Diversity

Today we are faced with the preeminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships - the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together and work together in the same world, in peace.

Franklin D. Roosevelt
Undelivered Speech, 1945
From the IHM Congregation President

Diversity: An Abundance of Life

by Sr. Mary Persico, IHM

I

I you are standing on the “other side of religious life,” it is impossible to miss the diversity among members. Variety exists in style of dress, ministry, the approach to prayer, and in the spirituality that has molded the life of each individual. For the members of a religious congregation, diversity is both personal and institutional. At times, from anyone’s vantage point, it can be construed as negative or divisive. I have chosen to interpret the diversity that swirls around me as an abundance of life. It is not a hindrance to the working of the Spirit of God in the world but rather evidence that the Spirit is ever creative, fluid, and unable to be contained. Trusting that the Holy Spirit can and will create order out of chaos is one way of living in the midst of diversity; the human spirit, however, is more apt to look for a logical explanation.

Generation theory has become popular in the last decade. Students of this theory propose that generations of people typically respond to life’s situations as a result of socialization in an historic framework. Generational groups view life from the events of history that shaped the family and spiritual values that became the force behind personal and institutional behaviors. In most religious congregations in the United States today there are members who represent five generations of Americans. Each group is surprisingly resilient in its ability to interact with members of the other four generations, and the worldview that motivates their responses to life adds new layers of insight and experience to the evolution of religious life as we know it today.

Members of the generation known as the G.I. Generation were born between 1901 and 1924 (H owe & Strauss, 2000). The hierarchical nature of the Church was unquestioned for persons of this era, and the Catholic faith, in particular, was delineated in the repository of the Church. A multiplication of restless-ness and plural-ism resulted in a religious perspective that was less meaningful and more marginal than that of their parents and grandparents. Although “boomers” became members of the Church and many remained loyal, a significantly large number abandoned formalized religion until the late 1980s when a return to traditional faith practices became evident especially among “boomer” parents whose children were receiving the sacraments. Boomers in religious congregations mirrored the practices of their peers. Large groups entered novitiates in the 1960s, but an alarming number left this lifestyle in the years immediately following the adjournment of the Second Vatican Council. Some have returned “loosely” to their congregations as benefactors or associates in ministry and prayer. The political and personal turbulence that characterized their era was also present to some extent in religious congregations.

Members of Generation X, born between 1961 and 1981 (Howe & Strauss, 2000) and their successors, the Millennials, although not alike socially and politically, are similar in their spirituality. Perhaps counterintuitive, these generations are more spiritual than may be suspected. Christopher Flor (2002) reports that spirituality ranking as higher than that of “boomers” because next to their grandparents. Although their spirituality. Perhaps counterintuitive, these generations are more spiritual than may be suspected. Christopher Flor (2002) reports that spirituality ranking as higher than that of “boomers” because:

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It is not a hindrance to the working of the Spirit of God in the world but rather evidence that the Spirit is ever creative, fluid, and unable to be contained.
The word diversity can lead us to thoughts of differences, separation, or lack of connection. As we will read throughout this issue of Journey, diversity can also lead us to other notions, those of commonalities, togetherness, and unification. In embracing our life experiences, our family background, and our learned patterns of thought and behavior, we are called to become steadily more aware of the lens through which we view the diversity of our world. At a recent congregation gathering, I was offered a transforming and beautiful glimpse of what diversity can create for our world.

I had the opportunity to attend a reunion of three congregations—our own IHM sisters, the Sisters of SS. Cyril and Methodius, and the Sisters of St. Casimir. We heard amazing stories about the life of a remarkable woman—Mother Cyril Conway. IHM, the superior general of the IHM congregation during the early 1900s. Mother Cyril was asked to help with the formation of two new congregations of women religious. She welcomed the young women into the IHM Motherhouse, so that they may be instructed and prepared for their commitment to religious life. While she attended to the needs of her own IHM sisters, Mother Cyril also nourished and guided the vision and hopes of these newly forming congregations. As with any new venture, there were struggles and trials. It would have been easier for Mother Cyril to follow the ideas of some, who advised that, perhaps, the new congregations would not survive on their own, that the women should instead be trained as IHM sisters. Mother Cyril resisted these suggestions, holding fast to the initial dream of these women who desired to create something new.

As I reflect on this story, I believe that Mother Cyril made a clear choice for diversity. She chose to believe in the beauty and power of the unknown path, rather than settling for the comfort of the familiar. Instead of giving up during the difficulties of the growing years for these congregations, she trusted that something new would emerge beyond the horizon of her own sight and imagination. She was able to believe in the value and meaning of that which was other than her own experience. She saw beyond simply the scope of the IHM congregation, and now 100 years later, the world reaps the benefits of her wisdom through the works of the Sisters of SS. Cyril and Methodius and the Sisters of St. Casimir.

For me, this is the lesson Mother Cyril teaches me about diversity: the world is not only expansive enough to welcome the multifaceted, but the world becomes a better place when diversity is nurtured and cultivated. As I sat in that reunion, I was in awe of all that had been accomplished through these three congregations, and I was inspired by the courage of one woman who allowed that to take place. I also found myself wondering about our world today and the many struggles we see around the topic of diversity. When I think about the issues which are so often divisive: religion, culture, race, gender, language, and beliefs, I wonder how often I have chosen the path of the familiar and cast aside as less valuable that which was different or challenging to my way of seeing/living/being? How often have I responded to situations and people with the clarity and wisdom of Mother Cyril, making room for the birth of something completely new, something that could transform our world?

Mother Cyril has become a role model for me. She is a witness to hope when we so often are surrounded by images of despair. She offers an invitation to me, to all of us, to live and breathe the wondrous possibilities found in diversity. May we be found ready, our hearts open to that which lies beyond the horizon.

St. Trish serves as the director of religious formation at Sacred Heart Junior/Senior High School in Carbondale, Pennsylvania.

References
The saintly Joseph Cardinal Bernardin wrote that the process of reflection on our past is important, for we cannot know who we are, we cannot understand what has made us the nation we are today unless we know our past—from where we have come and the events that have helped shape us as a nation. If this is true of us as a national entity, he reminds us it is also true of us as a Church, the people of God.

When we look back to our Judaic roots, we become more fully aware of the great common spiritual patrimony we share with the Jewish people. The late Monsignor George C. Higgins, the former Secretary for Research of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, expressed the belief that Catholics and Jews are under a solemn obligation to plumb the theological depths of their common spiritual heritage. When we begin to examine this material, we uncover some provocative thoughts. In a televised interview shortly before his death, the venerable Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel stated, “This great, old, wise Church in Rome realizes that the existence of the Jews as Jews is so holy and so precious that the Church would collapse if the Jewish people would cease to exist.”

Recommended Reading:
Today there are many ways that we can deepen our knowledge of the Jewish Faith. I have inspiring memories from the course, “Contemporary Jewish Theological Thought,” taught by Rabbi Simon Shoop from the Scranton Conservative Synagogue, Temple Israel. The three paperback texts used are still highly recommended for personal reading: Basic Judaism by Milton Steinberg (Harcourt, $12.00) presents the theological background; A History of the Jewish Experience by Leo Trepp (Behrman, $24.95) presents the historical development; and Jewish Thought Today by Louis Jacobs (Behrman, $9.95) presents the contemporary thinkers and writers of note followed by a very helpful commentary.

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practice the beautiful but simple customs in caring for their dead and the bereaved. The “American Way of Death” exposed by Jessica Mitford’s classic was not typical of Jewish customs. For them, life takes precedence over death, so on the Sabbath no mourning is permitted.

THE SABBATH
All life revolves around the Sabbath for a practicing Jew. In the Hebrew language there are no names for the days of the week; instead they are termed 1st, 2nd, 3rd day leading to Sabbath. In the Creation narrative in Genesis, a day is considered from sundown to sundown; so from sundown on Friday until sundown on Saturday, that 24 hour span is given to the Lord and work is prohibited.

Rabbi Harold S. Kushner (famed author of “When Bad Things Happen To Good People”) in his 2003 work, “The Lord Is My Shepherd: Healing Wisdom of the Twenty-Third Psalm”, writes:
If, during the week, a man or woman is bound to a schedule, if our lives are ruled by the clock so that we are not free to do what we want when we want to, the Sabbath (whether observed on Saturday, Sunday, or even on a weekday for those who have to work weekends) is a day to replenish our souls by being free to do those things that identify us as human. It is a time for family, for reading, and of course for worship, another uniquely human activity.

Rabbi Heschel’s writings on the Sabbath might be the incentive to challenge us to “Remember, keep holy the Lord’s Day.” When we truly observe the Sabbath, we will benefit physically, mentally and spiritually.

MITZVAH
The 613 Mitzvot or commandments binding upon a Jew serve as polishing cloths to sensitize his conscience. We might consider them as helps to practising and nourishing an interior life. When a young man at the age of thirteen is considered capable of assuming his responsibilities in the Synagogue, he becomes a Son of the Mitzvah. Rabbi Shoop admitted that some are more concerned with the bar at the celebration than the meaning of the Mitzvah. We often face the same problem at First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Matrimony parties. Rabbi Heschel interpreted the Mitzvah as reminders from God that Man is never alone; the Mitzvah makes man conscious of God. For instance, the minute regulations of the Jewish Dietary Laws are meaningful when they are understood as constant reminders to them of regulations from God. The Hasidic sect, familiar to many through the wonderful novels by Chaim Potok, interpret the Mitzvah as a way to cling to God.

The Christian prayer: “The Liturgy of the Hours,” with Morning, Midday and Evening Prayer parallels the Morning, Afternoon and Evening Services conducted in the Synagogue daily. The format of Psalms and Scripture Readings are very similar. Rabbi Heschel exhorted that “Prayer may not save us but prayer may make us worthy of being saved.”

CALENDAR
Jews have great respect and pride in their ancient customs. They maintain their own lunar calendar in contrast to our solar calendar. The Hebrew Year 5765 (our 2004) records time since Creation as we know it. Their calendar begins with spring (the time of birth/creation in nature); the first month is Nisan during which Passover occurs. This year on Holy Thursday, April 8, 2004, Jews will be observing the first day of Passover on the same day when Roman Catholics and most Christians will be observing Holy Thursday. How deeper our love of the Holy Eucharist would be if we understood more of the Passover rites that prefigured the Last Supper!

The Jewish New Year occurs in the month of Tishri (September) with their High Holy Days, Rosh Hashanah (New Year) - September 16, 2004 and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) - September 25, 2004. These two major feasts cover a ten-day span rich in prayer, synagogue services and family observances.
Each Person Unique

by Sr. Terry O’Rourke

(continued from page 4)

“Well begun is half done” and the devout Jew begins the year with giving glory to God and atoning for his sins. There is no ringing out the old and drinking in the New Year.

PESAH, SHAVU’OT, SUKKOT

The great events of the New Testament were prefigured in the Old Testament. We might consider the three Pilgrimage Festivals when Jews were required to go to Jerusalem. Even today most Jews still have a life-long ambition to be able to visit Jerusalem; throughout the world the Arc of the Covenant (the Tabernacle) in a traditional synagogue sanctuary is placed pointing toward Jerusalem.

In the spring, Passover (Pesah) commemorates the exodus from Egypt; it is the Festival of Redemption. In that time and now, planting and new life occur as man is freed from slavery. Christians are freed from slavery to sin through the Death and Resurrection of Christ at Easter.

Fifty days later, Shavu’ot, the Feast of Weeks - May 26, 2004, occurs commemorating when Moses received the Torah on Mt. Sinai. Passover commemorates physical liberation; Shavu’ot, spiritual liberation. The first fruits of the land come in this summer period and they are offered to God. It is also called the Feast of Revelation when the Decalogue was revealed; Confirmation is administered in the synagogue on this feast. Christians commemorate the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Pentecost, fifty days after Easter; the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit nourish the spiritual life.

In the fall, Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles - September 30, 2004, occurs commemorating the forty years the Chosen People wandered before reaching the Promised Land. It occurs at harvest time when the people offer four fruits of the land, which represent all the types of vegetation brought forth by the earth. They use palm branches, citron, willow and myrtle in a happy procession of thanksgiving around the altar. Our Pilgrim forefathers adapted this Biblical celebration as a Thanksgiving Feast to God for the blessings of the New World. Truly, a study of our Judaic heritage will lead us to an even deeper spiritual insight into American customs. The one volume 2002 New Encyclopedia of Judaism may be consulted for deeper detail on these suggestions.

HANUKKAH AND PURIM

These two Minor Festivals do not include a Sabbath so there is no work prohibition. Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights - December 9, 2004, marks a turning point, a major event in history, when Judah triumphed over Hellenism. As the lights are kindled on the eight branch candelabra, Christians are lighting the Advent wreath. Purim, the Feast of Lights, March 7, 2004, commemorates Esther’s triumph and deliverance of the Jews. Their festive celebration is comparable to the Mardi Gras preceding Ash Wednesday.

We have much to discover in our religious heritage. May Rabbi Heschel’s prediction be fulfilled in our search! “Man will discover when he is in search of God that God has found him.”

1. Visit their website at www.usccb.org or their 2004 catalog for their six titles on Jewish-Catholic Relations

*Marywood University Library collection has many more than the titles mentioned or borrowed through the on-line interlibrary loan.

St. Gilmary serves as a collection management librarian for non-print at Marywood University in Scranton, Pennsylvania.
These are the words of the prophet Isaiah, as he describes his call from his God. I’ve chosen Isaiah’s words to describe my experience of God largely because his words echo my first experience of God. Not only do they remind me of my first experience of God, but also these same words continue to motivate me, haunt me, and challenge my vocation in life on a daily basis.

