



Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, PA Vol. 40, No. 1 Spring 2022





# Balance and Peace

by Ellen Maroney, IHM

*Teach me how to trust my heart, my mind,  
my intuition, my inner knowing,  
the senses of my body, the blessings of my  
spirit.*

*Teach me to trust these things  
so that I may enter my sacred space  
and love beyond my fear  
and thus, walk in balance with the passing  
of each glorious sun.*

Lakota Prayer

This beautiful prayer of the Lakota Indians fills me with a much-needed sense of balance and peace as the horrific images from the Russian invasion of Ukraine bombard our world news. The unimaginable has become a terrifying reality and I have struggled to remain hopeful between some moments of deep emotion and inspiration and other moments of profound sadness and fear. This war comes on the heels of a two-year global pandemic that has overwhelmed us all. In his homily this past January 1<sup>st</sup>, Pope Francis noted this disturbing reality: “We are still living in uncertain and difficult times due to the pandemic. Many are frightened about the future and burdened by social problems, danger stemming from the ecological crisis, injustices, and by global economic imbalances.”<sup>1</sup>

These concerns and losses that burden an already stressful society have similarly impacted our individual lives. The sense of loss on multiple societal and personal levels makes it difficult to provide the space for, or engage in, creative, hope-filled possibilities for the new to emerge. It is timely, then, that this issue of *Journey* focuses on some topics related to the theme of emotional wellness that may provide insights to help us better navigate these times.

“Happiness is not a matter of intensity but of balance and order and rhythm and harmony,” wrote Thomas Merton. Most people would agree that creating and maintaining a balance in whatever we do in life is essential, though most would also agree that this is not always easy. Circumstances, the hectic pace, crowded schedules – all contribute to a loss of connection and even purpose. One of our IHM Congregation’s core values is Wholeness – integrating a rhythm of life that engages and nurtures body, mind, and spirit so as to live life fully. Such a holistic approach recognizes that our well-being does not only rely on maintaining our physical health but also paying attention to what’s going on in our interior self: our emotions, thoughts, beliefs. In this way we are better able to understand ourselves and be a more authentic presence in the world.

Just as our physical and intellectual well-being require effort and practice, so too does our emotional wellness. It is said that we most often discover our true selves only through another’s eyes. Our relationships with others, with all creation, with God are fundamental to our own personal development and likewise that of others. Writer Margaret Wheatley explains: “When we seek for connection, we restore the world to wholeness. Our seemingly separate lives become meaningful as we discover how truly necessary we are to each other.”<sup>2</sup>

This is the message Jesus embodied in his personal interactions with those who came to him seeking to be healed (to be made whole) – the blind, the lame, the ill, the lost. His brief encounter with each of them left them not only cured of their physical ailment but also transformed interiorly by Jesus’ overwhelming love and compassion: “Your faith has made you well (whole).” They were able to see themselves in the light of that love and compassion which moved them to the inner transformation so essential for growth.

The Paschal Mystery reminds us that living, dying, and rising are all part of our life experience. We learn from Jesus that new life can come from death, that we can find meaning in tough times, that there really is light in the darkness. The season of Lent calls us to more intentionally seek to clear our own minds, hearts, and souls from all that keeps us from seeing God’s presence in our daily lives and prevents us from being at peace with ourselves, one another, and all creation. Our faith in the God of love and compassion guides us on our life-long journey of conversion and healing that will make us whole.

“You will find life by giving life, hope by giving hope, love by giving love.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, St. Peter’s Square, January 1, 2022: <https://tinyurl.com/ycxcyzan>

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Wheatley. <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/38957.html>

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis. Apostolic Letter To All Consecrated People, 2014: <https://tinyurl.com/3dk2trvb>

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Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, Pennsylvania

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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## A Peace and Justice Perspective

# Wound Care

by Chris Koellhoffer, IHM

Some time ago, I heard from a friend who survived an incident that could easily have ended in her death by drowning. Grateful to be alive, she shared her story with me, emphasizing one detail that had surprised her.

"I had always thought that drowning victims screamed and yelled and thrashed their arms violently," she said. "But when I was drowning, I could do none of those things. My arms and legs struggled to simply keep me afloat. I was totally silent—not even a whisper of a voice—because every bit of breath, every last ounce of energy was engaged in only one thing: keeping my head above water. I couldn't speak or scream or call for help. I could barely breathe. I had no voice, so my overwhelming fear was that no one would hear me."

Thank God that in her case, someone did. Thank God there are those who can hear what is unsaid. Who can notice what's underneath silence. Who can intuit overwhelming fear or paralyzing terror or profound sadness. Who can listen beyond the rote responses we sometimes give to camouflage our actual state of mind or body.

I have sometimes heard people who suffer from depression or anxiety describe the onset or progression of their illness in words similar to the ones my friend used to remember her near drowning. Every breath, every last ounce of energy, is directed to keeping one's head above water, desperately trying to prevent one's life from slipping below the surface and being swept away by dark currents.

With the memory of my friend's experience fresh in my mind, I was primed to notice one of the side stories about the Jesuit Rutilio Grande, who was beatified on January 22, 2022. As a result of his passionate work for justice, raising the consciousness of the poor and boldly advocating for land reform in El Salvador, he was gunned down by a death squad in 1977.

That is the single-paragraph-greatly-condensed-version of Father Grande's story.

But in reflecting on the connections between emotional wellness and the work of justice and peace, I'd like to highlight a little-known aspect of Grande's life that speaks loudly to us. Cameron Bellm writes that, "Father Grande's work was possible because of the care and treatment he received for his mental health issues."

While he was teaching at a Jesuit school in Panama, Grande was overwhelmed by the stress of his workload. Admitted to a clinic, he was diagnosed with catatonic schizophrenia, received treatment, and recovered. Those sparse words are not the end of the story. Notice the aftercare that Grande received from his Jesuit community in support of his emotional wellness. The community took his mental health needs into consideration in future assignments. They offered him extra time to complete his formation program. They gave him access to the kitchen whenever he wanted so that he could regain his physical strength, and they delighted in his recovery. In their care for him, observes Bellm, the Jesuit community "beautifully embodied the Ignatian principle of *cura personalis*, care for the whole person," working to meet Rutilio Grande's mental, physical, and spiritual needs while respecting his dignity.

A second crisis, shortly before Grande's ordination, occurred as he was tormented by scrupulosity. Reassured by his superiors, Grande gradually came to see and accept his mental health issues as his own personal cross. He was able to live with his fragile condition, trust in God, and return to his pastoral work. Ultimately, he was able to give his life for his people.

This leads us to wonder: what might have happened to this holy man if his suffering had gone unnoticed, if he had been left without treatment and the care and support of a community intent on his well-being? What powerful, passionate witness might our church and our world have been deprived of if Grande had not been offered a path to wholeness? If instead he had



been overwhelmed by his mental illness and found himself unable to grow into the wounded healer Henri Nouwen describes?

"Making one's own wounds a source of healing does not call for a sharing of superficial personal pains but for a constant willingness to see one's own pain and suffering as rising from the depth of the human condition which all share."

In our work for a more just and inclusive world, may we listen with the ear of the Holy One so that we may truly hear the cries of our world. May we grow together into a community that is able to name our shared brokenness, honor our collective longing for healing, and do whatever is needed to claim the wholeness the Holy One desires for each of us.

<sup>1</sup> "Father Rutilio Grande: the (future) patron saint of breaking mental health stigma?", Cameron Bellm, *America, The Jesuit Review*, January 19, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *The Wounded Healer*, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Doubleday, 1979, p. 88

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# The Price of Hiding

by Paulette Day

When I was first asked to write a piece on emotional wellness with the topic being, “The Price of Hiding”, I had all sorts of ideas but first maybe we should define what “hiding” really means. Merriam-Webster says: a) to put out of sight; b) to conceal for shelter or protection; c) to keep secret or hide the truth and d) to turn away in shame or anger. Powerful words in that definition. Let’s look at some of those in the context of our topic. For instance, putting oneself out of sight, is akin to becoming invisible. Do those who chose to stay hidden do so to keep a secret or hide their truths? Do we hide for shelter or protection from something we feel shameful or angry about or do we hide because we seek safety? Can it be all those things and what are the costs to us if we stay hidden?

Often those in hiding suffer from:

- Not being heard and understood
- Not feeling affirmed
- Not feeling blessed
- Not believing in the possibility of an intimate relationship
- Not feeling safe
- Not feeling they are chosen
- Not being included

These are pretty costly prices to pay in our lives considering our needs as social beings that require a truthful connection to others in order to function with any sense of emotional health. However, sometimes the idea that revealing our true self makes us so uncomfortable and fearful that we feel we must conceal ourselves for the purpose of protection due to the anger and shame that we feel about who we are.

In these times of pandemic, we have all been hiding, in this case, behind masks, more so for our safety and health and the safety and health of others. The masks we have chosen have been assortments of cloth, surgical, gaiters, scarves, KN95 and N95 and they all have varying degrees of protection. In this case, we are well served to have a good protective mask. There are, however, masks that some of us wear every day in an effort to hide ourselves. Whether we are hiding from ourselves or someone else or everyone, there is always a price to pay based on the strength of the emotional mask we choose.

There are numerous reasons why someone would like to remain hidden but it all boils down to fear. Now fear is a strange animal: it has its uses especially as far as self-preservation is concerned. It too comes in all types of forms (shame, anger, etc.) just as our facemasks do. Fear is one of our base responses to dangers

that would threaten our survival. We are actually born with neural wiring to be fearful of certain things, like snakes and the edge of cliffs. Surprisingly, our culture and where we live in the world may also play a part in which types of things are wired into our fear response. All the rest is pure conditioning, learned responses and reactions to cues in our environment that we have learned, some for good reason and many others are the result of societal rules and prejudices.

In addition to a survival instinct, we are also hard wired for connection or attachment to others, as we are social beings. In order for us to connect to others we need safety as well. So, safety always plays a key role in our emotional wellness.

Who we are, who we think we are, how we identify ourselves to our world and how we interact with our world are all factors in our choice to hide or come forward based on those aforementioned fear factors. Survival and connection being the ultimate hard-wired sources of our fears and pleasures make it not so surprising that there actually can be safety in hiding.

