those friendly things:Los Angeles, and Phoenix, and on across El Paso, and there's Houston, there's home. And you identify with that, you know—it's an attachment.
>
> And that identity—that you identify with Houston, and then you identify with Los Angeles and Phoenix and New Orleans and everything. And the next thing you recognize in yourself, is you're identifying with North Africa. You look forward to that, you anticipate it. And there it is. That whole process begins to shift what it is you identify with.When you go around it in an hour and a half you begin to recognize that your identity is with the whole thing. And that makes a change (in you).
>
> You look down there and you can't imagine how many borders and boundaries you crossed again and again and again. And you don't even see 'em. At that wake-up scene—the Mideast—you know there are hundreds of people killing each other over some imaginary line that you can't see. And you wish you could take one from each side in hand and say, 'Look at it from this perspective.'...
>
> All of history and music, and poetry and art and war and death and birth and love, tears, joy, games, all of it is on that little spot out there that you can cover with your thumb. ...

Floating in space, Rusty had the direct experience of the earth as an indivisible whole. This changed him and he began to involve himself in activities that led him to new understandings and the interrelated "aliveness" of that indivisible whole.

Sisters, we are one, one with each other, and part of that indivisible whole. We are one with the Sisters of Mercy who have preceded us and we share in the power of their courageous and challenging vision. A vision, engendered in prayer, sees within the immediacy of the day's tasks the handing on of a tradition of excellence in Mercy.

Today, as Sisters of Mercy in higher education, we must question how we can best respond to the needs of the people we serve.

Today, as Sisters of Mercy in higher education, we must question how we can best respond to the needs of the people we serve. We are in a very complex, rapidly changing world—a world where advancing technology is breaking down barriers between nations, yet, at the same time is trapping individuals in ever narrower niches of specialized knowledge. It is a world seemingly preoccupied with abandoning moral standards—a world where frenzied pursuit of opportunity overtakes an individual's ability to live holistically. Mercy education must provide for the development of an intellectual state of mind, a preparedness for change, and a commitment to a set of ethical principles and values. I raise these issues to begin to suggest ways in which our colleges and universities can continue to meet the needs of students who rely on us to prepare them spiritually, academically and socially to live in a fast changing, interdependent, global society. Our challenge is to conceive of an education, however imperfect, to meet the needs of the child born, not in the 1900's, but in the year 2000.

Life implies change. If we are alive, we will change. It is far from a compliment to be told that we haven't changed at all.We have earned our gray hairs.We have changed, and we continue to change, and usually we accept the changes we find in ourselves with a certain grace or at least philosophical resignation. Why is it, then, that we find it so difficult sometimes to accept or initiate change? How often have we felt a disturbing jolt when some part of the established, familiar order is altered, even when we know it is for the better? Change involves us in a rela-

tively unknown, untested reality. It propels us toward the future. No one likes change.It is unsettling. But the alternative is deadly.

Our Mercy colleges and universities were founded in a rich tradition and heritage which impel us to respond to the changing needs of society. It is the Mercy tradition which calls us to recognize and address the needs of people who exist in an imperfect world and to reach out into that world with innovation, pragmatic action and love. And it is this tradition which missions each one of us in these times to be refounders, to be people who are deeply disturbed in faith when we perceive the gap between the gospel and the contemporary world. Such gaps are caused by abuses of authority and power, social injustices, materialism and oppression. We are a people who can offer an alternative vision of reality; who are able to devise and implement creative and imaginative ways to help bridge these gaps. We are accountable to and responsible for the Mercy vision.We nurture it, for it is this enduring power of vision, informed by the active presence of God, that sustains the vibrant life of our community and our ministries.

Today's young people are heirs to what can be called an American Catholic spirituality, whose characteristics point to individualism. It is a democratized spirituality in which everyone has equal access to God and holiness. It is functional—one that deals not so much with absolute truth and claims; but with meaning and meaninglessness. It is experimental and experiential; belief being the willingness to accept the practical consequences of what one claims is true. Bellah and Associates, in Habits of the Heart and The Good Society have amply documented that our culture is dominated by individualism. Thomas E. Clarke, S.J., astutely observes, "It is culture, not politics or economics or science or technology as such that provides the deepest energies shaping the course of history." We must challenge, not coddle our youth today. Mercy colleges and universities must insist on the knowledge that leads to wisdom, an understanding of commitment and the search for transcendence and wholeness.

Those of us in higher education must come down from the ivied towers, open wide the doors and windows, and center upon our students who are our priority and major focus. Catholic Education cannot be structured for the convenience of Catholic educators or the prestige of the Catholic institutions, but for the needs of the people we serve. Our Mercy colleges and universities must be communities of learning where scholars and students gather to learn from one another. All else, however important, is secondary. We, as Mercy educators, must live and flourish within the continuity of our own historical identity, and by so doing, meet our destiny as an influential force in American Catholic higher education. As we guide the students' steady steps toward achievement, we must constantly acknowledge that the process is as important as the achievement itself. We must teach creative achievement as an heroic project that requires integrity, courage and endurance. In a world of rigid organizational structures where new ideas are rejected as threats, where vision and long-term goals are dismissed in favor of ready gain, and interest groups clash over the control of existing freedoms, our students must learn that the most precious freedom of all is the liberty implicit in the creation of new ideas. We must teach them to understand that learning is integral to the development of their own humanity and that the life of the mind and the life of faith are richly interconnected.