The first time I recall feeling the loving presence of God in my life was on a retreat I attended in high school. While this retreat was a watershed event for me, I did not fully realize it at the time. Within the next three to four years, though, there was no denying that I had been called to do God’s work in a special way. To explain my confidence in understanding what I later learned was a “call,” I do not have much of an answer; it is inefable. What I can say is — I sensed a powerful spirit within me to do good, to try and live out the message Jesus taught and preached in the Gospels, and in a special way. Much like my parents and relatives had made me feel that I was the most special person in the world, I felt God’s presence in a very similar way. But, why me? What could I possibly possess that God would call upon me to serve?

Struggling with these questions remains a part of my life, sometimes on a daily basis. While the answers still often elude me, I am reassured by the words of the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah says that the Lord addressed him saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” Jeremiah says he responded to the Lord by saying, “Lord Yahweh; look, I do not know how to speak; I am a child!” But Yahweh replied, “Do not say, I am a child. Go now to those to whom I send you and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to protect you — it is Yahweh who speaks!” Yeah, right! Well, despite my somewhat disrespectful and cavalier response to my God, I deeply believe that I have been called to serve a purpose: to live out the call of the Gospels and raise awareness concerning issues of diversity. This call has manifested itself in my professional life in a number of roles, but with only one theme — Social Justice.

Over the past thirteen years, I have pursued my vocation and called to serve in higher education with my aim to encounter the many traditionally aged college students at the institutions I have worked and challenge them to “unlearn” many of the things they have been taught about oppressed groups in society. To a large degree, we have been taught, during our formative years by the media, our parents, teachers, friends and relatives, what it means to be a man, a woman, a member of a particular race, or a member of a particular social class. Too frequently, these learnings lead to the oppression of less powerful groups in society: racial minorities, non-heterosexuals, the poor, women, non-Christians, the disabled, and more.

Working in higher education, particularly Catholic institutions of higher education, affords me the opportunity to work with a majority of white students. For many, college may be the first time they have encountered “the other.” This is largely due to the fact that many of them choose to attend colleges that are similar to the high schools they have attended, which are often comprised of a homogenous student body. There is a wide variety of reasons for this, such as location, religious affiliation, cost, and appeal, to name a few. We must find other ways to help them encounter “the other.” This is pursued through a number of strategies: diversity education workshops, increasing the enrollment of students from less powerful cultural groups, having students wrestle with issues in academic courses, and interacting with faculty, staff and administrators, who are members of less powerful cultural groups.

I consider myself one of the strategies for helping students encounter “the other.” As an African-American male, I am often among the underrepresented on the campuses I have joined, which is where I think I am most needed. I would like to think that my encounters with students, staff and administrators, either directly or indirectly, provide me the opportunity to teach them something about “the other,” or influence them in other positive ways. Sometimes this occurs in the form of asking students to think about an attitude that they never thought of as being racist, sexist, or homophobic. Sometimes, it is simply being myself and causing people to pause and think about the stereotypes they may have attributed to this cultural group of which I am a member.

While I may shoulder this as a responsibility to make our world a better place, it’s a responsibility we are all called to engage in daily. Police your own thoughts and attitudes concerning “the other.” In your encounters, challenge yourself to understand those who are different from you. Challenge yourself to interrupt the cycle of ignorance that oppresses and diminishes the quality of life for so many people in the world. Challenge yourself to truly live out the call of the Gospels.

So, as I struggle, challenge and rejoice along the journey of living out the Gospels, I trust that God will shepherd me through each day, providing me, as Jeremiah says, with the words and courage to do God’s work.

Through my faith, I respond: “Here I am, send me.”

Don serves as dean of students at Marywood University, Scranton, Pennsylvania.
Diversidad

by Luz María Cayazzo, IHM

Durante estos últimos años la diversidad ha estado presente en mi vida de una manera “nueva”. Supongo que tiene que ver con la realidad de ser miembro de la Congregación del IHM, Congregación Norte Americana y de vivir en estos momentos en los Estados Unidos lejos de mi Chile, donde nací. ¿Y qué tendrá que ver estar lejos de mi patria y diversidad se preguntará usted?

El estar lejos de Chile me ha llevado de una realidad más bien inconsciente a una realidad un poco más consciente. A ver si me explico, durante este tiempo donde he estado libremente expuesta a una cultura que no es la mía y por ende ser considerada minoría, he encontrado que donde hay falta de diversidad, he experimentado por ejemplo prejuicios, rigidez mental, comportamientos de mala educación. No puedo dejar de sentir nostalgia por mi lugar de origen, donde encuentro … ¿Qué encuentro? La verdad es que me encuentro con una realidad que tampoco es muy “diversa” la diferencia es que es lo propio, lo que conozco, donde encajo. Por esta razón —me imagino— que no experimento allá lo que aquí vivo, pero eso no quiere decir que otros en mi Chile Lindo no sufran lo que sufriremos aquí aquellos que somos de otra cultura.

Creo que a través de la educación se pueden combatir las penurias que se viven cuando hay falta de diversidad. Pienso también que una sociedad más diversa tiene que ver con estadios sociológicos más sanos, esto tanto a un nivel individual como colectivo. Se habla de que somos parte de un mundo globalizado y acaso esa globalization no trae consigo diversidad?

La diversidad nos enseña a ser más adaptables, flexibles e innovadores, nos enseña a aceptar la diferencia. Y quizás hasta traiga consigo también esa condición sociológica y espiritual más elevada que es la empatía, donde seamos capaces de ponernos los unos en el lugar de los otros.

La hermana Luz realiza Ministerio Pastoral Hispano para la Diocesis de Scranton, Pensilvania.

A World With Such Diversity

by Luz María Cayazzo, IHM

Durante these past several years, diversity has been present in my life in a “new way.” I suppose it has to do with the reality of being a member of the IHM Congregation, a North American community, and living in the United States which is far from Chile, my country of birth. And what does being far from my homeland have to do with diversity, you might ask? Being far from Chile has taken me from one reality to another of which I am becoming more conscious.

Let me try to explain. During this time I have been freely exposed to a culture that is not my own, and in which I am considered a minority. I have found that where I experience a lack of diversity, I have also experienced prejudice, mental rigidity, and inappropriate behavior. I then feel nostalgic for my place of origin even though it is not very “diverse” either. The difference, I guess, is that it is my own. It is what I know and where I fit. For this reason, I suppose, I don’t experience there what I live here. But that doesn’t mean that there are not others in my Chile Lindo who do not suffer what I suffer here being from another culture.

I believe that through education we can fight the pains of lack of diversity. I believe having better psychological health, at both the individual and collective levels, results in a more diverse society. It is said that we are part of a globalized world. Doesn’t globalization bring with it diversity?

Diversity teaches us to be more adaptable, flexible and innovative. It teaches us to accept difference. And perhaps it will bring with it that higher psychological and spiritual condition called empathy. Then we will be able to put ourselves in someone else’s place.

Sr. Luz serves as a pastoral associate for Hispanic Ministries for the Diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania.

We Christians, after all our years of praying for unity and understanding, should be able to admit that we have a common Lord and Savior in Jesus. Our history contains a rich variety of approaches to thinking about our loving God. Isn’t it wonderful that our great God made a world with such diversity? We have great men and women with such a variety of interests which enable us to develop our lives in a way that will be a great help to others.

Each day, we walk with people who do not think as we do, but we respect what they are. We have a wonderful example in our own Sister Kathleen Toner, recently deceased, who had such great respect for homeless mothers and children who were living in welfare hotels in New York City. Because of her intellect and the level of respect she gained, she was able to find an alternative to the city’s housing of homeless mothers and children. Too, Theresa Maxis, the co-founder of the IHM Sisters, was another woman of deep trust who had the courage, determination and perseverance to go the way she thought best even though she met rejections and barriers. She, too, ministered to the marginalized.

An article in the New York Times, November 30, 2004, reported the story of a factory in Lawrence, MA, whose workers were living with the possibility that their jobs would be exported to China. The company was being managed by its creditors, but the original owner wanted to develop some of the buildings into housing which would enable the working people from the factory to retain their jobs. So, to save factories, owners diversify. How wonderful when people of means are willing and able to help others less fortunate!

Our church related schools’ population is extraordinarily diverse and in some areas, almost equally divided among African-Americans, Hispanic and white students. Yes, the doors have been opened to children across the lines of color, religion and class. New York City, the most diverse city in the world is an example of reaching out to the stranger, the outcast and the great.

There are times in our lives when we have to change in order to make us more aware of the misunderstandings of days gone by. Yes, the Wise Men of old trusted our loving God and went home by a different route. Trust our loving God, and you will never be disappointed.

Sr. Helaine serves as an office assistant at Our Lady of Grace Center in Manhasset, New York.
Inviting Someone Dangerous to Tea

A Justice and Peace Perspective

by Sr. Christine Koellhoffer, IHM

In my home is a colorful calligraphy rendering of Sark’s “How to Be An Artist.” Her admonitions are whimsical, delightful, and imaginative, including: “Take lots of naps…Plant impossible gardens…Giggle with children.” The hints are also inspiring: “Make friends with freedom and uncertainty…Drive away fear.” And among Sark’s long list of what makes for an artistic spirit is what I consider a wonderful five-word suggestion for fostering diversity: “Invite someone dangerous to tea.”

I find this image delicious and energizing, and I can easily envision the trappings of such an occasion: the table covered in a delicate cloth; my mother’s Bermuda teapot steeping with Black Oolong; freshly baked scones set on a china plate; butter, jam and Devonshire cream completing the spread. All seems the picture of domestic tranquility, except that…I’ve invited someone dangerous to tea.

For us to invite someone dangerous to tea means, I think, to lay aside our fear of the unknown and the difficult to tea? For us to invite someone dangerous to tea is to refuse to identify with our culture’s tendency to focus upon differences that divide, and instead, with Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, “to cling to the spiritual traditions of hospitality and openness.” The invitation is born of a global sense that there’s a wider and more liberating life beyond the clutching of “me” and “mine.”

In our post-9/11 world, how do we go about inviting someone dangerous to tea?

If we’re fortunate to live in a large city or any place with a diverse population, we’re already surrounded by people who may speak, and look, and follow traditions and customs different from our own. How much the human family would be diminished if we fail to embrace the richness of that same human family all around us. But even if we live in a town that’s fairly homogeneous, there are so many simple ways to invite someone dangerous to tea:

Prayer

Consciously choose a resource that insists on inclusive language. Find prayer selections written by people of many countries and cultural and racial backgrounds, or resources written specifically to include a “forgotten” population, such as women’s voices. Explore images of God that expand the boundaries of your particular upbringing or tradition. (Some suggestions: The Inclusive New Testament by Priests for Equality; All Desires Known and Bread of Tomorrow edited by Janet Morley; Prayers for a Thousand Years edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidor; The Woman’s Prayer Companion; Reading the Bible from the Margins by Miguel A. De La Torre).

Words and Images

Study a language other than your own native one. Yes, it will be difficult, but it will also open your heart to the values and customs of a culture not your own. You may just fall in love with the sound of words in your new language, sounds which can touch your heart even beyond your knowing their meaning. And if you live in an area where your new language is spoken, try a few words out on a neighbor. The light of recognition and delight is one you’ll savor for days to come.

Learn the language of dance. No words are needed, and both the music and the centering will usher you into a new understanding of what it means to be in relationship to others—your partner, your neighbor, your world.

Read poetry, often and passionately and always aloud. Poets offer us an alternate vision, fill us with hope and courage, articulate what we’ve yet to be. Let the sound of words and the power of images wash over you like a healing rain. Try especially to find a good translation from a language other than your own. (Some suggestions: Rilke’s Book of Hours; Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers; New and Selected Poems by Mary Oliver).

Culture

Many supermarkets now carry a large variety of foods that may be new or strange to you. Ask about them, sample some of them. Watch cooking shows that feature cuisine from a particular region. Try recipes using ingredients new to your palate. Listen to music from countries or artists you’re unfamiliar with. Place a piece of art you’re drawn to in a prominent place in your home.

When you reverently take into yourself the food, music, or art of other places or cultures, you also invite the hopes and dreams of those people to journey with you. (Some suggestions: Gifts of Many Cultures by Maren C. Tirabassi and Kathy Wonsoon Eddy; The Food Network; Ancient Mother by Spring Hill Music; In this Land by Sweet Honey in the Rock).

Calling by Name

This list is just the beginning of the story, but it leads to an acknowledgment that there’s no substitute for the one-on-one personal dimension, for being able to put a name to the faces of those who follow customs and come from cultures different from our own. I was reminded of this recently when I attended a 90th birthday party for Mima, an amazing woman from Cuba. All Mima wanted for this milestone was a gathering of her family and friends, so the parish hall was overflowing with toddlers and older folks, people representing a diversity of racial and ethnic backgrounds. There was lively dancing and rich food from Mima’s homeland, Cuba. The gathering itself seemed a metaphor for the diversity of the human family and of God’s dream for our world.

At Mima’s party, there were no strangers. There was no “them” and “us.” There was no conditional acceptance. There was no cautious co-existence.

There was only Mima, regal as a queen, radiant and reflecting back to all of us the palpable love, the absolute welcome that filled the hall.

At that moment, it was clear that we had entered a room full of dangerous people. And oh! It felt like a homecoming.

Respecting Diversity
The Gospel Mandate Includes Sexual Orientation

For more than 150 years, the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary have committed themselves to advocating, educating and celebrating the lives and cultures of the native and immigrant people of North, South and Central America, with special attention given to those most oppressed, impoverished or ill-informed. Over the course of being with and ministering to these people, thousands of women have discerned God’s call to become one of us, and so this IHM congregation exists. We are a product of the people and the culture.

