

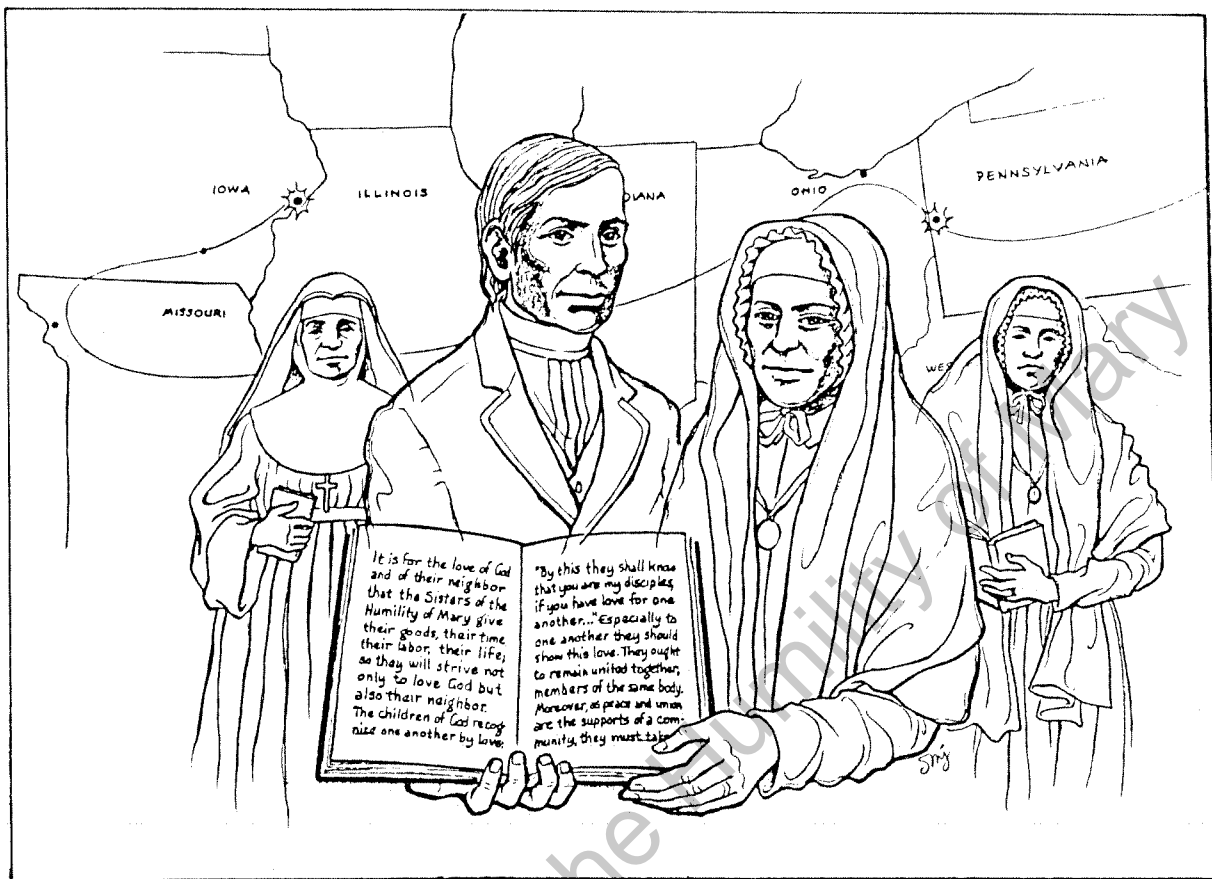
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A CELEBRATION OF 125 YEARS
IN AMERICA



Not only shall each Sister be humble
 but the Association shall be humble also.
 And if the Lord who has commenced it
 cause it to increase,
 if it please him that this mustard seed
 shall become a tree,
 it will extend its humble branches
 only in localities poor, abandoned, and without resource,
 after the example of their Lord
 who loved with a preference the lowly and the humble.