## When hiding is safety (for the short term).

One can almost argue that not being true to our real nature is somehow a denial of one’s self emotionally and mentally, but there are times when the act of hiding is all about self-preservation. So we don’t knock down a hornet’s nest when we are allergic to bee stings. As previously mentioned, we are all born with an innate sense of danger that mostly involves keeping us alive. Pretty much all living things have that, or else. So the price of hiding must be paired with the cost and benefits of coming out. Given your own cost/benefit analysis, I cannot tell you that staying hidden from your true self will hurt you, but eventually it will take a toll. It’s like eating a really bad diet; it’s not going to hurt you tomorrow or maybe not for 20-30 years but it will come at you sooner or later. In this case, depression, anxiety, regret, loss of relationships and other similar things are likely to happen.

## Emotional wellness can help us come out of hiding.

Emotional wellness is an intimate play between our feelings and thoughts, the reality of where we are, cognitively and emotionally, at any given time and our sense of safety. Learning to be emotionally healthy is a small price to



pay in order to move out of hiding. It is often my experience that those in hiding have strong negative beliefs about themselves and tend to believe what they think others think of them.

Coming out of hiding is a process that encompasses aspects of:

- Being aware and accepting of oneself
- Seeking information and reaching out to similar others, such as joining support groups
- Disclosure to others (an often-scary proposition) such as family, friends/peers, therapists and others (coworkers/employers). Certainly, disclosures of any type need to be balanced with aspects of safety and perceived consequences
- Integration of one’s self with the rest of the world

So, while there is no doubt that hiding has a price, that price is contingent on the individual in many ways. Just as every snowflake is different so are the differences and challenges for anyone stuck in hiding. The consequences of this range from physiological to psychological, likely both. Hiding serves a purpose but only in the short term. Growth, through learning how to be emotionally well, will allow one to transcend the boundaries of concealment, learn to manage the negative self-states of shame, anger and fear and allow one to feel safe and connected with their world.

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# Spirit of Ubuntu:

## A Measure of Our World's Emotional Wellness

*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu — I am who I am because we are who we are. -Zulu phrase*

*by Mary Elaine Anderson, IHM*



*I believe that the situation at our US-Mexico border is an invitation to put into practice our spirit of ubuntu and give witness to the emotional wellness of our society. It takes great courage and deep faith for families to leave their homes and loved ones to cross the border (wall, river or desert).*

“Ubuntu” is an African concept based on the Zulu phrase above and can be interpreted in this way: Who I am is deeply connected to who you are. Ubuntu is about our interconnectedness, not our separateness; our rich diversity, not our divisiveness; and our capacity for compassion, not our fear of vulnerability. Ubuntu is about who we are becoming together!

In his book, *No Future without Forgiveness*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu stresses the importance of having a spirit of ubuntu. He writes: “A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he/she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished.”<sup>1</sup> Tutu’s descriptors—open, available, affirming, self-assured and not threatened—are similar to those that we might assign to a person exhibiting emotional wellness.

One’s level of emotional wellness or spirit of ubuntu can never be measured in a vacuum. An emotionally well person not only understands her/his emotional needs but also has the capacity to attune and respond appropriately to another’s emotional state. Individual emotional wellness is intricately connected to the emotional wellness of others and to the community as a whole.

Our world today is indeed in need of a spirit of ubuntu! When so many of our brothers and sisters are suffering from hunger, oppression and exclusion, how can we continue to ignore and isolate them, deny our common bond and build walls around our hearts? We believe that we are protecting ourselves and what is rightfully ours, but we have forgotten that we belong to a larger whole and that our emotional wellness is connected to that of the other, whom we can choose to love and respect or hurt and humiliate.

I believe that the situation at our US-Mexico border is an invitation to put into practice our spirit of ubuntu and give witness to the emotional wellness of our society. It takes great courage and deep faith for families to leave their homes and loved ones to cross the border (wall, river or desert). They often walk hundreds of miles without adequate food, clothing and medicine, and they endure numerous assaults and abuses along the way. No one embarks

on such an arduous journey unless she/he is running from a situation of desperation—political violence, a death threat, extreme poverty, hunger, unemployment and/or lack of healthcare—and is searching for a place and a community where she/he can survive and thrive.

The plight of asylum seekers is real, and we cannot compartmentalize their stories in our heads and pretend that they do not affect our hearts. During the summer of 2021, I was one of 33 IHM sisters and associates who volunteered at the border in El Centro, California, with Catholic Charities of the Diocese of San Diego. All of us were greatly impacted by the stories of asylum seekers and humbled by the trust that it must have taken to share those stories with us.

In one of my first weeks in El Centro, I met Alminda, a 65-year-old woman fleeing from Venezuela where her husband and she were unable to work because of their age. They had no way to survive in their own country, and their daughter urged them to come to the US and stay with her. Alminda’s joy at being reunited with her daughter and grandchildren was tempered by the memory of those she had left behind. She told me that I reminded her of her mother-in-law who was 98 (30 years my senior). I was confused at first because I looked nothing like the woman in the photo that she showed me, but then I realized it was not about physical resemblance. I still am not quite sure what quality she saw in me. But I do know that she loved her mother-in-law and that somehow my presence was reassuring for her. Alminda had few possessions with her, yet she gave me a mask that she had embroidered and asked me not to forget her. I pray that my remembering of Alminda each day will help her know that she is seen and loved unconditionally and will give her the hope she needs in the difficult days ahead.

The faces and the stories at the border continue to haunt me. I can still hear the sobs of a mother, a father and their 15-year-old son whom the Border Patrol had released to Catholic Charities so that they could travel to their final destination in the US. The parents were distraught because their 18-year-old son was separated from them and sent to a detention center. In the US, an 18-year-old is considered a single adult and no longer a dependent of his parents. This family, reduced from four to three,

was devastated, and yet they were expected to continue their journey. How does a grieving family move on and leave a son/brother behind without knowing where he is and how he will fend for himself?

I heard quite a few stories of families being separated at the border. All of them were sad, and most of their endings are unknown. On one of my last days there, I met a young woman who was traveling with her husband, their

*continued on page 19*



# Emotional Intelligence

by Elizabeth Pearson, IHM

**“I held my tongue** this time when she commented sharply about the project I’d just completed.” I knew she had a poor night’s sleep, and I had learned that her sleeping habits and work tension produce conversations that are unlike her normal functioning. I later reflected that I did a wise thing by curbing my temper. When we think before we act, use our street smarts or common sense in expressing our emotions appropriately and effectively, we are using our emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is a term that has evolved from many branches of psychology, initially stemming from a controversy about the concept and measurement of general intelligence, developmental and abnormal psychology. When formal intelligence tests were created to evaluate the needs of mentally challenged children during the first decade of the 1900s, theorists recognized the difference between verbal and non-verbal skills and measured them in different ways. With the advancement of research techniques, factor analysis provided the perspective that intelligence has many interacting “factors” (abilities) each of which could be measured, e.g., long term and short memory, visual perception, and spatial organization. The educational and political flavor of the United States in the 1960s fueled controversy over the very notion of quantifying intelligence and recognized that the education of many educationally challenged children was being overlooked. This debate included the fact that many intelligence tests were biased against populations other than middle class white children. (Jensen, A.)

Continuing the trend of “many abilities,” Howard Gardner (who grew up in Scranton during the 1940s and 1950s) made popular the position that human abilities come in multiple forms, such as bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, and linguistic (*Frames of Mind: the theory of multiple intelligences*, 1983). Gardner later added naturalistic (1996) and existential (1999) forms of intelligence. Although Gardner does not name it as emotional intelligence, his notions of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences come very close to that notion. He described them as: the capacities to be self-aware and in tune with inner feelings, values, beliefs and thinking processes (intrapersonal), and the capacities to detect and respond appropriately to the moods, motivations and desires of others (interpersonal). His view

advanced the point that all humans possess these many abilities in various degrees, that there is a biological/neurological basis to them, that they can be developed or ignored.

Other branches of psychology (personality, abnormal, educational, neurological) contributed to the understanding of the whole person, not just one domain of the person. Developmental psychologists posited that social and emotional environments interacted together as prime factors in a child’s development, especially the development of a sense of self (self-identity), a foundational component for relationships and other life challenges.

In spite of these theories, our parents intrinsically knew that they must guide their children in understanding their emotions, and the expression of those emotions for their future personal and professional success. They knew that a preschooler needs to learn the how of expressing fear and anger, in an appropriate and acceptable manner (at the right time, with right actions/words, self-regulation, the dos and don’ts of expressing emotion). A parent’s maxim: “Respect yourself and other people.”

Following on Gardner’s work of inter- and intrapersonal intelligences, a theory of emotional intelligence was developed and popularized by Goleman (1995). He described his notion of emotional intelligence as the ability to identify, monitor one’s own emotions and to express them efficiently and appropriately. He speaks of five foundational elements: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. (Doesn’t this sound like the attempts of our parents to train us in managing our emotions?) Goleman’s work, mostly in the work place, considered emotional intelligence as the largest single predictor of success. Although not a causal relationship, emotional intelligence has been associated with, shown to interact with, bullying, violence, drugs, leadership, work success, job performance, and health. In schools, syllabi for coursework in social-emotional learning have been implemented with elementary grade children. We know from research that the high “emotionally intelligent child” has skills more available for bouncing back from being teased or sitting still in a group to listen to a story. Emotional intelligence, then, can be applied to the workplace, to school, or to ordinary daily life to help reduce stress and to manage feelings and impulses.

Emotional intelligence can help a leader face a crisis or a stressful situation resulting in lower levels of stress, less emotional reactivity and



fewer unintended consequences. When we are stressed to meet deadlines, to work without sufficient resources (physical, material, mental), when we are navigating change, especially in interpersonal relationships, ministries and/or living situations, these skills provide a path for appropriate and efficient reactions, externally and internally.

Thus, it is from many fields of psychology (cognitive, measurement and evaluation, multiple intelligences, personality, developmental psychology) that the term “emotional intelligence” has emerged. In plain talk it refers to our awareness of our emotions and how to express them appropriately for the common good. Emotional Intelligence is something that can be learned, comes in all varieties, is influenced by a variety of factors, and is worth practicing and monitoring throughout all of our lives. We all experience stress across our life span and want to maintain a healthy self, and positive enduring relationships. Other articles in this issue of Journey will speak to implications of using our emotional intelligence, e.g., in pandemic or grief situations, in highly intense ministries, and how reflection can assist in bolstering these skills.

