



Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, PA Vol. 29, No. 2 Fall 2011



Reach Out

"Reach out" is both a description and an invitation. We are all about what Jesus did. Whether we feed, clothe, educate, pray for or with, feel the pain of, or are present to someone, we reach out. We invite you to reach out as well.

Reach Out... for the sake of the mission

by Sister Therese O'Rourke, IHM

Lives of deep contemplation have created in us an urgency to be with and in the world in ways that are transforming of us and the world.

What we are about is not for ourselves... We are the next generation of Women and Spirit.

LCWR Assembly, August 2011, Reflectors' Notes

Earlier this year a committee was convened to create a new IHM Web site. Among many decisions that had to be made was the choice of a new tagline. It had to be short and powerful, clear and inviting. It had to communicate our congregation's spirit and purpose.

Our searching led us back to Chapter 2010 where we companioned one another in a contemplative process. We promised, at the conclusion of the event, to stand together and enter into the hopes, griefs, and anxieties of the people of God. We do not stand together for ourselves. We stand together to reach out to those in need.

It has been said that what we see depends upon where we stand (C.S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*). We choose to stand where our vision is unfettered; where human need is obvious and where injustice demands our attention and action. "The industry of

distraction makes us forget that we live in a universe" (John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us*) and that the wounded are our responsibility. We help one another to remain focused on what we see in the clearing, free of meaningless distractions. Reality can be frightening and challenging. We know that we are responsible for what we see, for what we know to be true.

In the history of humankind a few individuals have had such clarity of vision accompanied by the passion and the courage to stand alone against all odds. We are blessed with the communal support of our sisters and you, our extended family members.

Many years before 2010 at the conclusion of another Chapter (1986), we wrote what at the time was a revolutionary statement: community exists for the mission. We do not gather for our own comfort or even for the enrichment of our individual

spiritual lives. The love and support with which we are graced is intended to galvanize us for the mission. The mission is God's own. We are called and sent, on behalf of that mission, to be a prophetic presence in our world. We reach out to provide a vision of an alternative future: God's reign of love.

We nurture our contemplative roots and lean into God so that we can serve our brothers and sisters who need and depend on our love and presence. Such is the call, the purpose and the fruit of transformation: to reach out.

Sister Therese serves as the president of the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.



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Our mission as Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Scranton, Pennsylvania, is to follow Jesus as a community of disciples, aware that we are sent to be a clear and understandable prophetic witness to the presence of God in the world. - from the IHM Mission Statement

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Changed by the new life we seek

by Cecilia Dwyer, OSB



Cecilia Dwyer, OSB

You may be surprised to find a Benedictine Sister writing for an IHM journal. Actually, there is a connection. As a young Benedictine woman, just barely professed, I studied music education at Marywood University (College, then) and just loved all of it—the IHM community, the education, my relationships with the students. I was there the night of the fire and I think that experience forged an indelible bond between me and the IHM sisters. They have always been in my heart.

Benedictines are of the monastic tradition and, as such, have the building of community as our main focus. Our order is one of the oldest in the Church, having been founded in the sixth century by Saint Benedict of Nursia. Living in community

and praying together several times a day is the heart of our call, but my monastery also has several corporate ministries which flow from our Benedictine way of life. God has blessed my small monastic community with good, faith-filled women. We are twenty-six perpetually professed members, seven members in formation, and four women living with us to “try on” the life. I was asked to give my thoughts on the source of this abundance of vocations.

Just as in the Acts of the Apostles, when the first Christian community was described by the phrase “see how they love one another,” so are we as a religious com-

munity to be *the* sign of love. That is the root of a vocation to religious life—women called into a circle of love and holiness, supported by prayer and companionship. I believe this circle of community to be the attraction to our particular monastery. My sisters are in loving relationship with one another and it shows! Women come to us who are faith-filled, prayerful, educated, already involved in ministry and are looking for a community to support their search for God. Vocations attract vocations! Now that there are women in our formation program,

seekers are interested in knowing why they chose our life and are more willing to throw in their lot with us.

It all begins with the vocation director! Our Sister Vicki Ix is a talented, out-going, articulate woman who is passionate about the monastic way of life. Because she also knows media, Sister Vicki has a good understanding of all the tools at her disposal in this technological age. She has a blog, does social networking, monitors our community Web site (www.osbva.org), and has a variety of “give-aways” with our logo and name. But that is all peripheral to the monastic discernment weekends she conducts throughout the year. She has two weekends a year for first-time guests and three for women who want to return and get a closer look. So, moving forward with the confident logic that “to know us is to love us,” we offer hospitality to seekers through warm and wonderful interactions with the community. Sister Vicki has a vocation team of four community members who have their own full-time ministries but who are willing to give up their weekends for

these vocation encounters. The team and our women in formation converge for discernment weekends and create a wonderful “community-within-community,” giving visitors a real sense of what monastic life is. It is important to say here that no vocation campaign, no weekend program will result in a vocation if the community itself is not what we advertise. Integrity is essential in the “marketing” process. A good vocation director can sell religious life. The life she sells must match the lived experience of the discerner. It is most important to look at who we are as a community—warts and all—and focus on the special gifts God has entrusted to our care. We must try to be exactly who we say we are and demonstrate a willingness to be changed by the new life we seek.

The power of prayer must be recognized in vocation ministry. For many years our community has had a monthly hour of prayer for vocations. At our Sunday Eucharist we have about one hundred people who join us for the celebration and we enlist their help in praying for voca-

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Sister Cecilia presiding at the entrance of Andrea Westkamp. Sister Vicki Ix is beside her.

Tracing Our Journeys

A Justice and Peace Perspective

by Sister Chris Koellhoffer, IHM

Lately I've been reflecting a lot on stretch marks. Not the literal, physical kind, that scarring of the skin caused by pregnancy or rapid adolescent growth. Instead, I'm contemplating stretch marks that reveal the way in which a person's spirit or worldview has expanded enormously, sometimes explosively. Stretch marks that are the direct result of taking a risk, of opening up to a new experience, of struggling to grow emotionally or spiritually, of reaching out in attitudes of peacemaking or actions for justice. Like their physical counterparts, these stretch marks of the spirit may diminish over time, but they will never disappear completely. They're the map of where we've been and what we've opened ourselves to; they hint at future directions and possibilities; they mark us for life.

Wendy Wright got me started on this train of thought. In one of the entries in *A Maryknoll Book of Inspiration*, she describes healing from a Caesarean section delivery of her child and what that had meant for her body. Reflecting on the physical and emotional accommodations she had to make in welcoming new life, she observes that she was stretching far beyond the previous physical boundaries her body had known pre-pregnancy. She was aware of the growing child pressing and pushing out the bounded contours of her heart and of the reality that, after one reaches out and embraces new life, one is never the same.

"After each birth, the body

readjusts," she observes. "But things are never as they were before. Silver-webbed stretch marks are only an outward sign... Each child impresses upon waxen flesh the unique imprints of its life. Inscribe one's own life with an image all its own. Often I have thought how true that is of the heart itself."