from The Original Rule
 written by the Reverend John Joseph Begel



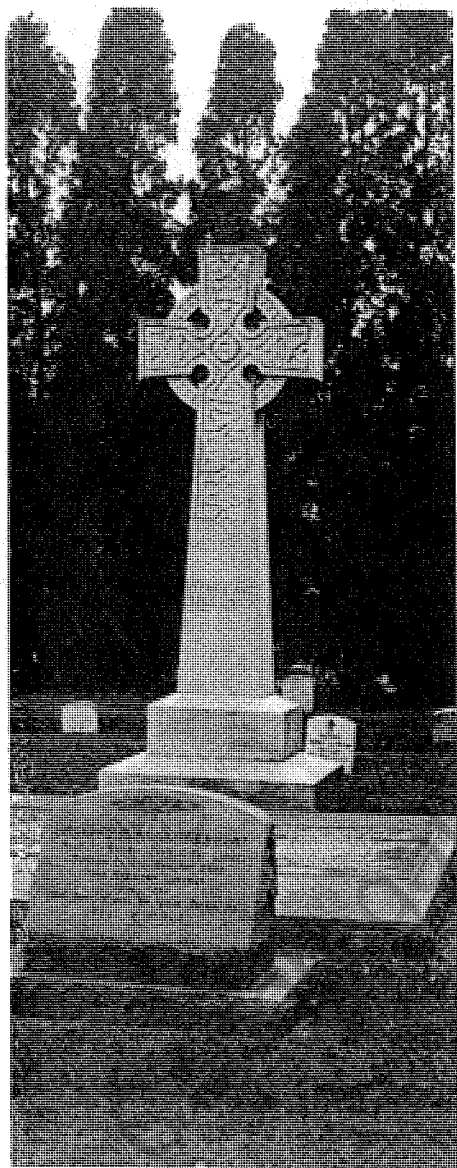
In this line drawing, modeled from photographs, our co-founders, Father John Joseph Begel and Mother Magdalen Potier, hold a copy of the Original Rule of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary. The open book contains a translation of lines which reveal the spirit of mutual love, union, peace and generous service to which the founding sisters aspired. Mother Mary of the Angels Maujean and Mother Anna Tabourat, two of the community's earliest members, are backed by an outline map showing the route their lives of love and service took them--Mother Anna, foundress in America, 1864, and Mother Mary of the Angels, later the foundress of the community in Missouri and Iowa. To them, and to all the sisters who have gone before us, we gratefully dedicate this Anniversary Publication and recommit ourselves to their spirit and mission.

*Sisters of the Humility of Mary
Villa Maria, Pennsylvania*

*Congregation of the Humility of Mary
Davenport, Iowa*

Design by Sister Mary-Joanna Huegle, HM

MUSTARD SEED



Grave sites of Father Begel, co-founder in France, 1854, and Mother Anna Tabourat, founder in America, 1864.

Photo by
Sister Therese Pavilonis, HM.

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MUSTARD SEED

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Published by the HM/CHM Committee, July 17, 1989, on the feast of the Humility of Mary, with a grant from the Founders' Fund, sponsored by the Sisters of the Humility Mary, Villa Maria, PA and the Congregation of the Humility of Mary, Davenport, IA.

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Photos by the following sisters appear in this special section:

Mary Therese Berry, HM; Becky Dobbels, CHM; Susan Gauntner, HM; Mary Ockuly, HM; Mildred Ruffing, HM, and Barbara Sitko, HM.

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COVER DESIGN: The tree on the cover was originally designed by Sister Elizabeth Staudt, HM, and adapted for MUSTARD SEED by Sr. Mary-Joanna Huegle, HM. Sister Elizabeth is a consultant and science program developer for the Mahoning County Public Schools. Sister Mary-Joanna is HM community archivist and member of the HM/CHM joint committee.

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Photographers whose works appear in this volume are Sister Eileen Mohr, HM; Sister Therese Pavilonis, HM, who combines art with retreat direction and lives in Girard, OH; Sister Barbara Sitko, HM, who is an English Department faculty member at Washington State University, Pullman, WA, Sister Mary Dolores Staudt, HM, who is director of Villa Maria Circle and also volunteers in the emergency room at St. Elizabeth Hospital Medical Center in Youngstown, OH.

MUSINGS: An Acrostic Meditation On Mother Anna Tabourat

by Sister Mary-Joanna Huegle, HM



Mother Anna Tabourat

Most of a life is spent learning, and
Ordering all the knowledge taken in
To make of it a whole, to find the
Harmony that marks a universe, a world,
Each art and science, every heart that reaches out,
Responding to the mystery of life and love . . .

A life is formed so slowly!
Nine months of hidden growth,
Nestled safely in maternal womb-world,
Are only a beginning . . .

Then comes the dawning wonder
After birth, when every month and year
Bring new skills, new signs
Of Progress as senses absorb and soak
Up impressions; eager mind explores,
Reaches, questions, seeks,
And learns about its world:
The life-long growing of a soul . . .