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# Reflections on the Value of Reading and Writing (and Hobbits)

by Erin Sadlack

J.R.R. Tolkien once gave a lecture “On Fairy-Stories” that defined and defended the genre of fantasy literature. Reading well-crafted fantasy that immerses the reader in another world is not escapism, he maintained, but a way for the reader to recover from the trials of this world and to gain new perspectives. More, he argued, fantasy could give readers what he called a “eucatastrophe,” the joy that springs when miraculous grace intervenes to produce a happy ending when all seems lost.

It is easy to understand why someone might want to escape the world these days: a global pandemic, climate change, systemic racism, an opioid crisis, a polarized citizenry, prejudice against immigrant refugees, and now, the unprovoked, criminal invasion of Ukraine and the deaths of so many innocent people. In the face of all that, we might ask where is our eucatastrophe? Tolkien, a survivor of the deadly trenches of World War I, answered that it lies in the birth and resurrection of Christ, God’s love for us made incarnate. Suffering continues, yet knowledge of God’s love sustains us.

Moreover, he argues that we can engage in activities that help remind us of that love. For Tolkien, reading and writing can do that, since the writer enables readers to experience the process of escape, recovery, and joy, and so find the courage to stand for what is right in the world around them. It is a powerful vision of what writing and reading can do.

This shouldn’t surprise us. In just the past year, in the face of all that brings despair, we see again and again how words uplift us. The soaring voice of young Amanda Gorman ringing out from the Capitol steps, “For there is always light, if only we’re brave enough to see it. / If only we’re brave enough to be it.” As the war in Ukraine continues, hundreds of people have joined in online readings with Ukrainian poets to raise money for humanitarian aid. We thus hear their voices, such as that of Serhiy Zhadan, who wrote “Needle” in 2015 about a tattoo artist killed at a checkpoint. His poem encourages us to think about the role of the artist: “...carve, carve, tattoo artist, for our calling / is to fill this world with meaning, to fill it / with colors” (translated by Amelia Glaser and Yuliya Ilchuk). As people read, they connect with and care for the people of Ukraine. Reading, as Tolkien recognized, is a powerful act.

So too is writing. Yet far too often, I see people cut themselves off from the benefits of these actions. They don’t see themselves as readers or writers (although ironically many of them spend much of the day reading and writing



on their screens for both work and pleasure). I would like to urge anyone interested in wellness to reconsider, to embrace the identity of reader and writer, to experience how reading and writing can enrich our lives deeply, enhancing our emotional health and wellbeing.

To open that door, we need to appreciate that there are all kinds of reading and writing, each with different values and purposes. Tolkien’s concept of reading as a place to refresh the soul and gain new perspectives on this world is just one. Sometimes we need challenge, to wrestle with Shakespeare’s language as Hamlet debates with himself or to wrap our minds around the impossibly hard choices of Toni Morrison’s *Sethe*. We read to learn of other peoples, times, and histories, to find new connections and compassion for those with different experiences. Other times, we read for information, still others for comfort, for humor or tears, a kind of aloe for a “sunburned brain,” to borrow a phrase from the poet Philip Sidney. Sometimes we re-read, choosing to revisit worlds or beloved characters or scenes. I cry every time Sam helps carry Frodo up Mt. Doom. Sometimes in the re-reading we find new insights as we ourselves grow and change. Immersing ourselves in a book can calm us, giving us distance from worry or anger, so that we can return to the world renewed.

Similarly, there are all kinds of writing, each of them with benefits to our emotional wellness. Sometimes we have stories in us that are waiting to be told—memoirs, inventions, family legends that preserve memories for generations to come. They may never be formally published, but they are valuable all the same. When Tolkien began the labors of what would become *The Lord of the Rings*, he was simply inventing languages and mythologies to escape the horrors of war. So too can writing give people a creative outlet that matters. Countless creative writing programs

across the country have helped military veterans cope with PTSD. Writing programs for incarcerated people have found that the process of creative writing improves prisoners’ mental health and social behaviors and reduces violence and recidivism drastically. Engaging in and sharing creative work is healing.

Sometimes we should write just for ourselves. Too often adults dismiss the idea of keeping a diary as something for children, but many studies show the benefits of journaling on mental health, how it can reduce stress and help people cope with the effects of depression or manage the cravings of addiction. Journaling allows us to reflect on ourselves, on our actions and desires, and to consider different reactions and choices, giving us an outlet for our feelings.

It is especially fascinating that studies show we think differently with an actual pen in hand. One Indiana University study showed increases of creativity when writers were using pens instead of typing, while other studies examined brain scans to reveal how different sections of the brain light up when the person is handwriting. I often encourage students to free write, to write without regard for grammar or coherence, but just to write in response to a question. It is amazing how the simple act of writing can free the mind to make new associations, to think differently and more deeply. Free writing can thus be a form of meditation that sparks creativity, mindfulness, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

Tolkien recounts that he was marking exams when a thought struck him and he wrote on the inside cover of the exam, “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.” An expert in linguistics, he began to think about what was a hobbit and where would it live and so forth. How could hobbits fit in among the races of elves and dwarves and orcs he had already mythologized? The result of that moment is history. What I love about the story is that it shows how writing and reading can lead to a spark of inspiration and how, if we have the curiosity to pursue that spark, we never know where it might lead us—perhaps to a story that the public will deem the greatest novel of the twenty-first century—or perhaps simply to a creative outlet that refreshes our minds and gives us courage to face the world around us.

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# EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AS WE AGE

by Nina Flanagan

And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.

-Abraham Lincoln

For the past 20 years, Susan Turk Charles, a psychologist from the University of California at Irvine, has been looking with a special interest at the way we handle and experience emotions as we grow older. She and her colleagues have found that, on average, older people have fewer, but more satisfying social contacts; they also report higher emotional well-being.

One of the interesting findings in Charles' work is that as we age, there is a decline in the overall mass of the brain's frontal lobe, the part that is responsible for emotion regulation, complex reasoning and speed of processing, but researchers found that older adults often exhibit greater prefrontal cortex activity than younger adults when processing emotion. Older persons also have a positive bias, even without realizing it. Their default mode is, "Don't sweat the small stuff;" they also are better at picking their battles.

Emotional regulation improves with age. This research provides some understanding of the brain and its impact on our emotional health. This is one aspect of the complexity of our emotional health. Emotional health is multi-faceted and interconnected with all aspects of our life. Emotional health as we age can be more of a challenge due to development of chronic disease, social isolation and loss of family and friends. To improve our emotional health, we have to examine all aspects of our life which impact our emotional health and wellness.

## Relationships

1. Maintain and cultivate our social relationships. They are as important as our cholesterol level, but often forgotten.
2. Stay socially active and engaged in activities that give us a sense of belonging and purpose. Have a confidant, a relationship which is open and non-judgmental, in which we can share our feelings freely. Volunteer for things we care about. Maintain a sense of humor. Laughter is the best medicine.
3. Spend our time wisely with people we enjoy.

## Physical Health

1. Maintain our physical health.
2. Exercise daily. Ten minutes a day can have a significant impact on maintaining mobility,

maintaining weight and lowering blood pressure.

3. Stay hungry for opportunities to learn new things. Challenging our brain has a powerful impact on our emotional health.
4. Know and understand our limitations. Understanding our limitations allows us to focus on our strengths and helps us reframe our goals/purpose.
5. Get enough sleep. At least 6-8 hours a night. Sleep helps us think more clearly, have quicker reflexes and improves our ability to focus.
6. Know our numbers. Blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and body mass index (BMI). Increases in any or all of these can worsen or lead to chronic illness.
7. 5 for 5 – Aim for a healthy diet of 5 servings of fruit and vegetables daily.
8. Recognize and manage our stressors.

## Spiritual Health

1. Meditation and prayer. Create a daily routine.
2. Think about defining our sense of purpose and meaning which may change as we age. Embrace the opportunity to re-focus and revitalize in a way that is congruent with where we are right now.
3. Define what makes us feel harmonious with the world around us.
4. Spend time enjoying nature as much as we can, wherever we can.
5. Be grateful.

## Understanding and Controlling Emotions

1. Recognize, name and feel the emotion. See where we feel the negativity in our body. Breathe and relax the muscles of our neck and shoulders. Breathe again and let go of the negativity.
2. Practice self-compassion. Self-compassion is the warm embrace that reminds us that we are safe; it is the gentle voice that makes us feel understood. Think of what our own kind voice would say. Then obey it!
3. Listen closely. All emotions remind us of our needs, our boundaries, and the values we hold dear. Emotions are also tied to the stories that have grown with us over the years. When these emotions are negative, we need to listen closely, so we know whether a value needs to be upheld or a self-defeating story needs to be dismissed. Do this without self-judgement.



4. Be present. Stay in the moment.
5. Be open and accept what is going on around us. Appreciate and accept without excess judgment or criticism. Be empathetic.

## Coping with Loss

There are many losses that come with age. The loss of family and friends, loss of independence due to chronic illness, job loss due to retirement, to name a few. Although some losses are more profound, grieving any loss has an impact on emotional health. Acknowledge and validate our loss. The grieving process is different for everyone. There is no "right way to grieve" a loss. Examining the facets of our emotional health can impact our response and ability to cope with grief.

Remember, anxiety and depression are not a normal part of aging. To maintain our emotional health, it is important to know the signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety and to seek help to alleviate symptoms and improve our quality of life.

Maintaining our emotional health as we age is not one size fits all. Our emotional needs will vary at different times as we age. Being aware of the complexity of our emotional health and appraising the facets of our life which impact it, are the roadmaps to feeling good and enjoying life.

*Nina serves as the IHM Healthcare Coordinator for the IHM Congregation.*

## Resources for Maintaining Emotional Health

<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/>  
<https://www.nature.com/>  
<https://uncw.edu/>  
<https://www.nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>



# Tips for Living Emotionally Well

by Judy O'Brien, IHM



## Tip #1

*"Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life."* -Luke 12:22

As in so many of life's ways, I believe that Jesus sets us on a path, offering tips, if you will, for keeping ourselves emotionally well. Instructing us not to worry is basic, but perhaps the hardest tip to embrace and practice. My mother used to phrase it by saying, "Don't sweat the small stuff." That little bit of wisdom has guided me through life offering perspective and peace repeatedly when situations were challenging and yet not earth-shattering.