All dynamic institutions are firmly rooted in their past, but fully oriented toward their future.

All dynamic institutions are firmly rooted in their past, but fully oriented toward their future. We do not renounce the authentic and permanent values of tradition. Historically, Mercy higher education has been open to rapid and profound changes with an ever lively involvement in the day's problems and needs. Such involvement has always found expression in human living, not cut off from it. In a world thirsting for the values of the spirit, Mercy Higher Education is called to continue being a witness to the fact that beneath all changes, beneath all that must change, there is much that is unchanging, much that has its ultimate foundation in Christ "who is the same yesterday and today and always." (Hebrews 14: 8.)

The storehouse of our past is well stocked with adversity and resolve, impasse and imagination, dilemma and decision. Our future holds equal measures of uncertainty and promise, of hesitation and hope. As time-bound beings, ours is a three-dimensional awareness encompassing past, present and future. Consciously or unconsciously, we will always associate recollections of our past with hopes and fears for the future of our present. Our past, then, is with us yet. Is ours a usable past? What can it teach us? How has it conditioned our present? What might it hold for our future? There is a continuity and linkage between our present and our past. These linkages make themselves known in a variety of guises—institutional continuities, persisting attitudes and priorities, traditional beliefs, inherited strengths and weaknesses, and the enduring consequences of earlier decisions, actions and omissions. Our past and our present flow into our future. Developing even now on the outer edges of tradition, our frontiers themselves are part of the tradi-

tion. A unique, distinctive Mercy perspective on higher education should be marked by both continuity and change. Continuity is necessary because a new frontier is never fashioned out of a whole new ideal, but is the outer edge of a living tradition, rooted in the past but not at odds with it. Change is also essential because each generation must reshape the tradition in a way suited to the time and place of its distinctive ministry. Slavishly repeating the insights, restating the innovative ideas of the past, can only lock up the legacy, rob it of its efficacy, make an heirloom of a living, flowing spring. Let us not attempt to create a frozen waterfall.While new frontiers will not necessarily dictate curriculum, they can be expected to fashion attitudes toward the entire educational process. The most fundamental issues facing Mercy higher education arise from the broader social and cultural context.

Although we stand firmly grounded in the rich Mercy heritage of our past, we must live wisely and courageously in the present so that we can prepare for the future. The past is instructive but not binding. We are now in transition, at a junction in the history of our community and of our universities and colleges. We must call upon the pioneer qualities of risk-taking, courage, and a great hope inspired by faith. We cannot allow ourselves to be timid or unimaginative. It is imperative that we empower ourselves with vision, trust and faith.We are being called to refound—to refound not in the sense of institution, but strategically.We are being called to engage in a process of exchange, a process of reciprocal and critical interaction. It is a time when the interplay between tradition and changing needs demands our energies. However, without vigorous faith and incisive vision we will fail the future.

We must have the wisdom, the courage, the determination, the energy, the resolve to imagine and create alternative outcomes and futures.

By addressing in a scholarly manner those issues that emerge from society, a Mercy college or university can help to articulate the questions raised and influence the conclusions reached. While we are not its sole interpreters, we, as Sisters of Mercy, are the keepers of the tradition, trustees of the vision.We must have the wisdom, the courage, the determination, the energy, the resolve to imagine and create alternative outcomes and futures. We must cut through the numbness, penetrate the self-deception, rout out the denial. We must reactivate out of our historical symbols that have always been vehicles of redemptive honesty and bring to wide expression the very fears and uncertainties that may be so deeply suppressed that we no longer realize they are there. We must speak the language of metaphor in the vision so that the process may be engaged in at different stages by different people at many and diverse points. We must, as the prophet says:

Write the vision;
Make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it.
For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
It speaks of the end and does not lie.
It seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come,
It will not delay. (Habakkuk, 2: 2-3)

Mercy, especially over recent times, has worked a practical synthesis of seeming opposites, a synthesis of realities that are temporal and eternal, natural and supernatural, individual and social, immanent and transcendent. Faith and reason are not enemies. Instead, they make common cause in the task of probing the meaning and implications of the Gospel message for today. They work together to manifest the goodness of creation,t he dignity and transcendence of the human person, the importance of critical thinking and judgment, the necessity of redemptive grace. The integration of faith and reason, grace and nature, requires a vision of education that embraces the spiritual and the intellectual and that seeks to create a community of faith as well as a community of learning. The dialogue between religion and science is crucial since both disciplines shape our society in powerful and far-reaching ways. Everywhere we turn, we find a new awareness of the need for ethical principles and moral reflection. Our students should be familiar enough with the history of morality and the principles of moral reflection that they can recognize current moral issues and dilemmas and address them intelligently and responsibly. What we hold in common enables us, faculty and students, to engage in a conversation. Without common ground, conversation is impossible. This conversation brings all participants into a genuine community. It is a conversation about everything: about thermodynamics and accounting, about special education, about music, about right and wrong, about truth and error, justice and injustice; about beauty and ugliness, about the human good and human debasement. It is conversation that is connectedness, that brings about change, that liberates, and that articulates and enacts vision.