Every four years our IHM Constitution mandates that we meet to pray, discuss and act on issues in our world that call for our needed attention and efforts. This holy process is called a Chapter of Affairs. At our last meeting in 2002, we concluded that the world affairs were calling our attention and efforts to help break down the walls of silence, ignorance, or, in many instances, violence that separate groups of people who are different from each other. To do this we created a direction statement that would focus us and guide our energies to that end. This statement hangs on the wall in all of our homes acting as a constant reminder of what we have agreed to do together. It reads: “With a profound commitment to religious life, we proclaim God’s unconditional love for all by channeling our energies to foster respect for diversity.”

Diversity – different, holy, God-created uniqueness deserving of respect in all ways and at all times. This is who we IHMs say we are, lovers of diversity committed to living this ourselves as well as inviting others, (including you our readers) to that reality with us.

Having said all this, I have been asked to focus this particular article on sexual diversity. It is more and more apparent in our world that not all of us share the same sexual orientation. Some among us are heterosexual, some homosexual, some bisexual and some are transgender. The growing knowledge and understanding of this mysterious reality have been and continue to be both wonderful and painful, unifying and divisive, celebrated and shunned.

At the invitation of the editorial board of Journey, my writing here is an attempt at shedding some light on the unique orientation of homosexuality. Briefly defined and in my own understanding, an individual with a homosexual orientation is designed, created if you will, to be predominantly attracted physically, emotionally and spiritually to members of the same gender by virtue of their very nature, while sharing the universe with others of different sexual orientation.

For the last two decades, in many different ways and settings, it has been my privilege to minister side-by-side with and to people of homosexual orientation as a pastoral presence. I have encountered hundreds of homosexual individuals and their families most often struggling to live lives of Gospel goodness in a world that would rather pretend that they don’t exist or force them to change their very nature in order to fit into a narrow and bigoted social norm.

I have witnessed situations where family members turn their backs on, and in some cases, disown their very own flesh and blood because of sexual orientation. I have also been present when individuals disclose their homosexual orientation to parents and siblings, and the entire family embraces and accepts the individual. It has been in these moments that I have deeply experienced God’s unconditional love alive in our world. I have listened to teenagers and adults speak of their contemplating suicide, because the prospect of existing in this society as homosexually oriented people seems hopeless and impossible both physically and emotionally. In some of those circumstances, sadly, I have been called to preside over wake services and funerals for those who have chosen their own end.

A woman, whose husband has left her and their five children, cries in my office because her husband has realized his homosexual orientation and has decided to change his lifestyle. She said he claims that twenty-five years ago he saw no other option than heterosexual marriage and can no longer live the lie. She does not know how to go on. Alone and afraid, she attempts to make her world whole again. What has been the role of society and church in this situation?

What must we do to change it?

I have also been invited to support groups and gatherings of people who have become accepting of themselves as beautifully created no matter what an often ill-informed world would have them believe. They support each other and give each other courage to live fully in their own beings, and they spend years educating others like myself to do the same. I have been touched, transformed and inspired by them and am eternally grateful for their presence in my life.

It is an absolute truth of both our Catholic faith and our Catholic teachings that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. This is shared in sacred Scripture and in our Roman Catholic doctrine. We are all made in God’s image and likeness. Perhaps we forget this at times. We need to be reminded often that it is neither the teaching of Scripture nor Roman Catholic doctrine that only white, Catholic, heterosexual individuals are made in God’s image. Such attitudes, sometimes, however, influence the laws and norms that govern our church and society. Many remain divided or even resort to violence in order to avoid differences among us.

To foster a holy respect for diversity we must embrace an understanding of God’s image and likeness as it dwells in all people. Respect for diversity mandates that... “we love the Lord, our God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength and that we love our neighbor as ourselves.” It sounds so simple but seems to take a lifetime to learn.

Sr. Judy serves as diocesan coordinator of human sexuality education for the Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York.

We need to be reminded often that it is neither the teaching of Scripture nor Roman Catholic doctrine that only white Catholic, heterosexual individuals are made in God’s image.
My office in Rocky River, Ohio, is a showcase of diverse objects – Native American and Mexican art, African and Hmong handicrafts, Mayan and Inuit carvings, and a map of Lebanon! Books about racial and ethnic diversity line my shelves – remnants of my teaching days at Gonzaga University. Though surrounded by these artifacts, I sometimes feel as though I don’t know a thing about diversity. And that’s because I often come away from a conversation or an encounter feeling like I’ve been in the presence of mystery and missed it.

So what I want to explore now are some of the revelations of this mystery in ordinary life. Then I want to make some observations about diversity as a challenge to leadership. My exploration comes in threes: three images, three stories, three learnings.

The Images

I remember the first time I ever saw a geode. Its rough, muddy exterior belied the jeweled inner beauty, the sparkling spikes and incandescent crystal crevices. Later, when I was faced with difficult students, I tried to remember the geode, to look for the precious inner person hidden by the scruffy surface.

Something similar happened the first time I went snorkeling. The smooth blue-green waters stretched before me with lulling sameness. But when I broke through the surface, I was astounded by the world below. Thousands of swimming creatures lit up the underwater with color and shape and size and movement beyond belief. It was a beautiful world hidden beneath the placid surface of the sea. I didn’t want to come up.

I’ve never experienced my third image first hand. It is one that is being crafted by astrophysicists, biologists, scientists of mind, body, and spirit. It is the redefinition by science of the relationship of our humanity to the universe, a relationship that turns out to be profoundly spiritual and physical, deeply personal and communal – we are one with all of creation and creation is the manifestation of the mind of God. The liveness of God’s creation is demonstrated, not just in the countless Earth inhabitants of every species but also in the universe of which we are a part. We float in a seemingly endless sea of stars and galaxies that surround us with magnificence and mystery.

Racism, discrimination, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, sexism – oppression of every kind, I think, come from not recognizing this relationship to the universe and, subsequently, our relationship to one another. So finding an image that speaks of unity in diversity is a useful tool for lifting us out of the morass of –isms and the failed political strategies that address them.

The Stories

The stories that brought home to me the devastating effects of these –isms are simple and singular. They reveal the longevity of the effects of discrimination, the intergenerational trauma caused by prejudice, the scorching fear of oppression, the self-denigration hatred brings.

When I was giving a workshop in Texas, a Mexican-American woman in her forties approached me and told me of her experience in second grade when her class was learning about the four food groups. She searched among the pictures on the chart for familiar items and found none. She went home sobbing to her mother that they were not eating real food. Nothing on their table matched the illustrations on the food chart. Some thirty plus years later, her eyes still filled up as she told her story.

Twenty-two members of a band of First Peoples from British Columbia came every summer for seven years to Gonzaga University to earn a bachelor’s degree. The group included three generations of some families all determined to gain an education and go back to the reserve to teach in their own school, manage their own businesses, and lead their people. I was in a Spokane shopping mall when I spotted a man and woman from the group strolling through a store. Close by was a store employee following their every turn and eyeing them suspiciously. I went up to them and greeted them and joined them in their walk through the store. The employee turned away. They told me that this happened everywhere they went. They looked sad.

We all know stories of the struggles of women. We serve many of them in our transitional housing units, education programs, immigration advocacy, healthcare and wellness ministries. The sex trade and sexual slavery have burgeoned into a global industry – and disgrace. Discrimination often takes on a feminine face: a rejection of the “mother tongue” when children and adults are punished for speaking their native language on the playground or in the workplace, an exile of the “mother land” through discrimination against refugees and immigrants, a violation of “mother earth” in our decimation of the planet.

There is another kind of discrimination that crosses ethnic, racial, and lifestyle boundaries – the rejection of differing worldviews. The thought patterns, the perspectives that shape a person’s worldview provide a lens through which all of reality passes. The all-too-familiar “iceberg” image reminds us that ethnocity, race, and lifestyle are only a small percentage of the entire mass. Below the water level are attitudes toward power, money, and belonging, toward role definition and relationship, toward spirituality and the meaning of life. And these are not exclusive to any one race or culture. Learning to accept different ways of thinking and perceiving is more challenging than learning to like sushi or hiphop. Navigating the treacherous waters of diversity demands a commitment to mission that is bigger than the words and a commitment to relationship that is deeper than differences.

The fluidity of perspectives in a postmodern age is often disorienting to those reared in structured authoritarian traditions or who belong to organizations entrenched in classical worldviews. Although the cultural upheaval we call Postmodernism erases the boundaries of loyalty, expectation, hierarchy, and tradition, it freed the voices of oppressed people, of women, of minorities, of the marginalized to speak with their own authority. Religious life, once characterized by uniformity of both external and internal habit, is feeling the collision between postmodern thinking and our classical upbringing. More and more congregational leaders face the question of how to accommodate a diversity of worldviews that manifests itself at the very core of our life together – differing views of the vows, of community life, of ministry, of our relationship to the Church – and to God.

The Learnings

I’d like to point out three sources for learning leadership in a diverse world. One is to apprentice ourselves to the great teacher Earth, to take literally Jesus’ command to learn “from the flowers of the field... the birds of the air.” That is what Brian Swimme, Greg Braden, Thomas Berry, Sister Miriam Therese Winter and other ecotheologians teach. On every level, stories abound that demonstrate the gap between our experience of the universe and its inhabitants and our understanding of the relatedness in which we dwell.

(continued on page 11)
True leadership draws others into the circle of inclusion, of privilege, of power. It is the work of relationship, of creating “webs of significance” that bind us together in a culture of love and respect.

woman taken in adultery, the woman at the well, the Cyro-Phoenician woman, the bent over woman. He used “outcasts” to teach virtues: the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan leper who gave thanks, the good thief. My favorite scripture is “The kingdom of God is among you” (Luke 17:21). I like the alternate translation “within you” even better.

A deepening awareness of this reality makes it hard to reject or marginalize anyone or any part of creation. It demands an ultimate, internal reconciliation of opposites, a calming of warring factions inside myself, an embracing of contraries in the thinking of others. Teilhard de Chardin long ago observed: “... that each one of us is perforce linked by all the material organic and psychic strands of his being to all that surrounds him that make their way by various paths towards greater consciousness.” He identifies this greater consciousness as Omega, the Christ. The convergence of contemporary earth-centered spirituality with old theologies is not meaningful coincidence. It is the serendipity of the growing awareness of the unity of all creation as the mind of God.

It might be difficult for some leaders to accept diversity. Our obligation to protect the common good competes with the clamor of diverse points of view for a place at the table. So I propose that a good third source for learning leadership and diversity is the story of our founders. We are heirs of the charism which shaped their lives and in our beginnings we find models for leading in this challenging time. This does not mean that we revert to the past which can become, in John Stuart Mills’ words, “a despotism of custom.” On the contrary, we invoke Teilhard de Chardin’s words, “a despotism of custom.” On the contrary, we invoke the Spirit to help us make “all things new,” to nurture a culture of openness to change and difference, to claim our place in the “organic nature of things.” Every encounter, every move of leadership is an invitation to break open the geode, to dive below the surface of turbulent waters, to stand in awe before the universe which is our home and our refuge in the mind of God.

**Diversity – Dignity**

by Sr. Jacqueline Servick, IHM

Why do you sisters leave all the advantages and good things you have in the States and come here to live?" "Here" was Mateo Pumacahuana, a Pueblo Joven or “New City” built upon the old city dump of Lima, Peru. Two teachers and I were trudging across the desert sands from our day care center to the straw hut home where one of our three-year-old students had died during the night. The Spanish have a beautiful word, “apoyar” to stand together with. I answered that it was because we wanted to “apoyarla” in her daily struggle to make a better life for her children. She gave such a sign of agreement and understanding that it made my spirit soar. It also made me take time and reflect on my twenty some years of life and work here in Peru. Why was I here? What have I done for these people? I have not left any lasting monument, no great works or projects. And what about this word diversity that we hear so much of now? What have I learned from this experience about diversity? Am I even conscious of race, creed or color? Do I really try to accept people as they are? Or do I try to mold them my way? One thing I remember of my first years in Peru was the extreme diversity of rich, poor, clean, dirty; beautiful, ugly; educated, uneducated; and on and on. It was all part of the whole. I could not opt for one as opposed to the other.

Are the people in Peru any different from those here in the U.S.? Do I try to make them North Americans, or do I try to better understand them as they are? And speaking of diversity, I certainly notice it here in Scranton. My work in Scranton is mostly with people of the fourteen South American countries represented by a fast growing population. Their language may be basically the same, but the differences are many. In my mind I find each person diverse. I will never see eye to eye with them on all things, but I respect their dignity as persons and as children of God. My worry is that many people do not realize their own value, self-worth or dignity so they are quick to blame others or to put themselves down; to feel unworthy in the presence or others, even to feel anger. How do I react in such cases?

Shortly before leaving Peru I found myself meditating on the words of the Our Father and stopped at the words, “Give us this day our daily bread.” I asked myself what was the “bread” that these people wanted daily from God, their country leaders and missionaries? Dignity! To know my own self-worth in a very diversified world. To know that I am loved and am capable of giving love to my fellow human beings.

Sr. Jacqueline serves as pastoral associate for Hispanic Ministries for the Diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania.
I had the feel of a family reunion. It was easy to find some friends you knew, but there were many new faces to learn. Like family reunions, too, there was a need to talk about the "family secrets." When fifty members of the Oblate Sisters of Providence (Baltimore), the first congregation of women religious of African descent, and the three congregations of Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Monroe, MI; Philadelphia and Scranton, PA) entered into a retreat together recently, it was clear that the family members had a lot to learn about each other.

The shared history of the four congregations begins in the life of Theresa Maxis Duchemin, an American of British and Haitian parentage, who became one of the original members of the Oblate community in 1829. After years of desperate living and ecclesiastical neglect and anxious to live in a fully recognized religious community, Theresa left the Oblates and traveled to Monroe, Michigan, where she founded the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1845. In this transition, Theresa kept only the name of her African grandfather, Maxis, and "passed for white," leaving behind her heritage as a woman of color.

