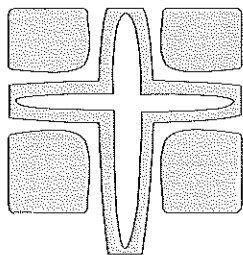


# *The* **MAST** *Journal*

The Journal  
of the Mercy  
Association  
in Scripture  
and Theology

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## **Aging Remembering and Caring**

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Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

About ten years ago, the Sisters of Mercy in Burlingame took a survey on the expectations we had for our retirement. A block of questions concerned our desired physical living situation. Was it a priority to live in a larger convent setting or in a smaller group? In a peaceful country setting or near a city close to public transportation so we could "get out"? As an alternative to "not working," what did we expect would be our ministerial interests and leisure activities? I remember my frustration at an underlying assumption that controlled the questions. At that time, the Sisters of Mercy sponsored nineteen colleges and universities. Yet none of the questions addressed the possibility that older nuns, as a group, would have a common need for nurturing their intellectual life. The survey seemed to embody a social bias that elderly women, once retired, would not seek to learn new subjects, participate in intellectual discourse, find a forum for teaching, or write for publication.

Recent statistics report that about 19 percent of the American population has received a college education. A greater number of women than men now enroll in undergraduate institutions, at least in the U.S.A. Despite the diversity of their professional fields and their families' economic and social background, nuns represent one of the most highly educated groupings of women in the world. Why is there no category in our retirement planning for what may expand our minds as well as support our devotional and spiritual life?

Now that I am sufficiently aged to belong to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), I receive marketing pitches from a retirement industry which defines the needs of the over-55 female. I learn that I should drink eight glasses of water (not coffee) to counteract dehydration, eat according to a new pyramid with less meat and more vegetables, increase my calcium intake, watch my investments, exercise on a treadmill, buy a mattress with adjustments for temperature and firmness, plan a cruise to warmer climes, send money to Save-a-Child overseas, and buy CD's which reissue the music of Ella Fitzgerald, Patty Page, and Glenn Gould.

My complaint about the retirement survey for nuns replicates my impatience with AARP literature. They both "dumb down" educated, thoughtful women, distracting our attention from the intellect, or life of greater consciousness which assumes new potential in the last third of life. After millennia of non-literacy and near-silence, women of this century have a responsibility, it seems to me, to leave as many written records as possible of their thinking. Retired women have acquired consciousness of their individual personalities. They see their shaping by family circumstance and historical event, and can take seriously their role as lay theologians and teachers of women's accumulated spiritual wisdom.

If not the AARP stereotype, what is the alternative for intelligent and spiritually developed women? As leitmotif for this issue of the MAST Journal, I present the voice of Valia Hirsch through the first pages of her autobiography. She began writing her memoirs and poetry at age 87. She and her husband emigrated to Israel where she took up the study of Hebrew (her third alphabet) at age 64. The fuller text of her memoirs narrates the stream of her family and neighborhood relations, her political activism in the war years, her literacy education, newspaper publishing, organizational leadership and patronage of artists, political radicals, scientists, musicians, enriching her life with new and abiding friendships.



Each reader of this journal also bears the potential treasure of a life-story wisely and abundantly told. The process of retrieving and telling such a story is a project worthy of retirement and a benediction on this last century of the millennium whose decades cry for redemption.

*Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.*

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., Editor

# Selected Poems of 1998

Valia Hirsch

## Meditation

*I am somewhere a long way off  
meditating, completely empty-minded.  
I repeat my mantra again and again  
Till I hover between heaven and hell.*

*Being way out there in nothingness  
Soothes my soul, brings me nirvana,  
Cut off from the world, free of feeling,  
Free of memory. Free.*

*Suddenly voices enter my calm  
Penetrate the peace, bring the world back to me.  
My pains, my fears, my loves, return.  
I am alive, even more alive than before.*

## Learning

*Of what use is learning if we don't remember.  
We don't need the P's and Q's, only the overall  
idea.  
We don't need to know the syllabus of the stars,  
But to know there are millions of billions of them,  
That we are a puny people in a plethora of planets,  
A tiny globe in an every growing cosmos.  
Our universe approaches infinity  
Which we will never see.*

## Flowers

*Life's unearned gift of green and gold  
Of red and pink and purple,  
A flower found to fill my heart  
With profound joyous ecstasy.*

*I neither spent nor toiled nor troubled  
For this beauty that came unbidden,  
So still more bountiful is this blossom  
Bringing fragrance and color to my life.*

## Mosaics of My Mind

*Some vivid stones stick together*

*With a grout of unpleasant paste.  
Their beauty brightened the dull blend  
To make the mosaic of the mind.*

*How can I grasp the glittering grains  
And ignore the ugly, common clay,  
Forget the amalgam that makes the whole,  
A mix of commonplace and comely.*

*Once all was pleasing, pretty and good  
The sharp shine of shards stirring my soul;  
Now I see only the meaningless, the unlovely.  
Is this the wages of age, the loss of sense,  
The end that comes with the fullness of years?*

## Evil and Good

*After the black night comes the day.  
After the icy winds comes the warm spring.  
Healing penicillin is made from poisonous mold.  
Decaying leaves nourish edible mushrooms.*

*How can evil be known without good?  
What is heaven without hell?  
Contrasts and opposites illumine all of thought.  
From the rot of death the beautiful is born.*

## The Bungled Beehive

*My mind is a hive of buzzing bees  
A random rummage of numbers and names,  
Stuck together in a tangled jungle.*

*Then suddenly a honeyed thought emerges.  
The barren tasteless wax vanishes.  
Taking with it the myriad rumbles.*

*A precious drop of sweetness is retrieved,  
Ideas new and pregnant emerge.  
They bring order to the bumbling bedlam,  
As calm now rules the hive.*

# Valia's Memoirs about Herself

March 7, 1995

## Getting old

As I add years to my life, my inner self has not grown old. It's hidden under layers of experience, fears, memories of pain and suffering. These are the calluses of past difficulties, but I will not become vulnerable, nor withered. I am still eager for the future and new risks. Still, I know I'm old. I live more in memories than in aspirations. What has been is more important than what will be.

As time goes on, I live through many old worlds and into new ones. My past is a compendium of memories:

**My past is a compendium of memories: some real, some distorted, some told to me, some read. With the passage of time, all of these become realities, even fuse with stories. I should have kept a diary.**

some real, some distorted, some told to me, some read. With the passage of time, all of these become realities, even fuse with stories. I should have kept a diary.

Interpretations and views change from one vantage point to another, from one period to the next. Understanding changes with knowledge. Even facts seem different with new insights. Does truth depend on precision, on facts, or on intelligence? The dif-

ference between the trivial and the important vanishes with the years. I was devastated at the age of sixteen when Manuel went to Europe and left me in Chicago. When he returned four months later, I couldn't recall my despair. Only the loss of David endures, after almost a decade.

With David gone, almost everything is lost and gone. It's hard to accept the idea that I'll never hear his responses, nor his wit, his understanding, his irritations, not even his annoying rejection of the new reality. How is it possible for so much

can be verified, but as to feelings, impressions, even events.

Do I exaggerate my grandparents' lack of demonstrativeness because I was not demonstrative and shied away from showing emotion, as I tend to do even now? At the age of ten, was my negative response to my uncle Alexander Kypnis due to anger that my mother spent time with me for the first time, not because she wanted to be nice to me, but because she wanted something from my father's brother.

Nostalgia grows with time; time is flexible. What took place half a century ago that is pleasant to remember seems to have happened half a year ago. The bad things that took place comparatively recently I tend to relegate to a distant and forgotten past.

Memory is treacherous and unreliable. I should have written my biography in the third person as fiction, and then there would have been no problem with facts, incidents, times, places. Maybe in fiction there is more truth.

## My Beginning

I was born Valentina Rautendelein Osipovna Kypnis in Zhitomir, Russia, in the Ukraine, June 20 1908. My mother was the daughter of Anna Perlmutter and Gregory Porwancher. My grandfather

Gregory, called Grisha, was the son of a rabbi. His father or grandfather had come from France. In the eighteenth century, when names were assigned to residents in Europe, they usually described the craft or locality. Grisha's family came from Provence; their name was originally Provencer; in Russia this became Porwancher. Grisha was the youngest of five brothers, all of whom had emigrated to the United States before I was born. "Rautendelein" was the fairy heroine of a play by Gerhardt Hauptmann, *The Sunken Bell* (*Der Gesunkene Glocke*, approximately), popular at the time. Later, Hauptmann was awarded the Nobel prize for literature.

Anna Perlmutter was the youngest of many children. Her mother died at her birth; she was raised by her eldest brother Ignatye. He was the *shtadlon* of Zhitomer, the liaison between the Jewish community and the municipality. He was also a pharmacist and owned a drugstore. Despite the popular myth that every Jewish family in Russia was poor, the Perlmutteres were wealthy by any standard, as evidenced by the sterling silver, cut glass, linens, old samovars, and other furnishings they brought with them to the United States.

My mother was Ljuba Gregorovna Perlmutter (later called "Nunia"—my childish pronunciation—by the family). She married my father Yosif Kypnis, a mathematics student, when she was

seventeen. I was born a year later. My grandparents Anna and Grisha, whom I was to call Mama and Papa, were *narodniks*—followers of Tolstoy's naturalist, nationalist movement, inspired by Rousseau. But Papa (Grisha) was more radical. He was arrested, accused of murdering a Russian officer, and sent to Siberia in 1899. In 1908 he was released, or escaped, and came back to Zhitomir.

My father refused to leave, saying he  
"didn't want to be a pants presser like  
other Russian intellectual immigrants in  
America." My mother was sure he would  
follow; but he never did.

At the end of that year, my father learned from some non-Jewish friends that Papa was to be arrested again. The family, consisting of my grandparents, my eighteen year old mother, my mother's brother Elya (called Samuel in the United States), her young sister Wilhelmina, aged seven, myself (six months old), and my grandmother's older brother Fabian, hurriedly departed for Holland, en route to the United States. I was entered on Papa's passport as his daughter. My father refused to leave, saying he "didn't want to be a pants presser like other Russian intellectual immigrants in America." My mother was sure he would follow; but he never did.

The family landed in Baltimore but went directly to Chicago where most of the Porwancher brothers were living (one had moved to Idaho). The first address I remember was 5050 South Drexel Boulevard. I learned to walk and talk in Washington Park. I remember sleeping in a room painted green with my aunt Mina (Wilhelmina), and going for walks with her. The next address I recall was 606 South Marshfield Avenue; I was

about four years old. My mother (Nunia) was supporting the whole family. Because she knew languages, she taught French at Parker Private School in Chicago from 9:00 to 3:00, and gave piano lessons after school. She would come home as late as 9:00 or 10:00 in the evening.

She had a few piano pupils at home on weekends, one of whom was Edward Robbin (later Tamara Greenberg's father). He was four years older than I, and was my mentor in becoming an American. He taught me to roller skate, gave me my first dog, Fipsie, and his parents' home was my favorite hangout. Ed's sister was institutionalized with Down's Syndrome and his father

treated me like a daughter. He always had bright new shiny pennies for me.

I lived in two worlds: Russian at home and English outside.

I also understood Polish, spoken by Nunia and Mama when they didn't want me to know what they were saying—although I did. Mama always spoke Polish to her brother Fybish (Fabian). He had lived in Lodz, Poland for many years. I also learned some French when my mother's friend Lyuba Feldmark visited us from Paris for several months and spoke only French to Nunia.

I never heard Yiddish at home, although Papa read the "Yiddish Courier" newspaper. I often walked with him to

English in Russia, because my uncle Sammy entered pharmaceutical school shortly after coming to Chicago, and had no trouble graduating in the minimum time. My mother prided herself on how much English she knew. She later recounted self-deprecatingly how when she first arrived she thought she could already read street signs, as she had at first pronounced it, "Cak-es" and "Coo-ki-es."

The house had electric lights and a telephone. The electric company provided bulbs for every lamp in the house, and would exchange new bulbs for outworn or broken ones gratis. Morris says this custom (or law?) was still in place when he was in graduate school in Chicago in the

these were given to me, I eagerly awaited the telephone man each month.

At age six, I started first grade in Marquette Public School. There was no artificial lighting in the classrooms, only gas mantle lights in the corridors. On dark days, we couldn't do any schoolwork, so, to our delight, our teacher Miss Murtaugh would stand in the doorway reading "Little Lord Fauntleroy" to us by the light from the corridor. Later that winter after she finished the book, she read us Andersen's fairy tales. I went into shock when I heard my teacher reading, in English, "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," which I knew in Russian because my grandmother read it to me. It took me a long time to realize that words could be translated from Russian to English, and vice versa!

In the house, I heard only Russian for several years. We lived in the same building with Papa's oldest brother Aaron, who had come to the United States about twenty-five years earlier. He was a widower with three grown daughters: Florence, Gertrude, and Lillian—all school teachers. Much later, after we moved away, I remember speaking English with them when Papa brought me to visit. They must have spoken English and taught it to me. I knew how to read English when I started school, but have no recollection of how I learned. Perhaps Ed Robbin taught me.