How true that is of the heart itself! And so the theme, "Reach Out," is an invitation to reflect on how we've opened ourselves to God's justice journey, how we're learning to engage, with our whole heart, the values of the kingdom. "Reach Out" invites us to explore how we've been irrevocably marked.

I offer here some simple entry points for reflection on stretch marks:

Journaling

What experiences have marked you with spiritual or cultural stretch marks? Reflect on a situation in your life when you were invited to "stretch," to reach out to a person or persons very different from yourself or different from the corner of the world in which you felt comfortable.

Did you accept that invitation to grow? If so, what did it feel like? If not, what held you back?

Breathprayer

Sit in a comfortable position in a quiet place. As you become aware of your breathing, pray this mantra or one of your own choosing as you breathe in and out:

Breathing in: God welcomes me.

Breathing out: I welcome the world.

Bodyprayer

Stand or sit in a comfortable position in a quiet place. Close your eyes. Imagine God's loving hospitality raining down over you. With your hands, touch your face and feel the blessing of this sacred shower.

Then imagine yourself and our entire world standing in that rain of God's love. No exceptions.

Scripture

Prayerfully read the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

In reflecting on this familiar parable, Jon Sobrino observes, "This meeting is where the human part is decided: Either you make a detour around him [the person who fell in with robbers], as the priest and the Levite of the parable did, or you heal his wounds."

What experiences have you had with the "stranger" that have invited you to be a healer of wounds?

Story

Read accounts of persons who opened themselves to acts of courage and generosity and stretched their worldview. The lives of the saints would be a good starting point.

In *St. Francis and the Foolishness of God*, Marie Dennis recounts the story of St. Francis embracing a person afflicted with leprosy. She then offers this action: "Let God lead you again to the 'leper.' Let the experience be a reflective one..."



a conscious and meditative move out from the familiar to the world of hurt... Allow the experience to challenge your assumptions about the margins."

The arts

Reflect on a piece of art, listen to a piece of music, or read a poem created by an artist from a culture other than your own. Be attentive to what this feels like for you. Are there any learnings that come from your reflection?

Standing in a new place

Astronauts of many nations have experienced profound spiritual changes upon viewing the Earth from a new perspective: Space. From out in the universe, they witnessed our home, planet Earth, as fragile and wounded and beautiful, all at the same time. They experienced a newfound sense of tenderness for our planet and all who inhabit this sacred space.

Read about how this shift in seeing from a new place changed their worldview forever:

<http://homepages.wmich.edu/~korista/astronauts.html>

May our lives given over to God's justice journey continually reveal new stretch marks!

Sister Chris serves as the counselor for spiritual development for the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

You've got to be taught

by Sister Mary Ellen Merrick, IHM

It seems that recently there has been an increased concern in our country about the reality of bullying. The concern is born out of many families' experiences of irretrievable loss when a teen or young adult daughter or son has committed suicide. Sadly, these young people seem to come to a conclusion that each is "not OK, not acceptable, too different to be included," and, therefore, deserving of being a target for others' lack of understanding and acceptance.

Two nationally recognized television shows focused on this issue during the month of October. Anderson Cooper 360° spent several evenings encouraging discussion and trying to raise social awareness as to how pervasive bullying is.

Sesame Street on October 17 aired a special, addressed to its young viewers. The scenario had Big Bird being rejected and taunted by the "Good Birds Club" because he was "too tall and his feet too big." The primary leader of this club was Pigeon who gained more and more power by the silence of the other members. Even Big Bird's "friend," Blue Jay, was mute, fearing he too would be rejected or targeted if he spoke up. The message, even to three- and four-year olds, was clear.

It has been shown that children as young as three can begin to show signs of bullying. As many as 80% of American students report experiencing bullying during their school years. A 2008 Zogby poll found that 37% of Americans report bullying on the job. Chances are that most of us have been or will be involved with bullying in some way during our lives.

What is bullying? It runs along a wide continuum from spreading rumors to physical

intimidation or assault to targeting someone online, often termed cyber bullying. Direct bullying is the most obvious. This might include hitting or punching, verbal attacks, such as name calling or "teasing." Indirect bullying can be less obvious and includes saying demeaning and untrue things, spreading rumors, and ignoring or otherwise discounting another person. Cyber bullying is just as serious. Sharing inappropriate pictures of someone, posing as someone else to spread lies, or sending harassing messages are but a few examples. We know how in the recent past promising and gifted college students have jumped from bridges rather than have to face their peers after private and personal information was revealed about them as a "joke."

Although common, bullying is not a rite of passage or something that occurs as a natural part of childhood. Bullying goes beyond



In our working and living situations, bullying may be persistent, different from constructive criticism or conflict. It focuses on a person, and the recipient feels powerless to stop it. It might include being ignored, put down, left out, talked about, or humiliated. Worst of all, people who experience bullying find it just as hard to explain and stop it as it is to suffer through it. Adults, like children, may distance themselves from any responsibility in order to "fit in" with a person or a group.

normal childhood conflicts and disagreements as children develop social skills. Bullying crosses all social lines: boys and girls, black and white, gay and straight, rich or poor. Anyone may witness or experience some form of bullying. [What seems to be a fair predictor of bullying is how we feel about ourselves and relate to others.]

Many people today make clear distinctions between power and authority. Power has taken on some negative connotations due to individuals and groups who have abused it to demean and unjustly control others. Authority seems to suggest an understanding of relationship that is based on thoughtful and just exercise of that authority. It is for the good of others, not at the expense of them. If bullying is an attempt at power or influence over others, how do people determine who among them gets sacrificed to achieve this

misguided goal? It seems obvious that a bully cannot exist in a vacuum. A bully is usually surrounded by others who "want to belong or want to be associated with" the aura created by the bully, like Blue Jay in the Sesame Street story. Blue Jay knew his friend was being treated in a mean and unfair manner but remained silent. We need to begin recognizing and being clear that silence can and does collude with the unacceptable behavior, at any age, and is a significant part of the resultant hurt and pain.

Dynamics change in predictable ways when children and adults bully in groups. Mean and nasty behavior becomes more likely, harder to stop, and worse when it happens. Some characteristics associated with group bullying are: more people join a bully when that person is someone admired or looked up to; there is less personal responsibility for actions when one is part of a group; the victim may come to be seen as deserving of the abuse.

And what about adults? In our working and living situations, bullying may be persistent, different from constructive criticism or conflict. It focuses on a person, and the recipient feels powerless to stop it. It might include being ignored, put down, left out, talked about, or humiliated. Worst of all, people who experience bullying find it just as hard to explain and stop it as it is to suffer through it. Adults, like children, may distance themselves from any responsibility in order to "fit in" with a person or a group. When we witness someone being made fun of for any reason, what do we experience internally and how do we respond to what we sense? Do we recognize it but go against what we say we support and live

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A Context of Hope and Hospitality

by Margaret Gannon, IHM

I've noticed that lately advertising is much enamored with the imperative mood. Our IHM Congregation urges us to "reach out." Our Marywood University calls us to "lead on," and even MSNBC promises to help us to "lean forward." It's exhausting! Doesn't anyone want me to "chill out"? In the effort to "reach out" toward action on behalf of justice, I frankly believe that the imperative I personally need to follow is "listen in."