Building on a strong foundation of excellence, the vision that inspired our foundresses and the power of the spirituality that motivated them, we are challenged by these times to create an experience of integration and an appreciation for the rigor and exacting inquiry that are indispensable to the advancement of knowledge. We are called to give witness that human

beings—believers and unbelievers alike—are on a common spiritual journey, to serve as a sign and safeguard of the transcendence of the human person, and to study the world carefully, reading the signs of the times.

Richard John Neuhaus wrote:

Each moment in time is equally close to God's purpose, and God's purpose is equally close to each moment. But we are to read the signs of the times to discern the obligations, limits and opportunities of our moment.

Our moment is now. Let us meet our challenges with the enduring power of vision and the courage of decisive action.

Our moment is now. Let us meet our challenges with the enduring power of vision and the courage of decisive action. In closing, we can hear the poetic prayer, *The Enduring Power of Vision: Pathway to the Future*, which was written by Sisters Eloise and Jean Tobin, Professors Emeritae:

The Enduring Power of Vision: Pathway to the Future

In this moment of time
and in this place
We are made one with those
who have gone before us
Having sown the seed of our harvesting
That lights our way with an enduring vision

A vision engendered in prayer
fortified by the spirit.

A vision which sees within the immediacy
of the day's tasks
The handing on of a tradition
of excellence in Mercy
Ordered not only to magnify
the splendor of the Truth
Whatever its demands
Wherever it may lead
But also to enkindle
the desires of the heart
To embrace the ways of
Mercy and of Justice.
The same Spirit moving us all the while
from action to contemplation
To that Sabbath Rest in the spirit
wherein knowledge becomes wisdom
and discipline the order of love.
Thus a pathway is laid open to us
The far horizon beckons us
beyond these shores.
Let us then fare forward
with faith as our compass
and love as our lode star.

Sisters Eloise and Jean Tobin
Professors Emeritae

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Higher Education and the "Enduring Concerns" of the Sisters of Mercy

Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M., Ph.D.

The task assigned to me is to propose "how Institute leadership sees higher education within the Institute."While I haven't done a survey of Institute leadership on the issue and can't profess to articulate any consensus, I do want to adopt an explicit Institute perspective for these remarks. The Sisters of Mercy made a decisive and irreversible choice back in 1988, a choice which we implemented July 20, 1991. What are the implications of that choice for our ministry of higher education?

There are many fascinating parallels between the consolidation of the seventeen Mercy congregations and the consolidation of the University of Detroit and Mercy College as it was presented to us on Friday evening. For starters, both took place around the same time. The University of Detroit Mercy began operating as a new entity in September 1991. Both mergers were mission-driven and broadly participatory. Each of our congregations had its own heritage, culture, resources, and problems, as did the two institutions of higher education.We had to create a new identity, image, logo, and publications, just as the university did.

There are also some differences.We had 7000 decision makers, while the Detroit merger only required the approval of the two boards and sponsors. We left our "infrastructure" unchanged, while the university completely restructured its "infrastructure." However, the proverbial "bottom line"is the same in both cases.We are more together than the sum of our parts; and the pain and struggle of consolidation leave us poised for new challenges and opportunities.

Our Constitutions and Direction Statement spell out what are our enduring concerns: the social, political, economic, and spiritual well-being of others, especially the materially poor, women and children.

As you know, the charter of our Institute, our Constitutions, affirms that "we sponsor institutions to address our enduring concerns and to witness to Christ's mission." Our Constitutions and Direction Statement spell out what are our enduring concerns: the social, political, economic, and spiritual well-being of others, especially the materially poor, women and children. We seek to alleviate these needs either through direct service or through our influence. When the Institute—leaders and members—examines our commitment to higher education, we face three realities: our members, our institutions, and our mission. I will describe each reality and raise some questions for each from the standpoint of our "enduring concerns."

Our Members

As of May 31, 1995, our Institute databank listed 328 sisters in higher education. The database suffers from some inaccuracies, but I believe these numbers represent a fair approximation of our reality. The sisters currently active in higher education are grouped in four categories: fifty-one in administration; 205 in professional services (largely faculty); fourteen in pastoral services and campus ministry; and fifty-eight in support services. This represents approximately five percent of our total membership (or, if you exclude the retired sisters and only include persons in active ministry, something closer to ten percent). I did not analyze the data to discover median ages or percentage of terminal degrees, nor did I research the number of students preparing for the ministry of higher education.

What are the administrators doing? Eighty percent of them (40) are working in Mercy-sponsored institutions; two are in seminaries; three in state universities; the other six are scattered in a variety of settings such as St. John's University, New York, Regis College, Boston, and the Mexican-American Cultural Center in San Antonio. How about the faculty members? I did not do a breakdown of fields of degrees, but I noted that sixty-five percent are in Mercy institutions. Furthermore, they are concentrated in six regional communities: Dallas and Merion have twenty-two each; Providence and New Jersey have nineteen and seventeen respectively; and Detroit and Chicago have twelve and eleven sisters in higher education respectively. The numbers in the other regional communities are in the single digits.