Theresa’s personal journey, often marked with rancorous disagreements with local bishops, led her to Susquehanna, PA, where she began a school outside of Michigan. Not long after, she went to Reading, PA, to establish another school. During this time, an agreement between local bishops caused the Monroe foundation to become a separate congregation. When the Philadelphia and Scranton Dioceses split into two, these congregations became separate entities as well.

During this time, the Oblate Sisters enjoyed a rebirth under the direction of Father Thaddeus Anwander. Their ministries, especially Saint Frances Academy, enjoyed new life as well. Under the loving and firm direction of Mother Mary Lange, the congregation grew and its mission of education for children of post-Civil War Baltimore drew new life into the community.

The goal of the intercongregational retreat, “Reconnecting the Journey,” was to provide space for sacred conversation that would allow the participants an opportunity to enter into the issue of racism. There were opportunities to see how racism had manipulated the early history of all four congregations, as well as a chance to reflect on personal racisms and racist practices that may still be alive within the congregations. The retreat grew out of a small committee of sisters from the four congregations who became convinced that addressing racism within their congregations would be most effective if small numbers of sisters gathered as they had and were able to engage in frank, open dialogue.

The outcome of the five-day retreat was overwhelming. Ann Walsh, IHM, said, “We could be open and honest about the issue of racism in our lives. Our listening and sharing was deeply beneficial for healing hurts of the past and for planning actions to address racism in our lives.”

An opportunity to discuss early history owned the fact that Theresa passed for white when she left Baltimore. The participants heard the worries of early superiors and bishops who feared what would happen to the IHM sisters if the parents of their students found out that the foundress of the congregation was mulatto. The secrecy that precluded conversations in the IHM congregations for years about Theresa’s heritage was the subject of discussion and new insight. Owning sin history opened the door to deep sharing about personal feelings of dealing with racism, and allowed the participants to look ahead to what actions might be attempted personally and communally.

The group concluded its time together by calling on each of the four leadership teams to act on specific goals that would open up the racism conversation among their respective memberships. Some common goals were shared opportunities for learning and prayer, a concerted effort to work for the beatification of Mother Mary Lange, foundress of the Oblate Sisters, a call for the members to consider the impact of their ministry and living choices on the issue of racism, an agreement to continue educating themselves and to keep the conversation alive. The governing Board of the TriIHM/Oblate Conference will take up a longer list of suggestions for consideration at their September meeting.

Sister Lorraine George, OSP, put it this way: “Persevere! God’s Providence will see us through. We are sisters in the struggle.” It seems the “family” has begun to connect with its common heritage. An annual gathering is being planned.

St. Jane serves as assistant director of financial aid at Marywood University, Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Participants of the Reconnecting the Journey retreat planted a tree to memorializing the shared roots of the Oblate and IHM Congregations. Pictured are (L-R) Claudia Sanz, OSP; Ann Walsh, IHM (S); Margaret Alandt, IHM (M); Kathy Sabatino, IHM (I); Helene Cooke, IHM (I); Pat McCluskey, IHM (M); Rosemary Davis, IHM (I); Jane Snyder, IHM(S).
“The hunger to belong is at the heart of our nature,” writes John O’Donohue in Eternal Echoes. A sense of belonging is a deep spiritual, psychological, and physical need we all have. Without it we languish, we feel isolated, alienated, disconnected. We live in a culture today where we lack a deep sense of belonging, a deep sense of connection especially with our home, Earth.

In every human society, the story of how everything began, how things came to be, where everything is going, is the basic cosmology that gives meaning to our existence and helps us understand the bigger questions of life. We are the first generation of people to come to know the Great Story of the Universe and how it unfolded these past 13-14 billion years. How do we make this story a faith story, a common creation story, a God story? This is an important work of our times. For it has a great deal to teach us of God and how to live more harmoniously with one another and all creation.

We live in a universe that is absolutely magical, mystical, yet we are unaware of it. We live on a planet that is a cosmic jewel, one of a kind, within the Milky Way Galaxy, yet we are unaware of its beauty, its awesomeness, its eco-systems and how it feeds and nourishes us everyday. For the early peoples, as well as for many poets, mystics, and contemplatives of previous centuries, God’s presence, energy, glory were sensed as flowing throughout the whole of creation. Much the same way that the sun’s radiance pours down upon Earth, the world/universe was sensed as a manifestation of divinity.

Because we have not perceived Earth in this way, we have been very destructive to its diverse ecological systems. We are extinguishing species at a horrific rate and causing our water, soil, air to become so polluted, that we create great suffering for ourselves and our biosphere. We also diminish God’s presence on this Earth.

One of the roles of the human is to be the contemplative, the mystic, the one who perceives the Divine in all things. The universe can now consciously reflect on itself, its meaning, what it is, and how it developed through us. Thomas Berry writes, “The universe is the primary revelation of the Divine, the primary scripture, the primary locus of divine-human communion.” Everything is given as total gift, such is the outrageous generosity of God, the Originating and Sustaining Mystery. (O’Murchu)

The universe from the very beginning seemed driven to create from the most simple to the very complex. It seemed variety and diversity were inherent within the creation, from the simplest atom of hydrogen to one hundred billion galaxies, each with billions of stars, solar systems with many planets, each radically different from the other. Our universe seems to have a constant drive toward the new and different, for the novel, unusual and even the bizarre. Our planet, Earth, developed oceans, mountains, landscapes with millions of different kinds of species of every size, shape, variety, color, and form.

We live in a universe that is alive, creative and experimenting all the time to discover what’s possible. Whether we look at the smallest microbes or look into the galaxies, we live in a world which is constantly exploring. It is finding new combinations, not struggling to survive, but playing, tinkering, to find what’s possible. (Wheatley)

The whole story is about the creative life force that came from Ultimate Mystery that unfolds and continues to unfold in limitless possibilities. It is the story of how energy abounds, how creativity explodes, how relationships unfold, and how complexity organizes and reorganizes. It is a story of paradoxes and mystery. (O’Murchu)

We live in a world in which nothing exists in isolation. It’s impossible. We need to see that we live in an environment that is an organized set of relationships between diverse individuals: human and non-human, living and non-living. The greater the diversity within this setting the greater is the health, balance, strength of the whole. Everything in our environment constantly affects the other, and at the same time, it is being changed by the process of being in relationship with each other. Extinguishing species and polluting the biosphere destroys the health of the planet as a whole, and diminishes the ecological balance that is necessary for life and the essential richness of Earth.

The greatest contribution we can make is to be our authentic self, which is different from anyone else. Everything in the universe is giving expression to who/what it is, from galaxies, stars, bacteria, trees, plants, flowers, animals to humans. Each is vital for the whole community of life; each has a right to be sustained and reveredence for who/what it is and is becoming. We are in harmony with the universe when we celebrate diversity and difference. We are not, when we try to eradicate differences, as when we promote conformity and uniformity. Large corporations today, through genetic engineering are changing the DNA of seeds so they will not reproduce. If allowed to continue, the diversity of foods will greatly diminish, as is the case with kinds of corn and soybeans.

It is in and through our differences, we find new ways to interrelate, collaborate and co-create. We find new ways of being in harmony with each other and the creation. For we have learned that relationship and interdependence form the heart and soul of what creation is all about. We have come to see that cooperation rather than competition is what features most prominently in the evolutionary story.

We are at a crossroads in the Story. This is our great moment of grace to awaken. The evolutionary process is evolving in each of us to change our consciousness and how we live upon our planet, to care for it, and in our own unique way to work together, to come to a deeper sense of who we are and how we can effect change. We can no longer live as we have in the past. We need to return to reverence, awe and wonder for the natural world, and to know that we are a part of it. We need to live with greater consciousness of the whole community of life. This is our time to be the wisdom for the next phase of this cosmic adventure.

Resources


Sr. Mary Ellen directs Earth Weaver Learning Center in Syracuse, New York, and gives retreats, workshops in spirituality and the Great Story.
S
ome few years ago, theologian Kosuke Koyama had this to say about our faith communities: Demand for full human dignity made by ethnic, racial, econom ic, and religious minorities, and women, is a prophetic event taking place at the end of the 20th century. Seeming tranquility and orderliness supported by the systems of religious authority are being challenged. The uninspir ing hierarchical order that has governed the human mind and community is being replaced by the power of creative fragmenta tion. Suddenly the gospel began to speak powerful words. Black theology, Womanist theology, Feminist theology, and Third World theologies are articulating crucial aspects of the gospel which have long been ignored. Ideas once accepted are being examined and challenged. Theological expression is becoming pluralistic. The life experiences of minority groups are coming into the theological world like a rush of wind at Pentecost.4

He said all this to bring home the inescapable reality that every expression of faith is culturally bound. The energies that religion, churches, faith communities can bring to the transformation of humanity are in their deepest aspects cultural in character. “As the wellspring of the most powerful resources of persons, groups and people, it is culture, not politics or economics or science or technology as such, that provides the deepest energies shaping the course of history,” says Thomas Clarke. “It is at the level of culture that the issues of today need especially to be dealt with.”5

What is Culture?

Culture is a complex of factors that makes a person what he/she is as an individual and as a member of a group. It also designates a web of common meanings and values buried deeply within the conscious and unconscious processes of a group of people and finding embodiment in structures and institutions. Gerald Arbuckle, well-known anthropologist from New Zealand, notes that because people fear chaos, meaninglessness, and uncertainty, they search for and find meaning, identity and security in culture. Culture with its symbols, myths, and rituals gives every group of people a center from which to create a frame of reference, that provides what we so desperately need in human life: a set of meanings which give us a sense of continuity, connection, and well being. This set of meanings is the story of reality that individuals and groups value as a guide for understanding themselves and themselves in relationship to God and the wider world of all living creatures. In short, culture has to do with how we create meaning in our lives and how we behave according to the meanings we create.

When we lose this set of meanings we become dislocated, alienated, lost. A simple example of this phenomenon is moving from the East Coast to the West Coast. A more complex example is what happened with the horrendous act of terrorism on September 11, 2001, and the resulting confusion, the aftermath of which the world is still experiencing. As a nation and as a world community, people lost their mooring. We have attributed all kinds of political and economical reasons to this horrendous deed. We have even named cultural differences. What we have not paid enough attention to is the clash of cultural perceptions driven by the cultural memories of the aggrieved groups and our inability to recognize that any attempt at dialogue will fail when there is no one to bridge the meaning systems of the different cultures involved.

In Church circles, too, when social tensions arise, the recent sex scandals for example, we have large ly ignored the power that resides in culture for good and for bad. We often pay attention to the tip of the iceberg and forget what lies beneath the surface — the subterranean forces of mythic memory, symbolic imagination and the affect, the feelings of committed caring which come into play when we are engaged in the creation, conservation or healing of any kind of life in common. These forces appear in a variety of woven forms based on race, nationality, sex, class, work or profession, religion, and more.6

Clearly, what is “underneath the waterline” is of far more importance to intercultural communication than external behaviors which we can see, touch, and feel. Intercultural communication must therefore take into consideration how we perceive, feel about, and behave towards “otherness.”

How we perceive, feel about, deal with differences/otherness in our lives will have an impact on our mission and ministry. I am convinced that for intercultural work to be effective it must include (1) finding effective ways of living and working with difference, ambiguity, and change, (2) discovering the light and darkness of the state of our being, which includes facing the grace and sinfulness of the culture into which we are born, and working with our responses to difference and change, and (3) accessing the power of imagination and our creative abilities in order to communicate the meaning systems of other cultures and be a bridge between these meaning systems.

I am drawn to Gerald Arbuckle’s explanation that the term “multiculturalism” (which is often used for “cultural diversity”) emerged at political, religious, educational levels as a consequence of the pressure of minority groups to have their cultural backgrounds respected. As he sees it, multiculturalism is the acceptance of diversity, equality, and interaction through sharing based not merely on tolerance but on respect and acted out in the arena of social justice.

It is not enough to “pay lip service” to the notion of cultural diversity or to have little bits and pieces of culture introduced into our everyday activities to give minority peoples a sense of inclusion and belonging. What we need is a new mindset, a new consciousness, a new way of seeing, feeling and acting towards a people’s yearning for justice. Diversity in mission and ministry, therefore, is not only about developing an interest in the customs and lifestyle of different peoples; it is about fostering life changes, helping those whom we, as a part of church and society, have alienated from their culture. It is about creating spaces in which people can grow together in justice and charity.

In a remarkable film, Mindwalk, one of the characters declares: “Healing the universe is an inside job.” Just so, it seems to me, that all intercultural work is also “an inside job.” Much of the work happens inside ourselves. Learning cultures as opposed to learning about cultures is a “whole person” experience that in the long run is really a journey of transformation. I would suggest that the shape this journey takes for anyone of us is dependent on the presence we bring to the task before us.

I will use God’s injunction to “love tenderly, act justly, and walk humbly with our God” to further explain intercultural interaction and work.

To Love Tenderly

Harris Woffard, a former director of the Peace Corps, says, that for us to develop an active understanding of cultures, we have to learn from others; we have to learn by doing, and it is not only learning by doing but learning by going. We have somehow to leave behind the habitual criteria we use to function effectively in our own culture and go into another’s culture, there to learn an
appreciation of their criteria of judgment, their value systems and points of interest.

To respond to God’s call to “love tenderly” and come to an active understanding of another’s culture, we have also to enter a different world of imagery and imagination and listen to the stories people tell, how they tell their stories. These stories tell us of a people’s values and frames of reference. “Loving tenderly” means that we listen to these stories with different ears, ears that are connected with the heart. We need to pay careful attention to the repeated themes of belonging and exclusion, the hints of promise and betrayal, the struggles of power and powerlessness, the signals of belief and doubt, how people deal with chaos and confusion, meaning and meaningless-ness. We must pay attention to how people internalize prejudice, bigotry, stereotyping, racism, and violence that they encounter daily.