The first printed matter I can remember reading, at age

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Kedzie and thirteenth street, where it was published. Neither my grandmother, my mother, nor anybody else in the house knew Yiddish at that time, but after many years, my uncle Sammy and Nunia were able to carry on conversations with Yiddish-speaking friends. They must have learned some

fifties. To make a phone call one had to insert a nickel into the telephone box. Once a month these were collected by the "telephone man." The minimum charge was \$1.50—thirty calls. One made up the difference if fewer calls were made, but got a penny back for every nickel over thirty. As

six, was *Mother Earth*, a socialist-anarchist magazine edited by Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. Sammy, who was studying pharmacy and who spoke English, took me to an anarchist meeting and introduced me to some of the leaders.

Mama (my grandmother) had been giving me piano lessons. At a recital of young music students at Hull House, I was the youngest performer—five years old. (Hull house was a community center, founded by Jane Addams, providing social services and education to new immigrants.)

I played Beethoven's "Für Elise." Jane Addams, the founder of Hull House, who had arranged the concert, sat me on her lap for the rest of the recital. She told me I must continue to study the piano and give a big concert in a few years. I did study, but I never played the piano again at Hull House. I did play the organ there once for a silent movie when the regular organist was sick.

Every night, my grandmother would read to me to put me to sleep, as I was a poor sleeper. She didn't distinguish between fairy stories and Russian literature. In addition to fairy tales, she read me Russian poets, political books like Lermontov's *What's to be Done*, Chekhov, children's stories by Tolstoy, and poetry by Pushkin.

Here is one of the Russian fables Mama read to me. A man met his friend on the street and complimented him on the beautiful new coat he

was wearing. "But," he asked, "why is the back part so shabby and worn?" "I can't see the back," the friend answered, "I can only see the front." (There was no moral to this story.)

I remember a poem where the writer asks one gift from God, to be a cat for one day in his life, to show disdain for all the world and do as he pleases.

I wasn't allowed to play outdoors, because  
Mama believed that only hooligans played  
outside, and I envied the children who  
played not only on the sidewalk but in the  
middle of the street.

Much of the material Mama read to me was way beyond my understanding. However, almost eighty years later, in the rehabilitation hospital in Israel, when the doctor noticed my name "Valentina" he spoke to me in Russian. To my surprise, my recognition vocabulary was excellent, including words I hadn't known that I knew. Answering him was a problem, but I discovered that when I wanted to tell him I had fainted, I instantly recalled an old Russian nursery rhyme about five pairs of flies, dancing on the floor; suddenly they saw a spider, and they all fainted. So I could tell him I fainted. The same thing occurred with words like: darkness, echo, unhappy, severe pain—I recalled them from poems and songs almost instantaneously.

On my daily walk to Marquette school, I found

some of the streets had wooden sidewalks. I wasn't allowed to play outdoors, because Mama believed that only hooligans played outside, and I envied the children who played not only on the sidewalk but in the middle of the street. Good children, according to Mama, went to school, practiced the piano, studied Russian, and obeyed

their grandparents. I was a good child.

In 1915, we moved to 1422 South Kedzie Avenue where I went to Howland School. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, people were asked to buy "Liberty Bonds." We had a contest in school, of four-minute speeches for selling bonds. I won in my grade and gave my "four-minute speech" at the White Palace movie theater on Kedzie avenue, and at other public places.

I also reminded the audience to observe "meatless Mondays" and "wheatless Wednesdays," and to save tin-foil and rubber bands, and peach, apricot and plum pits. The latter were used in the manufacture of atropine, an antidote to poison gas. We carefully peeled the "silver paper" from sticks of chewing

gum and rolled it into balls, as we also did with rubber bands. When the balls reached several inches in diameter, we delivered them to salvage depots. Our public school was a depot. Every month, the student bringing in the most salvage was awarded a gold star.

We were very patriotic in school, but at home Papa and Mama thought the war was a huge error. Papa could not understand how the Socialists' Second International could split into French and German sections, each supporting their side in this useless war.

We were very patriotic in school, but at home Papa and Mama thought the war was a huge error. Papa could not understand how the Socialists' Second International could split into French and German sections, each supporting their side in this useless war.

When the Russian revolution broke out in October, 1917, and Russia bowed out of the war, Papa and Mama were overjoyed. This lasted very briefly. When they learned that half a dozen "capitalist armies" (including those of the U.S., Britain, France) were attacking the new socialist state, their joy ceased. Their political trend was toward anarchism, and they thought that the Bolsheviks were wrong to overthrow Kerensky. I was more interested in the new baby (Helen) than in the war

talk, and did not understand a good deal of what was being said.

I remember seeing a movie, *Border Patrol*, made by Moscow Cine-Art after the war. It depicted the new Soviet Union's defense against the multi-national attack on its borders. A memorable scene showed British soldiers in their barracks polishing their boots and soulfully singing "It's a long way to Tipperary" in Russian-accented English. Another scene was of an American guard calling, "Halt! Who goes there?" at an approach-

on Maxwell Street, and later in the Auditorium Drugstore on Michigan Avenue.

About the time we moved from Marshfield Avenue, Nunia married Joseph Weinstein. They had an apartment on Douglas Boulevard, almost around the corner from Kedzie Avenue, but I refused to leave Mama and Papa to live with my mother and her new husband. Earlier that year Uncle Sammy offered me fifteen cents a week to call Nunia "Mama," or even "Mother," but I refused. Mama was my "mother" and I had great feelings of resentment toward Nunia, partly because of Mama. She wouldn't let me enter Nunia's room Sunday mornings, telling me Nunia was tired and needed her sleep. Nunia spent very little time with me, and I felt ignored and neglected.

Much later, after I was married, I realized how unfair I had been toward her. I also understood that Mama had influenced me, perhaps unwittingly, against Nunia. I remember before Nunia married, seeing her coming home at night on a wintry day. Mama would prepare a tub with hot water and Nunia would soak her frozen feet. She had been going from house to house giving piano lessons and returned cold and tired. On Sundays when I wanted to visit with her, Mama would say "She worked hard all week, she's very tired, let her sleep." She (Nunia) was the only real support of the entire family.

ing stranger. There was no mistaking the very obvious Russian nationality of the "American": not only was his accent Russian, but the sing-song of his voice marked him as a native of Leningrad.

My Aunt Mina was a concert pianist and also gave lessons. She died early in 1933. We gave Morris the middle name "Wilhelm" in her honor, but he later changed it to "William."

My uncle Sammy went to pharmaceutical school and obtained a pharmacist's license and worked in a drugstore, first



Mama was a rather advanced woman for the period. She was practically a vegetarian, took a cold bath every morning, and believed in the equality of the sexes. Both Papa and she were strong advocates of the work ethic. If on rare occasions I was asked to buy a loaf of bread at the local grocery store and brought one home without a union label, I had to exchange it. Papa preached that "religion is the opiate of the masses."

My brother Leo was born May 3, 1916. I was taken to the hospital to see him, but was not very impressed. Seeing him again a few weeks later at the Weinstein home, I felt justified in refusing to move into Nunia's house: He seemed to get all the attention from the family.

### Helen's Birth

Another event took place at the same time that was much more important to me. A newborn baby was brought to Mama's house. I was told a very romantic story about this mysterious infant:

Mama's friend in Russia asked her to locate her daughter living in Chicago; her friend had had no word from her for several months. Sammy finally found her in a hospital. She had just given birth to a premature baby and was very sick with TB. She refused to tell who the father was. It was assumed that he was a soldier. She died in the hospital. Sammy and Papa had to do something with the

baby. They learned that the only orphanage that would accept infants was a Catholic home. Mama said she could not put a Jewish child in a Catholic home; she would take care of her for a few years until she was old enough to enter the Marks-Nathan Jewish Orphan Home on South Albany Avenue.

All I understood (at eight years old) was that they were going to give away the baby, named Helen. The family later told me that I said, "If Nunia had a baby, we should

Kenny married Carol in 1958. His mother Clara told them, some time later, that Helen was really Mina's illegitimate daughter, father unknown. Much later, perhaps after Clara died in 1974 and I was in Israel, Carol told Helen.

Mama gave me piano lessons when I was about three years old. When I was five, she decided I needed a better teacher. Nunia had already married Joe Weinstein. His older brother Yakov was a well-known piano teacher; I was taken once a week to his

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have one too. If you give Helen away, I will jump out of the window." (We lived on the third floor.) I was sure my threat was what kept Helen with us. For a while she was the only doll I played with.

Helen was raised by my grandparents, as I was, and called them "Mama" and "Papa" as I did. But she believed they were her parents, and I was her niece. I acquiesced in the deception and learned to call her Aunt Helen. Helen may have suspected that Mama, in her early fifties or late forties, was not actually her mother; but she never let on.

I didn't learn the truth until long after Sammy's son

studio for more advanced music lessons. He regularly put his hand into my pants and caressed me while I was playing. One time he asked me to lie down on a small couch, and started undressing me. Somehow I felt this was not a good thing to do, refused, and started screaming when he tried to push me down. Not until a colleague from another studio came to the door did he let me go. When I reported the incident at home, the family stopped sending me to Yakov. I don't know what they did about it. I never saw Yakov again.

Helen was raised very differently from me. She was permitted to play outdoors, had many childhood friends, and

did not have to spend three hours a day at the piano, nor did she have to learn Russian. Perhaps this was due to the influence of Mina, but at the time it never occurred to me. In fact I was totally unaware of what was going on in the household, since I was so immersed in my studies, and also in my own reading.

## Growing Up

I was very involved with school work, selling war bonds, practicing the piano, and studying Russian.

Papa, whose brothers were all in the tailoring business, were teaching him tailoring, at which he never was a financial success. His instinct was to be an inventor. When we

was called the "Orangerie"—French for "conservatory"—and contained philodendrons, flowering trees, ficas, blooming oleanders, and other shrubs, but no furniture at all.

Some of these were in large wooden pots with small pipes screwed in at the bottom. Little pails hung at the end of the pipes so that excess water would not go on to the floor. Since Mama was very short and slight, Papa had arranged pulleys so she could pull up the windows.

The years of my childhood that I remember best were at 1919 South Avers Avenue, where I lived with my grandparents, my Aunt Mina, my uncle Sammy and later his wife Clara Schonbock, my

I was completely isolated from the neighborhood, which was largely Polish and Czech. The only child I was allowed to spend time with was Bobby Sterba, a boy my age who suffered from polio and could not walk at all.

moved to 1919 South Avers Avenue, in 1918, the new house (which Nunia and Sammy had bought) was full of gadgets that Papa had invented: a speaking tube from the first to the second floor, an inclined plane from the second floor to the garden, on which Mama's large plants could be rolled out in the summer. In fact the living room

"aunt" Helen, and great uncle Fabian (called "Fybish").

Sammy took me every place. Once, at Chicago's Clarendon beach, the matron stopped me when I came out of the locker room. I was eight years old and the bathing suit, left over from the year before, was a little small. The matron asked to see my guardian. When I brought her to Uncle

Sammy, she said he had to take me home: it was against the law to appear in a bathing suit that did not cover the knees.

I remember from early childhood that Papa brought an evergreen "New Year's Tree" into the house every year after Christmas (which we didn't celebrate). In Russia, Christmas trees were not customary. The winter solstice was observed by decorating a New Year's Tree, with ornaments and candles. No presents were exchanged.

I was completely isolated from the neighborhood, which was largely Polish and Czech. The only child I was allowed to spend time with was Bobby Sterba, a boy my age who suffered from polio and could not walk at all. Every Friday after school, his mother put him in his red Irish Mail wagon, and I pulled him to the public library, quite a distance away at 26th and Lawndale. We were not allowed to take adult books, but we each took five kids' books. The next Friday we returned the ten books and took ten more.

When I was about eleven years old, I convinced the librarian that I had to take books for my (nonexistent) big sister, and so I began taking an additional five adult books. I remember Anatol France's "Penguin Island." This appealed to me because by this time I was already reading the English books in Sammy's library. These included Anatol France, Stendhal, Pierre Loti, de Maupassant, and Balzac. At the

time, I never questioned why the books in his library were either English books like Jack London, Edward Bellamy, Dickens, or English translations from the French. Later I realized there were no German books in his library. I never learned why, but perhaps it was because my grandmother used to say, "Every people has a right to be stupid, but the Germans abuse the right."

Cicero, where Al Capone lived and managed his bootlegging operations, was only one mile west of our house. Nonetheless, when I read *When Knighthood Was In Flower*, I congratulated myself on living in Chicago in 1920 and not in London in the sixteenth century, where thieves could have waylaid me.

One lunchtime, walking home from school, I smelled an unusual, strong odor, almost a stink, along the street. Fluids were flowing into the sewers. I soon realized the odor was a strange alcohol. This was the first day of prohibition. Police were bringing kegs of beer or maybe wine out of the saloons and emptying them right on the street. They were also breaking bottles. Men standing near the buildings seemed to be yelling, cursing, or crying at the tragedy they were witnessing. Since I read only parts of the newspapers, I did not understand what it was all about until my grandfather explained the new law. He was very skeptical of its efficacy.

Although no alcohol was ever served in the house, when

I was sick Mama brought me oatmeal with sweet wine added to it. If anyone in the house seemed faint or ill, or had indigestion, the first antidote was a small schnapps. As I remember, this was a universal panacea for minor ills.