Recently I heard the promotion of justice, and particularly education for justice, described as "creating a context in which ethical decisions can be made." I think that is a very rich expression, and it makes me happy to see it as a meaningful mission for a lifetime.

"Creating a context in which ethical decisions can be made." I would like to suggest two essential characteristics of that context: it needs to be a context of hope, and it needs to be a context of hospitality.

So many of our sisters model for us the creating of a context of hope and hospitality! Seeing a pressing, unanswered need in the community and responding courageously and creatively is clearly a work of hope, and so many of our sisters have lived that hope. Anthony Gittins describes well the challenge they have faced, the challenge we encounter "when we come face to face with the broken reality of the world in which we live, the disillusionment of people who have tried so very hard, or the shattered dreams of others or even ourselves." For how many individuals and families have our sisters restored hope or even created it new.

The work of education for justice in which many of us are engaged also demands a context of hope and hospitality. Our

university's mission statement includes our aspiration to help students to "live responsibly in a diverse and interdependent world." I love the fact that the goal includes both knowledge and action, that growth in knowledge carries with it a responsibility to act.

It is a challenge to lead students to overcome the barriers to growth in knowledge—barriers we find also in ourselves—the barriers of misinformation, biases, distracting personal concerns, self-absorption, apathy. In my own ministry, so many of the topics I happen to teach about are disturbing—hunger, women's concerns, seemingly irreconcilable conflicts. Somehow to infuse these crises with elements of hope is vital if our students can bear to focus on them at all. Allow me to offer some concrete examples: in the midst of analyzing the challenges of world hunger, I am sure to highlight the good news—the global improvement in child survival, the microfinancing revolution spearheaded by the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, and "Plumpy'nut." (Plumpy'nut is a food that is rescuing children from near death by starvation. It is a combination of peanut paste, milk solids, sugar, and vital minerals and vitamins. It is packaged in individual foil containers and so is totally portable; it does not need heating or refrigeration or mixing. Starving children are fed several of these a day until their nutritional crisis is



Service learning experiences, carefully grounded in religious and moral principles and reflected upon in light of those principles, change students' minds and lives like nothing else.

resolved. Mothers are supplied with many packages to take home for the child. And the best thing—it tastes good, so the children will eat it.)

In another course, we study the physical, social and economic difficulties that women face in developing world regions, often a grim topic. But the students do their research papers about the several women from the developing world who have won the Nobel Peace Prize. Happily this year I can add the names of Leymah Gbowee and Ellen Johnson

Sirleaf, the heroic women who brought the criminal dictator of Liberia to justice and established a more just and humane society there. Women like these help students to understand that crushing suffering and oppression can be overcome and to hope that their lives can be similarly successful in bringing about justice and compassion.

I am sure that one of the most effective ways for students to develop a spirit of hospitality is ironically to be a guest of others, especially in unfamiliar settings in this country and in the developing world. Service learning experiences, carefully grounded in religious and moral principles and reflected upon in light of those principles, change students' minds and lives like nothing else. Receiving the hospitality of persons who readily share the little they have is a humbling and inspiring experience for anyone.

I celebrate and thank the staff members in our institutions who devote so much time and effort to provide those opportunities for students.

As I speak of "listening in," I am very much talking to myself, for I know how much I need to work on this. Isn't it the primary act of hospitality to listen openly and attentively to the other? Isn't it the first step toward "action on behalf of justice"? But the "fixer" in me often wants to act first and listen later! So my imperative has to be to get better at "listening in."

Finally, a word about "chilling out." Some years ago, we were holding a seminar on peace and the nuclear arms race. A Quaker woman was one of the panelists. As the discussion focused on the dangers of the nuclear race and our determined efforts to resist it, the woman said very peacefully, "But in the midst of all our efforts, we must not forget to celebrate the beauty of God's gift of this delightful creation." Around the same time, one of our sisters made a remark that impressed me deeply: if we do not present justice and peace efforts as based on the good news of God's unconditional love for each of us and for all of us, our efforts lack a foundation and a sustaining spirit. I take both of these remarks, the Quaker woman's and our sister's, as advice to "chill out," to rejoice, and to relax and to trust in the faithful love of God who gives meaning and effectiveness to our efforts.

So let's keep reaching out, and leading on, and leaning forward, and listening in, and chilling out, and enjoying the precious gifts of God's love.

Sister Margaret is a professor of history at Marywood University in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Listening and Healing

by Jan Corbett

My three sisters and I grew up in an atmosphere where reaching out was an everyday experience. We were blessed to have a mother who lived what she believed. Our nickname for my mom was Clara Barton because she was like the neighborhood's Red Cross. My mother was a supporter of Catholic Medical Missions. The photos in the pamphlet were the same then as they are now: children starving in Africa. When the magazine came every month we had to view the photos and Mother would say to us, "Count your blessings and be aware of what is happening in the world." If you are 8 or 9 years old and want 12 cents to go to the Saturday matinee, you think about those children and consider maybe giving up the 12 cents. What to do? What to do? You decide that it's imperative to find out what happened to Roy Rogers and Trigger when they fell off the cliff into the water in last week's serial episode. Feeling pangs of guilt, my mother says to me, "Go and enjoy the movies, you are a work in progress." After all these years I am still a work in progress. In my mom's memory I continue to support Catholic Medical Missions.

Holidays were always interesting at our home, because we never knew who was going to be there. I would say to my sister "Who is that sitting on the couch?" Her response was "I have no idea! Mom said if someone you know has nowhere to go for the holiday, bring them home." I can remember one Sunday at dinner saying to my dad, "Have you seen mom?" He said "Your mother is like a magician, here one minute, gone the next!" It always turned out that when my mother was missing she was bringing supper to the elderly neighbor, cookies for the kids next door, or visiting a

depressed neighbor. After my father died, I would frequently visit my mom after work. One day she said, "Don't take your coat off. Mary fell on the bathroom floor and can't get up. We have to help her." "Call 911," I say. "No 911. Mary doesn't want the ambulance." I said to my mom, "You are totally out of control!" Her response was "You're a nurse, aren't you?" "Yes," I say. "Then let's go!" It turned out we picked Mary up from the floor unharmed. I said to my mom on the way home, "Why do you get involved in these escapades?" She said, "I'm just being a good neighbor."

How do you grow up in an environment that is about serving others and not be transformed in spite of your own brokenness? My mother held no advanced degrees. She was a kind, compassionate and loving woman who lived what she believed. She continues to reach out to my sisters and me daily, challenging us to be good neighbors.

Nursing has been my career for 42 years, but most nurses will say it's a vocation. Health care is extremely challenging in so many ways today, but one constant remains and that is the nurse. Nurses go to work every day knowing that they make a difference in someone's life through compassionate care.

My career started as an O.R. nurse in a trauma hospital in New Jersey. Many of our patients were accident victims, many never survived their injuries. We only had a very few minutes with the patients to check charts and IDs, but when you reached out and held the patients' hands and reassured them that you and the team would keep them safe, it created an environment of trust and safety.

As a young O.R. nurse, I was called for an emergency C-section. The baby was critical and

it was evident he would not survive. He was kept in the PACU until a priest could arrive. The priest asked if there was a Catholic present. I said, "Yes, me."