Music opens up another world, coming
Up from cryptic signs and stumbling scales,
Spiraling souls towards heaven's ecstasy.
If we cannot - untalented, untaught -
Coax splendid sound from mute instruments,
If we ourselves lack such a gift,
At least we recognize and marvel at its nuances
Nascent in another's lovely art . . .

A life is lived so slowly!
Nights and days in rhythmic measures are notation,
Developing the phrases of a song of love . . .

Mystic musing, though, isn't all of life:
Around us are the practical concerns
Kin to human need (sustenance for
Empitness, shelter and clothing and care,
Relief for suffering), and that's love's music, too!

Sister Mary-Joanna Huegle, HM,
is archivist for the Sisters of the
Humility of Mary, Villa Maria, PA.

PRAYER SERVICE FOR A JUBILEE

by Sister Margaret Daniels, HM

Opening: Listen to the music: "Journeys Ended, Journeys Begun"

Reader 1: Today we recall together that 125 years ago, God called into being a community of women who came to be known as the Sisters of the Humility of Mary. In all this century and a quarter, He has continued to call them into being - individual women with individual lives and individual histories - to continue His work of salvation.

All: And Mary kept all these things in her heart and pondered them.

Reader 2: No one of us remembers that whole span of 125 years, nor knows all the stories, the complete story of the works: the works of evangelization, of liberation, of justice: the works of mercy, reconciliation, compassion; the works of care for the poor - that go to make up the story God has been telling in the world for 125 years.

All: And Mary kept all these things in her heart and pondered them.

Reader 3: Each of us knows a part of the story - some that we have heard about our founders, some that we know ourselves about our contemporaries or companions, stories about the "good old" days or stories about the "brave new" days of the present or the future. All of us know stories about the community or its members or even about ourselves - that have touched us deeply and live on in our memories.

(Let us spend a few moments letting these stories rise up in our mind's eyes, and recalling whatever comes to light.)

Leader: We invite you now to join a partner or make a group of 3 and spend a few minutes retelling any story that seems to want to be told or simply listening to the stories of others.

(Group sharing)

Reader 4: As we ponder all these things in our hearts, we cannot but feel the richness of life we have been given and the fullness of life to which we are called in this community. All these and so many other stories of life have been happening for 125 years and today we celebrate them all.

All: And Mary kept all these things in her heart and pondered them.

Reader 5: We know that Mary, our patron and friend, keeps all our stories in her heart, and so today we ask for her continued special care for our communities and for ourselves as members. We rejoice in gratitude with her for God's doings on our behalf in the spirit of her Magnificat. Let us pray together:

Magnificat of Now

John 2: 1-12

My spirit watches for the potent moment, Yahweh,
and in the midst of this celebration
you are a throbbing presence.
All of us are here.
All of us are ready.
Yes, in this time the nearness of your blessing is felt.
"Wine they have not," I said to him.
"What is this to me and thee," he said.
"Not yet has come my hour."
Holy is this work now beginning.
Blessed is the first step.
Blessed are those who, prepared,
have the courage to begin.
Blessed are you, Yahweh, the enabler of deeds
great and simple for these people today.
The fruit of this work offers nourishment to generation
after generation for those who harvest it.
You show us the potency of people with a clear commitment;
you scatter the energies of those who vacillate.
You remove the moderators and the intercessors;
you speak directly to those who speak to you.
You provide answers for those who question;
to those who know the answers, you are silent.

You are here now, the Available One,
for the work of these times,
mindful of your continuing newness
... according to the tradition of all searching people ...
mindful of the continuing newness of each one of us,
we come with open minds
to accomplish the work of this day.

from *Miryam of Nazareth* by Ann Johnson
Reprinted with permission from Ave Maria Press

Song: "Journeys Ended, Journeys Begun"

*Sister Margaret Daniels, HM, is on the faculty of
Central Catholic High School, Canton, OH.*

*Leaving France, the Sisters had a vision
of peace and rewarding
missionary service in a new location.*

Pioneer Women of Hope

by Sister Madeleine Marie Schmidt, CHM



*Mother Mary of the Angels
Maujean*

The origin of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary in France in 1854 was not surprising for it was a time marked by the growth of the older religious orders and by the appearance of new communities; it was a time noted for a kind of intense piety. What was distinctive about the foundation in Dommartin and the similar one in Mazeley (later to join Father Begel's association) was the thrust of the two groups and the efforts on the part of both to remain aloof from the inflexibility of the older orders and the tendency of new ones to incorporate minute rules traditional to religious life.