Some questions which come to mind are the following: What difference does it make to the life of our Institute or to the potential of our ministry that we have ninety-eight sisters in higher education in the state of Pennsylvania? Or that we have seventy-two in New England? Or sixty-six in New York and New Jersey? Are there incipient centers of research and creativity which are just waiting for a catalyst before they coalesce? What will it take to release the corporate energy among so many women committed to the same vow of service, the same mission, the same ministry, the same Direction Statement?

Consider another source of information, the 1993-94 Directory of the Mercy Higher Education Conference. It lists approximately 150 dues-paying members. Most are Sisters of Mercy, but others, particularly administrators, are our lay colleagues. We may presume that these persons have signaled by their enrollment that the mission of MHEC is important to them. Let me cite some lines from the Mission Statement adopted in 1989:

> The members of the Mercy Higher Education Colloquium reaffirm the need for continuing involvement of the Sisters of Mercy in higher education: first, as integral to the mission of the Church to teach all people, and second, as a fulfillment of the fourth vow of service.
>
> Sisters of Mercy participate in the Church's mission of higher education through the pursuit of truth and the search for unity of knowledge, as well as through a reverent approach to all that can be known about the created world and human life. They bring to this task the legacy of Catherine McAuley's special love for the poor, sensitivity to the status of women, and concern for the application of all available resources to build human dignity.
>
> Higher education is thus seen as a work of Mercy intrinsically linked to the other works that shape the ministries of the Sisters of Mercy, . . . These opportunities exist both within Colleges sponsored and operated by the Sisters of Mercy and other institutions of the Church, as well as in public and private colleges and universities.
>
> The members of the Mercy Higher Education Colloquium are convinced that the possibilities for contributing to the development of persons, and for participating in shaping a more just and merciful society, place higher education within the mission of the Sisters of Mercy.

This Colloquium is one of the oldest of the Mercy associations/networks. Through your initiative and resourcefulness you have established and maintained an organization for over twenty years, serving as a model and inspiration for other groups. The time may be ripe for you to take the lead again. One observation is that this mission statement was written before the formation of our Institute. What would it be appropriate to change now, in the light of our new identity? Further, I note that fewer than half of the sisters in higher education are members of MHEC. Does this raise any questions about the mission and programs of the organization? How can it be made a more effective vehicle for the promotion of our "enduring concerns" and a more effective means of catalyzing the corporate energies latent in our sisters in higher education? Should MHEC, MSEA, and MEEN give way to a single Mercy educational association? Would this be an example of the kind of infrastructure change which would signal our new Institute reality?

We might also ponder the effect on our Institute identity of our "corporate ministry" in higher education. Many commentators on religious life today note that we suffer from a weakening of corporate identity due to an erosion of corporate ministry. As an Institute we have 328 women engaged in the same ministry, plus many others serving as trustees and sponsors of institutions of higher education. When is a ministry "corporate"? I would suggest at least two characteristics: it is the preferred choice of the members and it contributes to the public identity of the congregation.

The Institutions

The second part of our higher education reality is our institutions: nineteen colleges and universities with enrollments ranging from a few hundred to several thousand; with programs ranging from associate degrees to graduate and professional degrees. If you were to divide a map of the United States into four quadrants, all would fall into the same northeast quadrant. The College of St. Mary's in Omaha would be right on the north-south axis!

The colleges are networked through an organization known as the Association of Mercy Colleges. According to the Tenth Anniversary Report it published last year,"The Association was formed to heighten the profile of Mercy colleges and universities by bringing the presidents of these institutions together under a formal structure. Twice a year these presidents, representing nineteen Mercy colleges and universities from fourteen states spanning Maine to Nebraska, explore subjects of general educational interest. They also discuss matters of particular interest to them as leaders of institutions sponsored by or affiliated with the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Collectively, member institutions in the Association of Mercy Colleges educate almost 36,000 students, have teaching faculties that total 1,468 full-time members and operating budgets just shy of $295 million. As such, the Association of Mercy Colleges stands as a powerful voice in American private higher education."

A question we might raise is, what has that powerful voice said lately? I don't believe that the AMC has enabled the separate institutions to promote their individual missions in any significant way, nor has it facilitated many efforts toward common projects except the publication of the Tenth Anniversary Report and the contribution to Mercy International Centre. To give an example of the lack of coordinated initiative: the corporate response to the first round of consultation on the Norms for the Implementation of 'Ex Corde Ecclesiae' was coordinated by our office. As far as I know, there has been no attempt to develop any common thinking about the issues being tested in the current round of consultation. To be fair, the presidents

struggled for several years with a proposal to establish and fund a central office which would facilitate common projects. However, since they were not able to agree on the purpose and goals of the office, they decided last January to drop the idea. Instead they will initiate and fund projects on a case-by-case basis. I hope that they will have the creativity and will to deploy some of their corporate strength!