He asked if I would stand in to be the godparent. The baby wrapped his little hand around my finger, was baptized and died shortly after. I went to see the parents later. We embraced and cried together. The parents sent me statues of the Sacred Heart of Mary and Jesus, which I still have. I carry many memories in my heart of patients and families who touched and healed me in the process as well.

My nursing journey eventually took me to St. Joseph's Hospital in Carbondale. I was privileged to care for the people of Carbondale and many IHM sisters who were hospitalized. The sisters who worked there and the ones I cared for were other examples of reaching out to patients, employees, and the people of Carbondale. My time and association with the sisters brought my spirituality to a higher level, reinforcing the fact that as nurses we are doing God's work. We are wounded healers who become the healing messengers of the Lord.

I decided, toward the end of my career, that I would enjoy going back to direct patient care. Currently, I am a home health nurse for Home Health Care Professionals and Hospice, in Eynon. My nine years as a home health nurse have been some of the most rewarding and challenging experiences of my career. There are many patients we have seen intermittently over



the years, and they consider us a part of their extended family. A greater number of our patients are elderly. A majority are lonely from having lost siblings, spouses and friends. They need us to listen to their stories. I listen when a patient asks, "Jan, can you heal my broken heart?" or "Will I be okay?" and "Will you be coming back again?" I listen to the sound of loneliness. Sometimes the highlight of their week is the nurse's visit. We are with them when they die, we go to their wakes and funerals, and miss them when they are gone, because they become part of our lives.

Listening becomes an important part of patient care. Patients want someone to listen to their stories. We learn from them and we become much better caregivers.

Home health has a lighter side, and a good sense of humor is an asset. Laughter is a great medicine, and having a few laughs with patients helps to brighten my day as well as theirs.

I have been blessed in so many ways, especially through the gift it has been to be a nurse. It is true we are not what we do, but we are disciples challenged to continue the work of Jesus.

"You sent them forth to proclaim the reign of God and heal the afflicted." Luke 9:2

Jan serves as a registered nurse with Home Health Care Professionals and Hospice, Eynon, PA.



When asked to write a piece on people who reach out in the parish community where I serve as pastoral associate at St. Mary's Church of the Immaculate Conception in Wilkes-Barre, I thought of the popular book *The Five People You Meet In Heaven*. In the book, the 83 year-old Eddie meets, one by one, five people who illuminate the unseen connections of his earthly life. The five parishioners that I briefly highlight in this article have really brought heaven to earth in the seen connections—reaching out—they have made to me and others in our parish community.

Ann and Charlie, two of our hospitality ministers, were attracted to our parish community by the friendliness of the people who gathered for Sunday, and now they themselves are the face and hands of hospitality at the front doors of the church. But not only at the front doors of the church, since Ann and Charlie have the knack of extending the circle of friendship by connecting people to each other in projects that mirror the Gospel call to service. Since Ann is active in Slovak affairs, she persuaded our youth group to join a local organization of Slovak ladies in several projects to the benefit of our local community.

One of these is the annual Christmas party for children—but this Christmas party is not just another Christmas party. It has an exceptional character in Ann's meticulous preparation that assures specially wrapped

gifts for each invited child, among whom are the beautiful faces of the challenged who await the arrival of Santa Claus. And there are poinsettias to take home, door prizes that everyone wins, live entertainment by a local children's choir, and a simple but hearty buffet. Other projects—for which Ann's Slovak ladies and the parish youth group received national recognition—were inspired by the "Hands Across America" campaign, including a diversity gathering with a presentation by a young Islamic Marywood student from Turkey and a veterans show that highlighted short historic speeches by local veterans and a "fashion show" of military uniforms. Ann and Charlie have assisted the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius and the Little Sisters of the Poor in promoting events that benefit the sisters, and also the IHM Sisters in their annual "Silver Circle" memberships for their retirement fund. They host a Franciscan missionary priest, welcoming him to their home and our parish whenever he visits the United States. Charlie counts the Sunday collection and Ann serves on the board of directors of our parish cemetery. Ann and Charlie are ordinary parishioners who find extraordinary ways to be a part of the reaching out of our parish community.

Rob owns a successful commercial properties enterprise which develops land and builds large facilities for business and industry and offices. His enterprise has brought new businesses and thousands of jobs to the Wyoming Valley, and this has been a huge blessing to our civic community, especially in this current situation of joblessness. But he told me recently that what brought him the greatest satisfaction in all his years of work was

his timely intervention in the recent flood. He sent heavy equipment and supplies with a crew of his workers to shore up the levee in Forty-Fort which had sprung some leaks and was under tremendous stress, and it worked. The levee held and prevented the massive flooding on the west side of the Susquehanna River. Rob is a very successful and creative person who carries his success and his wealth with a down-to-earth spirit that reflects the humble servant of the Gospel.

Reflecting on Rob's participation in our parish, including prized membership on the Finance Council, together with his wife and children, it strikes me that our parish community embraces the rich and the poor, entrepreneurs and workers, Latinos, African-Americans and Filipinos, and nationalities of amazing diversity, all united in the Word and Eucharist that makes the dismissal of the liturgy, "The Mass is ended; go in peace," a call to "reach out" and make the Mass real and recognizable by living it. As chair of our parish Human Services/Social Concerns Commission, I have seen this connection between Eucharist and Catholic Social Action become more and more the way for the church and its parishes in our contemporary society. Rob exemplifies this connection in his reaching out with jobs, jobs, jobs, as they say these days, and in his many charitable adventures that reach out to others.

Carmen Rosa is an amazing woman. Carmen is an Hispanic transplant from New Jersey married to a wonderful man from Kenya. And what a thriving transplant she is in our parish community! Despite her demanding career at Sallie Mae, she's always there: she's there

Humble Servant

as role model not only for her daughter but for the countless young women of our community; she's there as lector for Sunday Eucharist—always prepared for the proclamation of the scriptures; she's there as an assistant DRE, she's there as chair of the parish cluster for Called to Mission and Holiness: Pastoral Plan for the Diocese of Scranton, she's there to make comfortable our Latino members, she's there as a volunteer and photo-snapper at our annual parish bazaar (and her photos make it not only to the bulletin cover but also to a huge poster of faces that represents the Catholic membership of St. Mary's as "here comes everybody"). But perhaps Car-



Gifts of the Gospel

by Dolores Banick, IHM



men's best gift to our parish community is her leadership role as youth minister. She brought her involvement in several community organizations to the parish with a central insight: it's hands-on service to the poor, the homeless, the elderly, the afflicted that attracts youth to the church. Carmen's pervasive and inspiring leadership really fits the bill of what the church has recently recognized

as lay ecclesial ministers. With people like Carmen Rosa, the parish of the new millennium is in very good hands: hands that reach out.