For some of us worrying is a way of life, consuming our time and energy, leaving us fatigued, anxious and, in a worst-case scenario, hopeless. Being consumed by worry can paralyze us, leading to depression and self-damaging behaviors. "Do not worry," seems so simple yet for some impossible. To the degree that worrying impacts our daily life, professional help can offer tools to assist us in achieving a life less worrisome and more fulfilling. Counseling and/or prescribed medication are great resources that help us to regain a sense of wellness and health.

## Tip #2

*"Go to your room and shut your door and pray...."* -Matthew 6:6

A regular practice of prayer, meditation, or yoga are also agents of emotional wellness. Placing ourselves in silence, with open hands and heart, listening to God's Spirit breathing through us naturally facilitates serenity that imparts refreshment and calmness allowing us to be grace-filled beings for the world.

## Tip #3

*"Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."* -Luke 23:34

Emotional wellness requires the ability to forgive. A recognition that we are imperfect human beings and that our sisters and brothers are imperfect human beings calls us to on-going forgiveness and peace affording us the grace to live free of grudges, regrets and that deep-seated sadness that accompanies a heart burdened with ill-will and bitterness, fostering isolation and mean-spiritedness. Living community life sometimes comes with annoyances, misunderstandings, and mistrust, all of which beg that we choose forgiveness.

A regular examen of conscience moves our spirit to forgive ourselves and others for the hurts, great and small, that curb our happiness. As religious, we are mandated by the Gospel to forgive, revealing a life of authentic joy, acceptance and a peaceful purpose for existence.

## Tip #4

*"Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread nor money—not even an extra tunic."* -Luke 9:3

Simplifying our life for the journey can support a life of emotional wellness that is achieved and sustained for the long-haul. Total reliance on God's providence, if authentically lived, paves the path for spiritual, emotional and physical wellness. Keeping ourselves from being bogged down with stuff lightens the burdens and worries of everyday life. So often

we are rendered frozen, unable to commit, standing alone because of our inability to let go of things that keep us prisoners of meaningless fear and despair. Letting go can inspire a journey that is danced rather than trodden, fun and alive, yielding surprise and elation meant to be realized in a life rooted in God.

## Tip #5

*"I give you a new commandment, love one another."* -John 13:31

Emotional wellness presumes that we are on the journey with others. Being in right relationship with God, ourselves, others and all of creation is a pre-requisite for a life filled with hope, health and happiness. Developing relationships that feed our souls is necessary for a life of kindness, truth and happiness.

Religious life presents us with so many wonderful opportunities for rich and renewing friendships. Ministry gives us the gifts of unique and diverse people and places where we share experiences that call us to "act justly and love tenderly." Being able to bond with so many of God's creatures is a privilege to be treasured always.

Fostering positive family ties and moments filled with joy and celebration, as well as being there for challenging times and experiences of deep sadness remind us of our relational rootedness and where our journey began.

The call to a vowed religious life showers us with the love and blessings of our sisters. Unlike any other path to wellness, we are surrounded by the goodness of so many women called to be lovers in the world. The friendships we form in community are what give us the strength and courage to pursue emotional wellness. Right relationships with our sisters create emotional wellness and encourage us to worry less, pray more, forgive willingly, travel lightly and love passionately.

*Sister Judy serves as Director of Learning at Cathedral High School in Boston, Massachusetts.*



# One thing I do to stay e



One thing I do to stay emotionally healthy is unplug from my computer and cell phone and go for a walk. This allows my eyes and brain to become realigned to my heart and body resulting in a greater sense of wholeness, peace and calm.  
-Sister Grace Surdovel



Engage both my positive and negative emotions to learn what they mean to teach me to foster deeper emotional growth.  
-Sister Joanne Madden



I do a few things every day: I begin my day with gusto before sunrise. I pray, exercise outside, offer my being to the universe and ask for the grace of our Creator God.  
-Sister Donna Korba



I try to exercise each day and be still in my thinking.  
-Sister Regina Burns



I sit by the river or ocean and reflect on Jesus' time on the water.  
-Dorothy Dove, IHM Associate



One thing I do to stay emotionally well is stay in contact with my friends and try to exercise often.  
-Sister Anne Mary Boslett



I practice yoga, chat with friends, talk with a therapist and spiritual director.  
-Lisa Orlandini, IHM Associate



I pray daily, attend Mass, and meditate on scripture. I go to yoga classes and socialize with family and friends. I walk one hour a day. I have reconnected with three IHM Associates from my Circle of Grace and we plan to meet soon.  
-Eileen O'Donnell, IHM Associate



One thing that I do to stay emotionally healthy is take some quiet time "to be."  
-Sister Mary Ellen Higgins



I remember reading this advice and copying it in my prayer journal: "To boost your productivity and happiness, write three sentences a day. Today I will: Focus on... Be grateful for... Let go of..." This is not my idea, however it is an act that helps me stay emotionally healthy. I cannot remember the source, only that I read it as a reflection on Dec 10, 2021 in Give Us This Day. I find that these are always in the back of my mind in prayer. Focusing on gratitude is perhaps the most important thing I do and journaling is something I regularly do that helps me stay emotionally healthy. I think about those three things: "focus, gratitude, and letting go."  
-Jo-Ann Baca, IHM Associate



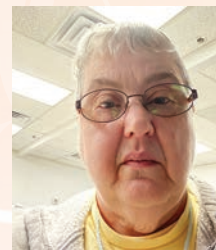
To stay emotionally healthy, I make an effort to be faithful to a time of personal prayer each morning. I remember that one of my brothers-in-law sat at the breakfast table with a cup of coffee for a length of time every morning. One day I asked Bill what he thought about for that length of time. He responded by saying, "I get my head on straight." I've often thought about his remark. Without giving it a name, he was communing with the Lord about the coming day. I believe I do the same by spending time in personal prayer each morning.  
-Sister Michael Marie Hartman



One thing—and the first thing I do every day to stay emotionally healthy is to acknowledge how much God loves me and then, I thank him for his blessings and his love!  
-Madonna A. Smith, IHM Associate



One thing I do to stay emotionally healthy is exercise. My nightly exercises for my back and my daily 1/2 hour rosary walk both keep me physically fit, which is necessary for my emotional well-being. Without both, I would not be able to go through the day without pain, and, at my age, that would make me a basket case.  
-Sister Miriam Joseph Reinhardt



I stay in touch with Jesus.  
-Margaret Keller, IHM Associate



I believe to stay emotionally healthy is to stay spiritually strong with one's church community and one's Circle of Grace.  
-Raymond Wheeler, IHM Associate



I receive spiritual direction monthly, connect with friends or family weekly, and have prayer time and laughter daily!  
-Sister Mindy Welding



I smell the flowers and blow out the candles.  
-Frank Walsh, IHM Associate



# emotionally healthy is...

by IHM Sisters and IHM Associates



My husband and I watch Mass daily and listen to music from the 60s, 70s and 80s. We also listen to religious themed music such as, "There are no Scars in Heaven," "The Prayer," and "O Danny Boy."

We had a wonderful pet, Danny Boy, a black lab, that we rescued in 2007 from Griffin Pond Dog Shelter. Danny went home to God on February 1, 2022. We are having a difficult time without him. I pray every day and ask God if we should rescue another dog.

-Barbara and Joe McCarthy, IHM Associates



One thing I do to stay emotionally healthy is my morning prayer time. I find that this quiet alone time sets me for the day as I pray for family, friends, our world and myself.

-Pat Sheehan, IHM Associate



I take a few moments each day to sit quietly and reflect on what I'm grateful for. It helps me to see that there is always something good in every day. No matter what difficulties life may bring, there are also many

blessings. -Becky DePrato, IHM Associate



One thing I do is I attend an opera or some other musical opportunity. I also am engaged in watching sporting events. I try to allow for some quiet time each day where I can sing my praise and thanksgiving to my Lord.

-Sister Dolores M. Banick



I join with my sisters here in Sicuani and order pizza on Friday nights, which we enjoy together, along with a wine cooler. It is part of our "wholeness" according to our IHM Core Values.

-Sister Eileen Egan



I try to maintain a positive attitude, live a balanced lifestyle of prayer, exercise and work, and be of service to others.

-Sister Mary Martha Gardiner



I meditate, do yoga, and write in a gratitude journal each night!

-Sister Karen Steinberg



I stay positive and know God walks beside me always. Namaste.

-Cheryl Kosydar, IHM Associate



I keep my sense of humor and laugh a lot!

-Sister Jane Gaughan



I talk to and listen to a lot of people. Communication! Connection is the ticket for me!

-Sister Maria Rose Kelly



I regularly practice Sabbath time that rejuvenates the human spirit. Also staying connected, delighting and enjoying relationships, sharing a good meal and conversation with a friend contribute to my emotional wellness.

-Sister Suzanne Delaney



I enjoy my porch at Our Lady of Peace Residence and the delightful birds who come to visit.

-Sister Margaret Gannon



I think that prayer is my means of staying calm and well.

-Sister M. Alphonsa Concilio



One thing I do to be emotionally well is to make sure my bird feeder is full so I can watch those beautiful creatures enjoying life as I should.

-Sister Lenore Thomas



One thing I do to stay emotionally healthy is, piecing things together (1000 piece puzzles).

-Sister Joel Marie Sheehee



Before I could address the topic, I needed to define "emotions." Emotions are associated with bodily reactions that are activated through neurotransmitters and hormones released by the brain in response to our interpretation of a specific trigger. These can be conscious or subconscious. Feelings come after the emotions and are the conscious experience of the emotional reaction. We and others can spend years or a lifetime trying to understand the depth of our emotions. On our journey toward wholeness we need to be aware of our feelings and, if needed, try to trace them back to the underlying emotion. Wellness necessitates addressing and understanding the negatives and reinforcing the positives. -Sister Janet Yurkanin





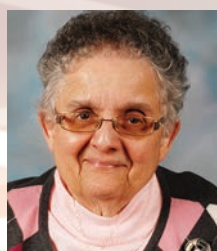
One thing I do to stay emotionally healthy is, think of what is possible rather than look backward and dwell on the past that I cannot change.

-Sister Janet Milan



One thing I do to stay emotionally healthy is focus on the Holy One within guiding, guarding and loving me, believing that this God, who has always been active in my life, won't give up now.

-Sister Robert Mary Murphy



One thing I do to stay emotionally healthy is talk and text on the phone and visit people since I am a "people person."