The quality of uniqueness was introduced by Father John Joseph Begel and his friend and former associate Father Antoine Schilling of Mazeley who were devoted to the rural poor and, at the same time, acquainted with the efforts of the French government and local people to control religious groups. The two pastors emphasized visible poverty for the members of the fledgling groups to dispose them for dealing effectively with the poor whom they would provide with educational advantages, religious training, care for the orphaned and sick and encouragement for struggling people. In addition, these efforts and the providing of libraries and vocational training in workshops were goals that could only be pursued if the members were free from governmental interference. Avant-garde priests shaped and

inspired the first women who formed these religious groups. These women leaders with their priestly directors were innovators, initiators, pioneers of a new style of dedicated service, of committed love.

In Mazeley, the inspiration to respond to rural needs came to three young women as early as 1850 when they became part of a pastoral team. They pooled their resources and opened an industrial workshop. One young woman, Marie Catherine Maujean, later Sister Mary of the Angels, was to become the foundress of the "western" congregation of the Humility Sisters in America twenty years later. To begin the new project in Mazeley took devotion, single-mindedness, disinterestedness and zeal, qualities Marie Catherine possessed, according to Father Schilling. To persevere required an extraordinary determination which characterized Sister Mary of the Angels and her followers as women of hope.

"We cannot stand much longer as we are," wrote Sister Mary of the Angels (by then known as Mother) to Bishop Henry Cosgrove of Davenport (28 October 1889), thirty years after she joined the association of the Humility of Mary in Dommartin. Those thirty years were marked by many crises, each demanding detachment and separation. Father Schilling had said in the days of formation, "Separation is part of the burden accompanying

all great things in the world." Sister Mary's first separation was from her native town, Mazeley, and the second was the greater gift of country, relatives and friends. In 1864, political events forced a critical move to an entirely different location, to a foreign country to America. It was a time when Sister Mary of the Angels became closely associated with Mother Anna Tabourat who had accepted leadership after the death of the foundress Mother Mary Magdalen Potier.

Leaving France, the Sisters had a vision of peace and of rewarding missionary service in a new location. The vision was soon dimmed by the destitution of the site near Cleveland and by alienation due to strange culture and language and the absence of friends. The situation became impossible and Mother Anna, Sister Mary of the Angels and Sister Odile Philbert travelled, partly on foot, to see Bishop Amadeus Rappe of Cleveland, their new bishop, to ask that they be sent back to France. His listening, his encouragement and the arrangement for an English instructor for them strengthened their spirit of confidence. In 1864, with determination, they created a religious house at Villa Maria, then a difficult setting.

Six years later a new endeavor was proposed, work in the rural areas of

Missouri when Bishop John Joseph Hogan was beginning his episcopacy in the city of St. Joseph. Years before, in Mazeley, Father Schilling had said, "Go where God calls you." This was again a time for Sister Mary to respond; it was another separation, the giving up of her companionship with the original French Sisters, in particular with Mother Anna. It was also a removal from her spiritual guide, Father Begel.

The journey to Missouri was by rail, first to Quincy, Illinois, and then to Easton, Missouri. The new promised land proved dry and barren even to Sister Mary of the Angels, an experienced missionary. She saw clearly the need to serve the rural poor in the Midwest, even though she viewed the Missouri situation as dismal due to sparse Catholic population, scarcity of priests and the lack of material resources. Especially painful to Sister Mary was the fracturing of the friendship and trust of Mother Anna and Father Begel. The break was completed in October, 1874. Bishop Hogan had already recognized Sister Mary of the Angels as Mother. Symbolic of the estrangement was the Sisters' change of habit from blue to black (Mother Mary continued to wear her blue habit underneath the black one in the winter time.) The Sisters discovered that

the five sites where they located in Missouri were not places where a new small community could be nourished and grow. Mother Mary again pulled up roots, with the consent of Bishop John Hogan, and sought relocation in Iowa.

A home and opportunities to serve others were offered in Ottumwa; the Sisters could continue their care of orphans and teach the boys of the area. Almost immediately, the Sisters opened a hospital with the help of Mary Quinn Tally, for whom the facility was named. For Mother Mary, the calling to Ottumwa was again the beginning of new misunderstandings, of rejection, of failures in property and financial administration. Mother Mary went out of office, but her concern for the spiritual growth of the community continued. She felt there was a lack of spiritual direction, even though she wrote, "... the Rules of the day are followed here very well." In 1889, Mother Mary turned to Bishop Henry Cosgrove of Davenport for help for the community. She wrote, "... my life is a martyrdom," but "God has given me the grace to bear it." Discouragement also touched some of the Sisters who began to think that perhaps they should disband. Mother Mary fought against this spirit and took steps to rectify the situation.