One suggestion might be to choose a contemporary issue of public relevance—e.g., some aspect of welfare reform or immigration policy or low-income housing or health care reform or foreign aid—and co-sponsor an inter-disciplinary, inter-collegiate conference or think tank on one of our campuses. Two or three or a consortium of our colleges could co-sponsor the event, so that the expenditure of resources by each would be modest. However, the potential for focusing attention on the issue, for public education, and for drawing on our own Mercy resources would increase with shared sponsorship. We have sisters in hands-on ministry in all of these areas who could bring credibility to theoretical debates; we have communication networks which could help to publicize the learnings. In short, with respect to our institutions of higher education, I don't believe the creation of our new Institute has made any difference as yet.

The Mission

Finally, the mission. Early in the life of the Institute Leadership Conference the question of our colleges was raised, partly in reaction to troubled or problematic relationships between regional community administration and their institutions and partly out of a desire to explore ways in which we could further this ministry from a corporate perspective. A higher education task force was formed, including college presidents, regional community presidents, and myself. We met four or five times and learned a great deal about the profiles of our various institutions and about current issues in Catholic higher education. We agreed that the ministry of higher education in our congregation does not enjoy the affirmation it deserves nor exercise the influence it merits. Therefore, in consultation with AMC and MHEC, we drafted a mission statement for higher education which was subsequently affirmed by the Institute Leadership Conference on Sept. 30, 1993. It reads

> The Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas recognizes that higher education is integral to the mission of the Church and is an effective expression of our Mercy mission.
>
> Therefore, we endorse the sponsorship of Mercy colleges and universities and encourage our members to ministry in these and in other institutions of higher education.
>
> This ministry expresses our commitment to the pursuit of truth and knowledge, and to the furtherance of the social, political, economic, and spiritual well-being of the human community.
>
> Our institutions are sponsored by, and/or are affiliated with, regional communities. We encourage collaboration among Mercy institutions, regional communities and sisters in this ministry.
>
> The Association of Mercy Colleges and the Mercy Higher Education Colloquium exemplify our corporate commitment.

I think you'll agree with me that it would be hard to say what difference that statement has made! We have no programs of recruitment, mentoring, exchange, or promotion of sisters in the ministry; no programs of leadership development or succession; no programs of mission assessment or enhancement. Finally, let me call attention to four mission related realities.

Sponsorship

A conference on sponsorship was held by the Institute Leadership Conference in January, 1995. It was an attempt to come to common understandings about the meaning of this relationship to our institutional ministries and to see how we could do a better job of sponsorship from the perspective and resources of our Institute. I would characterize the outcomes as visionary rather than practical. It wasn't a strategic planning session, because, as a group, we weren't the people responsible for the many institutions. However, there was a level of energy and excitement in the group that promises to carry into the future. As you know, the Institute Leadership Team has submitted a proposal to the chapter for an Institute-wide follow-up in 1996.

Ecclesial Identity

I was struck yesterday by the level of energy generated by the discussion of Catholic identity and mission effectiveness. Prompted perhaps by the dialogues on *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, but also out of our own sense of our mission and tradition, we take our Catholic identity very seriously. We search for ways to interpret it, to express it, and to guarantee its vitality and continuity into the future.

In June, 1995, I was at the Catholic Health Association meeting with 800 or 900 other sponsors, trustees, and administrators. Probably one person in ten was a Sister of Mercy or affiliated with one of our institutions or systems. A key issue there—the key issue—was preserving Catholic identity in the fact of avaricious for-profit systems, a revolution in the insurance industry, wide-spread consolidations and mergers, etc. Again, it was evident how seriously we take Catholic identity.

Now, the question this poses for me is, how can we care so passionately about Roman Catholic identity in our institutional ministries and sometimes seem so

cavalier about it in our congregational identity? Do we suffer from a kind of ecclesial schizophrenia? Is it more important that our ministries assert and affirm a relationship with the Catholic Church than that our Institute assert and affirm it? There is only one Church! I am simplifying a complex issue, but I would suggest that reflection on the relationship of our institutional ministries to the Church might be an antidote to a certain ecclesiological minimalism we fall prey to.

Scholarship and Research

The question of promoting Mercy scholarship and research has been linked with economic viability. Research takes time and "time is money." It's not only research in the physical and social sciences that is expensive; a summer spent in the library preparing a manuscript in the humanities requires being released from other work. But these reflections come from an Institute perspective. How does scholarship enhance the level of dialogue within our Institute? One issue that is timely is the corporate stance of the Institute. A certain number of our sisters are disappointed that the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas have not been more vocal, more out-front, in our public stances.

This raises a number of questions: out of what dialogue does a corporate stance emerge? Who articulates it? What authority can it claim? Our Direction Statement is far and away our best instance of a corporate stance to date. It was broadly participatory in its formulation, and it received formal endorsement at the highest level of our Institute. As a result it enjoys broad ownership and has stimulated countless actions at all levels in the Institute.