-Sister Francis Rose Lapitino



One thing I do to stay emotionally healthy is read the daily newspaper comics (for early morning laughs) Crankshaft, Pickles, Family Circus and Maxine's "Words of Wisdom" from her daily calendar.

-Sister Marion Tarone



I spend time with God explaining how I feel and asking for help to sort out my feelings. The time I spend with God could be on a walk, in a chapel or sitting quietly in a comfortable chair. Often, I don't have to

explain, God knows and helps. Spending time thinking with gratitude of all God has given me also helps me to stay emotionally healthy.

-Sister Delia M. McNeirney



I have a nightly phone call with a sister resident at Our Lady of Peace. We talk about the events of our day. The end of our conversation is always, "I think it is time to say good night!"

-Sister Judith Ann Ziegler



Yes... flowers! Buy an amaryllis (preferably red!) and watch it grow! Get a bunch of tulips or daffodils and enjoy their beauty... or surprise someone else! Look for signs of spring everywhere!

-Sister Theresa Frere



To stay emotionally healthy I remind myself that my God is a good God and has been with me in good times and not so good... so why would God leave me now? Sometimes God sends someone to talk with and

enlighten me. Other times the Spirit strengthens me with a positive suggestion as to what to do and how to view a situation. I try not to dwell on the negative. I take a walk, read a book, listen to some good music. These help to clear the air.

-Sister Helene Hicks



Being in touch with my emotions is key to informing discernment, knowing myself, knowing others and my relationship with Jesus. To understand my emotions (with my head and heart) and how I express them directly

impacts my ability to be in relationship with others and the world around me. I intentionally reflect on my emotions each day in prayer and find myself asking, "what emotions did Jesus experience" and "how is Jesus feeling." An intentional healthy balance of all the key elements of my life (spiritual, ministerial, intellectual, emotional, physical, environmental, stewardship) keeps me emotionally healthy. Really, when one element is missing, it can affect my emotional health. They are all intertwined!

-Sister Liz McGill



I get up early every day, so that I can have my coffee and breakfast in bed and reflect on the Scripture readings for the day. Then I walk and/or bike around Marywood University campus and breathe in the beauty around me.

-Sister Mary Elaine Anderson



One thing I do to stay emotionally healthy is stay connected with people, whether via social media, sending cards, calling, or visiting.

-Jean Shields, IHM Associate



All dimensions of wholeness are interconnected and are essential components of vital living. From my perspective, however, the spiritual and emotional are aligned to feed into each other. Much is said about mindfulness these

days. This intentional practice of self-awareness alerts me to the fact that I might be feeling out of sorts; will I stay in my mood, sadly polluting the field of presence around me? Perhaps during the course of the day I make a critical mistake and immediately I hear the negative self-talk going on in my head. Becoming irritated, will I then beat myself up? I celebrate emotions as gifts from God, that is, if I use them as my growing edges while doing my inner soul work. St. Alphonsus Liguori was convinced that, "God is crazy in love with us." Edwina Gately echoes his message in her book, Psalms of a Lay Woman, when she prays, "Let your God love you... God loves you with an enormous love." When I recall those words while dealing with an array of emotional states, my mind turns toward my heart and I am attuned to feel into those subtle, assuring whispers of the Holy One. Gratefully and humbly, by claiming the transforming power of emotional well-being, I can be the presence and action of LOVE in the world. "And the greatest of these is Love." (1 Corinthians 13:13)

-Jean Louise Bachetti



Each day, I recall a different memory that has given me joy and thank God for that special gift. It really sets the "tone" for my day.

-Sister Cor Immaculatum Heffernan



I have a Kindle and my sister-in-law gifts me with wonderful books to read. Somehow they always have a depth of beauty in the characters which takes me into their lives. I walk often with our dog Blackie

and enjoy the beauty all around me in these fields of corn and the surrounding Andes mountains.

-Sister Ancilla Maloney



One thing I do to stay emotionally healthy is to be faithful to daily Mass, hearing the Liturgy of the Word, and partaking in the Eucharistic celebration.

-Sister Rosella Salvato



# Stress, Grief, and Gratitude: Lessons from the Pandemic

by Gail Cabral, IHM

When the spread of the Covid-19 virus showed us that it was truly a world-wide pandemic, and that there would be many outcomes including long stretches of isolation, many people predicted that there would be an increase in emotional problems. These predictions came true.

As a few weeks of isolation turned into months, our level of concern and our experience of stress began to grow. Surveys administered before and after the pandemic have shown major increases in the number of U.S. adults who report symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression and insomnia (Mayo Clinic Newsletter, Nov. 2021). Adults reporting symptoms of anxiety and depression increased from 10% to about 40%, when data was compared to an earlier time period (Pancha, N., Kamal, R., Cox, C., & Garfield, R., 2021). Those who already manifested emotional or substance abuse problems indicated an increase in the severity of symptoms.

Although change can often be a cause of stress, certain kinds of change are particularly stressful. Changes which are chosen, expected, and which have predictable, time-bound outcomes are not very stressful. The pandemic violated these qualities that make change bearable. In particular, the pandemic was unexpected, and has remained quite unpredictable.

Epidemiologists had warned of the potential for widespread epidemics; the world had already experienced SARS, swine flu, Ebola, MERS, and other viral attacks. However, for those of us in the Western world, those occurrences were limited, and often focused in other parts of the world. The idea that health care systems in developed countries could be overrun by the rapid spread of the virus was certainly not expected. This was a once-in-a-lifetime, once in a century event.

Stress is the feeling that we are unable to deal with the circumstances or challenges we face. We feel stressed because we do not believe we have the resources to do what we need to do. The unexpected nature of the pandemic and the lack of a time frame contributed to anxiety. The first level of concern dealt with fear of getting the virus, or having loved ones get it. This would be simple fear if we knew exactly what to do, if the steps were clear.

Strategies were suggested; isolation and separation clearly would mitigate the danger. But the unknown end date changed a natural fear into an anxiety-provoking situation. How long would this virus run out of control? The

development and production of vaccinations constituted an additional clear step. However, vaccinations, masking, and other steps to protect or lessen the damage became controversial, increasing the sense that there were no clear answers. Again, uncertainty!

Besides the stressors I have mentioned leading to anxiety and depression, we found we were dealing with grief. The most basic grief was the loss of loved ones to the virus, and the inability to see loved ones, especially those confined to hospitals with severe illness. But there were other losses. We lost experiences we cannot regain: a niece's first birthday, a graduation, family Christmas dinners, etc. We had a feeling that things were likely to be different in the future in ways we could not predict.

We lost many of the ways with which we had coped with stress before. Getting out, having a sense of place, of neighborhood and town, having the ability to see friends in person – these, our usual means of coping, have frequently been unavailable; this has taken a toll on our emotional health. Are there new ways we have developed to cope with stress?

Much has been written about how to cope with grief. Grief is not the same as having emotional problems though it can exacerbate them. Loss is loss, and perhaps is best dealt with by naming and living the experience. Sometimes our strategies are basically distractions. We need to feel what we are feeling now, rather than avoiding what we are feeling now, or worrying about our future with this feeling.

Some deep semi-conscious self-talk makes grief harder to bear: "This shouldn't happen to me;" "I can't cope with this;" or "This takes away my identity." Such ideas need to be faced directly; we may find them irrational, and unhelpful.

Deep grief does not go away; a friend once said to me: "It is like a hole in our heart. It never goes away, but we get used to it." On the other hand, I once heard that the only cure for grief is to learn something. That seems to me to be a way to accept where we are, and to be present to something real, where we are.



The other antidote for grief is gratitude - to remember with gratitude what we did have, and what we have now. What have we learned through this pandemic about what is important in life? What have we learned about our weaknesses and our strengths? Have we remembered the idea that humans make plans and God laughs? Are we more aware of the limits of our ability to control?

Has the pandemic helped us to remember what is really important to us? Perhaps it has taught us that we can deal with, and sometimes even thrive in, situations of great difficulty. The pandemic taught us to treasure relationships more deeply, and to enjoy more sincerely the everyday connections we have – with the mailman, the neighbor, and friends.

The pandemic has reminded us that we are in the hands of a God who loves us, with less control than we imagine. It has taught us to grieve our griefs, remember the gifts they point to, and make gratitude in our lives more palpable, more central, and more widely shared.

*Sister Gail serves on the faculty at Marywood University in Scranton, PA.*

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<https://tinyurl.com/bdu4mxuy>

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## In Memoriam

*As women of faith, we find ourselves in communion with all who stand at the crossroads where death is giving way to risen life. As we grieve the loss of our own cherished IHM Sisters, we also celebrate their lives poured out in love and service to our beautiful yet wounded world. We invite you to join us in honoring the memory of these beloved and holy women.*



Jo Ann Trama, IHM  
February 24, 1942  
November 19, 2021  
by Ellen Maroney, IHM

Author Leo Tolstoy wrote, "Just as one candle lights another and can light thousands of other candles, so one heart illuminates another heart and can illuminate thousands of other hearts."

As I reflect about Jo Ann and what her life meant to all of us, I think these words of Tolstoy capture perfectly her spirit and her simple, deep faith. She truly lived the resurrection joy and promise each day of her life. As her condition began to worsen a few months ago, she calmly and purposefully sought advice, visited countless doctors and specialists, had tests, seeking solutions, to no avail. Most of us struggled to understand and accept and continued with our prayers and questions about how this could be happening. Only Jo Ann seemed to understand. A couple of weeks ago, when she was asked for probably the hundredth time what else could be done, she simply rolled her eyes, opened her hands, and smiled. Her faith and trust in the God she loved so fully was her response. This morning though our hearts are saddened by the too quick loss of such a vibrant influence among us, we gather in hope as a community of believers because our faith and the life of this special woman show us how.

Yesterday at the beautiful prayer service for Jo Ann, and throughout this past week, many have shared some wonderful stories about how she touched their lives through her simple goodness, humor, and caring. She was one of the most unique, fun, and vibrant persons most of us have ever met. Our sharing and prayer draw our individual memories into a collective one that

comforts and strengthens us, and also helps us to see beyond our own sorrow to the beauty and inspiration that Jo Ann was for so many. Her example encourages us to practice with deeper awareness those simple acts of kindness, respect, and selfless love that can make a real difference in one another's lives.