With the interest of Bishop Cosgrove and the advice of friends, the immediate financial problems were overcome. An election brought new leadership. The next decade marked many new beginnings: In 1890 the Sisters of the Humility of Mary replaced the Visitation nuns who had a monastery and an academy for girls in Ottumwa. Their Fourth Street building became the mother-house. In 1895, Bishop Cosgrove invited the Sisters to care for the children in Sacred Heart Asylum, Davenport, a home they renamed St. Vincent's. By the turn of the century new teaching missions were opened in rural communities.

Interior qualities of faith, trust and fidelity carried Mother Mary through the crises of the first decades in Iowa. Open to God's demands, responsive to providential happenings, faithful to His Word, Mother Mary brought a personal quality to her leadership, one Father Schilling had called "stubborn devotedness." This dedication, together with a spirit of courage and joyful daring, enabled Mother Mary and the Sisters to see separation as Father Schilling had predicted, "part of the burden accompanying all great things." These pioneer women of hope offered a model to their 20th century Sisters to initiate new journeys, to diversify ministries and to be challenged by change. They, too, are called to respond to the needs of the times with faith, daring and "stubborn devotedness."

References

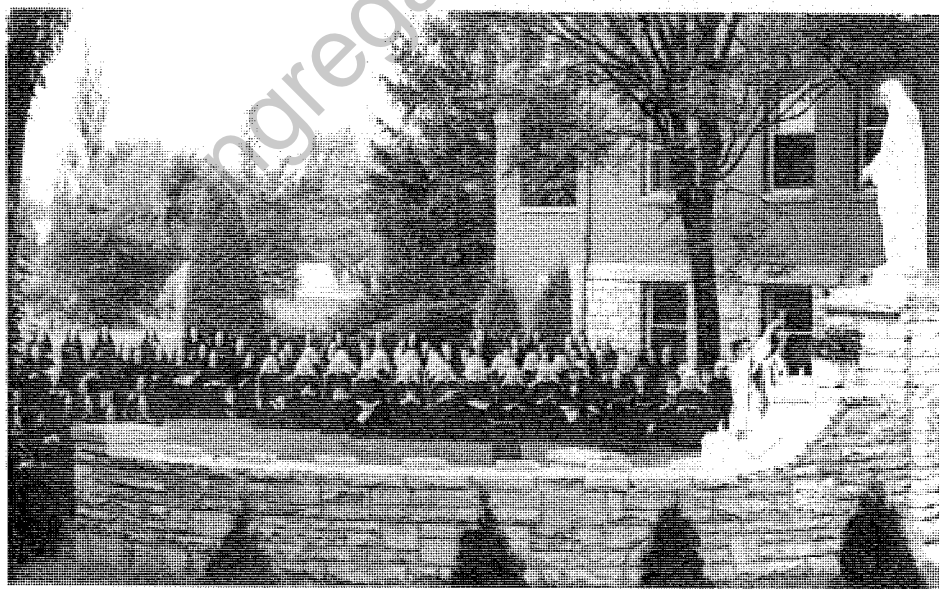
FOOTPRINTS by Sister Bernadine Pieper, CHM

Correspondence and unpublished documents in the Archives of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary

Correspondence in the Archives of the Diocese of Davenport.

This article originally was published in *IN SCAPE*, 10 September 1981, and has been edited.

Sister Madeleine Marie Schmidt, CHM, is archivist and historian for the Diocese of Davenport.



Mass celebrated in the courtyard at Ottumwa Heights

A Letter to Mother Anna

PAR AVION
BY AIR MAIL
PER LUGPO

30.11.88

বাংলাদেশ
BANGLADESH
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৳ 14.15

C. Young
NOTRE DAME
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1000

Notre Dame College
P.O. Box 5
Dhaka-2, Bangladesh

Dear Mother Anna,

I write in gratitude for the remarkable courage you showed in leaving your friends and your family home in France to make a new home in a foreign country. Not knowing what to expect, you trusted in the Lord--you did not withdraw from your decision to share the Good News with people in a strange country. There must have been times when you questioned your decision. I'm glad that you came to America and inspired other women to join you to answer the call of Christ by their dedicated lives.

Since you and your companions probably had not travelled very far beyond the confines of Dommartin, the idea of crossing an ocean on a ship must have been both terrifying and exciting. How important it was to have each other on that long and perilous journey. Besides the crowded conditions on the steamship Saxonnia, the questionable quality of the food and the probable sickness, you survived these dangerous conditions by focusing on your goal--to bring Christ's message to others. Your life was always for others.