Rita is another amazing woman who serves our parish as administrative assistant to the pastor, but whose role encompasses so many responsibilities and services that the parish community and its pastoral life and ministry could not function without her selfless enabling. Rita is an RN who owned a men's clothing store. You can see in her person how God providentially prepares people for the building up of the kingdom, when they bring their history, experience and talents to the church. Appointed administrator of the parish some twenty years ago, her office anticipated what has become standard in most parishes throughout our diocese and throughout the Catholic Church in the United States: a talented, competent, multi-tasking person who oversees the administration of the parish and its business operations so that the pastor and the

pastoral team can be about sacramental ministry and the hands-on pastoral care of the people. It's not so much the shortage of priests but rather the talent of lay persons in the administration and business affairs of a parish (with so many more diocesan/state/federal standards) that has propelled persons like Rita to an indispensable position in the parish. Rita supervises the personnel of the church, the rectory, the parish center, the early childhood learning center and the huge parish cemetery, but she does so in such a way that everyone understands and fulfills her or his job in a way that each is connected to the mission

and ministry of the parish. She not only fixes this and that in the buildings and grounds of St. Mary's Parish, but also "fixes" persons who call for information on church policies, for a listening ear when life gets burdensome, for assistance with food vouchers, for help with Christmas gifts that she buys and wraps for a family that only she knows needs the help, for hours beyond quitting time and on weekends when administrative or pastoral services demand her time and presence. And who has not noticed and complimented the environment for the liturgical seasons which Rita designs and puts into place with the help of the parish committee. If the model of a parish community is primarily a reaching out model in this era of the new evangelization, then Rita personifies that model!

Evilia and Dr. Lucia, married women of our Filipino community, must be named as parishioners who have caught the spirit of discipleship and pass it on to their children and so many others. Women of deep Christian

faith and love for the Church, they are at the forefront of the parish ministry of human services/social concerns. As coordinator of that ministry, I have been inspired by their self-forgetting devotion to others in whatever way the need comes to us. Do I need help with the sorting of hundreds of Advent giving-tree gifts and preparing the gift-bags for distribution? Call Evilia and Lucia. Do I need help with the Thanksgiving gift baskets to assure every basket has the makings of a Thanksgiving dinner? Evilia and Lucia will be there. Do I need help with Respect Life activities? Lucia will invite some parishioners to attend the march in Washington with her. Do I need help with the homeless shelter? Evilia and Lucia will cook and prepare a meal. Do I need someone to attend a diocesan workshop? Evilia and Lucia will go. Do I need someone to assist with a write-in campaign for a social issue championed by the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference? Evilia and Lucia will mobilize the Filipino community. As the pastor comments so often, every parish needs an Evilia and Lucia and many more like them to bring spirit-filled gifts to the church and with them hope for the future. Their reaching out is the sure source of this evangelical hope.

Meeting people like those briefly chronicled above convinces me that I have already met five people (and so many more) who have illuminated my earthly life and so have brought a little bit of heaven to earth.

Sister Dolores serves as a pastoral assistant at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

I AM A RECOVERING HOMOPHOB

by John Michele Southwick, IHM

My story is a long and winding one. I grew up in a Catholic family during the 1950s and 60s in a somewhat racially diverse community that was near an Army and Air Force base in New Jersey. I thought I was fairly tolerant of people with different skin color even though the African Americans lived in their own part of town and I heard the slurs said about them. I thought it was all so ridiculous that people were judged by the color of their skin. I saw inter-racial marriage early on in my life and I thought to myself, now there is a way to solve the problem among different races. I knew then that I wasn't a "racist." I thought I was pretty tolerant of people who were different from me although I had not yet addressed the issue of homosexuality.

Homosexuality in the 50s and 60s was not talked about much, and if it was, it was hushed and everyone acted as if homosexuals were crazy—marching in the streets, dressed up, and screaming about silly ideas. The Catholic Church, I understood, thought that if a person was gay, he was going to hell. That is how I developed my attitude about homosexuality—not very informed, positive, or life affirming.

It wasn't until I started working at a university that my attitude began to change. For the first time I met students who told me they were gay. These were wonderful young people who were solid citizens, studying to be leaders, and volunteering their time to help those in need. They were mature young adults as well as some staff members and faculty who had lived for years with the knowledge of their homosexuality and they were struggling with their faith and beliefs about

God and God's love for them. I met students who were struggling with their sexuality and not knowing if they were gay, and not wanting to be gay because of the stigma and the guilt and the hatred that accompanied the label. These people were in pain and I desired to reach out to them, but I did not know how. I didn't even know what I thought about homosexuality, much less what I should be saying to them. So I started to read and study everything on the topic that I could get my hands on. I studied and I listened, and I studied and I listened.

As I was doing all of this I found that the American Psychological Association was saying that it no longer considered homosexuality as a mental disorder. Scientists and researchers were saying a person is born homosexual and does not choose it. And the Catholic Church was beginning to acknowledge that homosexual orientation is not a choice.

In 1997 the American Catholic Bishops issued a letter to parents and family of homosexual children titled, "Always Our Children" and asked them to see the gift that their children are in the eyes of God. The bishops wrote that homosexuality is something that is discovered and not chosen. "Homosexuality cannot be considered sinful," the letter states. With this information, I now knew how to reach out to those with whom I ministered and worked.

Along with other staff members from the university, I sat down and wrote a proposal to the vice president for Student Life, the president of the university, and the board of trustees to begin an Ally Program for GLBT students as well as an educational

program for the campus community on issues related to homosexual persons. The proposal was accepted with the condition that it be sent to the local bishop. It was and he agreed—as long as the official Church teaching on the subject is presented—which it is.

The program has evolved and grown over the past fifteen years, as have I. The campus has become a place of greater acceptance and respect of homosexual persons—and all persons that make up our campus community.

Before concluding, I wish to share here the Riddle Scale, developed by psychologist Dorothy Riddle. It may help to measure the degree to which a person is or is not homophobic. This tool is used in the educational component of the program and helps participants identify their current attitudes and beliefs.

▼ **Repulsion:** Homosexuality is seen as a "crime against nature." Gays/lesbians are considered sick, crazy, immoral, sinful, wicked, or any other adjective that happens to satisfy the speaker. Any action is justified to change them: prison, hospitalization, behavior therapy, electroshock therapy, among many others.

▼ **Pity:** Represents heterosexual chauvinism. Heterosexuality is considered more mature and certainly to be preferred. It is believed that any possibility of "becoming straight" should be reinforced, and those who seem to be born "that way" should be pitied as less fortunate ("the poor dears").

▼ **Tolerance:** Homosexuality is viewed as a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most people "grow out of." Thus, lesbians/gays are less mature



THE PROGRAM HAS EVOLVED AND GROWN OVER THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS, AS HAVE I. THE CAMPUS HAS BECOME A PLACE OF GREATER ACCEPTANCE AND RESPECT OF HOMOSEXUAL PERSONS—AND ALL PERSONS THAT MAKE UP OUR CAMPUS COMMUNITY.

than "straights" and should be treated with the protectiveness and indulgence one uses with children who are still maturing. It is believed that lesbians/gays should not be given positions of authority because they are still working through their adolescent behavior.

▼ **Acceptance:** Still implies that there is something to accept; the existing climate of discrimination is ignored. Characterized by such statements as "You're not lesbian to me, you're a person!" or "What you do in bed is your own business." or "That's fine with me as long as you don't flaunt it!"