To know Jo Ann was to be invited into an ever-widening circle of diverse and inspiring connections. Our relationships tell the story of our lives and I believe Jo Ann was a high relator. During her fifty-eight years of religious life, she witnessed her relationship with God and with others in a vast array of ways. She ministered as an educator, a social worker, a community support professional, a board member, a counselor, and family caregiver in schools, university campuses, and public and private community social service agencies in Pennsylvania, Florida, and Ohio. In each place of ministry, Jo Ann left a legacy of professionalism, caring, vitality, and generous commitment. So many, from grade school children to senior citizens, were the recipients of her deep faith, ready generosity, unique sense of humor, and gentle compassion. She valued people as sacred gifts in her life.

Jo Ann was a care-giver in the truest sense of that word. No effort was too much, and that was especially true for her family, who were so special to her. She lovingly cared for both of her aging parents during their final years. She was an organizer and the planner for them and enjoyed bringing surprise and joy whenever she could. She relished her role and valued those traits in her other relationships. Jo Ann was also a doer who was joyful, resilient, and creative. She had the knack of engaging all, friend or newcomer, in conversation that would leave an indelible mark on each person. She was, as Gail so beautifully described her yesterday, very comfortable in her own skin, and that comfort transferred instantly to those who met her. Her circle of relationships just kept getting wider and she treasured her connections for the life and joy she both gave and received from them. She taught us about the deep value of love for others not just through words, but through her actions each day.

Jo Ann possessed a depth and richness in her relationship with God, to which all who knew her can readily attest. She spoke easily about her own spirituality and her love and trust in God not in an intellectual way, but in a personal way that touched us deeply and invited that same deep faith and trust in us. Through the ups

and downs of her own life, I think Jo Ann understood suffering and need in others perhaps better than most, and through her own faith, was able to reach out to others. Her love of and trust in God is what sustained and carried her each day, especially during these past few months, and enabled her to live the mystery of that deep faith with a strength that continues to sustain each of us during these days.

So we rejoice today that Jo Ann is now at home with her God and enjoying eternal life with her parents, Ann and Frank, her sister, Patricia, and other family members who preceded her in death. I'm certain that Jo Ann has already ordered a sufficient number of percussion instruments for a full heavenly band and is already having practice! We join our prayers with her beloved family, especially her sisters, Judy and Debbie, and all her extended family members, her IHM family, especially the sisters of Lourdes Community, her many dear friends, and all who knew her.

The following is part of a poem written by Mary Oliver expressing her thoughts about how she hoped to approach the idea of death. I think the words capture how Jo Ann sought to live her own life, and truly how she did live it.

When Death Comes  
by Mary Oliver

I want to step through the door full of curiosity,  
wondering: what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything  
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,  
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,  
and I consider eternity as another possibility,  
and I think of each life as a flower, as common  
as a field daisy, and as singular...  
When it's over, I want to say all my life  
I was a bride married to amazement.  
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder  
if I have made of my life something particular,  
and real. I don't want to find myself sighing and  
frightened, or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

*continued on next page*



Rest assured, Jo Ann, none of us has any doubt that your life was indeed something very particular and real and special, and you were never a mere visitor anywhere you went. You were fully alive and fully invested in all around you and we have been blessed by your presence among us. Your one candle, your one heart, surely brought light and joy to thousands of others. So as we gather around this table today, may we resolve to be examples of God's love and care for others and may we be blessed by our own faith and hope in the resurrected Jesus and rejoice in the same God who today enfolds Jo Ann in loving arms of eternal peace and joy.



Tomasa Fernandez Huaman, IHM  
December 29, 1955  
December 13, 2021  
by Ellen Maroney, IHM

"I know that I will not give much [financially] to the Congregation, but from my littleness I will be able to give my small portion so that the IHM spirit will continue to grow."  
Tomasa Fernandez Human, 1997

These words were written by Tomasa in her thank you for permission to make her final vows in 1997. As we gather today with hearts filled with gratitude for the life and goodness of our Sister Tomasa, I think her words are a clear reflection of her story among us. Her whole life was marked by a desire to serve God, a deep love for family, our congregation, and her native Peru, and a conviction that she was never doing enough on any of these two goals. In this, the thirtieth year of her profession, we today thank our God for calling her to our IHM congregation and for gracing us, our church, and countless children and adults in Peru with these years of faith-filled and tireless service for others.

Tomasa's life was a prime illustration of what she wrote in 1997, someone wholly and humbly dedicated to serving God by helping others in whatever way needed. Her early life was marked by serious illness, the results of which continued to affect her throughout her life. It was during one of her hospitalizations early on that Tomasa first encountered religious sisters. She was struck

by their compassion and commitment, and that experience led her to consider religious life herself. After becoming acquainted with our sisters, she asked to be admitted as a candidate to our congregation. In her letter, she wrote of her love for God and the Blessed Mother and her desire to serve others in community. She entered the formation program in Lima, where she persevered despite language and cultural differences. As a candidate, she assisted our Sister Jacquie Servick with four and five year olds in Mateo Pumacahua, but found the little children difficult to manage (I can identify with that!) so she began a ministry to the aged near Barranco. She later became a member of our first community in Sicuani, along with Eileen and Mary Elaine, and served there for several years, where her outreach focused on whatever were the needs of the people she met each day. She would bring the same energy and commitment to the people and parishes in Cieneguilla, Lima, and Cuzco, wherever she ministered as a pastoral minister and catechist. In each of these ministries, in fact, at the very core of who she was as a person, Tomasa was a selfless giver whose longing for God moved her deeply into the gift of God's unconditional love for all.

Tomasa was passionate about her own vocation and that same passion was evidenced in her commitment to seeking vocations to the congregation. Whenever I visited Peru, without fail, Tomasa would ask about doing formation work there. Once, after meeting for the first time, a mother and her daughter at mass, Tomasa came back and said that the daughter wanted to enter religious life and could we interview her! Her impatience with the process only bespoke her deep love for the congregation.

Tomasa was a giver. No one ever left her company without being given a beautiful handmade gift, and also many gifts to take back for sisters in the states. She would always ask what she could do for you, and watched to make sure you ate enough, were warm enough, wanted an extra sweater, or needed anything. She never missed calling or sending an email on our feast days and holidays, wishing us well and reassuring us that we were in her prayers every day. I know she called Dora and the sisters in Sicuani every week too. Her beautiful smile welcomed others into her life and her great happiness was seeing the joy of others.

Tomasa treasured the members of her family. We remember today her parents, Visitacion and Emiliano, her first teachers from whom she learned her deep love for God. They no doubt led the great fiesta for her in heaven last Monday, shared by Jeanne Marie and Jacquie for sure. I'm also very sure that Tomasa immediately began recruiting vocations to IHM as soon as she arrived in heaven! We pray today for all who have been touched by her life. We ask God to comfort her brothers, Basilio and Florencio, her sisters, Rosa and Epiphania, her nieces and nephews and their families, her IHM sisters, especially the sisters who shared life and ministry with Tomasa in

Peru, and all those who were part of her journey here on earth.

Tomasa once explained that she didn't think she was doing enough for our congregation, and that her ministry was 'just' talking to the people to whom she ministered, walking with them, and mainly listening to their stories. I reminded her that that sounded very much like the way Jesus ministered. Tomasa brought beauty, joy, and compassion into our world by the simple but profound acts of caring she lived each day. We were all greatly enriched by Tomasa's spirit and perseverance in bringing God's love and hope to those she met and her fidelity to that mission impacted countless lives. Her "small portion" indeed enriched our IHM spirit beyond anything she could have hoped or imagined. She trusted in God throughout her life. We have no doubt that she now enjoys forever the fullness of God's eternal light and love.



Barbara Nogiewich, IHM  
February 22, 1939  
December 18, 2021  
by Ellen Maroney, IHM

*Clothe yourselves with compassion,  
kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.  
Colossians 3:12*

When I started to think about what I wanted to say about Barbara today, these words from St. Paul's letter to the Colossians quickly came to mind. Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience – these qualities speak to me of the true foundation of Barbara's goodness and deep spirituality and define how she lived every day of her life – well, except maybe I'd put an asterisk after patience because while Barbara was usually pretty easygoing with others, not so much with herself. Her quiet, humble, and warm spirit came from her deep inner trust and faith in a God she truly loved and trusted and who, she knew, loved her. Barbara gave joy to others through her selflessness while at the same time revealing her own inner goodness and beauty, as we heard in the sharing at our wake service this morning. She

*continued on next page*

was a person of strong faith and trust. We were recipients of her gentle kindness and concern, her generosity and compassion, her gentle humor and willing availability.

Barbara was a creative and enthusiastic elementary school teacher for over forty years in schools in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, and Connecticut. She really loved teaching her young students and her creative art projects were a real hit with her students. Her calm, gentle way encouraged them to keep trying in spite of mistakes, and taught lessons about acceptance, understanding, and respect far better than any lecture could. Barbara also ministered at St. Mary's Child Care Home in Cresson, where she helped care for the resident children for two years, which I think probably helped her learn something about that patience with others I talked about. When her parents became ill and needed assistance, Barbara returned home and lovingly cared for them until their deaths. She was a support for her sister Barbara Ann and brother John during this time as well, and became the #1 spoiler of the stray cat Barbara Ann brought home one day. In 2012, Barbara came to the IHM Center where she was an instructor for young students in the Educational Enrichment Institute. She also helped with various duties in support services during this time, always with a welcoming smile and warm hospitality that made others feel at home even as she herself dealt with some personal physical difficulties. From 2019 until the present Barbara served as a prayer minister here at OLP.

Today we celebrate and give thanks for the life of Barbara, for her unwavering love of God and her great gratitude for all that life gave her, the rejoicings as well as the sorrows. She was a generous giver – of her time, her creative gifts, her presence. She frequently received large boxes of snacks from her family and friends, and she would immediately put them out for the other sisters and staff to enjoy. Although I'm told she did have a very big sweet tooth, so she did manage to enjoy some treats herself. I understand from Marie Lourdes that whipped cream was a special favorite – the more, the better. Barbara was always ready with a word or act of kindness or support whenever needed and her generosity was never-ending. She was a faithful communicator when anyone requested prayers. She wrote cards and letters with messages and poems of encouragement to them, usually followed up by regular phone calls to make sure they were doing okay. She was a great decorator and brought much joy to others with her creative crafts and decorations.

We surely will miss Barbara, but we rejoice that she is now at home with her God and enjoying eternal life with her parents, Josephine and John, and her brother, John, who are now reunited with her as she is welcomed into the great joy of eternal life by the God she loved and served so well.