Learning a new language had to be one of the hardest things you did. It is impossible to share yourself with others and to learn about their hopes and fears unless you can communicate. How happy the people must have been to see your determination to speak English and to reach out to them in the midst of their illness and hardships.

Because of your courage, I have been inspired to follow your example. Just as you experienced great joy in finding Christ in an alien country, so too I find great joy in witnessing to Christ's love for all people by my presence in Bangladesh. I am happy to answer the needs of the Church in another culture so that the reign of God might continue to come about.

Your grateful sister in Christ,

Claire

Claire Young, HM

Sister Claire Young, HM
teaches English at Notre
Dame College, Dhaka,
Bangladesh.

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Your grateful sister in Christ,

Claire

Claire Young, HM

Our Lady of the Villa Intercedes

by Sister Marie Celeste Carraher, HM

"The works of God are to be declared and made known with praise and due honor," Tobit 12:7



After exploring the Villa grounds, a retreat master once said that he had been puzzled about the statue of our Lady of the Villa. Where was her other arm? He had finally concluded that it was lovingly encircling all the sisters of the H.M. Community. I personally experienced the warmth of that embrace very early in my religious life.

When I was a novice, I developed a severe cough which prompted my novice mistress to send me to St. Elizabeth Hospital to determine its cause. Doctor Dreiling, then Chief of Staff examined me, and then brought in Doctor Brody, chief cardiologist, for consultation. After several tests I was diagnosed as having "an enlarged heart and a congenital pulmonary sclerosis." Using the fluoroscope, Doctor Brody outlined for Sister Regina Mercedes (Mistress) how a normal heart should look, pointing out my enlargement, and explaining the pulmonary ar-

tery problem. Both doctors agreed that I would be unable to withstand the stress and strain of either teaching or nursing. My whole world began to crumble! I knew that our rule plainly stated: "A postulant or novice found to be suffering from some disease which is chronic or incurable shall be dismissed." The only difference was I wasn't suffering.

When Mother Patrick sent for me she said, "Codger, I'm so sorry! I really thought you were one of the healthiest novices in the novitiate. I'll do all I can for you, but the decision rests with the Council which I will call together next week at Wickliffe." I was instructed to write to my family and inform them of the possibility of my dismissal.

From some of the old sisters I had heard the story about Sister Beatrix who had had T.B. and who built our little shrine in thanksgiving to our Blessed Mother for having obtained a cure for her. I was told that, as a symbol of her faith, she scraped a little powder from the back of the statue, and consumed it as she prayed. With all the fervor of my young novice-heart I decided to do likewise! Every day while the Council was in session, instead of packing my trunk, I visited the "Wish House." I pleaded with our Blessed Mother as I consumed a few grains of powder: "You did that for Sister Beatrix, and you can do it for me, too. Please don't let them send me home!"

When my mistress finally called me to render the verdict she said, "The Council has unanimously agreed to let you stay on the condi-

tion that you will not go to school, but remain here and do whatever 'odd jobs' you are able to do."

I didn't go to school with my class. However, during the next administration, Mother Ursula decided to let me try. After two years I got my certification and was sent on mission. Presumably the authorities still had some misgivings about my physical stamina, because I wasn't sent to summer school for the next five years. Consequently it wasn't until fifteen years later that I received a B.S.E. I taught for forty-three years, and remained on mission for five more, engaging in teaching C.C.D., in cooking, sacristy work, and volunteering in the Pastoral Care Department of a nearby County Hospital.

What about my heart problem? After a few years the cough had completely disappeared, and I have not yet had a coronary problem. A skeptic may say, "It was an incorrect diagnosis." I think not for three reasons. First, those were two reputable doctors. Secondly, after I had a near-death struggle with influenza in 1918, our family doctor maintained that it had left me with a heart problem, and he ordered many of my childhood activities curtailed. Even as I approached adolescence, I had difficulty in convincing him that I never experienced pain, and felt perfectly fine. Lastly, we must never underestimate what our Blessed Mother can do! I am firmly convinced that I owe the salvaging of my vocation to Mary, my Advocate before her divine Son, and I'm happy to give this testimony to her intercessory power.

Sister Marie Celeste Carraher, HM, died on February 2, 1989, after a life of service in parish elementary schools.

*The sisters responded to the need
of education in Montana
in traditionally established schools
in remote areas.*

work in schools where teachers were in great demand in Missouri.