At the end of World War I, in November 1918, my father's youngest brother, Alexander Kypnis, the world-renowned basso, appeared at the Chicago Opera House in *Boris Goudunov*. My mother decided to visit him and took me along. She dressed me all

money. He told her he had left Russia to study music in Germany and had had little contact with my father. We left after a very brief visit.

Years later Mina took me to piano lessons with our teacher Heniot Levy, director of the Chicago Conservatory of Music. He loved to have Mina for a piano student because, as he explained to me, she played the music exactly as he played it. She never changed the rhythm or dynamics, or inserted her own interpretations. This was be-

My father's youngest brother, Alexander Kypnis, the world-renowned basso, appeared at the Chicago Opera House in *Boris Goudunov*. My mother decided to visit him and took me along. She dressed me all up, putting a large blue ribbon in my hair. This is the only time I recall her taking me anywhere.

up, putting a large blue ribbon in my hair. This is the only time I recall her taking me anywhere. When we arrived at the Auditorium Hotel, Nunia naturally spoke Russian to my Uncle Alyosha and was very proud that I too spoke Russian. Despite being so young, I felt his cold reception and aloof manner to Nunia and me. She wanted to know about my father, although she was already married to Joe and had two children, Leonard and Raymond. My uncle thought, probably, that she wanted

fore tape recorders. Levy said that hearing her play was like hearing himself.

I became friendly with his daughter Mildred who was seven or eight years older than I. She invited me to her wedding; she was marrying Alexander Kypnis. Naturally I refused to attend, still resentful of his cold reception of me six years before. Fifty years later when his son Igor Kypnis, my cousin, was harpsichord soloist at a concert in Princeton, I impulsively and foolishly refused to attend the

concert, and didn't try to meet him.

In the early 1970s, I came across a critique of Alexander Kypnis' recordings which gave a brief biography. It told of his appearing at both the Salzburg and Bayreuth music festivals in Germany during the Hitler regime. I felt vindicated in my complete rejection of him. In 1980, in Israel, I received a press clipping from the *International Herald Tribune* from Pearl Fried Saks, saying that he had died in Connecticut. I did not grieve.

Papa's eldest brother Aaron lived on the south side of Chicago and had three unmarried daughters, not one of whom spoke Russian. Papa frequently took me to visit the

Papa and Sammy always took me visiting. Sammy became the pharmacist for the Auditorium Drugstore on South Michigan Boulevard. He received free tickets to performances at the Auditorium. When the Russian opera came to Chicago he gave me tickets to go to the concert at 8:30, and he attended after the drug store closed, usually to hear Act III; then he took me home. I saw Gliere's *Snyegurochka* (*The Snow Maiden*), Tchaikovsky's *Pikovaya Dama* (*The Queen of Spades*) and *Nautch Lubvi* (*Night of Love*) and other operas. I also saw all the performances of the Moscow Art Theater—*Three Sisters*, *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya* and others by Chekhov.

the pantry and opened the door. There I saw Papa and Mama kissing each other farewell, as if we were going on a long journey.

That was the first time I noted any sign of affection between them. They had separate bedrooms and although they spoke a lot to each other, I never heard a word of love between them. I don't remember ever being hugged or kissed by Mama or Papa, although they both spent a lot of time with me, and I was certain of their love.

Papa used to make his own cigarettes. I walked quite a distance with him to the tobacco shop (which was owned by David's uncle Morris, as I found out later). When I asked him why he spent so much time and money making his own cigarettes, he said he wanted Turkish tobacco: "The tobacco in American cigarettes tastes like dried cabbage leaves."

When I was younger, Papa took me to Union Park. I thought the name was "Nunia Park" after my mother. In the park, there is a memorial statue commemorating the Haymarket martyrs. He told me about the Haymarket riots, but I don't think I really understood, at that time, what he was trying to explain to me.

(The memoirs continue for another 250 manuscript pages).

When I was younger, Papa took me to Union Park. I thought the name was "Nunia Park" after my mother. In the park, there is a memorial statue commemorating the Haymarket martyrs. He told me about the Haymarket riots, but I don't think I really understood, at that time, what he was trying to explain to me.

family so that I could amuse the three sisters in English while he spoke Russian to his brother. The youngest sister, Florence, later married and moved to Sacramento. The others remained old maids.

Occasionally, Sammy received tickets for matinees which he couldn't attend, so I took Mama. She got herself all dressed up, and when it was time to leave, I couldn't find her. I heard some sounds from



# Finishing Unfinished Business

Avis Clendenen

As I approached my 40th birthday, I was struggling to figure out the reasons for the depth of distance between myself and my mother. I knew she was suffering because of my brother's emotional and physical struggle with AIDS. My brother, Dan, had returned home to Chicago to face the diagnosis and find support from his family. Unfortunately, my mother and the more extended family could not do much, and I became his sole support. My desire to be support for him at this time in his life was a source of pain and confusion for my mother. Not that she did not want me to take responsibility to help him, but because this caused her an almost unspeakable conflict. I believed that her decision to "call off Mother's Day" in 1990 was a result of her simply not being able to face the intimacies of that day with us. My birthday followed Mother's Day by a few weeks. The juxtaposition of a son with AIDS, the expectations of Mother's Day, and a daughter about to turn 40 provoked behavior that was both painful and perplexing.

## A Journey Back in Time

A few months before my brother's return to Chicago, I

had begun counseling because I knew I needed help to make this final journey with him. I needed guidance to sort out my feelings of loss, my fear of what would happen to him as he diminished from the illness, anxiety about what would happen to me in being his primary support, and anger with my mother for her

uary birthday, my eight-year-old brother had died." I could sense a resistance in myself in having to return to this painful memory but I proceeded because I wanted to imagine what my Mom was experiencing as she turned 40, the age I was then. I explored this with my counselor: "My little brother and I—I was 11 years

As I approached my 40th birthday, I was struggling to figure out the reasons for the depth of distance between myself and my mother. I knew she was suffering because of my brother's emotional and physical struggle with AIDS.

seeming inability to mother at such a crucial time. During one of the counseling sessions that followed my rather uneventful 40th birthday—a day that went unrecognized by my mother—my counselor asked: "What was going on with your mother when she was 40?" I paused to think about it and found myself with an uncomfortable, eerie feeling. "I remember my Mom's 40th birthday party. My aunt, her only sibling, had a surprise party for her. I remember the time as horribly sad because the November before her Jan-

old at the time—were playing at my cousin's house. My older cousin had recently been given some guns by his parents. It was 1961 and for some reason a teen having guns was reasonable at that time. My older cousin was showing my brother and me the guns. They were unloaded. I turned to play with Jude who was holding a rifle. During these few moments my older cousin had left the room and unbeknownst to me had put blank cartridges in a small handgun sitting on the desk. This was not to fool us. He had no idea I

would pick up the gun and pretend to shoot my brother. I did, however, pick up the gun while my brother's back was to me as he playacted with the rifle. I fired the gun, the blank cartridge lodged in his back, and the nightmare began. One week later he died. I never saw him again after "the accident." In those days, if you were not sixteen you were not permitted in the hospital. Little was said to me during the week he was in the hospital. I never, never thought for an instant during that horrible week that he would die. But he did. I never said good-bye; I never told him I was sorry. Nothing was ever the same again.

## I fired the gun, the blank cartridge lodged in his back, and the nightmare began. One week later he died.

My Mom turned 40 not long after her baby died. Only seven years before, her husband, our father, had died, leaving a thirty-two-year-old widow with three children, ages five, four, and one. I sat in the chair in my counselor's office that afternoon hardly able to imagine what my mother endured as she "celebrated" her 40th birthday. While terribly hurt at my mother's distance from me and her refusal or inability to be with me as I faced the loss of my only other sibling, I felt an overwhelming sense of compassion for her and gratitude for the strength

of character she was always determined I would inherit from her. I wondered if I were her, could I muster the energy and courage to live to see my first-born die too?

I doubt my mother consciously reflected on her life at 40 as she anticipated the dawning of my 40th birthday. I do not believe she thought about "hurting me" the way she was hurting when she turned 40. Yet, at some level the merging of these realities paralyzed my mother, laid an enormously heavy burden on me, and stirred up feelings from the past.

The unfinished business of the past keeps emerging, often uninvited, into the present

unresolved frustrations, fears and grief; to shed the oceans of unshed tears, to open our hearts to healing and forgiveness so that we can be restored to the fullness of our lives without repression and guilt. Kubler-Ross reported in her book *Death Is of Vital Importance*: "When you listen to dying patients who have been able to finish their unfinished business, you will find that, for the first time in their life, they learn what it means to live fully."<sup>1</sup> People who learn the artform of doing their emotional and spiritual homework, intra and interpersonally, are neither afraid of living nor of dying.

Life is indeed a messy montage of wonderful and awful seasons. We search for meaning in it all. And above all, we yearn to be loved and to love through it all. The bonds between us are not easily severed. Theologically speaking, as we know from the Christian mystery, love does not perish in death. In dying, we change our home; our locus becomes eternity. Yet, the bonds between us in life are surprisingly fragile at times, unable to support us in the way we want or need. Maggie Scarf reminds us in *Intimate Worlds: Life Inside the Family* that all families [relationships] struggle with three core issues: (1) power and how to manage it, (2) intimacy and how to achieve it, and (3) conflict and how to resolve it.<sup>2</sup> It is fear and guilt that hold us captive to a painful past and become roadblocks to the flow of

until it is addressed. I use this notion of unfinished business the way Elisabeth Kubler-Ross has defined it in her ground-breaking and legendary work on dying and death. The central theme of the nearly thirty-year span of Dr. Kubler-Ross's writing, from her first published work *On Death and Dying* (1969) through her final book *The Wheel of Life: A Memoir of Living and Dying* (1997), was that the best gift we give ourselves and those we love is to embrace the challenge of telling the truth about our emotions, our anguish and hate, our

understanding and love when we need it most. Death—the physical removal of a person from our existential reality—does not end the unresolved or unattended conflicts between people, in families or communities. These issues do not evaporate with death, they simply are “buried alive” until they emerge again, often unexpected and unwanted.<sup>3</sup> Psychologically, the shadow will claim its due and when allowed to accumulate and go unattended, will spill out destructively. Jungian psychologist Robert Johnson in *Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche* appeals to the human drive toward wholeness by urging people to do their inner work and give the best possible gift to others: remove your shadow from them.<sup>4</sup> Take on the burden of your own personality; the risk and responsibility of healing yourself.

## A Death Journey

My brother, Dan, died a few days before his 43rd birthday in 1993. Even though I tried to bring them together, my mother remained unable to walk with her son in his final days. I found the double burden of her emotional absence and demands on my time to meet her needs, coupled with attending to my brother in his dying to be one of the most unjust and graced times in my life. I railed at God even as I thanked God for having brought him home where we could be together through to

the end. I knew it was a sacred time and I lived each day as mindfully as I could in relationship with my brother. I found in caring for him and in the mutuality of his caring for me that the unfinished business of Jude’s death was also being somehow completed. I was doing for Dan and being with him in ways that I was not able nor permitted to do or be with Jude in his final days. We talked through the whole of our growing up, laughed and cried, letting go of both the childhood we shared and the unique relationship we savored, in the way that you do

somehow she deserved to be exempt from the pain of change and loss and the challenges of new choices. When this insight emerged, I found it harsh to think it. I find it harsh to write it; yet I believe it true. Life is a messy montage of wonderful and warm and cruel and cold seasons. Loving through the wintry seasons is no easy task. Unless there are severe mitigating and incapacitating circumstances, we are obliged by blood and love to do the emotional and spiritual homework of growing-in-relationship; of living until we die.

**Life is a messy montage of wonderful and warm and cruel and cold seasons. Loving through the wintry seasons is no easy task.**

with one you love as they get ready to take their final leave.

I knew Dan’s dying was simply more than my mother could integrate in the series of losses that marked her life. I knew she felt shame that he was dying from AIDS. She would not talk about his dying just as she had, over the years, resisted my need to speak of Jude’s death the way I experienced it. I also knew that she would have to attend to bonds between us if we were to heal from the painful journey of our respective experiences of our early 40’s. I could not accept that because she was now elderly and suffering from chronic illnesses that

## For Everything There Is a Season

Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson has posited that each phase of life presents a crisis or series of developmental hurdles that must be negotiated in order to successfully grow in personhood and an increased sense of personal identity and well being. His eighth stage of psychosocial development includes the challenge in old age of integrity versus despair. This last stage, integrity versus despair, is the fulfillment of the preceding seven stages. This final stage of growth is achieved when an individual makes

identification with humankind and has come to grips with the contribution she has made to society. Sister Irene Dugan, R.C., a spiritual mentor to many, prior to her death at 87, illumined the gift of the final stage of life when she wrote in an unpublished manuscript: "Largesse is journey's end."

The older person comes to terms with the realities of their actual life and reaches a reconciliation with dreams realized and unfulfilled. The individual, true to her character, does the work of her unfinished business and is able to reminisce with a sense of peace and serenity. An important dimension to reminiscing in old age includes the contin-

relieving and healing when experienced.