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Called to Serve

by Teresa Osborne

Like many of you, my parents provided their children with tremendous gifts. Most significantly among them are gifts of life and of faith. My parents chose to raise their children to believe in God. Growing up, my five siblings and I were nurtured by parents who instilled in each of us a strong Catholic faith-base, a solid work ethic and an accompanying moral compass that would guide each of us for a lifetime. Like many of you, I grew up with siblings and cousins who were ready-made playmates and who taught us very valuable lessons, like how to share, how to say you're sorry, how to hold hands when you crossed the street, how to be a good loser and how to play fair—lessons that remain with you for a lifetime. Like many of you, I grew up in a small community, where friendships were cultivated and relationships were built that prepared me for adulthood, and where the lessons of life emerged from our neighborhood, school and parish-life experiences. Such experiences were often rooted in celebrations, such as births, baptisms, first communions, little league championships, graduations, weddings, and reunions. Such experiences also exposed us to losses, such as the loss of a game, a friend moving out of the neighborhood, the loss of a job or the loss associated with the death of a pet or the passing away of a friend, neighbor, sibling or parent. Such events of life provide opportunities for us to celebrate with friends and family in times of joy while also supporting each other in times of sorrow.

Regardless of exactly how we got here, I am confident that our paths of life have provided each of us with experiences which have taught us that life sometimes takes an unexpected turn, and our plans are suddenly

altered. During such times, we may struggle to understand God's will in our lives. However, as Christians during such times, despite the challenge being faced, we pray for strength and courage to endure as we follow the path God has laid for us. As Christians we also know that we do not travel this path alone. Like so many other parents, my parents also transmitted their faith to my siblings and me by living it. In doing so, our parents served as our first true role models. Because of their faith and their example, my siblings and I were also exposed to the classic Christian model of how to love and serve others.

This particular model has been shared with us repeatedly. It is one that His Excellency, Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L., Bishop of Scranton, shared with the 350,000 northeastern and north central Pennsylvania Catholics who comprise the Diocese of Scranton when he released his "Pastoral Vision for the Diocese." This perfect model of "service to others" is found



Serving others demands that we "reach out" and share with our brothers and sisters the very best we have in body, mind, and soul. By reaching out, we share the gifts we have been given, we give hope to others, and we embrace the example of Jesus: to serve our brothers and sisters—our neighbors—in their need.

in the example shared when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The example is proclaimed every Holy Thursday: when hours before his own death, Jesus shared a meal with those closest to him, and following the meal, Jesus picked up a towel, tied it around his waist, took a pitcher of water and a basin and bent down to wash the feet of his disciples. After washing their feet, Jesus reclined at table once more and said to his disciples: "Do you understand what I just did for you? You address me as 'Teacher' and 'Lord' and fittingly enough, for that is what I am. But if I washed your feet—I who am Teacher and Lord—then you must wash each others' feet. What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done, so you must do" (John 13:12-15). In the "washing of the feet," Jesus assumed the role typically reserved for a slave or a servant; and through this selfless act, our call to service was forever rooted in one of Jesus' final gestures of love

and ministry to his disciples. This example models for us that as Jesus served us, we must also serve our brothers and sisters. Jesus' words and actions provide for us the basic building block of what it means to lead with a servant's heart. We are called to service when we take up Jesus' towel of servant-hood in order to meet the needs of others. The opportunity "to serve" and "to do" as Jesus did is found in the simplicity of life. We "serve" when we treat others with dignity and respect and when we seek, tend to, and care for their basic human needs: food, clothing, and shelter. Through Jesus' example, we are called to commit ourselves to serving others with integrity, humility and sincerity. We are called to action in order to comfort, to guide, to love, to listen, to reassure, to advocate, to trust, to serve.

Through God's grace, opportunities to serve others are constantly revealed to us. We have only to respond to his invitation. Serving others is a spiritual practice and a point of faith, calling each of us to act respectfully and compassionately toward our families, our neighborhoods, and our communities. Serving others demands that we "reach out" and share with our brothers and sisters the very best we have in body, mind, and soul. By reaching out, we share the gifts we have been given, we give hope to others, and we embrace the example of Jesus: to serve our brothers and sisters—our neighbors—in their need.

Teresa Osborne, a graduate of Marywood University, has served as the Director of Human Services for Lackawanna County and currently serves as Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer for the Diocese of Scranton.

REACHING OUT: GROUND ZERO TO THE SOLDIERS PROJECT PENNSYLVANIA

by Nancy DeCesare, IHM

This year marks the tenth anniversary of “9/11”, 2001. Although it was several days after 9/11 when I walked onto the Staten Island Ferry as a member of the mental health team for the American Red Cross, it seems like only yesterday. Accompanied by two soldiers carrying massive guns, I began my first trip to ground zero. I joined other Red Cross volunteers on a nearly empty ferry boat that usually held thousands of people traveling to and from Manhattan. On this day, there were only Red Cross volunteers and the soldiers on board for security.

Once we landed in Manhattan, I made my way to ground zero, walking behind military personnel headed to Battery Park. I remember thinking that this must be a dream and that any minute my alarm would sound and protect me from the mounds of grey ash, screaming sirens, and the overwhelming smells coming from what used to be lower Manhattan and the twin towers. By my awakening I would be brought back to that which was familiar to me. We all know that that reality never came, as we all watched in horror as the towers continued to burn, survivors failed to be found, and one month later a nation took itself to war.

Much has changed since the towers fell. Since October of 2001 we’ve deployed two million U.S. troops to fight in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF: Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF: Iraq). This massive deployment has required the largest deployment in the history of our country of an all-volunteer force with many troops surviving experiences that would have led to death in prior wars (Regan, 2004 & Warden, 2006). The latest research tells us

that, although we have a higher rate of survivors, many soldiers are experiencing casualties of a different kind, the kind that are often invisible to most of us.

These wounds come in the form of mental health conditions and cognitive impairments, often the result of improvised explosive devices (IEDS), multiple deployments, and the unending strain and anxiety of being on the front lines. Soldiers of these two conflicts return with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, major depression, and probable Traumatic Brain Injury, which often goes untreated and undetected.

I would imagine that these two major events in the past decade have been politically, financially and emotionally complicated for many of us. Now, ten years later, we are faced with yet another major public tragedy: many soldiers, most in their twenties and thirties returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan with major mental health conditions and life altering disabilities. This current crisis requires specific actions on all our parts including a process for providing mental health care. The Soldiers Project is one such effort.

In 2004, psychiatrist Judith T. Broder, M.D. attended a theatre performance of *The Sand Storm: Stories from the Front*, a series of ten monologues describing the Iraq War from the perspective of active duty Marines. The play was written by Sean Huze, himself an active duty Marine at the time. The Sand Storm dramatically illustrates the horror of war and the trauma it brings to the young men and women who carry the burden. After seeing the play, Dr. Broder felt a professional obligation to help our troops and their families manage the myriad war-related mental health issues they often face alone and in silence. Dr. Broder started The Soldiers Project, paid for a telephone line, created a Web site and gathered together a group of volunteer mental health providers like myself (<http://www.thesoldiersproject.org>).