Our prayers are with her, Barbara Ann, Eileen, Stanley, and Evelyn and Barbara's niece and cousins. We pray too for her many friends, her IHM sisters, especially those who lived with her in 2B here at OLP, her Band members, and all who knew and loved her. We ask the God of all consolation to comfort us all at this time of loss.

Barbara blessed us and befriended all of us. She lived the true meaning of these words from a quote I found: "May the hand of a friend always be near you and may God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you." Barbara, as you gave your hand in friendship to so many during your life among us, may your heart now overflow with the abundance of gladness in God's loving embrace for all eternity.

Barbara Ann will now place the scriptures on her sister's casket, for indeed Barbara heard the Word of God, she staked her life upon it and received life to the full... the Word now beckons her home.



Mary William Philbin, IHM  
October 3, 1946  
December 22, 2021  
by Terri Jordan, IHM

Mary William spent 47 years in the ministry of elementary education, 29 of those years were spent here in Scranton at St. Clare's and St. Paul's school. She loved being an educator especially of the little children as depicted on the cover of the liturgy booklet. The last five years of her life were spent in ministry at Our Lady of Peace Residence. There she joyfully and without hesitation responded to the many needs of the sisters.

The "Our Mission" section of the IHM constitutions reads, "We strive to serve in a joyful, loving, hospitable and self-emptying spirit, reflecting that humility and simplicity which present a clear and understandable witness to Christ, who welcomed everyone." Mary William lived out that statement to the fullest.

Yesterday I was speaking with a sister and she commented on how many people referred to Mary William as a saint. The sister and I both commented that neither of us would need to worry about that.

That was a frequent comment about Mary William and I share with you comments people shared on Facebook, in the comment section of the obituary, or those shared directly with me which support "she was a living saint."

- She was a living saint
- Angel on earth
- Lead with quiet grace
- If she isn't in heaven then no one is
- Lucky to have known her
- Wonderful person inside and out
- Kind
- Gentle
- How blessed my child/I was to have had her as a teacher
- True servant of God
- Favorite teacher
- Generous
- Humble
- Selfless
- Never said an unkind word about anyone
- Thought of others right up to her death
- When asked why she stayed at the end of day to clean and dust the school when there was staff who did that, she replied, "As I am cleaning, I can pray for the many people who asked me to pray for them."

And the examples could and did go on.

Mary William clearly touched a lot of lives in ways that were probably not known by her.

The offertory song for today is Hail Mary, Gentle Woman and the refrain goes like this: "Gentle woman, quiet light, morning star, so strong and bright, gentle Mother, peaceful dove, teach us wisdom; teach us love. As we prepare for Mary William's send off, let us pray to her that she will continue to teach us wisdom and love.

I would now like to invite Nancy, Eileen, and Judy to place the bible on Mary William's coffin. For she heard the word of Lord, staked her life upon it, and the Lord now calls her home.



Madeline Swaboski, IHM  
October 30, 1943  
January 2, 2022  
by Mary Reap, IHM



Today, we remember Madeline's deceased parents, Sophie and Stanley, and her sister Violet, who welcomed Madeline home last Sunday for a joyful reunion. Madeline was loved by her family and her students, patients, coworkers, and the IHM Associates with whom she worked and shared her life. She developed a special bond with our Oblate sisters during the years she spent living and working with them on the cause of beatification for Mother Mary Lange. We welcome the Oblate sisters present on Livestream today. I cannot imagine that Mother Lange was not there on Sunday to join in the reunion and receive Madeline into the arms of God.

Sister Madeline entered the congregation a little more than 60 years ago, on September 8, 1961, a time of tremendous change and upheaval in society and the Church. It was a time of change that tested the faith of many; however, not that of Sister Madeline. During that tumultuous time and for 58 years as a professed member of the congregation, Sr. Madeline served her God and her congregation in many ministries in New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, with faithfulness, generosity, and love.

One cannot capture the essence of a lifetime in a few words, but perhaps the words on an embroidered pillow in Sister's room catch the spirit that guided her life. It reads simply: *Live well, laugh often, love much.* Madeline did just that. She lived well, she laughed often, and she loved much.

Madeline was inspired to live these words because she had heard the Word of God and staked her life on it. That Word now beckons her home to eternal life.

Rest in peace, dear Madeline.



Maureen Dailey, IHM  
January 24, 1937  
January 8, 2022  
by Terri Jordan, IHM

On behalf of Sister Ellen, I would like to extend the congregation's deepest condolences to Maureen's brother, John and his wife Ann Marie who are with us here today, to her brother, Robert, her nephews, nieces, grandnieces, grandnephews, and to the sisters here at Our Lady

of Peace Residence with whom Maureen lived. To the administrators and caregivers at Our Lady of Peace Residence and the Life Program, thank you for the wonderful care you provided to Sister Maureen.

Nancy Rogers, Fred Rogers' mother, once gave him this advice: "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping," Mister Rogers then in turn used this as part of his advice to parents when helping children overcome tragedy. Maureen spent her 65 years as a religious and a helper, maybe not in the true sense of what Mister Rogers had intended for this quote but in the spirit of the quote. Maureen spent forty-eight years in the ministry of education where she was known for being a wonderful, dedicated teacher who readily shared her sense of humor with the students and with those with whom she lived. Maureen was always looking to help the needful in whatever way she could.

Maureen arrived at Our Lady of Peace Residence in 2007 where she continued her spirit of generosity and helping with anything that was needed.

Maureen,

May you now know the shape of your soul was unique, that you had a special destiny here, that behind the façade of your life there was something beautiful and eternal happening.

May you now see yourself with the same delight, pride and expectation with which God saw you in every moment.

(Adapted from John O'Donohue)

I now invite Maureen's brother John, to place the bible on the Maureen's casket. For Maureen heard the Word of God, she staked her life upon it and received life to the full. The Word now beckons her home.



M. Celeste Parry, IHM  
November 12, 1927  
January 17, 2022  
by Ellen Maroney, IHM

*"Happiness is a gift and the trick is not to expect it, but to delight in it when it comes and to add to other people's store of it."*

Charles Dickens

These words of Charles Dickens remind me of how Celeste lived. She was one of those rare people who truly did increase the store of happiness in the lives of each person she met and in our world for that matter. Her presence radiated a quiet peace and joy that permeated any conversation she joined – and I must say that Celeste joined many conversations every day! I love Redempta's description: Celeste was like "the mayor of Our Lady of Peace." Every day after dinner she would quietly set off on a round of visits throughout the building, stopping first to see her dear friend, Jean Toolan, and then off to check on a sister who was ill, or one who had suffered a family loss, or just to catch up with a sister or two or six that she hadn't spent time with in a while. The word was that if you needed to know anything about a sister or a staff member, just ask Celeste. She enjoyed the bits of information she picked up from her visits, but the real joy for Celeste was in the visit, the shared presence, the shared conversations that brought kindness and caring to others.

Celeste walked among us with gentleness of spirit and graciousness of heart and truly touched countless hearts and lives. Her ministry experiences as a primary teacher in schools in Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, and Delaware spanned almost sixty-four years of dedicated service. She absolutely cherished her interaction with the students, mostly first graders, and their families. Her smile and eyes that twinkled with delight brightened many a hallway and warmed children's hearts. Her presence, her gentleness, compassion, and understanding were life-long lessons that she modeled for her students, and all of us, every single day. As mission moderator at her beloved St. Ephrem's in Brooklyn, she taught the students about the needs of people less fortunate than them and then would sponsor a bake sale in the school and have the students donate the proceeds to those in need. In her file, there is a letter she wrote explaining that her first graders voted to send \$100 from one of their bake sales to the retired IHM sisters in Scranton – a copy of the check was there too. Valuable lessons learned, I'm sure, that stayed with those students and were passed on to future generations.

I once heard a person describe her life as "a happy one, simple, nothing spectacular." Those who knew Celeste saw in her that simplicity, but lived in an extraordinary way. She has been a loving sister to us. She supported us in our hopes and aspirations. Hers has been an elegant simplicity, an inspiring celebration of quiet trust, love, and support. She loved and was deeply

*continued on next page*

faithful to God, and that relationship was tended to constantly by her. Her gentle, gracious spirit reflected that faith and trust in God. She loved her family beyond measure – I don't know if you know this, Patty, but you and other family members were the topic of conversation many nights at Household 3-B's supper table. She loved her congregation and always expressed her deep gratitude for the many graces she received as a member. Even here at OLP, whenever there was a gathering, whether it was for Bingo or an auction, or whatever, Celeste was present and engaged. I loved that about her – she chose to be involved, not just sit on the sidelines. That spirit is what we celebrate today. She was so interested in others and what was happening in their lives, and shared that interest and love, that we never left her without a smile on our face and a feeling of being richly blessed by her humble goodness. How wonderful that she got to enjoy celebrations of her years and goodness this past fall when her 70<sup>th</sup> jubilee and 94<sup>th</sup> birthday were observed with much joy among the sisters here.

Celeste's goodness and deep faith were rooted in her close family ties. We remember her parents, Rose Ann and Henry, her sisters, Sister Jeannine and Rose Ann, and her brother, Joseph, with whom she is rejoicing today in heaven. I have no doubt that Celeste is already making the rounds, visiting family, friends, co-workers, and even students, catching up on the latest news and increasing the heavenly store of happiness by her gentle, joyful presence. We pray for all those who will miss her caring and joy-filled presence, especially Patty, Charlie, Jean, Tony, Casey, Julie, and Sarah, her other nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews, and all their families. Our prayers are also with her many IHM friends, the sisters, staff, and administrators here at Our Lady of Peace, especially those with whom she lived in Household 3-B, and all who knew and were blessed by her life.

Celeste's entire life was one of seeking the Loving God in all people and in all creation. So, with prayerful remembrance this morning, we honor the memory of our Celeste, who has stepped over the threshold of this life to be embraced fully in the mystery of God. May we live our lives as faithfully as Celeste did and come one day to be embraced in this same eternal love and mystery.

I now ask Patty to place the scriptures on Celeste's casket, for she heard the Word of God; indeed, she staked her life upon it, and received life to the full... the Word now beckons Celeste home.