According to Erikson, if one cannot face the challenges of this last stage of living into old age, then one may end her days with a sense of loss, disappointment in not receiving what one deserved, dissatisfaction with oneself and those around her who have, in some sense, failed her. A sabotaged eighth stage of growth is often identified by the enormous projection of dissatisfaction with life thrust upon others. The rest of life can be spent in regret, unaddressed anger, debilitating projection, isolation, sense of personal worthlessness, fear of finishing, and feeling that life itself is hopeless.<sup>6</sup> Robert Johnson con-

potential and possessing the raw material for wholeness and holiness; the endtime of life is about living with a consciousness about it all that is absent from childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. According to Johnson, the only disaster is getting lost halfway through the process of maturing fully and not finding one's conscious completion because of the endless threats of our ego to selfishness, self-absorption, excessive self-concern, refusal to change, unwillingness to commit to the process of negotiating losses, and failure to give and receive forgiveness.<sup>7</sup>

This may sound to some as if it is a human impossibility to live so consciously and courageously as to experience that sense of integrity and completion that is available during the endrun of our life. Is someone like Joseph Cardinal Bernardin an exotic exception, an anomaly, far more saintly, and therefore, more capable and graced than anyone else? Without diminishing the unique gift of Cardinal Bernardin's courage and his character, the theologian Karl Rahner has been clear that the gift of life is freely given by a gracious God who endows each person with freedom toward fullness of being. This freedom potentiates each person in the direction of her fullness and she is, by God's unremitting and free offer of grace, capable of living into her completion on earth. In a book entitled *Karl Rahner: I Remember*, published a year

## The second half of life—later adulthood into old age—is devoted to restoring the wholeness of one's life; making the whole of it holy.

ued capacity to grieve. It is, at this stage of life, a pure grief, an immediate and direct connection with the sense of emptiness and loneliness that will never completely diminish until one falls one day fully and finally into the loving embrace of Fullness. A significant distinction exists between grief and grief work. Grief work is part of unfinished business.<sup>5</sup> Grief work is identified by feelings of regret, shame, guilt that need to be addressed before pure grief can emerge, which is always

trasts the second half of life with the first half by saying that, in our early and middle years, we devote ourselves to meeting cultural expectations, gaining and refining skills, scoping out our life dream, discovering and nurturing loving and generative relationships, and disciplining ourselves in hundreds of ways. The second half of life—later adulthood into old age—is devoted to restoring the wholeness of one's life; making the whole of it holy. While one is born into life rich with



following Fr. Rahner's death at 80 years of age, he answers a question put to him about old age and death. Fr. Rahner said: "Now we are certainly not destined simply to become blessed and graced by God some day in a way that is totally different from who we were in earthly life. No, in the mystery of death we do not become in God the totally unexpected; rather the harvest of our earthly life will be inserted into God's life, our eternal life."<sup>8</sup> Monika Hellwig, another Catholic theologian, said it this way:

The image of God in which the human person is created is something to be achieved in the course of our biological life or not at all. The possibilities of awakening to full consciousness and full self-consciousness and full human responsibility happens during the biological lifespan or not at all.<sup>9</sup>

It is basic to Christian faith that we are not only redeemed from our fallenness and refusals to change in the direction of God's image; but we are, as Hellwig writes, redeemed for personal happiness and the integration of our whole being that gradually comes about in responsive relationship with a self-giving God desiring our communion with God.<sup>10</sup> Such redemption is a process; salvation is progressive, interpersonal and social, and has to do with our free will and God's grace working in tandem in order for us to embrace the tough reality that we will never be exempt from the gift and burden of living, living

relationally, and living until we die.

Prior to and following Dan's death, my mother was living alone in an apartment building owned by her sister and brother-in-law. They had retired to Florida and returned to their apartment a few months of every year. During their time in Florida, their apartment remained empty. My mother was alone in the building and had to walk down three flights of stairs to use the laundry room. She was no longer able to drive. The church was blocks from where she lived. Her arthritis was severely crippling her ability to walk. She relied on me for shopping, pharmacy runs, doctors appointments, and rides to social engagements. These expectations continued during the time of Dan's illness and caused me to feel resentment toward her. I did not want to be in charge. She was the mother. He was her son. I expected more of her than she was capable of giving at that time. Her helplessness prevented her from seeing ways to relieve me, so she subsequently absented herself and fell silent in the face of my grief and exhaustion.

### Refocusing Care

Following his death, I just could not imagine going from caring for him back to a caretaking focus on my mother while, at the same time, progressing along the tenure track of my new faculty position. The first year of

grieving over his loss was terrible for both of us. The chasm between us hung there even while we attempted to reconstruct our family of two. Jokingly I would say to her, "Mom, we can't turn on one another . . . the troops have thinned." We both knew there was more to say but we needed time to find the bridge that would bring us toward the other's heart.

I continued to be distressed and stressed over the isolation and literal danger of her living situation and the pressures put upon my daily living by her choice to live alone. I feared she would fall down the steps and I would find her days later. When I entertained this scenario I became so angry I could hardly stand it. As R. P. Johnson and T. Hargrave and others who do research in the emerging field of the expanded lifespan have discovered, "Caregiving for the elderly is an enormous task. Caregivers risk experiencing more physical and emotional illness, premature aging, and a lower level of life satisfaction."<sup>11</sup>

I was bone tired for so long that I had normalized to the feeling of constant fatigue masked by my drive to finish a dissertation and succeed in a new job. It seemed to me that I spent most of my life in a car getting from one task to another, taking care of what needed to be done, and crashing into bed too tired to dream anymore.

I stopped by one day not expecting my mother to be

home. I entered her apartment to find her in bed in her pajamas at 2:00 in the afternoon. In her scurry to get up and assure me that she was fine, the closet door that needed fixing for months fell off its hinges and onto her head. She called for me and I quickly lifted the door and, in a loud explosion of frustration, shoved it up against the wall, turned to her and said: "That's it, it's over, this is no longer just about you!" We were both surprised at the power of my voice and the certainty of my words. It must have been a moment of grace because my mother and I gently walked together to her

of independence. I could not work all day and meet the demands of my teaching, service and writing requirements, heal from the devastating loss of my brother and only remaining sibling, and be the key point person to meet her daily survival needs. Was it only survival that we were about now? What about building something between us for the years of life waiting to be lived? My mother now was the only remaining member of my family of origin. I wanted and needed an authentic relationship with her. I did not want to be valued as her driver, snow shoveler, maker of appointments, financier, social orga-

## Relating Revisited

We exist and grow in a web of relationships. To be in a relationship is to be engaged in a mutual and reciprocally enhancing experience. The give and take, ebb and flow of caring is what makes shared time with another meaningful. In authentic relationships, we take care of our emotional business, relate honestly, desire to develop stronger and more tender bonds of love, compromise to meet one another's sometimes competing needs, and learn to express and receive forgiveness. Then and today, I refuse to accept the condition that aging and all its consequent hardships somehow exempts people from the requirements of continued authentic engagement with those whom they love and who love them. We are meant to live until we die. This conviction holds true for those who have suffered much in life and reach a point where they come to conclude that they should not have to endure any further painful challenges. While both realities, aging and multiple sufferings, make falling into the desire for "no more" understandable and worthy of compassion, the imperatives of the gift of life and the sacrality of the relational world in which we live require something of us to the end. True relationship can never be about only fulfilling the needs of one.

I stress that I am speaking here only about relationships with those persons mentally

In a loud explosion of frustration,  
I turned to her and said:  
"That's it, it's over,  
this is no longer just about you!"

living room, sat down, and began to talk. The closet door was the bridge we were waiting to find and the moment arrived to face the present and future of our relationship.

I was able to say more about what I meant when I screamed: it's not just about you. I expressed to her in weepy and tender tones that I wanted a relationship with her. I did not want to be in various episodes where I was fulfilling the next and needed task in order for her to retain, from my point of view, a false sense

nizer. I was not interested in a self-sacrificial stance relative to her life that brought me "goodies" from those who perceived me as the proverbial "good daughter." I began to see how people slip into having episodes with one another and eventually become normalized to the loss of authentic mutually enhancing relationship. The memory of how the relationship felt is dissolved into performing functions, and fulfilling those functions becomes the illusion of relationship itself.

cognizant enough, emotionally stable enough, and morally capable enough to be in relationship. And, I am speaking about how difficult it is to be authentic especially with those whom we say ought to love us the most! This is a paradox of our human condition. Because the bonds between us are so essential and fragile that we fear rejection by those who know us the best and longest and those whom we need the most. Life's surprises and the inevitabilities of living a long life continue to throw us off balance and challenge even the most solid relationships. Facing the tragic death of my younger brother and the terminal illness of my older brother were unexpected occasions of tremendous pain and personal and spiritual growth that have made me more aware of life's fragility and sacrality, my own limitations and strength of character, the joy and the pain of loving and loving to the end. And, with increasing urgency, I have grave concern about the intra and interpersonal consequences (personal, familial, communal, and eternal) for those who refuse to do the work of their unfinished business.

It is important to place the challenges of not allowing adult child-aging parent relationships to become episodes of function with little growth in love in the context of our current situation. In *Finishing Well*, Dr.'s Terry Hargrave and William Anderson report that Americans are in the midst of a

longevity revolution. In 1900, the life expectancy was 47; today women can anticipate living beyond 78, and men over 71 years of age. The fastest growing age category is 85 plus years of age. By 2010, 7 million people will be over 85. In 1982, there were 37,000 people in America who reached 100 years of age. There will be one million centenarians by 2014.<sup>12</sup> We now live in multi-generational families of three or four generations. We must learn to face the issues of honesty and reciprocity-in-relationship so that we can live with no unfinished business and finish well. We do not have ready access to stories or models of those who have meaningfully and successfully negotiated the mutual care-giving/care-receiving relationship over the long haul.<sup>13</sup>

Hargrave and Anderson develop the notion that every family or community is embedded in an emotional field characterized by what one is owed and what one is expected to contribute. Our families and communities are now experiencing the reality of the presence of three or four generations in one company. If one member of the family or community fails to maintain this balance of entitlement and obligation, the entire emotional system is altered. As persons in the relational web age, their responsibility to the balance of entitlement and obligation can become obscured. Robert Havighurst is one of the first developmental

theorists unpacking the specific tasks associated with Erikson's final developmental stage: integrity versus despair. The tasks that deal with the last stage of older adulthood are as follows:

- adjust to declining strength and health;
- adjust to reduced income;
- adjust to the death of a spouse [adult child, grandchild, close relatives and friends] and the resulting grief;
- establish an explicit affiliation with one's own age group;
- establish satisfactory and acceptable living arrangements; and
- maintain and meet continuing family [community] and social obligations.<sup>14</sup>

It becomes painfully clear that the desire to avoid change and challenges in living as one travels into older age is simply not possible. Facing new developments in life with the abilities to negotiate needs and losses, hopes and desires, is an unending saga of adjustment that we call life. While the outer self diminishes, physical strength wanes, chronic illness alters the functions of each day, we retain the inner freedom to flex needed emotional and spiritual muscles to continue to sow and reap the "harvest of our earthly life." This must be so if the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition is faithful to the covenant of being with us always, as near to us as we

are to each other. God's becoming flesh in the Incarnation was God's commitment to enter the human experience freely and fully. And in Jesus we have the One who walked the human way, embraced the cross, wept in the garden of life's confusions and losses, and opened his arms in trust to Trust. Because of Jesus, there can never be a death of hope.

The 80-year-old Jesuit Karl Rahner was asked what a theologian has to say about the significance of living a long life. He reported that old age was a grace, a special task, and a danger. "As long as these people [the elderly] possess their inner personal freedom, they are still able to turn meaningfully to God, to accept their life, which grows, of course, more and more restricted, with Christian patience, in hope of eternity. And, as a theologian, I can only say that for those, who out of pride or as a protest against life do not accept this, I have no other consolation."<sup>15</sup> This can sound harsh; yet I believe it true.

### **Mutuality for a New Time**

So, when the inevitable imbalances of the relational ledger of entitlement and obligation emerge, how is a family—adult children, elderly parent(s), and grandchildren—to rebalance in an effort to remain in authentic loving relationship? When we become aware that the nature of the

bonds between us have become episodes of function and lack a mutuality of compassion and meaning, what are we to do to restore an appropriate flow of give and take? The assumption here is that this condition is inevitable as people we love enter old age. It is also an assumption—psychologically and theologically—that the responsibilities of mutuality do not evaporate but must be negotiated in new ways.

"It's no longer just about you!" I still can't believe I yelled that at my mother. I will always be grateful for that unhinged closet door because it became the bridge that arched to the feared shore of each other's heart. My mother agreed to go with me to visit

subsidizing the financial requirements of living at Mercy Residence. I remember her saying once that day and over and over during the four months until she made the move: "I never thought I'd see the day that I would sell my parents furniture . . . and your father's coffee table . . . and . . ." As each piece was sold and before it left the house, we held a little ritual talking about the chair or the sofa as we sat on it or touching the coffee table and what it meant to us as a family over the years. Each good-bye to the sacred and familiar markers of her life was one more step in a newfound inner freedom to face the challenges of change when, she believed, such terri-

### **I remember the mixture of sadness and hope that marked the day my mother decided it was time to change her living situation.**

Mercy Residence, a Sister of Mercy sponsored home for the well elderly. I purposely made the appointment on January 11, 1994, the first anniversary of Dan's death. We arrived in time for the 11:30 daily Mass. I remember the mixture of sadness and hope that marked the day my mother decided it was time to change her living situation . . . and more. Her openness to the meaning of this change touched me deeply. We both knew that we would have to sell many of her belongings to assist in

ble change ought not be required of one who suffered so, gave so much to others and was now old and in need of attention and peace.