Now nearly eight years later, The Soldiers Project has over one-thousand clinical volunteers located in Southern California, Sacramento, Seattle, Chicago, Boston, Atlanta, New York City, and Long Island with the newest branch developed in Pennsylvania eight months ago.

Our licensed mental health professionals provide free of charge counseling to veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and their loved ones. This includes boyfriends, girlfriends, spouses, children, parents, and grandparents. They see individuals, couples, children, and families for as long as it takes with no arbitrary limit to the number of sessions provided. Nationally, The Soldiers Project has provided counseling services to over 10,000 veterans and their loved ones since 2007.

The Soldiers Project Pennsylvania

My own connection to The Soldiers Project came in the fall of 2010. I was listening to National Public Radio on my way to teach my courses at Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia. On this particular day I was moved by the interview of an Iraq veteran’s wife, a mother of three. Her husband had recently been redeployed for the third time. She shared a detailed account of her psychological and physical struggles as a now single mother, describing for the interviewer her inability to sleep or eat and her major fear that her husband would be killed. To help her cope, she was provided confidential psychological counseling free of charge in the private office of a clinician from The Soldiers Project.

Hearing her story, I was motivated to investigate if these same services were available in our own state for the over 70,000 men and women who have been deployed and redeployed to Iraq and Afghanistan (Defense Department, 2010). My finding was that we did not have a branch of The Soldiers Project for those veterans from the Common-



*Sister Nancy and Congresswoman Allyson Schwartz
at a veterans resources fair.*

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wealth. As a part of my sabbatical work and with an outpouring of support and commitment from those at Chestnut Hill College, I developed The Soldiers Project for the state of Pennsylvania.

A work in progress, The Soldiers Project Pennsylvania has over forty clinical volunteers from throughout the Commonwealth who are licensed, trained, and committed to the work of helping veterans come “All the Way Home.” The first cohort of clinical volunteers just completed trainings in Military Culture, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, Veteran Homelessness, Suicide, and Military Sexual Assault. A second cohort will begin their intensive trainings this coming fall. All trainings are held at Chestnut Hill College for those in the area, while those at a distance have access to trainings online. All trainings are free of charge and clinicians receive continuing education credits from the college.

In addition to the training of clinical volunteers and through the support of Chestnut Hill College, volunteers from The Soldiers Project Pennsylvania, provide community outreach to military bases like the Willow Grove Air Force Base and Fort Indiantown Gap, with the desire to join forces in meeting the mental health needs of veterans and their loved ones. In addition, volunteers connect to college and university student veteran programs, the Wounded Warrior Program and with national, state, and local outreach programs like local VA hospitals, PA-Cares, Family Assistance Center Specialists, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and a host of other service providers in order to meet the ever growing needs of veterans and those they love.

As we anticipate the hopeful return of our troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, we must search for ways to provide care to the 45,000 physically disabled veterans including those that are traumatically brain injured for life and care for the 90,000 soldiers currently diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Defense Department, 2010). As we do so, it goes without saying that the mission of The Soldiers Project Pennsylvania has only just begun. If you know of veterans and their loved ones who could benefit from this service, contact us at 215-242-7736 or for help go to <http://www.thesoldiersprojectpa.org>

As we go forward, we must step up our efforts to provide physical, psychological, emotional and, where desired, spiritual support to the men and women who have given us so much. To me it is a matter of justice that we provide outreach to our veterans who return home carrying the memories of colossally horrific situations and, more often than not, life-changing disabilities and memories. Reaching out to them and their loved ones should rank among our highest priorities as Americans.

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Sister Nancy DeCesare is an associate professor of human services at Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia, PA. She is the director of The Soldiers Project Pennsylvania.

Changed by the new life we seek - continued from page 3



Sister Cecilia Dwyer, OSB, presiding at the reception of Sisters Vicki Ix and Veronica Joyner into the novitiate

tions. Every week a family takes home our vocation cross and prays for vocations during that week. They are sent off with a blessing by the assembly at the end of Mass. Every time we have a rite of passage into formation, we announce it to the assembly and thank them for their prayers.

I believe that there is a certain issue of capacity that is essential to the whole process of inviting women to join a religious community. The capacity for monastic life has nothing to do with age. It has everything to do with personality and grace and sheer willpower to embrace community living. I feel that this capacity is the most important factor in the equation of a religious vocation. There are no prodigies in monastic life!

For its part, the community has to have a generative capacity to create within its very heart a place for the newcomer and the ability and willingness to pass on the charism to a new generation.

The vocation call is an invitation to a lifetime of formation. At the heart of it, the vocation discernment process is about relationships. Every individual wants to be nourished and cherished. Sister Vicki cultivates the initial relationship with a seeker. She then introduces her to the community where community relationships take over. In Sister Vicki's own words “I was simply called to listen with the ear of my heart, to companion each candidate over a period of months—sometimes years—to a place of relative security, and to nurture the seed of God's call over time until it was ready for the harvest.” In his Holy Rule Saint Benedict tells us that monastic life is the “School of the Lord's service.” In all schools students learn and work together to reach their goals. There are daily choices to be made to keep our feet on the path that Saint Benedict describes as “narrow at the onset.” Our sisters and the beautiful women who join us journey together finding the love of God in one another.

Inviting new membership is a necessity for the continued viability of any religious community. Because of this, we get anxious about our “numbers.” But really, it's all in God's plan, in God's hands. Each community's charism, or particular reason for being, is not just for the community but is gift to the whole Church and beyond. We have confidence in God's continued providence as we eagerly engage our future.

Sister Cecilia Dwyer, O.S.B., serves as the prioress at Saint Benedict Monastery, Bristow, Virginia.

Walk closely by our side until that day **In Memoriam** *when we shall meet again.*



M. Coleman Nee, IHM
November 14, 1917
July 9, 2011
by Joan Paskert, IHM

It was as a young girl attending Marywood Seminary that I first met Sister Coleman. Sister taught Latin, algebra and geometry. The Latin I was able to handle, but the math, at least in my mind, was beyond my grasp. Sister always encouraged me though, and we would have many “math encounters.” Sister was the “BEST” as a teacher, sincerely dedicated to that ministry, humble, and non-assuming, never thinking of her talents as being special. As the years moved on, we kept in contact in various ways and lo and behold, I eventually found myself a faculty member at Marywood, living in Regina Hall with none other than Sister Coleman—then president of Marywood College. Those were wonderful days, and what was so apparent was sister’s great love for community and how she treasured those times. In spite of a day that might have been filled with challenging issues that only the president could handle, sister never missed an opportunity for recreation and chatter to share a fun story, a game of cards, to teach a crochet stitch, or use her dry Irish wit to entertain us in community.

From 1992-2004 sister returned to her beloved teaching. As her health began to fail she turned to prayer ministry, placing all her trust in the Lord whom she had so many years ago embraced. As sister lived her last days at Our Lady of Peace Residence, she suffered the declines associated with aging. She never complained, enduring and accepting all with grace and silence.

Rest in peace, dear sister.