It's easy to state the obvious in a public statement, but then, why is it needed? It's tempting to take the issue-of-the-month approach and find the politically correct stance. It's more difficult to craft a thoughtful and challenging statement about a complex issue in the church or society, a statement that commits us and invites others to dialogue and action. The community's reaction to the Institute Leadership Team's letter on *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, published last September, is an interesting case in point. We expressed our concern, we gave our opinion, we invited dialogue, and we suggested actions. Some sisters let us know they thought we were too 'wimpy,' and the great majority said nothing at all.I raise this issue with those who are in higher education, to say that we need your habits of reflection and your skills in discourse to help the rest of us form those convictions out of which a genuine corporate stance can emerge.

Higher Education and New Membership

"Oh no!" you're saying, "Here she goes again!" Well let me just reflect on the fact that students in higher education, whether traditional or non-traditional, are people who are seeking—people who have questions and dreams and aspirations.What they're seeking may be financial security as Kathleen Weigert's data showed us. But a certain number have not yet made irrevocable life commitments and may be open to an invitation to religious life. The Institute Leadership Team has been teased and scoffed at for our suggestion that we should seek 100 new members a year. We've been accused of "playing the numbers game,"of not understanding the mystery of a vocation, of not being open to "new forms of religious life,"etc. But in our defense, I'd say we succeeded in shocking people into considering an issue of critical importance to the future viability of our Institute and its mission.

How many women is God calling? We don't have any idea. But we do know that there are a certain number of ordinary women who would be willing to make an extraordinary choice. And a disproportionate number of them are probably on our Catholic campuses, perhaps involved in our service programs, perhaps not. Questions that might be posed:

- Do you publicize Mercy Corps?
- Do you provide opportunities to introduce young women to the spiritual life in an adult way?
- Do you share information about our Mercy ministries?
- Do you give active and attractive witness to the way of life you have chosen?

Conclusion:

Higher education is a powerful means to achieve the Mercy mission of service to the poor and the marginalized as well as the mission of social change. As yet, the Institute has made little or no difference to our ministry of higher education. The well-being of each institution is the preoccupation of a local board, perhaps of the regional community leadership and of a small number of sisters. There is no sense of responsibility for the ministry as a whole. The Institute needs the ministry of higher education for its intellectual resources and for the discipline and method of intellectual inquiry. One group which exemplifies this is the Mercy Association of Scripture and Theology. On their own initiative they have solicited and published the scholarly research and reflections of our members. I would look for closer collaboration between MHEC and MAST in the future.

Finally, a hope. I would not want my analysis to be interpreted as critical or pessimistic. It is only in light of the great vision which animates us and of the manifold gifts that have been given to us that we fall short. We are limited only by our imagintion! In 1981 we imagined that our relationship as Sisters of Mercy could be different and we re-created the whole Mercy world. Our Institute is not yet four years old. Let us creatively imagine how "we may further the social, political, economic, and spiritual well-being of the human community through our pursuit of truth and knowledge" in this corporate Mercy ministry of higher education—and invest our energy in making it a reality!

Book Review

The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross

By Jon Sobrino, S.J. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993)

Reviewed by Mary Ann Dillon, R.S.M.

At first I was attracted to Jon Sobrino's most recent collection of essays by its title, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross. It stirred in me echoes of the profoundly simple insight on which our congregation was founded. When Catherine McAuley reworked the Constitutions of the Presentation Sisters to fashion the rule for her newly forming community she drafted the primordial description of our charism:

> *Mercy, the principal path pointed out by Jesus Christ to those who are desirous of following Him has, in all ages of the Church, excited the faithful in a particular manner to instruct and comfort the sick and dying poor, as in them they regard the person of our Divine Master....*[1]

This one sentence captured in embryo form the relationship between contemplation and service which has molded the character of our Institute. Mercy draws us to service in order that we might find the One for whom we search, living within the very ones we serve. In fact, since Catherine's day, efforts to explicate the charism in light of the concrete situations in which Sisters of Mercy find themselves have, in substance, turned on the interpretation of that sentence. In her wisdom, Catherine also recognized that Mercy was not an attribute unique to her Sisters; it was the primary way for all followers of Jesus. In *The Principle of Mercy* Jon Sobrino builds upon these same insights.

The only survivor of a community of El Salvadorian martyrs, Sobrino, a Spanish Jesuit radicalized by the experience of life in the Third World, uses the tools of liberation theology to explain the reality of our fractured world. He forthrightly declares that the purpose of the English edition of the book is "[t]o help the First World halt its slide down the slippery slope of misunderstanding, dissimulation, and oppression of the crucified people" (vii). Part One concentrates on the essential character of mercy and its role in shaping the mission of the church and the task of theology. Part Two analyzes the crucified reality which is the Third World. Part Three explores solidarity and priesthood as manifestations of mercy. The final chapter of the book is a moving testimony to the Jesuit martyrs of El Salvador who, for Sobrino, are witnesses *par excellence* to mercy.