Her sharing the stories of the past became a sort of life review that, I could sense, was re-balancing my emotions toward her. My resentments gradually diminished as I experienced my mother in the fuller context of her life and its joys and challenges. I found the desire to want to help her make this transition. I clearly saw my obligation to help

being reciprocated by her willingness to share the meaning of her past and present. Handling the material aspects of the move, such as the finances and purchase of a new bedroom set (all she would need for a move from a fully equipped apartment to one bedroom) created a atmosphere of open dialogue. There was time now between us that was not filled with the distracting behavior required when we shared only episodes of function. We recovered time to be with one another and time to cross the bridge to the other's shore.

Dan and Jude were on the other side. Tenderly we made our way into these conversations and the unfinished business of their dying and their deaths and found a resolution. My mother listened to my experience of them and of her and she received the stories without interruption. I felt entitled to this time and she gave it to me without measure. With compassion reestablished between us, we were able in clearer and cleaner ways to return to the past, survey it in detail, and reintegrate the pain and the enduring love into our present relationship. We consciously decided to restore a relationship. The flow of the reciprocity of love was worth all the risk, time, and work.

The process of rebalancing a relationship most likely will not be complete without

the gift of forgiveness given and received. Confronting painful and conflictual issues need not be a confrontational experience. If the bonds between us have not disintegrated because of too many years of episodic non-mutual functioning and there is still a trickle of love, empathy is possible. Only those with some degree of empathy toward another can engage in the efforts to rebalance the relational ledger and explore a new mutuality for a new time. After my mother and I reestablished empathic bonds and participated in a seven week bereavement program together, I was able to say to her: "I forgive you for not being, at times, the mother I needed and deserved and I ask your forgiveness for not being, at times, the daughter you needed and deserved." We journeyed to the cemetery and stood together on the holy ground of the graves of our family, prayed, embraced, and walked into our present. There is a holy synergy in love that includes doing the work of balancing the emotional ledger—finishing unfinished business—and the absolute empathic benevolent giving of the gift of forgiveness. We who say we love one another, we who say we are kin, are obliged by blood and love to take the risk and discover the bridge that will arch to a new shore.

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# Caregivers, Take Care!

Paulanne Diebold, R.S.M.

If you provide any type of care for a loved one with chronic illness or a long-term disabling condition, you are a caregiver. Your loved one may live at home or in a long-term care facility. You may spend just a few hours a week assisting your family member or it may be a full time responsibility. Initially, caregiving may not be much of a burden, but as your relative's health or

- It offers you a special way of showing your love and affection
- You allow your loved one to stay near family and friends.
- You help your loved one to function at his or her best level.

Yet, caregiving can place tremendous stress on you in the form of conflicting demands,

**Caregiving can place tremendous stress on you in the form of conflicting demands, emotional strain, physical exhaustion, social isolation, and financial problems.**

cognitive ability declines, you may find that you are adding more and more responsibilities to an already full plate.

It is my hope, therefore, to affirm you in your role as caregiver, while offering guidelines and resources which can assist you in the challenges you face.

Though you may not think about it, your being a caregiver provides benefits to both yourself and your loved one:

emotional strain, physical exhaustion, social isolation, and financial problems. If such stresses are not resolved, some serious problems may develop: depression, physical illness, self-neglect, and even abuse or neglect of the care receiver.

The more information and support you have, the less likely it is that you will be overwhelmed with your caregiving responsibilities. Thus, I hope you will find in this article

some of the support and information you need to meet the demands of caregiving and perhaps relieve some of your stress.

Surveys of caregivers repeatedly show that, while the physical aspects of caregiving are indeed difficult, the hardest part of caregiving is the emotional stress. Helping a loved one can be very rewarding, but constant demands, social isolation, lack of resources, and other aspects of caregiving can cause high levels of stress and strong feelings. Perhaps you experience some or all of these feelings at times: anger, guilt, resentment, irritability, fatigue, frustration, helplessness, depression, and desperation. These are perfectly normal feelings—they are not wrong, and you are not a bad or less loving person for having them. If you're like many caregivers, though, you beat yourself for feeling the way you do, and then try to "stuff" the feeling so you can get back into control. However, ignoring the feelings won't make them go away. As I indicated earlier, feelings which are not dealt with will come out in some way, so how do you deal with those feelings?

Primarily, by learning to apply some of the guidelines and information in this article.

## Internal Stress

Since stress is *the* major problem for caregivers, I'll begin there. Caregiver stresses come from two sources: within and outside. Much stress that is totally unnecessary comes from within. Caregivers are very hard on themselves and tend to live in a world of "shoulds" and "oughts." Often, our expectations are very unrealistic, but we are trying to be the best caregiver, and therefore, feel that we must do everything. We have to learn new ways of thinking. Perhaps, in the past, your mother kept a perfect house, and now you feel frustrated if you can't continue to keep it as she did. What is more important, really, a spotless house or a few quiet moments for yourself to relax and refill your inner reserves?

Another unrealistic expectation is that if you're a good caregiver, you should be able to do it all—and without any negative feelings. Thus, as your family member needs increasingly more care, you just keep piling on the responsibilities, rather than asking for help. Other caregivers see themselves as inadequate if they need to ask for help.

Another way caregivers add to their own stress is by taking the responsibility for the entire caregiver-care receiver relationship. We'll talk more about this later, but you cannot blame yourself if your loved one is cranky, depressed, hostile or agitated. Medications, the illness or condition

itself, and the emotional stress of being a care receiver all play a role in their behavior and mood, and caregivers need to just let those things happen—and not worry about what you did to cause it.

## External Stresses

While external stresses are very difficult to handle, there are guidelines which can help us to think clearly and make wise choices.

**Another unrealistic expectation is that if you're a good caregiver, you should be able to do it all—and without any negative feelings.**

Think of a problem you are dealing with now. Most caregivers waste a lot of energy on problems about which they can do nothing. Try using the principle of control in considering the problem. Ask yourself, "Is this something that can be changed?" If not, don't waste your precious energy wishing things could be different. If it is something that can be changed, is it something you can do something about? Many caregivers spend lots of energy trying to get their family involved and become resentful because they can't make it happen. Another common frustration comes from trying to make the care receiver happy. No one can make another person happy,

and you can drive yourself into the ground trying. Approaching each situation with these two basic questions can be tremendously freeing. It may not make the problem go away, but it will relieve a great deal of stress.

Needs and wants are often confused by caregivers. We are certainly responsible to see that our loved one's needs are met—but we do not and should not have to meet his or her every want. I understand

that we often feel that the one we are caring for has so little or has lost so much that we want to do everything we can to make life better for them. However, there is only so much energy one human being has, and it must be used wisely. Better to do a little less of the extras than to become irritable and resentful from being totally overwhelmed.

Setting limits is something caregivers rarely do, because they think they are being selfish. In the long run, it avoids burnout and a host of other negative emotions, not to mention physical illness. In cases where your relative is capable of understanding and relating to you adult-to-adult, it is important to be honest about what you can and

cannot do. Some caregivers are surprised what such honesty will do in negotiating with their loved one. In some cases, it gives the loved one a chance to help the caregiver by being understanding and offering to accept whatever will work best.

Avoid becoming a victim to manipulation. First of all, it is important to recognize when manipulation is occurring. In most cases, if your

if she went. With the support of the group members, and with the staff at the nursing home alerted to her father's threat, she did go—had a wonderful time—and found Dad alive and as “ornery” as ever upon her return. That experience freed her to do other things for herself, while still honoring both her desire to be attentive to her Dad and to have a life of her own.

siblings or acquaintances. “Mary Ann calls every night to see how I’m doing.” “Martha’s daughter is a nun and she comes every weekend to check on her.” Whether overt or subtle, manipulation causes frustration, resentment, and anger.

At one time or another, many of us will hear, “Promise me you’ll never put me in a nursing home.” Never, ever make that promise! Some day that may be the best alternative in order for your family member to have the best care and/or for you to maintain your ministry, your health, or your community responsibilities. You can promise that you’ll always be there. What caregivers and their loved ones forget is that placing a parent in a nursing home is not abandonment; it is recognizing that anyone can perform the physical aspects of caregiving, but only you can be you for your loved one, relating as daughter, granddaughter, or friend . . . sharing an emotional history and providing the emotional security that is so critical to one who is at such a vulnerable place in life. In fact, if you become overwhelmed with the physical care, you will not have the energy to just *be* for your loved one; it will reach a point where all interaction becomes functional rather than relational.

Consider everyone’s needs, not just those of your aging relative. The majority of caregivers tend to consider only their loved one’s need—and no one else’s,

## Avoid becoming a victim to manipulation.

First of all, it is important to recognize when manipulation is occurring. In most cases, if your family member was manipulative in younger years, he or she will continue to use that tactic in old age.

family member was manipulative in younger years, he or she will continue to use that tactic in old age. While many caregivers recognize manipulation, they simply do not know to deal with it—especially in a parent. I strongly recommend a support group for these individuals, because manipulation tends to be an ongoing problem which causes unbelievable stress.

An overt type of manipulation is the making of threats. One member of a support group shared that she wanted so badly to go out of state to visit her daughter and new grandchild, but felt it was impossible, because her dad had threatened to commit suicide

Subtle manipulation often takes the form of “emergency” situations which conflict with caregiver plans. What is necessary is to have a back-up plan in place for such “emergencies” so that you can follow through on plans, but have someone lined up to check on your family member and give assistance if needed. The hard part about this is that you never know if there really is a legitimate problem. (Remember the story of the boy who cried “Wolf!”?) That’s why it’s important to have your bases covered. Another subtle attack is comments designed to make you feel inadequate, unloving, or guilty, often by comparing you to other



certainly not their own. This can wreak havoc on your life and health, as well as on other relationships and responsibilities. The bottom line is in making decisions about the care of your loved one, you must take the whole picture into consideration and do what appears best for all. I'm not saying this is easy, because it does involve a balancing act, so to speak, but in the long run, it is the healthiest approach.

Nurture yourself. Don't wait until there's time, because it will never happen. Schedule regular times of relaxation for yourself and with your family or friends.

### **Use Any Help You Can Get**

As I indicated earlier, many caregivers tend to try to handle everything themselves. However, if you do all of the care, you are, in effect, limiting the rest of the family and or friends from participating in the care, thus alienating them from you and isolating your loved one.

Let other people help you. Most people do want to help, but they don't know what to do. You need to be specific with regard to tasks. Draw up a list and approach family members and friends. Give them a choice of tasks. Find out if they are willing to do these tasks on a regular basis or on an occasional basis. Think in terms of your entire workload, even that which is not directly related to caregiving. Let's use

doing the laundry or grocery shopping, for example. While these are not direct caregiving, they are chores which take up your time and energy. Delegating these to another can be a win-win situation. You gain extra time for yourself and the helper is not threatened with doing something he or she does not feel capable of handling.

There are also individuals out there who can do more hands-on caregiving if you are

regular basis. Change is very stressful for those with dementia, so maintaining a routine is wise.

I can also resonate with the feeling that sometimes it's just easier to do it yourself, rather than go to all the trouble of showing someone else how to help. In one sense, that is true. However, once you have taught others how to help, the more they practice, the better they will get. One thing to remember is that oth-

**Let other people help you. Most people do want to help, but they don't know what to do. You need to be specific with regard to tasks.**

willing to relinquish some control. These helpers might assist with bathing or with occupying your relative for an hour or two or with transporting to the doctor. I used to do it all for my mom, so I know how it feels to ask for help; but you need to remember that oftentimes others really want to help, and in allowing them to do so, you are gifting them with a sense of making a difference. Having a variety of caregivers to interact with can be more stimulating for your parent and can offer more opportunities for "warm fuzzies" from other caring individuals besides yourself. In the case of persons with dementia, however, it is best to have only a few helpers who come in on a

ers won't do things exactly the way you do them, and in most cases, that really doesn't matter. What is most important is the love, concern and interest which is being shown.

There are other forms of help which are just as valuable, and these have to do with education and formal resources.

Learn as much about the illness or condition of the care receiver as you can. To use Alzheimer's as an example, often there are typical behaviors which may occur over the course of the disease. Knowing ahead of time what to expect and finding out ways to cope may save you a lot of frustration and heartache along the way. I remember one woman in her 60s who was caring for

her 90+-year-old mother who had Alzheimer's disease. This caregiver was absolutely devastated by her mother's filthy language. Her mother had been a devout church-goer all her life and had developed her personal prayer life at home, as well. The caregiver couldn't understand why her mother behaved this way, and she feared that after having led such a good life, she would go to hell because of her changed ways. She didn't understand the disease and what it was doing to her mother's brain.

consideration in long range planning is future living arrangements and the criteria to be used in making the decision to move your relative to a more secure, supportive environment.