There is a strange coincidence in all of this. When we learn to appreci-ate otherwise we come to a clearer understanding of self. This brings me to the second challenge in our explora- tion of mission, ministry, and cultural diversity.

To Act Justly

Often when we engage in listen-ing to others we discover the inex-haustible creativity of God reaching out to us in the differences inherent in life. At the same time, we cannot help but see humankind’s tendency to divide our world into competing values and balkanized categories of ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, class, work or profession, and religion. We see differences as lines of separation rather than meeting places for new grace to unfold. I would sug-gest that this is in fact a frame of refer-ence, a prevailing paradigm that keeps our world wounded and hurt-ing. This mental model that touches every aspect of our lives creates in-equalities and a “disparity of power” that is at the bottom of much of the dynamics of cruelty” that is in all aspects of life.

If we look deeply at most of the stories with which we have grown up, we would see that they tell a tale of how we choose whatever advan-tages us and reject whatever disad-

vantages we. We are essentially ego-centric, even if it is a group ego. The energy patterns of our predominant stories tell of domination/submis-sion, superiority/inferiority, this is better than that. Now, if this is a valu-e then there is no room for that to be a value. There is only one right answer - mine. Clearly, this is a partial view in which we remove and separate pieces from the whole and we ground ourselves in this partial view.

In this atmosphere, fear is the driving force that forms our ways of knowing and valuing God, our world, and ourselves. Fear is an af-fect that alienates us from our deep-est selves and distances us from the “other,” either dominating or being dominated. We cannot underestimate this strong impulse which forces us to see only what we want to see, to see even things that are not there. This is why it is so necessary for each of us to do “inside work,” to manage our state of being. To pacify our fears, personally and collectively, we develop structures and mindsets of injustice, such as racism, privi-lege, competition and violence that mark our relationships. We ritualize the story of fear and domination through discrimination, profiling, stereotyping, even demonizing — whatever is “other” or different. We thoughtlessly subsume whole groups of people into one group by using the frames of reference of the domi-nant group as the norm for what is right and valuable.

Our plight is that we have sys-tematized and institutionalized this story of domination in all spheres of life in church and society, and we have incredibly managed to believe ourselves innocent while whole groups of people “lie bleeding at our gates.” What we face is a crisis of planetary dimensions, and things will not change simply by railing against injustice, or urging that we have re-spect for all people, or preaching that we love our neighbors as ourselves. What we need is a new mindset, a new way of seeing, feeling, and acting.

According to Beatrice Bruteau: As long as we persist in this ba-sic perception of people as alien-nings of what it means to be organi-cally whole, all the various parts tru-ly interconnected, interacting and cooperating. When one part hurts, the whole hurts. How do we tell this story, “ever ancient, ever new”? Anne Janeway offers this guid-ing question in intercultural learning that may be helpful for us to keep in mind as we go about our work: What leads human beings from a state of fear, ignorance, and distrust of those who are different/unlike us to a state in which they want to understand, communicate and connect? And once this desire of heart and mind is present, what converts it to action?

To Walk Humbly with God

According to Eric Law, there is very little room between what peo-ple, individuals or groups, experi-ence as a safe zone and a fear zone. When people feel themselves pushed or pulled out of their safe zone, they are easily threatened and resistance gets triggered in many forms and modalities. The narrow space be-tween the safe zone and the fear zone provides little room or time to negotiate, explore, or engage in real dialogue. We go about our business as usual, paying lip service to cultural diversity, accommodating our-selves to differences, doing what we have to do to be legally and politically correct, but basically not changing our mindset, or re-arranging our lives to suit anyone. The Gospel, however, calls us to another posture — to open up the space between our safe zone and our fear zone for God’s grace to search, disturb, hal-low our spirits.

To live in this space, the “grace margin,” calls faith communities to invite those whom we perceive to be “outsiders” to join us inside the cir-cle and to make a covenant with each other to talk honestly about the things that matter to us.

For us to live in this “grace mar-gin” means that we have to “leave where we’ve been” - the safe places, the places of privilege and control - and “come and see” how people we perceive as “other” open themselves to chaos, evil and death; how they confront the contradictions of the cross and discover compassion, hope, and new life. In this “grace
The Quest for the Many Names and Faces of God

by Sr. Kathy Kurdziel, IHM

Does God have a face? A name? I test these questions on my fourteen-year-old freshmen whose untainted freshness, humor and zest for life represent the Church of the future and the practical theologians of the present. They are “doing theology” day by day as they morph into the present. Each name from Elohim to washerwoman God adds a shade, a nuance to the emerging name of God. Each human face, each part of creation adds another feature to the fascinating mystery of God’s eternal face. To desire to see and name God is the ultimate verification of our belief in the Incarnation; for the Incarnation is not some completed past event but an ongoing reality. God continues to become flesh and dwell among us.

As Christians we believe all are created in the image and likeness of God. That means God must have billions of faces, faces of every color, reflecting every age and situation on the planet and every emotion on the spectrum. A quick surf of the internet reveals many websites that deal exclusively with the names of God. For example, one site lists 548 names of God; another from the Islamic tradition, presents the One Hundred Most Beautiful Names of God and a charming story by the futurist writer Arthur Clark is entitled “The Nine Billion Names of God.” Clearly, the naming of God is a perennial activity of the human soul. If this common desire is so fundamental to the human spirit, why are such terrible conflicts and devastating divisions threatening to destroy us?

The problem is not with the theological concept; rather the problem is with the concrete reality. It’s a particular face rejected for some “good” reason. The problem surfaces when we can not see God for the face or pronounce the name of God for the letters. The trouble is within a single soul who can’t see God in his/her own face in the mirror and it’s the same dilemma within a whole nation, race or people who cannot see the face of God in one another. When even a single human face is unacceptable, God is unwelcome.

And so, we live behind locked doors, in gated communities, with surveillance cameras, alarm systems, bulletproof glass, and armed security. I do it too. I look carefully through my peephole before I unlock my door and truthfully, that’s a metaphor for the way we live—staring through peepholes at the suspicious face of God on the other side.

We need to believe that each face before us is the face of God starting with the faces in our households and neighborhoods. We need to call each person by name. We need to start listening to each personal history, glorious or horrendous. We need to talk truthfully at kitchen tables and at global conference tables. We need to abolish “off limits” neighborhoods for our children and ourselves and we need to welcome once unacceptable friends or unacceptable marriage partners for our sons and daughters. I listen to the lyrics of the popular, teen TV show, Joan of Arcadia. “What if God were one of us? Just a stranger on the bus trying to make his way home?” Even our children’s songs challenge us to plumb more deeply the simple integrity of God. Could it be that our transcendent God, whose name is so sacred that it is absolutely unpronounceable, stands hand-in-hand with the imminent, incarnated, everyday God of Joan of Arcadia? I think the 19th century poet Gerard Manley Hopkins had it right when he wrote:

Christ plays in ten thousand places
Lovely in limbs and lovely in eyes—not his
To the Father through the features of men’s faces.

“I AM” is the face and the name of every living being, for every face is God’s face. Everyone is God’s name. I recall the line from “Les Misérables,” “To love another person is to see the face of God.” I AM the face and the name of every brother and sister on this planet. I AM with you always till the end of time. I AM your most beautiful representation, your most promising future, your most intimate, loving thought. I AM your alpha and omega, your beginning and end, your first breath and your last. And my name is Stephanie, and David and Taywana, and Fernando and Oshee and Kathy and Mary and Jim.

St. Kathy serves as a teacher at Bishop Hannan High School in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Sources
1 http://www.names-of-god.com/
2 Hopkins, Gerard Manley, “As Kingfishers Catch Fire”

Each human face, each part of creation adds another feature to the fascinating mystery of God’s eternal face.
Fear is an emotional response which is activated in us when we're confronted with what we perceive as a threatening situation. We can be afraid of a long list of things. I am personally afraid of dark rooms in the middle of the night, making a mistake on my taxes, driving north on I-81 on snowy nights, water marks on my ceiling suggesting the need for an expensive roof repair, and teaching a new class. Once we turn on the lights, however, or maybe have someone to hold our hand in the dark, we can breathe a little easier. Starting a new class can be so exciting once we've prepared and built a rapport with our students. And even taxes aren't so bad, after we've become used to the confusing 1040 form, and we finally feel confident enough about our arithmetic.

All of these fears are natural and easy to relate to. We all have these fears, or at least ones that are similar. They are familiar and easy to talk about or admit to. And once we own up to them and take them as our own, and share them with friends and acquaintances, they aren't quite so scary. But there are other fears that are not so easy to talk to others about or even admit to ourselves. We carry these fears around with us, sometimes without even knowing it, until we are directly confronted with what we fear. Such is the case with diversity. In this context, I would take fear of diversity as meaning being afraid of those that are different from us. They can differ in many ways: language, physical features, religious beliefs, age, sexual orientation and economic circumstances.

This particular fear is difficult for us to deal with because of the complexity of the emotional reaction behind it. I believe that there are a number of reactions that come into play. At a basic level, we are simply afraid of the unknown. If we find ourselves in a situation where we are confronted with a person of color who does not look like us, does not speak like us, dresses differently from us, we can feel somewhat off-balance. A kind of fork appears in our social and spiritual road. One path leads to a denial of our fear, often accompanied by a retreat, and a return to situations that are less demanding and require us to interact only with people like ourselves.

Choosing this path is easy. It places few personal and professional demands on us. But in reality, in a more practical sense, this path is becoming increasingly difficult to take because the world has become a much smaller place. And when we choose the path that winds us back to the start…well…that's just where we are: right back where we started. We may be comfortable and feel secure in what and whom we know, but have we really grown and developed in the way that I must believe God expects from us? I think not. And in cycling backwards, whom have we helped? I think I've already made clear that we've not helped ourselves. We've managed only to stunt our own growth. And it is entirely possible, and likely, that we have closed the door on an individual or a group that was hoping for an opening.

Let us not forget, however, that the second path waits for us. This is the path which requires us to say to ourselves ‘yes, I am afraid, but I choose to forge ahead, to learn and grow and make a difference, a real difference.” Taking this path is a formidable challenge. It requires an awareness of the times we’ve turned away from it and the part that we’ve played in creating it to begin with, which is a painful process requiring a special brand of courage. This path demands that we put aside what we think we know about different populations and confront the frightening unknown in ourselves, and in others. But the potential benefits are great. In doing so, not only do we enrich our own lives by seizing the opportunity for growth and development, we open up limitless paths for others to follow our example, perhaps helping them to put aside their own fears. And if we are truly blessed and sincerely committed, perhaps someone will be there for us to hold our hand in the dark.

There are a number of resources that could be very helpful along this path. They are as follows:

Overcoming Our Racism by Derald Wing Sue. This is a text written by one of the most well-known and respected authors on the topic of cultural diversity. It is enormously helpful and readable.

The following web site also contains a concise list of practical suggestions for beginning the journey towards wholeness and healing: http://www.nyec.org/undoing_racism.htm

This link leads to a well known article used to heighten awareness about racial issues and can be very helpful in confronting our fears: http://www.utoronto.ca/acc/events/peggy1.htm

Brad is an assistant professor of counseling at Marywood University, Scranton, Pennsylvania.
The Compassion of God

by Sr. Catherine Luxner, IHM

“See what it is to love.” These words of St. Alphonsus Liguori seem to echo the sentiments of many who have seen Mel Gibson’s The Passion of the Christ. As I watched this film, conscious of all the controversy surrounding it, I couldn’t help but think, “St. Alphonsus would have loved this!” It seemed to echo for me much of his writing and preaching on the passion and death of Jesus. With intentions similar to those expressed by Gibson, Alphonsus tried to impress upon his audience the magnitude of God’s gift of plentiful redemption wrought for us in the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This God who loves us so lavishly is revealed for Alphonsus, and for us, in the person of Jesus, who is one with us in everything that is human and who freely gave his life to reconcile us to the Father forever.

The eighteenth-century church within which St. Alphonsus lived and ministered was largely influenced by the Jansenist morality that declared that only a privileged spiritual elite would be saved. In that narrow-minded environment Alphonsus offered to the most outcast members of society the good news of salvation and the image of a God who is lavish with love for every human being, indeed, “crazy with too much love” for each one of us. The God proclaimed by Alphonsus was not a harsh judge, but rather a Divine Lover who relentlessly searches us out and loves every individual as if he or she were the only person in the world. Alphonsus’ message of liberating love promises redemption, plentiful redemption, to anyone who is simply willing to accept and respond to the magnanimous gifts of “a God who is full of love.”

It delights me to know that this spiritual legacy translates easily to the needs of our contemporary world and continues to be a vehicle of hope in this 21st century. Alphonsus’ spirituality and mission are reiterated in these familiar words from the documents of the Second Vatican Council:

The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of human beings, who, united in Christ and guided by the holy Spirit, press onwards towards the kingdom of the Father and are bearers of a message of salvation intended for all. (The Church in the Modern World, 1965)

Even though St. Alphonsus never left Italy, he clearly envisioned a world where the dignity of every human being would be appreciated and celebrated, where every person would know that he or she is the beloved of God. His own experiences of woundedness and pain seem to have given him a base from which he was able to present his loving God to others, especially the poor and abandoned. In our own world when we experience the poor and their needs multiplying daily, when justice seems less about restoring right relationships and more about getting even, or when forgiveness seems not to be an option, the God of Alphonsus is a refuge for the most broken of us. He assures us again and again how much we are loved, and invites us to respond to Love by bringing ourselves just as we are—with all of our joys and our hopes, our grief and our anguish, our virtue and our sinfulness. Nothing practiced or perfect is necessary. If we but open our hearts, the power of the Holy Spirit takes over and awakens redemption in us—that joyful, liberating, healing love of God that makes it possible for us to love one another as we have been loved.