In 1877 Sister Francis accompanied Mother Mary of the Angels on a trip seeking funds for their impoverished missions. Arriving in Ottumwa they met Rev. John Kreckel, pastor of St. Mary Church, who was seeking sisters to teach the boys' in his parish. As a result of the visit the entire group of sisters moved to Ottumwa. Sister Francis organized a school for boys in the basement rectory. Enrollment increased and classroom space was extended to the next floor of the rectory.

The following year, 1878, Rev. Peter J. Portz

Mother Francis Mangan - Woman

by Sister Mary John Byers, CHM and Sister Maurine Sofranko, CHM

Who was Mother Francis? She holds the distinction of being the only Sister of Humility to live in all three foundations. She was professed at Villa Maria, followed Mother Mary of the Angels as general superior in Ottumwa and established the Montana community.

Sarah Jeanne Mangan, daughter of Francis Mangan, was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, April 1, 1856. She had two brothers, Frank and Joseph. The family moved to Dubuque, Iowa where the father taught in a Catholic boys' school operated by the Sacred Heart Brothers. When it closed he moved to Des Moines, Iowa where he taught in the first Catholic boys' school in the city. When his sons were ready for high school, the family moved to Conception, Missouri where the Benedictines were building a monastery.

Sarah Jeanne first came in contact with the Sisters of Humility when they were located in Easton, Missouri. At the age of 16 she became the third postulant to enter the Missouri community, December 8, 1872. She received the habit in the Liberty, Missouri headquarters, July 13, 1873, taking the name Sister Mary Francis. As prearranged with the Pennsylvania motherhouse, she went to Villa Maria for her novitiate. There she continued her education and was privileged to study music under Mother Anna Tabourat who succeeded Mother Magdalen Potier as general superior from 1864 until her resignation in 1883.

Sister Francis was professed at Villa Maria, August 15, 1875, then returned to resume her

opened a school in Marshalltown, Iowa. Sister Francis was assigned to open the first school outside Ottumwa. She remained there for two years before returning to Ottumwa when she was appointed general superior for ten years.

Rev. Mathias C. Lenihan, pastor of Marshalltown, was appointed First Bishop of the newly formed Great Falls Diocese in 1904. He invited the Sisters of Humility to open the first Catholic school in Great Falls, Montana at St. Mary's, the cathedral parish. Mother Francis, Sisters Annunciation and Evangelista were assigned to the new mission.

Enroute to Great Falls they were delayed in St. Paul, Minnesota for several days by a blizzard. Arriving in Great Falls, December 7, 1906, the weary travelers were met by Bishop Lenihan, Rev. McCormack and Rev. John Henessy from the Cathedral and driven to Columbus Hospital where they were guests of the Sisters of Providence.

The following morning Bishop Lenihan took the sisters to the school and home he had provided for them. It was a large two-story vacated hotel building on the corner of Eighth Avenue North and 15th Street. Renovation plans were discussed for classrooms on the first floor and living quarters for the sisters on the second.

During the renovation the sisters began religious instruction for 300 children at the Cathedral. They replaced lay teachers who instructed the children until the arrival of the sisters. Christ-

mas Eve they attended Midnight Mass celebrated by the Bishop. Immediately after, he left for Dav-
enport, Iowa, to attend the funeral of the Most
Rev. Henry Cosgrove, D.D., who died after a 12
year term of office.

The sisters moved into their new home on De-
cember 28. Delivery of classroom furniture was
delayed because of blizzards and heavy snow.
Using whatever materials were available, they
improvised tables and chairs for the opening day,
January 2, 1907. Nine students came the first
day.

Mother Francis began almost immediately to
give music lessons after school and on Saturday.

of Vision

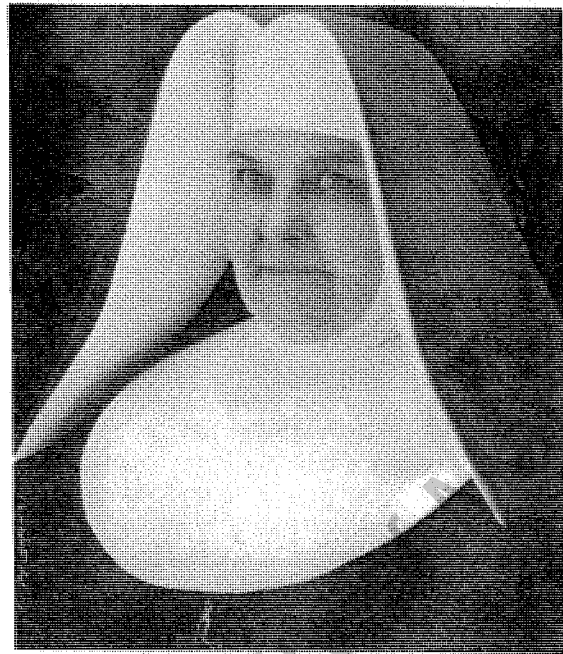
Many years later Mother Genevieve, OSU, re-
called that as young children, she, her brother
and sister were music students of Mother Francis.
Mother Genevieve's brother took little interest in
music and wished to terminate lessons. Mrs.
McBride made the final decision by announcing,
"You will all take lessons; the sisters need the
money!"