Take advantage of educational and networking opportunities. Use the print and video materials of organizations which focus on your loved one's particular condition or disease. Libraries and bookstores have a wealth of information, as does the internet. With the internet, however, it is important to remember that

area. Every state has an Area Agency on Aging or Council on Aging. These agencies are funded under the Older Americans Act to provide in-home and community-based services to older persons. If you live in a different city or state than your aging loved one, you can call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116 to find the names and numbers of aging services and programs in that location.

Adult Day Services are a wonderful bridge between living alone and moving to a long-term care facility. If you worry about your parent being alone during the day because of physical or cognitive impairments, this may be the answer, at least for a time. Usually transportation can be arranged and the older person spends the day in a safe setting, with plenty of stimulation and opportunity for interaction. The benefits are tremendous, not only from the safety aspect, but often individuals who participate improve to some degree in both alertness and function; also, this gives your family member something to look forward to—a reason to get up in the morning.

Another solution to the worry of a chronically ill elderly loved one being home alone is a PERS—personal emergency response system. You've seen these advertised on TV, "Help, I've fallen and I can't get up." For an older person who does not have dementia, the PERS is a great way to increase the possibility of

## When workshops or conferences are offered, participate in order not only to learn more from the presenters, but to meet with others who are dealing with situations similar to your own.

Knowing as much as you can about your parent's illness or disability can assist you in doing some long-range planning, one of the most important aspects of which is an advance directive. Particularly in the case of early dementia, it is necessary to talk with your family member about his or her preferences with regard to life-support and other medical treatments and technologies. If you wait too long, your loved one may no longer be able to express his or her desires, and the burden of choice will then be upon you and your siblings. Another

not all the information you find is tested and true; look for websites of well-known organizations. When workshops or conferences are offered, participate in order not only to learn more from the presenters, but to meet with others who are dealing with situations similar to your own. It's amazing how much knowledge and wisdom can be shared in settings like these. Similarly, caregiver support groups abound in most metropolitan areas and cover a wide variety of illnesses and situations.

Use the aging services and programs available in your

getting immediate help in the case of an accident or medical emergency. The cost varies, and it's a good idea to contact the local Area Agency on Aging to see if they can provide information. In some circumstances, the cost may be paid in full or part by the Homecare Program of the Area Agency.

Speaking of the Homecare Program, some of the services available are: assistance with personal care, light housekeeping, meal preparation, grocery shopping, and some chores. There is usually a sliding fee scale, thus making it very affordable to anyone. While it is a wonderful program, there is often a waiting list, so it is important to make the contact and take care of any preliminary requirements.

Many of the private pay agencies have assessment and case-management services which can assist you in deciding how much and what kind of help your family member needs, including options such as in-home services, adult day

or long-term care. Even if your family can't afford to use a private agency for ongoing service, having the assessment done is especially useful for families in which there is general disagreement over what level of care is needed, as the opinion of an impartial professional is more readily accepted.

I have mentioned some of the key services for elderly persons, and each community will have these basics, along with a wide array of both in-home and community-based services, as well. Usually, the Area Agency on Aging, will be your primary contact for purposes of finding out just what is available in any given area.

Finally, I recognize that some of these suggestions may sound like one more thing to try to squeeze into an already hectic schedule. Likewise, I understand the fatigue that comes with caregiving. When you do get a break, all you may want to do is sit or sleep! It's very hard to break out of the

pattern and to begin to use new ways of coping. All I can say is, I hope you will give it a try. I've seen the positive results with my own eyes. You will be very surprised at the benefits—both for yourself and for your aging family member.

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# Still Full of Sap; Still Green

## Observations on Successful Aging

Mary Dolores Jablonski, R.S.M.

As an only child, I grew up relating to older family members. I enjoyed their company. I loved the stories of long ago and eagerly encouraged their narration. I was a good companion as I listened and observed. Words of wisdom were carefully catalogued for future reference. When I entered the convent in the early 1960s, much of our novitiate was spent with the older Sisters in the infirmary of the motherhouse. It was an easy transition. My models for maturity were in their later years. I continued to observe and to listen.

I will age with grace and wisdom?

I believe the choice is ours. We can either accept with humility the entire process of life or we can waste a lot of energy fighting the inevitable. One must positively accept this new state of one's life and say Yes. It is a great waste to let ourselves drift along life as though floating a down a river. Only when we actively discover the unique values and precious new opportunities that mature age can give, is it possible to come with joy to the final stage of human completion and fulfillment.

priorities allowed her the freedom to relax and to go about daily tasks calmly. Her deep joy had trust in God as its foundation.

If aging is not accepted, an interior disharmony will reveal itself in unrest, complaints, and absorption in trivial matters. One sees the glass as continually half empty. Change cannot be accepted either in oneself or others.

I have always been amazed to read in scripture that God heard the excuse, "I am too young," made by Jeremiah (Jer 1:7). However, neither Abraham nor Moses considered being too old a serious problem in following the Lord's direction.

**We can either accept with humility the entire process of life or we can waste a lot of energy fighting the inevitable.**

Abraham prostrated himself and laughed as he said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Or can Sarah give birth at ninety?" (Gen. 18:17)

Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were undimmed and his vigor unabated. (Deut 34:7).

As I moved into a professional career working with people in their later years, I began to wonder, "Just what is it that determines how a person develops and ages? What are the factors that establish attractiveness and maturity? Why is one person irritable and negative while another smiles and adjusts? Must one have a God-given personality or are there ways to insure that

One can usually observe very quickly whether or not a person has come to grips with aging. If so, that person will show a calm, self-possession and maturity. She easily determines the priority that she will give to everyday events. My grandmother used a measure which asked, "Will I be concerned about this ten years from now?" Very few events met that standard. Sorting

Abraham confidently set out for a long, unknown journey in uncharted territories to accomplish incredible tasks. Moses guided the community throughout its wandering in the desert.

One of the women I knew in my early years was Sister M. Bertrand. She was the senior Sister at the motherhouse in Titusville, Pennsylvania at the time of my novitiate. I have been delighted to discover that other Sisters made the same assessment of her that I did. We all had a deep sense that she not only accepted her aging but actually reveled in it. She did not have the pompous manner of one who enjoyed the privilege of seniority, but the eagerness of a pilgrim who is nearing the end of a long journey.

I remember than an elevator had recently been installed in the building, but Sister M. Bertrand continued to go very slowly up and down the fire tower steps, sometimes for three or four floors. We were concerned about her falling and I questioned her about her reluctance to use the easier means of transportation. "The elevator goes too fast," she replied. I was stunned and asked for clarification. She responded, "When I use the steps, I can pray on each one. There is little time in the elevator." She had no complaint about the aging process which had slowed her progress. Rather, she made a wise use of the time.

Sister M. Bertrand had great courage and confidence in the young. Since she was the senior of the house, we postulants often had to go to her before we made whatever arrangements were necessary to deal with a telephone call or message delivered at the door.

Regardless of the question, her response was always, "Do whatever you think is best." That both challenged and encouraged us to do our best. We seldom made errors of judgment in handling those messages.

That empowerment was also evident to my companions. On of the novices experienced what she now describes as her "baptism as an artist" when Sister M. Bertrand gave her painting materials. Sister Mary Christian Koontz wrote a poem to commemorate the occasion:

### The Gift

*"I am going to die soon,  
The crone said,  
"And I want you to have these things."*

*With these words  
She lifted up an artist's tools:  
A palette, a few brushes,  
An array of pigments  
In a weathered, wooden box.*

*Surprised and moved,  
I accepted the offering  
From the gnarled hands,  
Little knowing  
Its deeper meaning,  
The full import of its promise.<sup>1</sup>*

Sister M. Bertrand was deeply committed to life and had a reverence for life in all its forms. Her devotional care of plants was notorious. Every Sister in the house had moved them many times for seasonal house-cleanings. The plants were everywhere and thrived under her care. Another poem by Mary Christian Koontz,

R.S.M., memorializes this love for growing things:

### The Gloxenia

*"Come," the old nun said,  
One winter's morning.  
Her eyes alight,  
A gnarled finger tapping my wrist,  
Her cane the polished floor.  
"I want to show you something."*

*Together we made our way  
along dim corridors,  
Past the chapel,  
Down the stairs,  
Through endless convoluted passages,  
Silence and anticipation our companions.*

*The deeper we descended,  
Question joined us,  
Doubt punctured by anticipation,  
Hesitance slowed my pace,  
Yet I followed my guide  
Into the very bowels of the nunnery,  
Unexplored territory for me,  
A novice.*

*Soon I found myself  
Beside her,  
In a root cellar.  
"Look," she said,  
Glee in her voice.  
Her crooked finger pointing.*

*One by one,  
Forms of clay pots and tubers,  
Potting soil and trowels,  
Emerged from the shadows  
Until I discerned  
The object of the crone's delight:*

*A cracked pot  
With a single, serpentine stem  
Stretching  
Toward a chink of light  
In a corner of the cellar wall,  
Dangling from the end*

*Of the absurd stem,  
A single green Leaf.*

*"It's a gloxenia," said my guide.  
Pride lifting her voice toward me  
In the darkness.  
Shock and revulsion my  
response.*

*As I recalled the beauty  
Of the gloxenia in full bloom.  
Its wine velvet trumpets  
Resting on low, compact leaves.*

*But what did I know then,  
Of the power and glory  
Of life and light and love.*

Death came to Sister M. Bertrand fittingly on the last day of winter, March 20, 1963, at the age of 87. She then, I am positive, began eternal

*Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary.  
It was indeed a moment of  
eternity.*

## Golden Jubilee

*Sun-stained hands offer  
One golden rose,  
Symbol of her hour:*

*Brown bowl  
With yellow flower.*

The goal and culmination of aging is the process of dying and death. Successful aging and full maturity are also interrelated. Abraham Maslow offers several characteristics of a fully actualized human be-

pain can define our maturity. Job can serve as a model of one who has understood that God can turn suffering for our good. After his refusal to blame God for his misfortune, Job "lived a hundred and forty years; and he saw his children, his grandchildren and even his great-grandchildren. Then Job died, old and full of years." (Job 42:16-17).

We need special, spiritual vision to understand that God often works "the night shift." His best and most creative work in our lives is done many times during the darkness when we least expect to see His work. True wisdom often comes only through suffering, when we are able to arrive at insights and allow suffering to reveal what is in our hearts. Those who have experienced great suffering are the ones who can most deeply experience compassion.

During the years of my novitiate, I spent many months as the assistant to the infirmarian. I was not a nurse, nor did I become one. Perhaps my ability to relate to older persons gave me a sensitivity and understanding which allowed me to care for them. I remember Mother M. deSales. In those years, mastectomies were almost always total and radical. She had endured many radiation treatments. I was sent to her room the day she came home from the hospital with the direction that I was to learn to clean her wounds and change the bandaging. I still remember the horror I experienced as she

## The goal and culmination of aging is the process of dying and death. Successful aging and full maturity are also interrelated.

Spring. I remember it in great detail. (I have little doubt that Catherine McAuley's death was similar. Catherine's concern for the Sisters gathered around her bed has prompted many "cup of tea" images.) The day of Sister M. Bertrand's death was sunny and bright. Her bed had been moved to the center of the small cell so that those present could be on either side. Her Reception candle was lit and every Sister available in the house that afternoon was kneeling in the hall, church cloaks on, reciting the Prayers for the Dying from the *Little*

ing. He describes a psychologically mature individual who is self-knowing, is able to experience meaningful and intimate relationships with others, has a deep understanding of the human experience, and is capable of great joy and a sense of connectedness to the powers of the universe.<sup>2</sup>

I would like to expand on Maslow's thinking and include an additional characteristic of maturity: an understanding of suffering and positive attitude toward it. Because suffering is such an intrinsic aspect of the human condition, the manner in which we cope with loss and

allowed me to take off the old dressing. Radiation had burned and scarred her so deeply that her entire chest looked like raw hamburger.

As a registered nurse, she taught me how to carefully debride and clean the bloody flesh several times a day, to apply gently the soothing, medicated cream, and to rewind the sterile gauze around her fragile body. It was easy to imagine that her body was Christ's and the task was made easier when I realized that she allowed me to experience the joy of merciful compassion. Her quiet humility and beautiful dignity permitted me to perceive the wisdom of the way she accepted suffering.

Even in my own limited experience of aging, I have enjoyed the freedom it brings from the opinions others may have. Someone accused me, "You said what you thought without thinking." I do not conclude from this remark that I am irresponsible, but suggest that with aging, a person becomes less apprehensive and can respond honestly and more quickly. I remember learning many years ago, though I do not remember the source, that within each of us there are three selves. There is the real self (the "me" I really am); the apparent self (the "me" I let you see); and the ideal self (the "me" I want to be). I am mature to the extent that I am able to let you see the "me" I really am, and to act as the "me" I want to be. Hopefully, at the end of life, all three selves become one. I am who I

want to be and I can be authentic with you at all times.

There are probably many Sisters of Mercy who will agree with me that our community has always enjoyed its share of distinctive and delightful "characters." We are, more often than not, playful and true daughters of Mother McAuley and unique in our personalities. There was never, to my knowledge, a mold labeled "R.S.M." We can usually laugh, even in the midst of apparent disaster, having learned

visit her on a Saturday afternoon and found her watching a Notre Dame football game. I said I was both pleased and relieved to find her feeling better. She retorted, "I'm sick, not dead!" Another of our older Sisters confided in me one day that she could no longer sincerely say the prayer of St. Ignatius which begins, "Take, O Lord, my mind." Fear and concern about Alzheimer's disease makes many aging seniors apprehensive.