M. Benedicta Berendes, IHM
November 28, 1927
October 2, 2011
by Ann Berendes, IHM

Hanging on the door of my sister’s room in Queen of Peace Community was a cross simply decorated with child-like flowers. In the center of the cross, written in a light yellow circle was a quote from Erma Bombeck: “When I stand before God at the end of my life I would hope that I would have not a single bit of talent left and could say, ‘I used everything you gave me.’” As often as I had visited my sister in that room I never took time to read it until I had to take it down. Now it is hanging on my door as a reminder to myself of the challenge that waits for me.

Erma Bombeck must have known my sister because these words could not have been a more fitting expression of her qualities. Benedicta was an accomplished musician, organist, artist, especially in calligraphy, and in arranging and coordinating, and a tremendous correspondent. She loved to garden and raise her flowers. She kept in close contact with family and friends. She never missed a birthday, anniversary, or any special event in our family or among her close friends without a card or phone call.

Her loyalty to family and friends was quite obvious at her wake and funeral by the numbers who came. People who knew her and have settled elsewhere have corresponded with me expressing gratitude and sincere accolades for her.

She was always interested in our young sisters and anticipated the struggles of the newly arrived, visiting sisters from other cultures or convents and sincerely reached out to them to make them feel comfortable and welcome.

All I can say is that she always looked out for me and I pray that she is still doing that from her heavenly organ bench on high. I only hope that I can use most of my talents before I stand before the Lord. As one of our cousins said, “I miss her already.”

Eternal rest, my dear sister.



Elizabeth Sciulli, IHM
February 20, 1929
October 7, 2011
by Janice Barry, IHM

One of the things that people have often said about Sister Elizabeth Sciulli is that she enjoyed life. As a young person attending St. Rosalia School, she could always be found in the midst of whatever was happening, especially if it involved sports or extracurricular activities. Coming from a family involved in the Church and School, it was always a part of her nature to be a vibrant asset to the parish.

Betty entered the IHM Community shortly after High School. She and Sister Mary Ruth Bailey came to visit Marywood and soon after the visit they both entered the community. After her profession, Betty began teaching in various schools and was instrumental in developing the minds of many young people. She was also involved in Catechetical work bringing the knowledge and love of God to many young minds. She returned to Pittsburgh for part of her ministry. Her family has many fond memories of those years in her home town.

Toward the end of her life Betty spent a long time waiting for God to take her home. At this time of the year, as we all await the coming of the Savior on Christmas, let us pray, that we may all be mindful of God’s presence in our lives. May Betty who has experienced God’s presence pray for us.



M. Carol Baden, IHM
April 22, 1920
October 27, 2011
by Martin de Porres McHale, IHM

The gold ring received by a sister at First Profession is a “public sign of God’s fidelity to her and her total dedication to Jesus Christ and his mission.” (Constitutions p. 20). Sister Carol’s life from the time she entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1935, to the time of her death on October 27, 2011, was dedicated to Christ and to his mission.

To have known Sister Carol was to know a person who was an outstanding woman religious, an excellent teacher, a trusted confidant, and a wonderful friend. Her life on earth was spent in making others feel special.

Sister Carol’s days in the classroom were her crowning glory. Not only did she teach students each day from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., she also taught piano lessons each afternoon until 5:00 p.m. To her, teaching was a labor of love—she never counted the cost.

Sister’s vitality showed itself in her every undertaking whether it was ministry, life in the convent, reaching out to students, family and friends, or concern for the marginalized. She was a selfless person. One with a great sense of humor, Sister Carol always had a little anecdote to share or a joke to tell.

A southerner at heart, Sister was very proud of her lineage. She was related to the Carrolls of Carrollton, Maryland, and to the first bishop of the United States, Archbishop John Carroll. In fact, it was the name “Carroll” she took for her religious name. She retained that name for a short time when the Bishop of Scranton advised that it be changed from the family name of “Carroll” to “Carol.”

Sister Carol’s funeral Mass was celebrated by Father John J. Kilpatrick whose homily included memories of Sister Carol at Chapel School during the years when he served as an assistant at Cathedral Parish. Also in attendance were many sisters, her beloved family, including her dear sister-in-law, Peggy, and other friends.

May Sister Carol now enjoy the eternal reward she so richly deserves!

IHM Heartworks Online

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www.sistersofihm.org

I am a recovering homophobe - continued from page 5

▼ Support: People at this level may be uncomfortable themselves, but they are aware of the homophobic climate and the irrational unfairness and work to safeguard the rights of lesbians and gays.

▼ Admiration: It is acknowledged that being lesbian/gay in our society takes strength. People at this level are willing to truly examine their homophobic attitudes, values, and behaviors.

▼ Appreciation: The diversity of people is considered valuable and lesbians/gays are seen as a valid part of that diversity. People on this level are willing to combat homophobia in themselves and others.

▼ Nurturance: Assumes that gay/lesbian people are indispensable in our society. People on this level view lesbians/gays with genuine affection and delight, and are willing to be their allies and advocates.

Over the years of reaching out to students, staff, and faculty on campus, I recognize how much I treasure the gay men and lesbians who have touched my life. Each new day in this ministry I am reminded of the teachings of Jesus: "Stop judging, that you may not be judged." "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you." "If God so loved us, we also must love one another."

I hope I have the courage to continue to face my own bias and prejudices and in so doing to help create a more peaceful world. My prayer for you, the readers of *Journey*, is that you will do the same.

Source: The Riddle scale is a psychometric scale that measures the degree to which a person is or is not homophobic. The scale is used in tolerance education. It is named after its creator, psychologist, Dorothy Riddle.

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by? Do we say anything to signal that at least one person is uncomfortable with what is happening?

Let's take a quick look at "teasing." Humor, if healthy, is never offered at the expense of another. All of us have quirks, our differences that can make us either interesting to know or can be used as someone else's weapon. Teasing can be fun, if all are enjoying it or it can be a "not so subtle way" of putting another down. In order to use teasing or other forms of humor in an acceptable way, it is important to reflect on the possibility that the person may feel more shame than anything else but attempt to act like all is well. When it tends toward sarcasm or "playful" put downs, it may be wise to avoid using it at all.

Most of the focus recently has been directed at our children, but let's not lose sight of the roles adults play in children's lives. I recall a show song from the 1949 Broadway musical *South Pacific* by Rodgers and Hammerstein that told of a harsh reality. The tune says:

*You've got to be taught
 To hate and fear
 You've got to be taught
 From year to year
 It's got to be drummed
 In your dear little ear
 You've got to be carefully taught.*

*You've got to be taught
 To be afraid*

*Of people whose eyes
 Are oddly made
 And people whose skin
 Is a different shade
 You've got to be carefully taught*

*You've got to be taught
 Before it's too late
 Before you are 6 or 7 or 8
 To hate all the people
 Your relatives hate
 You've got to be carefully taught*

The song addressed the racism that was part of the story and highlighted how adults pass on less-than-open attitudes about other people. Our children mirror what they see us doing and repeat what they hear us say. Does our behavior match our words or do we harbor a shadow side where something like bullying lurks? To stop and consider what it would be like to be on the receiving end of my comments may help. Could I ever imagine the tag of "Bully" or "Supporter of a Bully" being written under my picture?

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