St. Catherine serves as director of campus ministry at Marywood University, Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Diversity & IHM

by Sr. Babette Opferman, IHM

H ow does one write a “brief reflection” on such an enormous topic as “diversity?” All Catholics, in the sense of “catholic/universal” are challenged to respect and honor the diversity of races, cultures, social or economic levels of groups and individuals throughout the world, but especially those encountered on a day to day basis.

Being comprised of human beings with human faults, the church, and we are part of that church, has sometimes fallen short. Yet, the vision remains as the ideal to strive for, and throughout history, holy and courageous people have responded by the witness of their lives.

As IHM sisters, we can trace our beginnings to those heroic and holy women who have shown us how to give joyful, loving, hospitable and self-emptying service to those within and without the congregation. In my perception, hospitality in the full sense includes respect for diversity — since Christian hospitality is never exclusive.

Before becoming an IHM, I learned from my mother, who was influenced for life by the legendary Mother Cyril Conway and her sisters in Pittsburgh, about the varied ways in which IHM sisters reached out according to the needs of those they served. In my own IHM grade school, I experienced diversity among the sisters themselves, as well as in the school population. Students not only came from varied local backgrounds, but from all over the world, since many United Nations families lived in the area of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs in Forest Hills, NY.

We learned early on that each person was valued and had something to contribute.

Living as an IHM, I have been influenced by the legacy and example of more sisters than I can count. Though some sisters had difficulty accepting greater diversity than previously experienced, most moved graciously, and sometimes humorously, into the spirit of change which began with Vatican II and has continued to the present. I have been impressed by the stories of past, and the example of present IHMs who not only managed to accept and respect individual differences among themselves or those whom they served but did not hesitate to see more diverse needs and find ways to meet them. We have recently been challenged to confront the issue of racism and to reconnect with our Oblate heritage from which Theresa Maxis moved to found the IHM congregation.

Our sisters who opened the North Carolina missions in the 1920s and 1930s confronted racism by becoming one with those they served — being labeled “black” sisters and experiencing segregation, as well as dire threats to themselves. I lived with some of those pioneer sisters, who were women of legendary courage!

Over the past decades, we have “widened the space of our tent” to include sisters of other cultures and languages and to welcome opportunities to learn more about other cultures with the respect due to them. We have adapted to diversities of lifestyle as well as of ministry. We are a “work in progress” as we strive to channel our energies more effectively into respect for diversity among ourselves as well as those with whom we minister. In order to continue Theresa Maxis’ mission to “go where the life is,” I believe that we are challenged not only to respect diversity but also to remain rooted in that unity which makes us IHM and allows us to bring life where we go.

Sr. Babette serves as receptionist at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC.
Theresa and Her French/Haitian Roots: the Power of Assumptions

by Sr. Margaret Gannon, IHM

I am what I am.
1Corinthians 15:10

In the weeks preceding the deadline for this article, I was troubled about how to bring it together. All of us IHMs know so much already about our founder Theresa Maxis Duchemin and her Haitian roots. It wouldn’t do simply to review the story and its illustration of diversity and discrimination. Meanwhile, these weeks’ news from Haiti is so distressing, as that aginized country endures yet another siege of violence and destruction. Perhaps reflecting on Theresa and her Haitian heritage can be an act of solidarity with those suffering in her country.

I propose to focus on two aspects of Theresa’s Haitian background: its French orientation and its connection with persons of color. As we know, Haiti was a French colony from 1694 until 1804. In 1791, the African American population overthrew the white dominated society under the leadership of Toussaint L’Ouverture. The black Haitians banished not only the white population but also the mulatto persons, whom the revolutionaries considered collaborators with the whites. It was that wave of French-speaking émigrés that brought Theresa’s mother, Betsy Maxis Duchemin, to Baltimore and its African American, Francophone community.

Recently, I have been reading Diane Batts Morrow’s interesting account of the first decades of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time. Morrow spends considerable time in the text describing the struggle among the Sulpician Fathers who were so influential in the history of the Oblates. This struggle centered on the desire of some Sulpicians to preserve their French cultural orientation, and the competing thrust of others to be thoroughly assimilated into the US culture. Father James Joubert, the founder of the Oblates, was solidly located in the first camp, intent on maintaining the French traditions and the style of religious life developed within that tradition. On the other hand, several Sulpicians Bishop Samuel Eccleston and Father Louis Deluol, also much involved in the Oblate story (although generally in a negative way), were committed Americanizers, eager to shed any foreign characteristics and to appear totally representative of the general US culture. Morrow’s very important point is that the latter Sulpicians accepted racism as a part of the American culture. Deluol, for instance, had been a slave owner. Eccleston’s disdain for the Oblates and his indifference to their future are rather transparent indicators of his racial bias. Becoming American for them included becoming supporters of slavery and its accompanying racism.

So Theresa, through the influence of the Sulpicians, was actually affected by two identifications—as a woman of French culture and as a woman of color. Because Theresa was a member of the first congregation of African American sisters, we tend to assume that her primary identification was as a person of color. Having made that assumption, we judge her decisions and actions out of that assumption. But suppose Theresa saw herself primarily as a woman of French culture? How would that have directed her decisions? We know that she repeatedly followed opportunities to use her French language abilities—in Baltimore, in Monroe, in Ottawa, and in an aborted attempt to establish a mission in New Orleans. Morrow also supplies a fascinating detail: before she moved to Monroe, Theresa had investigated the possibility of moving to a convent in Belgium, clearly another French language alternative. Morrow also notes how often Theresa, as the keeper of the Oblate’s annals, mentions the opportunities of the sisters to participate in French religious services. Moreover, the Oblates’ history records that Mother Mary Lange, Theresa’s earliest mentor in religious life, was strongly committed to preserving her own French roots. Theresa knew the cruelty of US racism and its impact on the persons of color in her surroundings. So maybe Theresa really did see herself primarily as a French woman religious. Perhaps, her French orientation provided her with a validating identification and a refuge from American racism. If we examine Theresa’s story from this perspective, we get a rather different sense of the significance of her leaving the Oblates and her “passing” as a white person after she moved to Monroe.

All this leads me to recognize the power of our assumptions; our whole understanding of Theresa shifts if we adjust that singular assumption of how Theresa identified herself. How often we rely on assumptions in our judgments about other persons; how often those assumptions become societal bases for discrimination against persons who seem not to fit the majority norm.

We are all familiar with the practice of racial profiling of persons of color, and more recently of persons of Middle East descent, clearly examples of negative assumptions operationalized. Many myths and fallacies persist in our society, even among those of us who consider ourselves quite enlightened and sophisticated. Try out a few:

“People with disabilities can’t have a fully human life and will have to settle for less.”

“Immigrants into this country are a drain on the welfare and social service systems.”

“Most pedophiles are homosexuals.”

“__________s (fill in any ethnic group you like) are apt to be __________ (fill in any negative characteristic you choose).”

In the second reading for the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Paul writes to the Corinthians, describing his relationship to them and to the Gospel. “By the grace of God,” he writes, “I am what I am, and his grace in me has not been ineffective.” What a blessing it is to be what we are, without being confined by the assumptions of others or consigned to particular roles by their expectations. What a blessing we bestow on others when we subject our assumptions about them to careful and discerning examination, when we leave them to be, by God’s grace, who and what they are!

Source

Sr. Margaret is a professor of history at Marywood University, Scranton, Pennsylvania.
Cultural Diversity —
All I needed to know from Foresdale!

by Sr. Patt Walsh, IHM

Prior to the early 1980s, “diversity” was a term I didn’t really understand. But then I met Professor Lou Foresdale. He taught a course simply titled: “Topics in Communication” at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City, and I had the great good fortune of being a student in one of his final classes there as I was completing my master’s degree.

Lou (as I’ve become fond of calling him) was not only a real expert in his field – we were using his own text for class – he was also best friends with media and cultural critics, Marshall McLuhan. Marshall is best known for the statement (and the book he wrote under the same title) The Medium is the Message.

Because Lou was both a prominent figure in his field and because Columbia is located in New York City, many of our class hours were spent listening to incredible experts in the field of communications. For example, Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Artists Association, stopped in to talk to us about movies.

Then it happened! At the end of one class Professor Foresdale gave us what I thought was a simple, painless, and rather intriguing assignment. I had no idea the powerful impact it would have on me the next day when we completed it in class.

Our assignment was to go home, and on the way home observe people communicating. We were to pick one example and share our observations and conclusions about it the next day in class. Simple, right?

We all arrived the next day to our mini-auditorium style classroom (with seating that rose on an incline like the new movie theatres). In the beginning we shared our observations informally from our seats while Lou stood in the front of the room.

Then Lou made his move! Our class included a number of international students. He asked a woman from China to come and stand next to him in the front of the room to make her report. What I saw was a woman whose voice sounded frightened and whose body posture was stiff and slightly bent over.

While the rest of us seemed to satisfy Lou with a brief explanation of what we’d seen, he allowed this woman to go on and on. I could feel the entire class grow more and more sympathetic for her as they grew annoyed at Lou.

Finally, Lou gently put his hand on the woman’s arm to signal her to stop. He looked at all of us with an elfish grin and said, “You’re angry with me, aren’t you?” We all realized that he’d been doing this on purpose. Next, he turned to the Chinese woman, who was really confused, and asked if she was feeling ok. She said she was feeling fine. Then, she went and sat down.

What had just happened? This was Lou’s way of introducing us to the next chapter in his “cross-cultural communication.” Being both Irish and American, I was “culturally diverse” from the presenter. What I didn’t know was that in China the most important figure in that culture is a teacher. This woman had just been given the great privilege of “standing next to the teacher” to make her report. She was using her culturally acceptable tone of voice and body posture to show respect for that honor! Moreover, I’d not only made assumptions on what she was feeling. I’d also blamed Lou for causing it. I was angry with him – we all were!

Luckily, this was only a classroom exercise. Lou made it quickly apparent to us how this has been impacting our real world. His key point was that cross-cultural communication is the most difficult form of communication that exists. When we don’t know anything about another person’s culture, communication is absolutely impossible. A decade later I traveled to Slovakia to help the teachers there re-structure their educational system after the Communist “political system” had fallen. Then, I realized I needed to expand my definition of culture to go beyond ethnic groupings.

When I arrived I didn’t know I’d be working with particular classroom teachers who’d already begun to put the program in place. They were desperate to change, so they’d watched a video of what the program looks like in a fourth grade classroom conducted by a master teacher. They also had some training by a Slovak woman who’d visited America and had been to several training sessions. I visited first grade classrooms to find the teacher had desks arranged in small cooperative learning groups. She had recorders and reporters and leaders assigned in the group. The room was in chaos. I asked her why she was doing this kind of strategy with first grade students. She replied that she’d seen it on the video about fourth grade. When I asked her about the chaos, she said, “Since the Communist political system was so rigid, I was not surprised when a teaching method from a democratic political system became chaotic.”

That experience was just the beginning of the examples I would observe, but know I’d never really understood because I hadn’t experienced them personally. My American background was so different from their former Czechoslovakian Communist background.

During my time there, I had the opportunity to live with the Ursuline Sisters. They had just been able to resume ownership of and re-establish their convent in a building that was attached to the church where a number of their sisters were buried in a basement mausoleum. (Having completed enough physical repairs, the sisters had just recently moved back into the building.)

The community included the older sisters who became members of the community prior to the collapse of the Communist system as well as the “underground sisters” who had taken their vows in secret and who had been pursuing a variety of different work and educational experiences and who were just now receiving the habit and living in community and trying to learn and live its customs, rules and traditions.

Though their ability to speak English was minimal, it was apparent as I spent time with them that my definition of “culture” would also include different religious communities and Pre and Post Vatican II philosophically based communities. Because religious life in Slovakia had been almost completely disbanded in 1952, the exodus of the Communists in 1989 not only brought the sisters back to the convent, it brought them back to the 1952 state of their community. Perhaps, because many had been deprived of wearing their habit for such a long time, it is now something very precious to them. But I wouldn’t have

(continued on page 21)
M y personal journey to the United States was in response to my religious vocation to an American religious order. Some may ask why I joined a U.S. order? That is just another of God’s mysteries. When I thought about joining a religious congregation, I never even imagined that I would enter an American order. My spiritual director and close friend, Sr. Margaret, was a member of a Korean congregation and she guided me in a discernment of whether an American order would be the one that I should join.

Sr. Margaret had the vision to recognize the need for a church mission to work with the immigrant population in the United States. After much discernment I made a decision to explore whether an American religious congregation would be the place where I belong. My prayer was that, if this were God’s will, then this is where I should be.

I entered the IHM congregation in January of 1986. My novitiate was a multiethnic environment where we had Americans along with women from a Philippine, Peruvian, and Korean background. In the process of integrating these diverse and distinct cultures, I needed to redefine my personal values and ethnic identity, while learning a new language and negotiating social roles and relationships with others in the formation program. My personal goal was to integrate both the American and Korean cultures during formation, and my primary priority was learning English. I had studied book English in school in Korea, but I needed to improve both my academic and conversational English. I knew that unless I learned English, I would not be able to understand American ideology, lifestyle, culture, norms and values. Many linguists say that English is not an easy language to master, and language development will be my lifetime project.

I have many anecdotes and fond memories from when I studied English with Sr. Marie Emeric Donati and Sr. Patricius McAndrew. God be good to them. Sr. Emeric used to call me “the queen of questions,” because of my non-stop questions until I was satisfied. I remember that Sr. Emeric tried to explain some exception and then exception to the exception in English grammar. And I kept asking “why” and “how?” In the end she said, “Just memorize it, because I don’t know the history of English language development.” I miss Sr. Emeric. What a wonderful teacher and witty person she was! I also had Sr. Patricius McAndrew as my English teacher. Sr. Patricius was both a teacher and also the grandmother that I never had. I felt comfortable sharing myself with her and she always responded to me with love, care, encouragement, and confidence in my ability. What a beautiful human being she was!