## With aging, a person becomes less apprehensive and can respond honestly and more quickly.

that laughter is another essential ingredient to aging wisely. The ability to play and tease adds perspective to losing hair, teeth or body parts. I am more encouraged when I hear someone from the senior center joke about combing his hair with a washcloth than I am when I see someone wearing a toupee or suddenly appearing with darkly colored hair. The soft chuckle of the older Sisters who reminisce with each other at dinner, relating humorous school stories, is music to my ears.

During one difficult fall season at the motherhouse, many of the old Sisters had the flu even though most had been given a flu shot. One particularly frail senior Sister had been quite sick and we considered hospitalizing her. I was delighted when I stopped to

Today more is being discovered and written about exercise. We are encouraged to keep those muscles stretched and moving. We are beginning to remember that our mind is also a muscle that needs to be used. Recently a medical school student did a summer program with a group of older adults entitled, "Mental Gymnastics" based on this principle. I observe that those who continue to read, to enjoy challenging word games and to pursue areas of interest are those who remain mentally alert. This asset of mind, creativity, is another key to successful aging. Many stories of famous composers, artists or writers confirm that aging minds can give society some of its greatest treasures.

Women religious, many of whom spent their lives as

teachers, have continued to teach into their eighties or even nineties. Our Erie community is no exception. Sister M. Ildephonse must have been in her eighties when she was assigned to assist me, a postulant, in my first classroom teaching experience. I had had only one year of college and had attended only public schools, so Sister Ildephonse's task was indeed monumental. I no longer remember exactly what it was that she tried to teach me, but I am positive that what I learned was patience and acceptance. Her gentle way encouraged me to set realistic goals both for my students and for myself, and to be patient since we may learn slowly. Others worked with me to write lesson plans, prepare exams and monitor progress, but Sister Ildephonse's quiet ways served me in the classroom, and outside of teaching as well.

Acceptance and patience must be first exercised with ourselves. Life is a task to be completed. But who can claim that the task has been completely accomplished? It is easy to simply say, "Old age must be accepted." It is more precise to speak of accepting the unfulfilled. The pain of unfulfillment is not felt only in exceptional and dramatic situations, but is a daily occurrence. We all die a little every day in all the things we leave uncompleted. All work is a beginning which does not really have an ending.

It is rare for a person to be able to achieve all that was

undertaken. We try to complete everything and are frustrated when we must choose to leave other things undone. We struggle to find time to pray. We wish we had more time to read or to correspond. If we take vacation, we may not enjoy many experiences because we feel that we are neglecting our work. We must learn to relax, be patient, and accept that we can never complete everything.

To accept means to say "Yes" to life in its entirety. When the child cannot leave mother's apron strings to move to adolescence, that adolescent cannot become adult and assume adult responsibilities. The adult who cannot accept growing older, or the old person who cannot accept old age, or who accepts it grudgingly, because it "has to be," has the same difficulty—blocked against the stream of life.

It is no easy matter to accept that one is growing older, and no one succeeds without first overcoming the spontaneous refusal. It is also difficult to accept the aging of those nearest and dearest to us. Most people harbor some fear of old age. Is the expression "third age" a way to refer delicately and tactfully to "old age"?

A list of the characteristics of successful aging does not exhaust the qualities possible. I would however, highlight the following:

- Acceptance and even joy in the experience of one's aging

- Confidence in the next generation
- Reverence for all of life
- Positive attitude toward suffering
- Ability to be authentic
- Sense of humor
- Mentally stimulated, and stimulating
- Patience with oneself and one's ability

Naming these characteristics may stimulate the reader to consider the value of each one and to consider others. Few of us look at age "in the eye" and consider how to do it successfully. We may miss many of the "miles before we sleep." Each of us, if we were given a choice, would choose a quality of life that brings sparkle to the eye and a laugh to the heart. Jesus told us, "I have come that they may experience life and have it to the full." (John 10:10) My faith says that all of life, including old age, is incorporated in that promise.

## Notes

1. The three previously unpublished poems presented in this article are by Mary Christian Koontz, R.S.M., and used with her permission. "The Gift," "The Gloxenia," and "Golden Jubilee," are in the volume *Trilogy*. Unpublished poems. Titusville, PA, 1962.
2. See Abraham Maslow, *Toward A Psychology of Being*, Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1962.





# Retirement Success Profile for Religious

## One Way of Retirement Planning

Mary Anne Nolan, R.S.M.

Sister Frances dedicated her ministerial life to education. Over a span of fifty years, she served her community as an elementary teacher and principal. In her later years, she served as a secondary teacher and principal. The school communities flourished under her competent and compassionate leadership. However, in her later years she became less effective in the classroom and the students began to take advantage of her. Gentle suggestions that she "retire" from a full-time position as a classroom teacher were met with, "If I cannot teach, what will I do?" Finally she had to be asked to resign.

Sister Mary was a highly successful hospital administrator. Many people praised her energy and dedication to the healthcare ministry. She worked long hours and many weekends. She helped to enliven the charism of Mercy in her regional community's sponsored institution. When Mary was in her early sixties, she contracted a chronic illness which made it impossible for her to continue her healthcare ministry. While still able to do some part-time work, Mary found she had open time on her hands and

was at a loss as to what to do with it. Because of her almost total immersion in work, she had not developed any deep relationships with either her God or others. She had few interests outside of ministry.

At age 68, Sister Kathleen lost her position as parish social minister because the parish could no longer afford to

and the situation to see ourselves or someone we know or have known.

The Retirement Success Profile for Religious (RSPR), designed by Richard Johnson, Ph.D., has helped many religious to think about the future before it is upon them, and to plan accordingly. While most Sisters of Mercy would prefer

**While most Sisters of Mercy would prefer to "die with their boots on," they have discovered that it does not hurt to plan ahead for some other possibilities.**

pay her. Try as she might, she was unable to secure another full-time paid position. With her community's blessing, she began to visit the sick elderly in their homes in some of the neighboring parishes as a volunteer. Guilt and depression ensued when she thought of herself as no longer a "contributing" member of the regional community.

The stories of Sisters Frances, Mary, and Kathleen are fictitious, but the truth underlying their narratives is very real. We need only change the name, the ministry

to "die with their boots on," they have discovered that it does not hurt to plan ahead for some other possibilities.

The RSPR process has several components. Sisters, usually age 55 or older, complete a 120-question instrument. The instrument is designed to measure the Sister's present behavior as compared with her desired behavior in her retirement years. The questions cluster around fifteen factors that Dr. Johnson's research indicates contribute to "successful" retirement, i.e., one that is happy and

well-adjusted. Some of those factors are Ministry Reorientation, Attitude toward Retirement, Life Meaning/Spirituality, Leisure Interests and Personal Adaptability.

Each Sister receives a personal profile which compares her responses to all the responses of religious throughout the country who have taken the RSPR. Because I have found that it is not helpful for the Sisters to take the instrument and receive a profile without explanation, I plan at least two days, and usually a weekend of follow-up.

**I have found our time together to be grace-filled. For some Sisters, it is the first time they have looked realistically at the rest of their lives.**

During the weekend, we give an overview of aging and retirement, and explain the scoring of the profiles. Then we spend some time exploring as many of the factors as possible, coming to a deeper understanding of what each means. Dr. Johnson has provided for those of us who have taken the "Train the Trainers" course a set of additional exercises which further elucidate each factor. With an overview of all the factors, the Sisters then decide which ones they need to address presently in order to embrace retirement gracefully. Retirement is seen as another stage of life

development which is both meaningful and enjoyable.

I have found our time together to be grace-filled. For some Sisters, it is the first time they have looked realistically at the rest of their lives. They have time to examine more closely their own attitudes toward aging, their degree of self-direction and adaptability, as well as their satisfaction with their current way of living. Realizing the importance of ministry at whatever age, they begin to dream of some new ways of ministry that they would enjoy or new ways of

doing a present ministry that can be adapted in their later years.

The inter-regional follow-up workshop also provides time for Sisters to engage with each other around common areas of interest and concern. Unspoken norms in our culture are verbalized and renounced, e.g. "We are what we do," or "We are only contributing member of a community if we bring in a salary." The lives of our Sisters who have retired well without the advantage of an RSPR workshop are held up, affirmed and celebrated. Sisters speak of the pain of unemployment, of the need for

help in times of transition, of the joys and burdens of caregiving within the community and within their families. Some parts of community philosophy and policy on retirement are affirmed and other parts challenged. Regional and inter-regional bonds are deepened.

I have offered the RSPR each year for the past six years. In general, I believe I could say that I find our Sisters planning ahead as they move from one ministry to another. ("God willing, I have ten good years of full time ministry left and this is a possible plan."). A positive attitude toward retirement is growing. ("It is OK to retire; that is, it is OK for me to give up my fifty-hour work week and do some ministry I enjoy for only twenty hours a week.") The growing edge for me is that at present I do not offer any kind of reconnection after the initial workshop. Many Sisters have suggested that we meet again in five years to measure the growth in areas they have chosen to work on. All this speaks positively to Sisters' ongoing desire to grow gracefully into their later years.

For further information, contact Richard P. Johnson, Ph.D., Center for Ministry Transition, 1714 Big Horn Basin, St. Louis County, Wildwood, MO 63011



# Mother with Many Wrinkles

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.

Once upon a time, many moons ago, long before Sacajawea the Indian maiden led the white men Lewis and Clark across the great land later called America in search of a passage to the sea, there lived an old Indian woman with many, many wrinkles. She had more wrinkles and deeper wrinkles than any elder in the whole tribe. The wrinkles creased her cheeks like rivers running north and south, and furrowed her forehead with lines like the trails of goats and deer across the hills, and circled her eyes and mouth like trenches surrounding teepees. Her hands, both left and right, were dotted and speckled with brown splotches like pigeon eggs.

How did she get so many wrinkles in her face and all the brown spots on her hands? Well, that is partly what the story is about. At a certain season every year, when it was time for the twelve-year-old boys and girls of the tribe to cross over from childhood to adulthood, their parents would come to Mother with Many Wrinkles and say, "It is time for my daughter to become a woman and for my son to become a man. Lead them on their hard journey, as you led us when we were young, to a place where they too can meet the Great Spirit. Show

them the way to the place where the Great Spirit's presence will rise up for them, too, and the place they can always return for their sacred meeting. Teach them the song of that holy place. Lead them through their rite of passage and bring them home to us. Do for them what you did for us."

Mother with Many Wrinkles would beseech the Great Spirit to show her the place where, this year, these twelve year olds could see the holy

forgotten the wisdom of women. And then, when she sensed the place chosen by the Great Spirit, she would set out, sometimes on an arduous path, sometimes an easy path. The route depended on the location. Mother with Many Wrinkles was sensing as the special place the Great Spirit would arise for this year's meeting. Sometimes the meeting place was a great stone cave hollowed out by the generations before her, sometimes a massive rock by the

Teach them the song of that holy place.  
Lead them through their  
rite of passage  
and bring them home to us.  
Do for them what you did for us.

presence arise and the place, this year, where they would learn a new song in memory of their journey. No one in the tribe was ever sure where that first sacred meeting would be. No one could predict, not even Mother with many Wrinkles, what the song would be. But the tribe trusted her prayer, for these were still the days when men had not

brown and churning river, sometimes up high near terrifying cascading falls, sometimes in the middle of a vast, serene plain, sometimes against the barren desert hills swept by white sand.

There were times when her first sense was wrong, and she would look, listen, and feel for the direction again, until she could turn and circle back

to where the Great Spirit was rising this year.

When she was younger, Mother with Many Wrinkles was often unsure of the direction. Alone in her work, feeling responsible, and yet afraid, she would go out into the night while the others slept. She would lift up her hands to the heavens, and wait for a star to fall. Then she would hold up the star in the night, and by its light, before it went out, she could catch enough of a glimpse of the Great Spirit's rising to con-

back and feet hurt with arthritis, her memory was not so reliable as before. She would sometimes forget the way she used to know so well to the cave, the falls, the river, the plain, or the desert hills. After so many journeys, she would get turned around and forget where she was going. Her arms were too stiff to lift to the heavens and wait for a star to fall. But, at the same time, after many years, the routes of all the sacred journeys, once traced in her memory, had now appeared on her face,

path back to the river, feeling around her eyes the direction back to the serene plain. It was the same for coming home. The wrinkles in her face remembered the way home, too.

She would notice her hands, too, at the end of arms it hurt her to lift. The little bruise marks on the back of her hands were proof the impact the stars had made on her palms when she caught stars in the night. And now, the little bruise and burn marks reminded her of the way to the Great Spirit, and how many journeys she had made. It would come back to her, when she looked at the mark of falling stars on her hands, the way home. She would remember because her hands remembered.

Mother with Many Wrinkles was the grandmother of Sacajawea, the one who, years later, led explorers on their journey. Sacajawea could lead others across a land she knew because, when she was a girl, her grandmother led her across that same land to meet the Great Spirit, a Spirit who appeared in many places. And that is why those who make many journeys to the sacred places have many wrinkles on their faces and many brown spots on their hands. They are the ones whose brown-spotted hands prove that in the night, they were brave enough to catch and hold the stars.