Mary Luke Zaleski, IHM  
September 16, 1938  
January 30, 2022  
by Ellen Maroney, IHM

*Blest is she who believed that the promises  
made to her by our God would be fulfilled.*  
Luke 1:45

In these days since last Sunday, I've heard some very beautiful stories about Mary Luke and her faith and love for the poor and her kindness and gentle humor. The other night, one of the nurses on 1 C, where Mary Luke lived, told me that when she would come in to assist her, Mary Luke would ask her questions about what she was doing, and then would often end the conversation by saying, 'I'm going to make a nurse out of you yet.' They would both laugh.

We knew Mary Luke as sister, nurse, instructor, director, administrator, administrative assistant, and prayer minister, but, most of all, as a person of faith and great love for God.

She cared deeply about her profession and the people she served. She loved nature – its beauty, its changes – all reminded her of God's love for all creation. As a nursing instructor and administrator, she used her own education and training to teach students and staff how to minister with compassion and understanding to patients, especially those who were most vulnerable. Her smile and her own kindness and patience toward her patients brought healing to so many people. If I had to choose one word to describe Mary Luke, it would be gratitude. In my own conversations with her, no matter the topic or whether or not we agreed, she always voiced her gratitude to me and for the congregation in her life. In her file were many letters from Mary Luke recounting countless instances of kindness, thoughtfulness, generosity, and courage demonstrated by those with whom she lived and ministered. She appreciated the goodness in others.

We celebrate and give thanks, then, for Mary Luke's life among us, for her unwavering love of, and trust in, God, and for her great gratitude for all that she received, the rejoicings as well

as the sufferings. Her life was an example to me of the incredible power of true faith and trust in God to overcome the darkness in each of our own lives that sometimes seems so overwhelming, whether it be caused by illness, loneliness, or suffering of any kind. Joan Chittister refers to this as the internal "noise of the soul" that, rather than burden us, is meant to enable us to move forward "with new honesty, new hope." Mary Luke successfully completed that journey and rejoices today in the loving arms of the One who walked beside her each step of the way. Her vulnerability throughout her life was also her strength and her gift to us because she came to deeply understand the truth of those words of Joan Chittister, that compassion, kindness, and understanding of others is a source of God's healing and light in our world. Mary Luke sought to bring those gifts to those she met.

We bring thoughts of Luke's goodness to our prayer today as we also remember very specially her parents, Helen and Anthony, and her brother, John, and her dear friend, Cephas, who welcome her home to the eternal, all-encompassing love of her God.

We pray in a special way for those who will miss her dearly, especially her sister, Jewel, her nieces, nephews, and cousins, especially Jo Ann, her Band members and all her IHM sisters, especially those here at OLP, our OLP nurses and aids and the LIFE Geisinger staff in Household 1C, and all who knew and loved her. We ask the God of all consolation to comfort all of us at this time of loss.

Mary Luke's presence among us challenged and encouraged us, broadened and reassured us. Her compassion for the suffering opened our hearts; her illness reminded us of our own vulnerabilities, demonstrating that even amid our darkness, God's light and love shines through and we can each make a distinctive contribution to our world that is good and sacred. Her searching for life's meaning drew us ever closer to the God in whom she trusted and loved.

So let us continue our celebration now of Mary Luke's life and final journey home to the God whose unconditional love enfolds her for all eternity.



Obituaries for IHM Sisters

can be found at

Find a Grave

<http://tinyurl.com/yb3mp9ds>

Search by last name.



Mary Elaine Anderson, continued from page 5

5-year-old son and her two younger sisters, who were 12 and 14 years of age. The woman told me that while she was in the border patrol holding station, an official came and took away her two sisters. There was no time to say goodbye or to pass them their mother's phone number or address in the US, which she had written on a small, folded scrap of paper. No one even communicated where they were being taken. I will never forget the woman's eyes, which were lifeless. It was as if she, like her sisters, had disappeared and vanished into an unknown place.

Sometimes there were happy endings to the sad stories. I remember a woman crying tears of relief when she found out that her elderly father, who had been separated from her, had already been released by the Border Patrol and had safely reached their extended family in another state. Her joy warmed the hearts of all of us who were volunteering. Her tears and smiles gave hope to every asylum seeker who was longing to reach the journey's end and to be welcomed into the arms of waiting families and friends. On that day, we all felt the great Spirit of Ubuntu, a deepened sense of our interconnectedness and our potential to impact the emotional wellness of our world.

What I learned from my months of volunteering at the border is expressed in these words of Dr. Mmatheo Motsisi:

*UBUNTU is fueled by the Spirit of Oneness. Therefore, the notion of Separation or Divisions is an alien concept, for Oneness knows no Separation. There exists a common bond among us all and it is through this bond, through our interaction with our fellow human beings, that we discover our own human qualities.<sup>2</sup>*

May the Spirit of Oneness fill us with compassion and love and make us vulnerable and soft! May our stories and human experiences find a home in one another's hearts! May our collective heartbeat bring balance, harmony and emotional wellness to our world!

#### Resources

<sup>1</sup>Tutu, Desmond. No future without forgiveness. Center for Action and Contemplation: Daily Meditations (February 8, 2022).

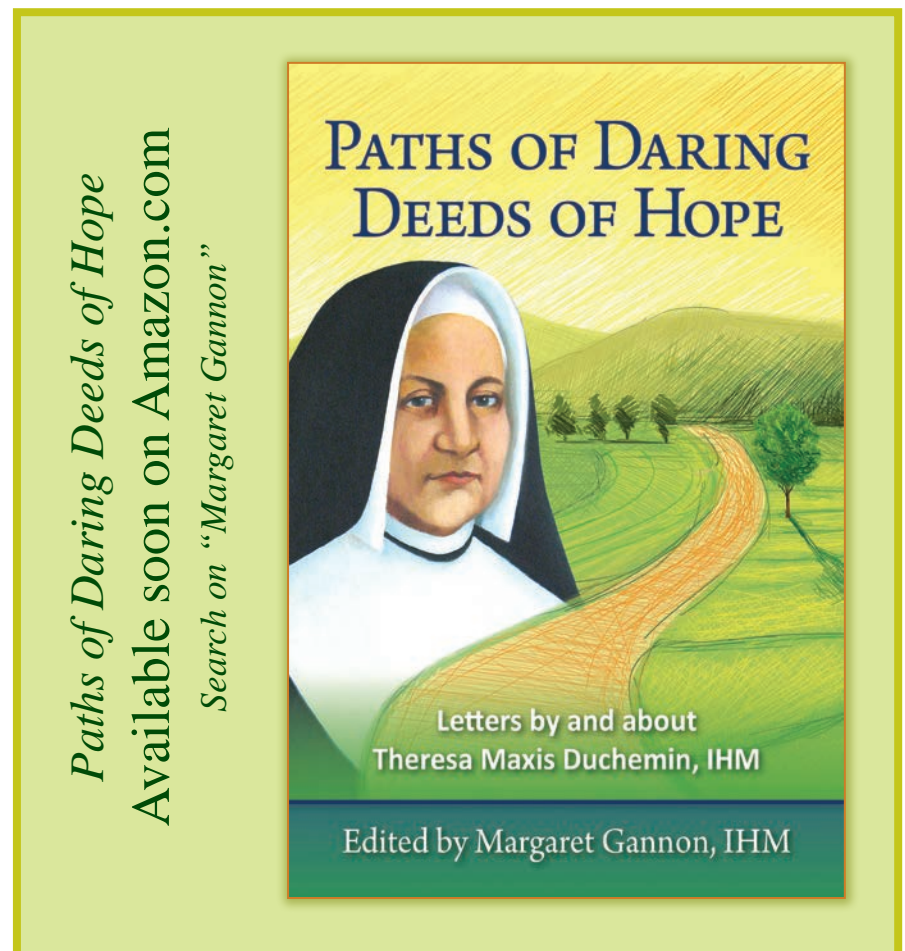
<sup>2</sup>Motsisi, Mmatheo. Spirit of Ubuntu. [www.mmatheomotsisi.com/2017/02/22/spirit-of-ubuntu-2/](http://www.mmatheomotsisi.com/2017/02/22/spirit-of-ubuntu-2/).

Lewis, Jacqui. Center for Action and Contemplation: Daily Meditations (February 7, 2022): <https://cac.org/the-spirit-of-ubuntu-2022-02-07/>

*A licensed mental health counselor and dance movement therapist, Mary Elaine currently serves as Director of Candidates and Novices for the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, PA. She participates in the OSP-IHM Committee for Collaboration at the US-Mexico Border.*



Sister Mary Elaine (center) with Almindra (right) and her husband at the Imperial Airport, El Centro, CA.



## Guided Inquiry to Process Emotion

You are invited into this guided inquiry to process emotion and find breath and action.

Where do you notice feeling grief in your body? What is the quality of that grief? What is the shape of grief inside of you? If it feels uncomfortable, take another deep breath and stay with it. Breathe through it.

What does your body need to be brave with this grief? What do you need to feel it and to move through this energy? What rituals are you called to? Who do you need by your side.

Who have you not yet grieved with? Whose story have you not fully let into your heart? What community's struggle have you not fully taken in? Notice what is happening in your body. If your fists tighten, or your heart beats fast, or if shame rises to your face, it's okay. Breathe through it. Trust that you can. The heart is a muscle: The more you use it, the stronger it becomes. You don't need to know people in order to grieve with them. You grieve with them in order to know them.

What do you need to do to be able to grieve with them? What vigils or marches need you? What houses of worship are you ready to visit? What phone call are you ready to make? You can begin where you are, with a simple text or email, saying to someone "I'm here for you."

You have a role to play that no one else can play. You don't have to know all the answers now. You simply need to allow yourself to feel the power that you have, the abilities that you have, the voice that you have, and invite that deepest wisdom inside of you to guide you into what you need to do now and next.

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*Journey*



*Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton, Pennsylvania*

## IHM Chapter of Affairs



IHM General Chapter meetings are planned every four years and are conducted in two parts: Chapter of Affairs at which members address the life and mission of the congregation and Chapter of Elections when members decide what gifts are needed for leadership of the congregation and then vote for the sisters who will lead the congregation in the next four years. These Chapter gatherings for decision making and planning are a graced and holy time for the Sisters of IHM. Pictured L-R are members of our

Chapter Coordinating Committee: Sisters Grace Surdovel, Ellen Maroney,  
Nancy Hawkins, facilitator Pat Kozak, CSJ, Kathleen Mary Burns,

Mary Elaine Anderson, Kathleen Lunsmann, and Angela Kim.



# Emotional Wellness