Reflecting on my formation period, I am grateful to my formation directors and my band. At times we had moments of conflict and misunderstanding with each other because of our different personalities, perspectives and cultures, but, above all, I enjoyed socializing and engaging in activities with them while fulfilling the required studies. I remember the day when all the novices and the professed Sisters who lived in the novitiate worked together to make a Korean dinner and we served the Sisters who were living in the IHM center. Their willingness and appreciative attitude to learn more about Korean culture made me feel at home with them. Many weekends the novitiate family shared Korean food and noodle soup together.

When experiencing the Sisters’ willingness to open up to understand my own and the other cultures in the novitiate, I learned the difference between the U.S. culture and the subculture of the congregation. The main American culture emphasizes personal independence and autonomy as important values by which individuals are defined by their relationships and the importance of interdependence among the members and a positive emotional attachment built up by the support of members over the life span. I felt at home with some of the Eastern philosophy of collectiveivism in the congregation’s counter-cultural life style in the U.S.

Ethnicity is a birthright. Every individual is born into a certain ethnic group whose members share a culture and history. That culture is neither homogeneous nor static, but rather, in certain historical time, is tempered by social experiences which vary according to one’s attitudes, values and behavior. Thus, throughout a lifetime, one’s cultural schema is continually revised. In my cultural integration with the United States culture, I try to have both low expectation and high hopes of people. As much as I didn’t want to live according to other’s expectations of me, I did not want to impose on them to satisfy my cultural needs.

I will continue to share who I am and my heritage with Sisters with whom I interact on a daily basis. Unlike European descendants who became “White” over generations in the United States, I accept the fact that I will always be an Asian or Korean woman because of my distinct physical features and skin color and because I have no intention of letting go of my ethnic heritage.

The welfare of Korea and the United States are equally important to me at the present time. Korea is the place where I was born, where I find the roots of my ethnic identity and where most of my family lives. The United States is the place where my religious vocation finds its roots and has been nurtured, cared for and supported by the congregation. I believe in both Korean and American values, and I try to live fittingly and respectfully in both cultures at the same time.

Sr. Angela serves as parent/community coordinator for the Montgomery County Public Schools in Kensington, Maryland.

realized that unless I had experienced their culture.

Finally, on my last visit to Slovakia, I had the opportunity to meet the Cardinal of Slovakia, Ján Chryzostom Cardinal Korec. He spoke of his good friend Karol Wojtyla, now Pope John Paul II, and how his friend, while Bishop of Poland, worked underground to keep the Church alive by secretly ordaining priests. The Cardinal showed me his private library of the books he’d been able to get published during that time of Communist rule. He touched them as if they were precious jewels.

Since my Slovakia days, these insights into these cultures have helped me immensely and have made me far less judgmental than in the past.

Thanks to Professor Foresdale, these insights have helped me to realize how diverse culture really is.

And for all this diversity, I am truly grateful.

Sr. Patt serves at Bishop Hannan High School in Scranton, Pennsylvania.
T**he definition of diversity is as fluid as the oceans of the earth. I believe that the definition of diversity is not so important as are the actions or behaviors that we supply for diversity. It is important to recognize the value of its use; why is diversity important? Diversity is what we find in ourselves when we recognize that we are unique individuals with passion, vision, power, compassion and knowledge. This evolution takes place on a continuum for everyone: not all of us arrive at the same place at the same time and we fluctuate in times of confusion. Though once the process is stable, when we truly know and are changed with the real importance and value in ourselves, we then can pass this on to others through development, education, encouragement and challenges. This is the mental and physical place where the concept/idea of diversity gains its strength.

Throughout this process, we are besieged with situations in which we must answer the question: diversity at what cost? At what cost am I willing to perpetuate this idea of diversity. One must look inside and ask: what must I do now and in the future. Finding a voice to speak our belief(s) is an answer to this question of knowing what diversity is.

As religious people, we have found a voice that demonstrates and identifies who we are, what we believe in and what we stand for. Diversity is the same. Each of us has responsibility for putting ourselves out to recognize, educate and sometimes fight for people, ideas, issues which matter to us and may not be the popular ideas.

It is not easy and never has been easy to align oneself for causes and issues which are controversial, though if we do not stand and fight, we pale as does the cause in which we believe. So diversity is, for me, thought and mostly action. Action on an individual level and then hopefully action as a group. Diversity also starts as something internal that is recognized and then put in action with others. It cannot happen until a voice is found. This voice speaks for self initially and then is applied or lent to others. Once the voice is activated, it cannot be quieted. Diversity changes from something that we talk about or are working to define to something that we embody and live. The whole becomes greater due to the sum of its parts.

Lia Richards Palmier is the diversity manager at Marywood University, Scranton, Pennsylvania.

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**The Face of Poverty Is Often Diversity**

by Sr. Rosemarie Gregorio, IHM

We are the ones called upon to build a new way of living with each other based not on race, creed, sex, social class or culture but on the dignity of every human being.

We have a chance in this country, particularly as a Church, to deal with this reality of inter-cultural living, people of every race, English speaking/non-English speaking, heterosexual/homosexual, physically and mentally challenged people, and the poor and the wealthy. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-36) is at the center of gospel teaching and it is really about crossing borders. Living with other people across cultural boundaries is not simple, and it is not just a matter of compassion. Jesus’ challenge is to choose to make oneself a neighbor to the people whom you do not have to
I have often been asked, “What drew you to ministry in Peru?” My reply is, “At heart, we are all God-Seekers, searching for Truth, seeking for the reason of our being.” When, as a young girl, I would mull over Maryknoll publications, I recall being attracted to the search of the unknown. There was in my heart a desire to learn, or at least be open to learning how God was present to a people of another culture and language. I also had a strong desire to share with those of another land the God I knew and loved. It seems a bit ironic that, having loved when I was able to live and share directly with the poor who are the vast majority in this fascinating country. In the mission where I last lived, Campoy, a poor sector located on the outskirts of the city of Lima, one of my works was that of accompanying the Catholic community of that area because they had no pastor. Each Sunday, a priest would come to celebrate Mass and reach out to sacramental needs of the people, and the rest of the week, I was there for the people of the area. Many of my neighbors were not Catholics, so my work in this mission was to be a presence for the whole neighborhood. There, I attempted to serve, empower and encourage these “ordinary folks” in the midst of all the mundane events that are entailed in the life of the poor. Events such as:
- trying to keep up with the annihilation of ants, flies and cucarachas in their respective seasons
- shopping in open air markets where those who were selling literally counted on one’s few purchases for their daily bread - also leisurely making these “market - moments” times of socializing, thus getting to know the needs and problems of the community
- carrying buckets of water to supply household needs from the out-door well where a cat, which had fallen in, had to be rescued
- riding in over-crowded buses, where, as it happened to me, one might have her glasses snatched from her face

Among my greatest learning experiences in Peru were those lessons learned when I was able to live and share directly with the poor who are the vast majority in this fascinating country. In the mission where I last lived, Campoy, a poor sector located on the outskirts of the city of Lima, one of my works was that of accompanying the Catholic community of that area because they had no pastor. Each Sunday, a priest would come to celebrate Mass and reach out to sacramental needs of the people, and the rest of the week, I was there for the people of the area. Many of my neighbors were not Catholics, so my work in this mission was to be a presence for the whole neighborhood. There, I attempted to serve, empower and encourage these “ordinary folks” in the midst of all the mundane events that are entailed in the life of the poor. Events such as:
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- riding in over-crowded buses, where, as it happened to me, one might have her glasses snatched from her face

I was the Hospital del Nino. In this hospital there was a sector dedicated specifically to the care of children with AIDS. Having helped a poor woman get her little girl who had AIDS into this hospital, I saw there, the opportunity to serve the children through visits, and also to be a “listening ear” for the parents. After receiving permission from the hospital authorities, I visited the hospital frequently. Also, as a result of this connection, we organized a group in Campoy to visit schools in order to educate the students concerning this terrible disease. Once again, I experienced how working together we can help one another become “agents of change.” (I truly believe that unknowingly, all of us evangelize one another, in the most mysterious ways!)

In closing, I’d like to pass along the best missionary advice I’ve ever received. Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy! More serious still, may we not forget... God was there before our arrival.

Sister Joel Marie serves as Hispanic minister with the Northeastern Pennsylvania Hispanic Ministry for the Diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania.
What Does God Look Like?

by Sr. Ann Marie McDonnell, IHM

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hat does God look like?” This was a simple question asked by one of my students a few years ago. Working with many children over the years, especially when teaching religion, has opened my eyes, pierced my ears, and quickened my heart to be aware of the presence of God, first of all in myself, but also in others.

What does God look like? My first response might be: God is a pure spirit that we cannot see with our human eyes. God has no body, no flesh, no bones. But Jesus, God’s Son, was born a human being, so he had definite characteristics and was a Palestinian Jew. Such explanations, theological and intellectual, did not touch my heart. Then I thought about the passage in Genesis. God made us in his image. God looks like you and me. So, to answer that student, I said, “Just look at yourself, or the child sitting across the aisle from you, look at your Mom and Dad, that is what God looks like.”

This year I have the privilege of working with preschool age children, three- and four-year olds at St. Ann’s in East Harlem. Not having worked so closely with this age group before, I am learning a lot, mostly by observation, about growth, change, and personality. All the children are beautiful. Some are white or Asian, many are Hispanic, most are African-American. God’s palette has so many shades and hues of color. Most of the children have their hair braided and like to feel my hair because it is different from theirs. They also wonder about the many strands of gray too. I am fascinated by each child, who is a unique person made in God’s image.

I, along with the other sisters in my local community, am using the concept of a study circle to discuss the booklet, “Facing the Challenge of Racism and Race Relations.” I need to do this not only for my benefit but also for the children of our school, neighborhood, city, and nation. They deserve my best, because each day in our Pre-K class I see 19 children who give me a glimpse of what God looks like.

Reflections on Diversity and the IHM Experience

by Sr. Jacquelyn Donohue, IHM

With a profound commitment to religious life, we proclaim God’s unconditional love for all by channeling our energies to foster respect for diversity.

(IHM Direction Statement 2002-2006)

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n my reflections on our IHM Direction Statement and the theme of diversity for this issue of Journey, and in looking back on our IHM history, I asked myself, how advantageous was it for our founder, Theresa Maxis Duchemin, to be highly educated and well versed in social graces? Despite her Caucasian appearance, great talents, and extremely generous desire to share these attributes, she was rejected, maligned and even willing to assume self-exile to effect change and reconciliation for her IHM community. She, because she was mulatto, bore the wounds of societal and ecclesial bigotry and discrimination.

But her spirit and fire were not to be extinguished. We IHMs owe a debt of gratitude to the historians of our communities that raised our level of awareness to the unfair realities experienced by our founder.

Our IHM community has begun a far-reaching examination of our need to educate ourselves on the many aspects of diversity in our communities, society, and world. This has been evident through individual, small group and congregation-wide efforts. For example, the Sexuality Institute, which took place three years ago, called for a small group of sisters to dedicate themselves to year-long study, reflection, and discussion on topics related to sexuality and spirituality. The Oblate/Tri-IHM intercongregational retreat last summer also provided several sisters from each community the opportunity to connect with the four congregations by participating in a process of building right relationships, healing, and reconciliation.

During that retreat, our Oblate Sisters related that they were often refused communion because they were black. Many of us cringed and we wondered if we would have had their faith and long suffering. Why were they faithful? Because it was who they were…the beloved daughters of God in whom God was well pleased.

Educating ourselves on issues of racism, multiculturalism, enculturation, social justice, and what it means to be a Eucharistic community for each other and our world has strengthened our commitment to this mission of Jesus through life together in community.

Educating ourselves on issues of racism, multiculturalism, enculturation, social justice, and what it means to be a Eucharistic community for each other and our world has strengthened our commitment to this mission of Jesus through life together in community.

Community, that deep need in all of us to belong to some meaningful group, is being met on several levels in our IHM experience. Our mission groups, local and major community gatherings and our ministerial communities support and fill many needs.

Of community, O’Donohue, in his book Eternal Echoes states, “This is how we grow; it is where we learn to see who we are, what our needs are and the unsuspecting effect our thinking and presence have on other lives.” He also cautions that, “Community becomes toxic when it pretends to cover all the territories of human longing. When the perceptions find a balance in their own difference, then the togetherness and challenge can be wonderfully invigorating.”

If we are a prophetic, all-embracing community, nourished by prayer and a desire to proclaim God’s unconditional love for all, we shall create a harvest of justice fostering a respect for diversity.

Source


Sister Jacquelyn serves as pastoral associate for adult spirituality at St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish, Bridgewater, New Jersey.
Sr. M. Perpetua Little, IHM 1919 - 2003

Sr. Perpetua lived her life in service to God and God’s people in simplicity and humility for more than sixty years.

Born on May 3, 1919, in Brooklyn, NY, she was the daughter of the late Harry and Mary Louise Keyes Little. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1940, and made her temporary profession of vows on May 10, 1943, and her final profession of vows on August 1, 1946.

She served as a teacher at St. Mary School, Avoca, from 1943 to 1944; at St. John the Evangelist School, Pittston, from 1966 to 1976; and at St. Patrick School, Scranton, from 1976 to 1992; as well as schools in Bridgeport and Devon, CT, Forest Hills, New York, and Nyack, NY, and Pittsburgh, PA.

She served as a prayer minister at the Marian Convent from 1992 until the time of her death.

Sr. Kathleen Toner, IHM 1944 - 2003

Kathleen’s presence among us challenged and encouraged us; her searching for life’s meaning drew us ever closer to God.