—Burlingame, August 6, 1988



Mother with Many Wrinkles was the grandmother of Sacajawea, the one who, years later, led explorers on their journey.

Sacajawea could lead others across a land she knew because, when she was a girl, her grandmother led her across that same land to meet the Great Spirit, a Spirit who appeared in many places.

tinue the journey and lead those entrusted to her. It burned a little to catch and hold a star, and her hands sometimes felt bruised by the impact of the star falling, but the light always showed her where to go next. When she and the twelve year olds arrived, they would rest and sing a song, one of many songs Mother with Many Wrinkles knew, to celebrate this journey, different from all others.

When Mother with Many Wrinkles was older, and her

creasing it with lines that criss-crossed like overlapping paths. What her mind forgot, her face remembered, like a map traced into her cheeks, upon her forehead, and around her eyes.

Grooved up and down and across her face were the directions to all the sacred places. It was easier now to remember, by sweeping her hand across her face, feeling in the creases across her forehead the way to the rock, feeling in her creased cheeks the

## Contributors

**Avis Clendenen** is a Mercy Associate (Chicago) and holds a D.Min. and Ph.D. in theology and the human sciences from Chicago Theological Seminary. She is associate professor of religious studies, and Director of the Pastoral Ministry Institute at Saint Xavier University in Chicago. She has served in Mercy education for twenty-five years.

**Paulanne Diebold**, R.S.M. (Cincinnati), M.S.S.W., C.S.W., is director of aging ministry, Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Louisville, KY. She is a certified social worker with an M.A. in geriatric social work. Prior to coming to Catholic Charities, she spent several years as director of pastoral care at Sacred Heart Home, a personal care and congregate living facility in Louisville, KY. She holds an M.A. in education, and spent twenty years in elementary schools and administration.

**Valia Hirsch**, 90, attended the University of Illinois at Urbana and the University of Chicago. She worked as rewrite reporter at Inter City Press Service in Chicago, served as executive vice-president for Americans for Progressive Israel, and staffed the American Israel Cultural Foundation. An organist, she used to play for services at St. Agatha (west side) and St. Thomas the Apostle (south side) in Chicago. She and her husband David emigrated to Israel in 1973. Valia edited *Progressive Israel*, a journal for the left wing socialist labor party Mapam. Since her husband's death and her return to the U.S.A., she has tutored English, taught Hebrew, copy-edited, added to her memoirs, written poetry and kept up with current best-sellers. She enjoys the role of matriarch to a large, loving and burgeoning family of two children, four grand-children and seven great-grandchildren. She presently lives in Berkeley, California, with her son Morris, a jazz musician and mathematics professor at U.C. Berkeley. His wife Charity is a physician's assistant at community health care clinics, and founder of WAGE (We Advocate Gender Equity), an organization which supports the legal rights of women academics at universities in California.

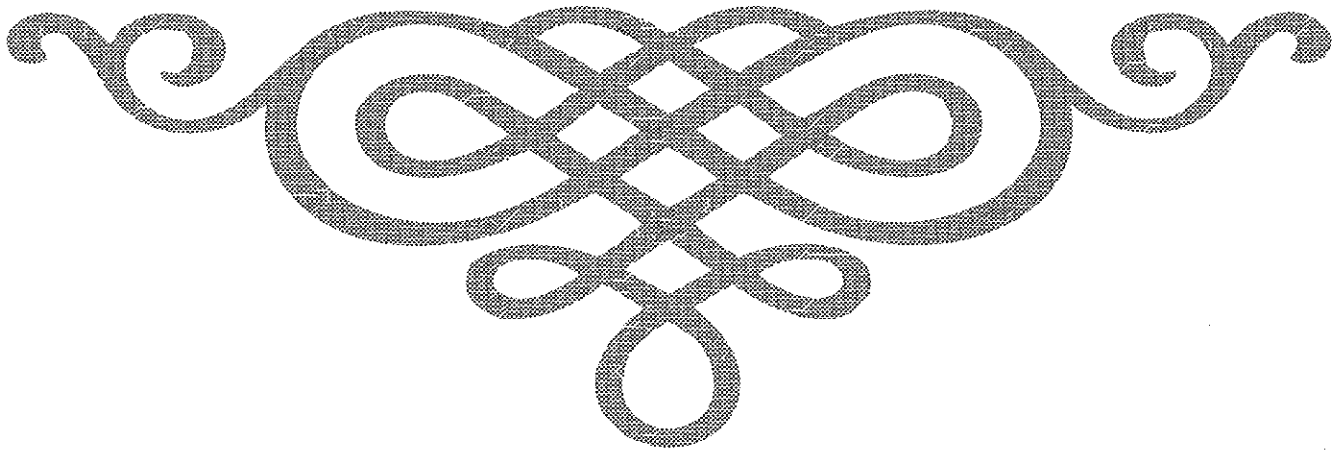
**Mary Dolores Jablonksi**, R.S.M. (Erie), holds a B.A. in English and an M.A. in religious studies from Gannon University, Erie, PA. She has done additional studies in gerontology at Penn State University, Michigan State University, and North Texas State University. Presently she is executive director of the Mercy Center on Aging in Erie and serves as Pennsylvania representative on the National Council of Aging Advisory Board and as chair of the Mercy Network on Aging Advisory Board.

**Mary Ann Nolan**, R.S.M. (Merion) is full-time director of life development for her regional community. She holds an M.S. in mathematics from SUNY at Buffalo and an M.T.S. from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Trained by Dr. Richard Johnson, Ph.D., Mary Ann has been training groups of Sisters in the process of Retirement Success Profile for Religious for eight years.

**Eloise Rosenblatt**, R.S.M. (Burlingame) is the associate dean of faculty at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA, and editor of *The MAST Journal*. She holds an M.A. in comparative literature from the University of Southern California and a Ph.D. in theology from the Graduate Theological Union. After twenty-five years as a classroom teacher, seminary professor, and university academic, she is currently in her first year of legal studies at the University of Santa Clara Law School.

## Discussion Questions

1. (Clendenen) "The second half of life—later adulthood into old age—is devoted to restoring the wholeness of one's life; making the whole of it holy." What have been the challenges you have faced as you address the "unfinished business" of your personal history?
2. (Diebold) As a caregiver, how have you worked out the balance of caring for the need of family member, involving other caregivers, and protecting your own health?
3. (Hirsch) In explaining who you are, how has geographical setting and historical event shaped your identity, besides the personalities of your parents and siblings?
4. (Jablonski) What was it about a dearly loved older nun, whom you regard as a model of successful aging, that brought out the best in you?
5. (Nolan) Who have you become as a result of the ministries you have undertaken, and after many years of working, what wisdom can you hand on to younger women?
6. (Rosenblatt) Where are the places you recall the "rising of the Great Spirit" happened along your journey?



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## MERCY ASSOCIATION IN SCRIPTURE AND THEOLOGY

**MAST**, the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology, met for the first time in June 1987 at Gwynedd-Mercy College in Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania. Called together by Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M. and Mary Ann Getty, twenty Mercy theologians and Scripture scholars from fourteen regional communities formally established the organization to provide a forum for dialogue and cooperation among Sisters of Mercy and associates. The stated purpose of the organization is to promote studies and research in Scripture, theology, and related fields; to support its members in scholarly pursuits through study, writing, teaching, and administration; and to provide a means for members to address current issues within the context of their related disciplines.

**MAST** has been meeting annually since then, usually in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and the organization now numbers fifty, with members living and working in Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America, as well as in the United States. Julie Upton, R.S.M. currently serves as MAST's executive director. MAST will hold its annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, June 18-20, 1999, just prior to the Institute Chapter.

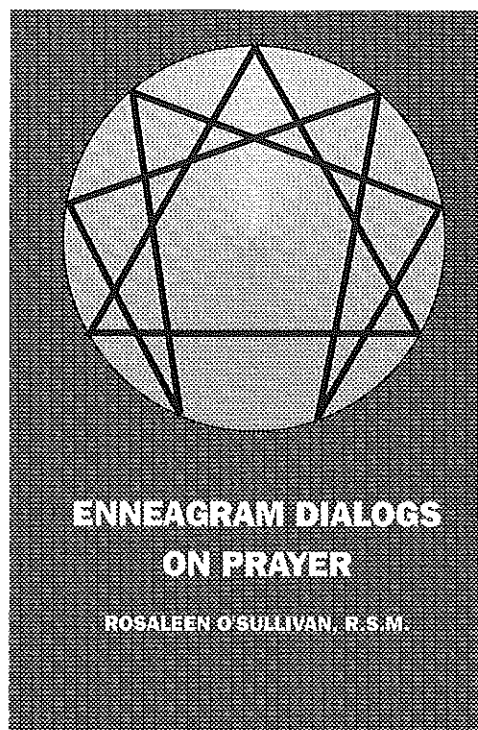
Members work on a variety of task forces related to their scholarly discipline. Present task forces include: Scripture, healthcare ethics, and spirituality. In addition, the members seek to be of service to the Institute by providing a forum for ongoing theological education.

Membership dues are \$20 per year, payable to Marie Michele Donnelly, R.S.M., MAST treasurer, Convent of Mercy, 515 Montgomery Ave., Merion Station, PA 19066.

If you would like to be on the mailing list, call or write: Julia Upton, R.S.M., Executive Director, St. John's University, 8000 Utopia Parkway, Jamaica, NY 11439 (718) 990-1861, or email to [Uptonj@stjohns.edu](mailto:Uptonj@stjohns.edu).

Since 1991, *The MAST Journal* has been published three times a year. Members of the organization serve on the journal's editorial board on a rotating basis, and several members have taken responsibility over the years to edit individual issues. Maryanne Stevens, R.S.M., was the founding editor of the journal, and Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., currently serves in that capacity.





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Rosaleen O'Sullivan is a member of the community of Sisters of Mercy of Burlingame, California. She is a graduate of the Institute for Spiritual Leadership and has conducted workshops, courses, and seminars on the enneagram for the past fifteen years.

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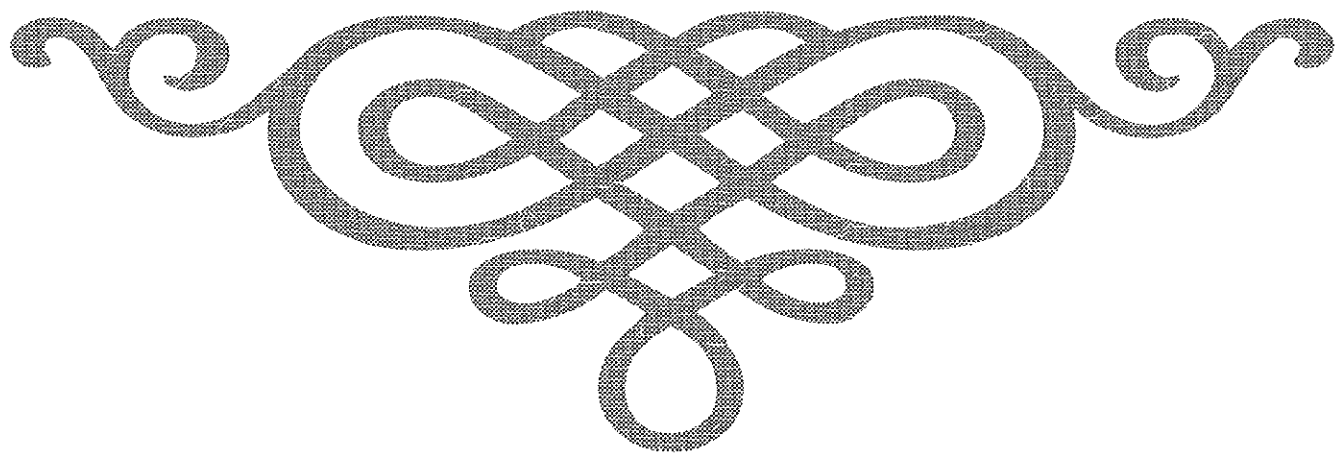
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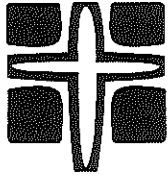
## NEW PUBLICATION

Julia Upton, R.S.M. *A Time for Embracing: Reclaiming Reconciliation*.  
Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999. Paper, 128 pp. ISBN 0-8146-2373-5 \$10.95

What has happened to sacramental reconciliation and confession in Catholic practice? Julia Upton, a theologian who draws on thirty years of study, explores this question in an in-depth study of a sacrament she terms "endangered." As illustration, she reviews the thoughts of bishops, priests, and lay people on the practice of sacramental reconciliation, published in "Study of Penance" by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. The cause is not the lack of people going to confession, she concludes, but the fact that the sacrament is not understood or celebrated well.

Chapter 1 is "Reconciliation at the Crossroads," a review of the problem. Chapter 2, "Reconciliation in American Society" discusses the influence of American culture. Chapter 3 is "Reconciliation in Sacred Scripture." Chapter 4, "Through the Lens of History," treats the sacrament's historical development. Chapter 5, "Reconciliation as Sacrament," focuses on theology and ritual. Chapter 6, "For the Sake of the World: Reclaiming Reconciliation," suggests ways believers can alter the sacrament's fate as "endangered."





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