According to Sobrino, the principle of mercy, which stands at the origin of all Jesus' activities, is a "particular praxic love that swells within a person at the sight of another person's unjustly inflicted suffering, driving its subject to eradicate that suffering for no other reason than that it exists, and precluding any excuse for not so doing" (18). When confronted with the suffering of whole groups of people, mercy takes the shape of justice and action for liberation, Sobrino explains. It causes people moved by the pain of others to pose the question: What are we going to do to bring the crucified people down from the cross?

In order to answer that question, Sobrino argues for the necessity of a real solidarity with the poor. That solidarity, he contends, has the effect of converting those whose initial involvement with poor people was simply to give aid to suffering "others." "Solidarity is...the Christian way to overcome...individualism, whether personal or collective, both at the level of our involvement in history and on the level of faith" (147), he says. Solidarity with the poor leads to co-responsibility with them for humanity; it unmasks the falseness of much of Western culture. Solidarity with suffering people causes those from affluent societies to reformulate their faith and re-evaluate their response to the mystery of God as experienced in history.

Forgiveness and the reality of being forgiven are major themes in two of the nine essays in *The Principle of Mercy.* Sobrino explores the idea of forgiveness as acceptance, preferring it to the more traditional notion of forgiveness as pardon. He holds that acknowledging personal sin and welcoming forgiveness, experienced precisely as acceptance by the one offended, can lead to the eradication of historical sin, the term he uses to refer to the massive and systemic evil sometimes called social sin. "[I]t is the gratitude of knowing oneself to be accepted that moves a person to de-centering from self, to generous action, to a life of eager striving that the love of God that has been experienced may be a historical reality in this world" (96). His thesis is that the poor and oppressed of the world offer forgiveness as acceptance and thus witness to the means by which systemic evil might be overcome. They offer this forgiving acceptance not only to their political and economic oppressors but also to the church whose most serious sin, according to Sobrino, is its failure to make a consistent radical option for the poor.

In the book's final essay Sobrino gives moving tribute to his martyred fellow Jesuits of the Central American University: "Mercy for them was the beginning and the end, and they put nothing before it not even their personal safety, not even—and this was perhaps the most difficult part—the safety of the institution" (179). They were moved by mercy to seek and

proclaim the truth and to unmask the lies which masquerade as truth, all in order to defend the poor. Because of their commitment they were required to confront those who are governed by the principle of "active anti-mercy." Thus, their deaths were not the product of a momentary madness but the culmination of a process. These martyrs, Sobrino concludes, "tell us that it is possible to live with a great love in this world and to place all our human abilities at the service of love" (184).

The Principle of Mercy is worth reading because it offers a particular perspective on our claim to be Mercy, which we dare not overlook. Sobrino's reflections on the meaning of solidarity and the centrality of forgiveness, understood as acceptance, are additional reasons to read the essays, especially since these values figure significantly in our corporate efforts to be Sisters of Mercy.

The essays suffer from a major lacuna, however. There appears to be no effort to integrate the insights of feminist theology on the issues under scrutiny. This gap is particularly glaring given the work of Latin American women theologians, such as Maria Pilar Aquin. Among his cited references there is not one allusion to the work of a woman. In addition, although women are among the poorest of the poor, Sobrino makes no mention of their unique suffering as he describes the plight of the people in Latin America. Even the deaths of the two women who were martyred along with his Jesuit colleagues at the Central American University receive only passing mention.

Because the book is a collection of occasional essays, most of which were published in earlier forms or originated as speeches given to a variety of audiences, it also suffers from some repetitiveness and a certain unevenness. Nevertheless, even given these short comings, this anthology of Sobrino's essays embodies the prophetic passion of a person committed to the eradication of oppression. The haunting question which frames Sobrino's theologizing,"What are we going to do to bring the crucified people down from the cross?" might well be posed to us as an Institute. Were Catherine among us today, I believe she would challenge us to answer the question by daring deeds.

Footnote

1. *Rule and Constitutions of the Religious Sisters of the Order of Mercy*, Dublin, 1841 (Copy of original hand written manuscript), Ch. 3. Emphasis added.

Discussion Questions

1. (Kane) Whether or not women's ordination is possible right now in the Catholic church, what other ministerial roles should be open to women, and what do you think they would do differently if given the chance?

2. (Bumpus) Even though Lincoln abolished slavery in the U.S. in 1865, what groups of people in society are still enslaved, according to your ministerial experience? What is needed to see them free?

3. (Thornton) What sorts of political action do you undertake? Which ones do you judge to be most effective and why?

4. (Hittner) Getting access to the Internet would allow Mercy Sisters to communicate on a new level. But which is the greater value for you—living simply and communicating according to the limitations most people have, or investing money in computer equipment?

5. (Weigert) What is your understanding of what Catholic identity means in the educational institution you yourself attended, the one where you work, or the one your regional community sponsors?

6. (Antone) "Mercy education must provide for the development of an intellectual state of mind, a preparedness for change, and a commitment to a set of ethical principles and values." How is this directive generally Catholic, yet specifically Mercy in character, no matter the school level it addresses, whether elementary, secondary, or collegiate?

7. (Gottemoeller) "What difference does it make to the life of our Institute or to the potential of our ministry that we have ninety-eight sisters in higher education in the state of Pennsylvania? Or that we have seventy-two in New England? Or sixty-six in New York and New Jersey? Are there incipient centers of research and creativity which are just waiting for a catalyst before they coalesce?" What sort of projects could such a research center launch?