Born on March 6, 1944, in New York, NY, she was the daughter of the late Hugh A. and Jean Brown Toner. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1962, and made her temporary profession of vows on June 27, 1965, and her final profession of vows on August 22, 1970.

She served as a teacher at Marywood Seminary in Scranton from 1966 to 1968, and as a member of the faculty at Marywood College from 1974 to 1975 and from 1977 to 1978. She also served as a teacher at St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore, MD, as well as a faculty member at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

She was the founder and director of Samaritan House in Brooklyn, NY, a temporary residence for homeless women and children, and served there from 1986 to 1999. She served as a prayer minister at the Marian Convent from 1999 until the time of her death.

Sr. M. Geralda McNamee, IHM 1917 - 2003

Sr. Geralda touched the lives and hearts of hundreds of children and teachers during her sixty-four years of service as an IHM Sister.

Born on November 30, 1917, in Pittsburgh, PA, she was the daughter of the late Frank J. and Anna W. Roscoe McNamee. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1936, and made her temporary profession of vows on May 8, 1939, and her final profession of vows on August 2, 1942.

She served as an elementary and junior high school teacher in schools in Lock Haven, Patton, Hollidaysburg, Cresson, and Pittsburgh, PA; as well as schools in Cranston, RI, Poughkeepsie, NY, and Washington, NC.

She served as a prayer minister at the Marian Convent from 2002 until the time of her death.

She received a bachelor of arts degree in education from Marywood College and a master of education degree from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA.

Surviving are a brother, Joseph McNamee, Monroeville, PA; and a sister, Eleanor Rasch, Corona, CA; nephews and nieces.

She was preceded in death by two brothers, Harry and Lawrence; and a sister, Veronica Kolb.

Sr. M. Felician Hurley, IHM 1913 - 2003

According to those who knew her, Sr. Felician loved teaching and helping to mold the lives of young people.

Born on May 26, 1913, in Susquehanna, PA, she was the daughter of the late John F. and Bridget Mugar Hurley. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1930, and made her temporary profession of vows on April 24, 1933, and her final profession of vows on August 2, 1936.

She served as a teacher at St. Rose Elementary School in Carbondale from 1933 to 1938, St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary School in Archbald from 1953 to 1954, Monsignor McHugh Elementary School in Cresco from 1976 to 1978, and as a faculty member at Marywood College from 1955 to 1968; as well as schools in Binghamton, Brooklyn, and Poughkeepsie, NY, and Bethesda and Silver Spring, MD.

She served as a prayer minister at the Marian Convent from 1997 until the time of her death.

She received a bachelor of arts degree in education from Marywood College and a master of education degree from St. John University in Brooklyn, NY.

Surviving are nieces and nephews; Christina Kersavage, Rochester, NY, Patricia Conroy, Beacon Falls, CT, Ann Gustains, Caledonia, NY, Jane Mathis, Leroy, NY, Stanley Kersavage, Susquehanna, PA, and John Hurley, Shelton, CT.

She was preceded in death by two brothers, Donald and Joseph; and a sister, Helen Kersavage.
Sr. M. Leonora Swanhart, IHM 1908 - 2003

Sr. Leonora touched countless lives during her fifty-seven years in the ministry of teaching.

Born on February 16, 1908 in Asheville, PA, she was the daughter of the late Matthew and Mary Alice Wills Swanhart. She entered the IHM Congregation on December 28, 1924, and made her temporary profession of vows on August 15, 1927, and her final profession of vows on December 8, 1930.

She served as an elementary and junior high school teacher in Scranton at St. Ann Elementary School, St. Patrick Elementary School, and Holy Rosary Elementary School. She also served in schools in Danville, Dushore, Hastings, Pittsburgh, and Williamsport, PA, as well as schools in Wilmington, DE, La Plata, MD, Forest Hills, Manhasset, Poughkeepsie, Syracuse, and Port Washington, NY.

She served as a prayer minister at the Marian Convent from 1984 until the time of her death.

She received a bachelor of science degree in education from Marywood College in Scranton, PA.

Surviving are a niece, Pamela Roesch, Aliquippa, PA; and a nephew, James Swanhart, Germantown, MD.

She was preceded in death by a brother, Gordon; and two sisters, Ruth Roesch and Mary Shultz.

Sr. Marian Denise Walsh, IHM 1919 - 2003

Sr. Marian Denise brought hope and peace into the lives of innumerable people by her unconditional loving spirit.

Born on September 19, 1919, in Dunmore, PA, she was the daughter of the late John and Sarah Higgins Walsh. She entered the IHM Congregation on February 2, 1942, and made her final profession of vows on August 2, 1947.

She served as a teacher, social worker, administrator, and advocate during her sixty years as an IHM Sister. She served as administrator of St. Joseph Center, as a staff member at Marywood College, as a teacher in schools in Idaho and New Jersey, as a social worker and supervisor at St. Joseph Children’s and Maternity Hospital, and as executive director of the Brooklyn Diocese Catholic Charities in Brooklyn, NY.

She received a bachelor of science degree in education from Marywood College, and a master of social work degree from Fordham University.

Surviving are a nephew, Robert J. Walsh, Trooper, PA, and a niece, Ann Wright, Holmdel, NJ; grand nephews; friends, Sr. Mary Joan Kelleher, and Marysia L. Reilly.

Sr. M. Cecily Wittig, IHM 1915 - 2003

We are thankful for the hundreds of students whose hearts and minds were touched by Sr. Cecily’s joyful spirit.

Born on September 10, 1915, in Roslyn, NY, she was the daughter of the late William A. and Rose Golden Wittig. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1934, and made her final profession of vows on August 1, 1940.

She served as a junior high school and high school teacher in schools in Danville and Pittsburgh, PA; New York City and Oyster Bay, NY; Mount Holly, NJ; and New Bern, NC; as well as office manager at Cathedral High School in New York City. She served as a prayer minister at St. Joseph Convent in New York City, and as a receptionist at the IHM Center.

She received a bachelor of science degree in education and a master of science degree in theology from Marywood College.

Surviving are cousins, Margaret Busse, Bethpage, NY; James Dykes, Southbury, CT; Richard Dykes, Port Washington, NY; Bernard Dykes, West Islip, NY; a niece, Rosemary Dressel, Kingston, NY; and a nephew, James Hastie, Kingston, NY.

She was preceded in death by two sisters, Edna Hastie and Gertrude Wittig; and brother, William; and two brothers who died in infancy.

Sr. Josefa Connolly, IHM 1926 - 2003

Sr. Josefa lived justly, loved tenderly, and walked humbly with her God.

Born on December 23, 1926, in Scranton, PA, she was the daughter of the late Robert J. and Margaret Killgallon Connolly. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1944, and made her final profession of vows on August 2, 1950.

During her fifty-six years as an IHM Sister, she served as teacher, social justice advocate, and artist. She served as a teacher in Carbondale, Kingston, Pittsburgh, PA; and Manhasset, NY. She was the director of Mercy House in Albany, NY, a shelter for women in crisis, and also served as the director of social justice for the IHM Congregation for four years. She served as an artist for the congregation at the IHM Art Studio from 1994 until the time of her death.

She received a bachelor of arts degree in education from Marywood College and a master of arts degree in art education from New York University.

Surviving are a sister, Elizabeth Whitney of Dalton and nieces and nephews.

Sr. Barbara Sweet, IHM 1927 - 2003

We rejoice in Sr. Barbara’s love of learning, readiness to help, and fidelity to her call.

Born on July 15, 1927, in Providence, RI, she was the daughter of the late Herbert and Mary Elizabeth Walsh Sweet. She entered the IHM Congregation on August 30, 1946, and made her final profession of vows on August 2, 1952.

She served on the staff of the Marian Convent and was administrator there from 1974 to 1977. Sr. Barbara served at the Marian Community Hospital in Carbondale as a nutritionist and coordinator of the WIC clinic, and as a high school teacher in schools in Washington and New Bern, NC; and in New York and Manhasset, NY. She also served as a staff member at Our Lady of Grace Center, Manhasset, NY. From 2000 until the time of her death she served as a prayer minister at the Marian Convent.

She received a bachelor of science degree in education from Marywood College and a master of arts degree in foods and nutrition from New York University.

Surviving are a sister, Ursula McElroy, Greenwich, RI; and nephews, Robert Durrell, Bradford, MA; and Dennis Durrell, N. Kingston, RI; and many cousins.
Sr. Maria Vittoria Gioia de Zerman, IHM 1917 - 2003

We remember with gratitude Sr. Maria Vittoria’s compassion and kindness to all she met along her life’s journey.

Born on March 28, 1917, in Turin, Italy, she was the daughter of the late Count Silvio and Countess Ruth Willits de Zerman. She entered the IHM Congregation on February 2, 1935, and made her final profession of vows on August 2, 1941.

She served as a teacher at schools in Scranton, and Pittsburgh, PA; Asbury Park and Mount Holly, NJ; Syracuse, NY; Wilmington, DE; Cranston, RI; Baltimore, MD; and Washington, NC. From 1996 until the time of her death she served as a prayer minister at the Marian Convent.

She received a bachelor of science degree and a master of science degree both in education from Marywood College.

Surviving are a nephew, Jordan Mott, Grants Pass, OR; grandnephew, Jordan Mott, Studio City, CA; grandnieces, Stacy Lazor, Beverly Hills, MI; and Denise Giori Maas, Rochester Hill, MI.

Sr. M. Florine Madigan, IHM 1928 - 2003

We rejoice in Sr. Florine’s full and faithful life of service as a teacher and mentor.

Born on September 9, 1928, in Amsbry, PA, she was the daughter of the late Paul William and Elizabeth Verobish Madigan. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1945, and made her final profession of vows on August 2, 1951.

She served as teacher at St. Patrick Elementary School in Scranton from 1948 to 1950; St. Patrick Elementary School in Olyphant from 1950 to 1955; and St. Joseph Elementary School in Williamsport from 1972 to 1975. She also served as a teacher at schools in Bellefonte, Cresson, Lock Haven, and Pittsburgh, PA; and Baltimore, MD. She served as principal at St. Bernard Elementary School in Hastings, PA from 1985 to 1997. She also served as an office assistant in Forest Hills, NY. From 2000 until the time of her death she was a prayer minister at the Marian Convent.

She received a bachelor of science degree and a master of science degree both in elementary education from Marywood College in Scranton, PA.

Surviving are a sister, Ellen Glass of Cresson, PA; and nieces and nephews.

Sr. M. Marella Moran, IHM 1921 - 2004

Sr. Marella lived among us, gently, quietly, lovingly, and we have been touched by the strength of her goodness.

Born on December 3, 1921, in Scranton, she was the daughter of the late Frank and Margaret Scheiber Moran. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1943, and made her final profession of vows on August 2, 1945.

She served as a teacher at schools in Ashley, Carbondale, and Scranton, PA.

She served as principal at St. John the Evangelist Elementary School in Silver Spring, MD; Our Lady of Peace Elementary School in Clarks Green, PA; and at St. Rose Elementary School in Carbondale, PA. She also served in schools in Binghamton, and Oyster Bay, NY; and Upper Marlboro, MD. She was the director of religious education at St. Catherine and St. Ignatius parishes in La Plata, MD. From 1993 until the time of her death she served as an assistant in the business office at the IHM Center.

She received a bachelor of arts degree from Marywood College and a master of arts degree from the University of Detroit both in education.

Surviving are a brother, Frank, Scranton; and several nieces and nephews.

Sr. Rita Halligan, IHM 1924 - 2004

It is with gratitude we remember Sr. Rita and all those lives touched by her faith and love.

Born on June 19, 1924, in Tannock, NJ, she was the daughter of the late Michael and Mary Ellen Carlson Halligan. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1943, and made her final profession of vows on August 2, 1949.

She served as a teacher at schools in Scranton, and East Stroudsburg, PA; Wilmington, DE; Baltimore, MD; Goldsboro and Washington, NC; and Mount Holly, NJ. She was principal at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Elementary School in Asbury Park, NJ, and the assistant superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Trenton, NJ. She was an educational consultant for the IHM Congregation and also served as a pastoral minister at St. Augustine Parish in Larchmont, NY. From 2003 until the time of her death she served as a prayer minister at the Marian Convent.

She received a bachelor of music degree from Marywood College and a master of science degree in elementary principalship from Monmouth College.

Surviving are a sister, Sister Edith Halligan, IHM, Scranton; and a brother, William A. Halligan, MD, Pinehurst, NC; nieces and nephews.

Sr. Mary Rose Freiman, IHM 1927 - 2004

We remember Sr. Mary Rose for her gentleness and kindness throughout her fifty-four years as an IHM Sister.

Born on September 8, 1927, in Pittsburgh, PA, she was the daughter of the late Joseph and Agnes Kelly Freiman. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1945, and made her final profession of vows on August 2, 1951.

She served as a teacher at Epiphany School in Sayre, PA, from 1948 to 1951 and Marywood Seminary, from 1957 to 1959, and as an occupational therapist at the Marian Convent from 1972 to 1983. She also served as a teacher at schools in Bellefonte, Pittsburgh, PA; Raleigh, NC; and Manhasset, NY. She was also a school librarian in Manhasset, NY. She served as a prayer minister at the Marian Convent from 2000 until the time of her death.

She received a bachelor of science degree in art from Marywood College and a master of arts degree in religious studies from Manhattan College.

Surviving are three sisters, Agnes and Clare Freiman, Rochester Hills, MI; and Sister Patricia Freiman, RSM, Pittsburgh, PA; and a brother Martin, Sterling Heights, MI.
Today we are faced with the preeminent fact that if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships - the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together and work together in the same world, in peace.

Franklin D. Roosevelt
Undelivered Speech, 1945