Book Review

Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy

By Mary C. Sullivan, R.S.M., (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995)
Reviewed by Katherine Doyle, R.S.M.

Sometimes, when we least expect it, we are given a treasure of incalculable worth. This is the case with Mary C. Sullivan's *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy*. It would be easy to assume that this new work on Catherine is another interpretation of her vision and her ministry or a study of the legacy which she gave to Mercy. Instead it is a collection of primary documents of the Mercy tradition which have been tucked away in Mercy archives in Ireland and England. To put it succinctly, this work provides the raw material for a new cycle of scholarly research on the Mercy charism.

With meticulous research Mary Sullivan draws together four distinct categories of data. She provides a detailed chronology of Catherine's life and ministry from 1778 through 1841. The chronology provided will be of significant assistance to formation personnel, persons responsible for mission services and all others who are asked to play the role of Mercy storyteller. Although condensed the outline jogs the memory and invites the reader to revisit some of the episodes in Catherine's life which might otherwise be forgotten.

The second category of data relates to the various manuscripts and writings about Catherine that are extant. Sullivan traces the origin of these manuscripts and the possible sources from which they are drawn. Speaking of the quality of the narratives, Sullivan reflects: "Catherine's contemporaries and her first biographers had stored in their memories their own personal images of her, such that, which there is considerable commonality of remembered perception, noticed after the fact, each of these writers speaks in her own voice, out of the particularity of what she had grasped of Catherine. Their narratives are, then, individual realizations of the one, never completely accessible, historical character and plot. Each narrator gives us the only Catherine she can give us: her version of her, as it were: the Catherine she perceived, treasured, and remembered."[1]

Sullivan points out that all the manuscripts are somewhat hagiographical in nature. The women who wrote them were not only attached to Catherine but they believed her to be saintly. The stories remembered and the words written down reflect that belief. Although conditioned by their ages, points of view and unique personalities, they all wrote their portraits to preserve a memory of the woman whom they choose to follow. Each reminiscence differs in the degree with which it captures both her strengths and weaknesses.

Another key element to note in the various manuscripts is the form which the author used. Some were quick letters written in the haste of many duties and cares. Others were more carefully crafted and contain collective memories rather than strictly personal ones.

Most intriguing is the data in category three, the seven portraits of Catherine by her closest collaborators and religious daughters. These materials are divided into letter and manuscript format. The writers, Mary Ann Doyle, Mary Clare Moore, Mary Vincent Harnett, Mary Clare Augustine Moore, Mary Frances Xavier Warde, Mary Vincent Whitty and Mary Elizabeth Moore were all closely linked to Catherine. The unique qualities of that personal relationship color and flavor the storytelling. In some way the collection can be compared to the Gospel perspectives of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They tell the same story but each remains unique in its interpretation, selectivity and insight. Each woman's perspective adds to the collective portrait.

While the purpose of this section is to make available these important primary documents concerning Catherine, there is a secondary element which should not be overlooked. The documents along with biographical background on their writers give us a look at the early Mercy community. Catherine did not work in isolation nor did the tradition of mercy emerge solely shaped by her insight. The early members of the community were important shapers of the mercy tradition. In particular the influence of Mary Ann Doyle, Mary Clare Moore and Mary Elizabeth Moore invite additional research and study. Such study might lead to an increased understanding of how the charism was interpreted, refined and adapted to the mission setting during the foundational period.

The fourth section of the book is devoted to the original rule as it was written by Catherine and revised by Archbishop Murray. The research value of this section is tremendous. Even subtle changes in the rule cloud over the original insight and vision of Catherine and her notion of how mercy life should be led. Sullivan points out that the ordering of the chapters, the changes in religious language and the elimination of some elements of the Presentation Rule all are revelatory of Catherine's understanding of religious life.[2] In addition to study of the nuances found in the Rule, more needs to be done on the influence of Mary Clare Moore in its formulation. Because of its contribution to the pool of accessible resources for study of Catherine and the tradition of mercy, it might be overlooked that this is not just a book for researchers, scholars and formation personnel. It is a rich source of

mercy heritage for everyone: sisters, associates, collaborators in ministry.

A careful reading of the text surfaces issues with which we still struggle: the care of aging parents, the relationship with the institutional Church, the conditions under which a ministry must be started or ended, the quality of our interpersonal relationships within mercy community, the urgency of our passion for the poor. Reading the texts through the prism of our daily experience challenges us to ask ourselves questions such as, "How is Catherine's understanding of the Cross operative in my life?" and"How is our present criteria for accepting a new ministry like that used by Catherine?" or "Do we really have as close a network and sense of common mission now as we did during the foundational years?"

The true worth of this book will only be known over time. It is a starting point for much research, prayer and reflection. As a starting point it is only useful if used and used again. For such a gift and such a challenge we can only say "Thank you, Mary."

Footnotes

1. Sullivan, Mary C. Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p.30.
2. *Ibid.*

Contributors

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