Mother Vincent, superior general of the Sisters
of Humility, made her first visit to Great Falls in
1908 shortly after the opening of the school in
the new location. The visit provided the opportu-
nity to assess the work and needs of the sisters.
Mother Vincent returned to Iowa with complete
knowledge of the problems, successes and im-
mediate needs of the sisters, yet she could not ex-
tend much hope that additional personnel would
be forthcoming.

The school was moved to the old cathedral and
a house purchased at 717 Third Avenue North
for the sisters. This brought them much closer to
the school.

In appraising the work of the sisters in Great
Falls and the upswing to open schools in Iowa, it
is asked why a new foundation was undertaken
in Great Falls. When the sisters were assigned to
open a school it was not the intention of Mother
Francis to break away from the Ottumwa group.
Neither was it in the plan of Mother Vincent to
continue a steady supply of sisters to a distant
area where another order of sisters was actively
engaged, the Sisters of Providence.

When Mother Ligouri was elected superior gen-



Mother Francis Mangan

eral in 1909, the growing demand to open new
schools in Iowa was greater than the supply. It
was expedient to recall the sisters to Iowa.

Bishop Lenihan was reluctant to close St. Mary's.
In a letter to Bishop Davis he stated, "These
sisters have made themselves so useful that it
would be easier for me to do without an assistant
priest than to do without their assistance in
parochial work." He petitioned Bishop Davis to
intercede for him.

The issue was dissolved by the Apostolic Dele-
gate who stated the Great Falls sisters were sub-
ject to the authority of the Ottumwa superior
general. Mother Francis and the sisters were in
agreement with the decision to return to Iowa.

The issue was reopened when Bishop Lenihan
contacted Bishop Davis asking him to negotiate
for the sisters remaining in Montana. He ques-
tioned the interpretation of the finality of the
decision of the apostolic delegate. Bishop Davis
presented the case to Mother Ligouri. He sug-
gested for the best interests of everyone, includ-
ing the interests of the Church and Catholic edu-
cation, a severance of the two groups seemed ad-
visable. The final separation was marked by the
profession of two novices, Sisters Regina Thill
and Loretto Dimke on December 30, 1912. By
1915 nine additional postulants entered the com-
munity.

Enrollment in the school increased along with
a request for continued education. A two-year
commercial course following graduation from

*'These sisters have made themselves so useful
that it would be easier for me to do without an assistant priest than to
do without their assistance
in parochial work.'*

eighth grade was offered qualifying young women for secretarial work. In 1916 the first high school graduation class included six girls. On April 10, 1922, ground was broken for a 47-room convent at 920 Fourth Avenue North.

The year 1925 was declared a Holy Year Jubilee for the entire Church. It also marked the golden jubilee of Mother Francis. Bishop Lenihan invited her to join the group he was sponsoring to visit Rome. In a private audience with the Holy Father the Bishop asked him to confirm Mother Francis in her office of mother general for life. The return trip was made with stops in Lourdes, Paris, London and Dublin. While in Ireland Mother Francis met several young women who were interested in religious life. Two postulants arrived the following November, followed by twelve young women who became Sisters of Humility.

With increased membership schools opened in Billings, Lewistown, Glendive, Red Lodge and Sidney. Three schools were opened in Great Falls. In 1929 Vacation Schools were inaugurated, so called because they were scheduled at the close of the school year. They were held for two to four weeks and provided the opportunity for indepth learning sessions in doctrine, church music, altar boy training, First Communion and Confirmation instruction.

In 1932 Mother Francis, who had reached the age of 76, felt she could no longer meet the demands of the office and petitioned the Holy Father to be released from the position of superior for life. Mother Francis died in 1944.

Mother Francis did not live to see the amalgamation of the Ottumwa and Great Falls communities. Mother Geraldine Upham, Mother Colette Troja, Mother Rose Dimke, Bishop Ralph L. Hayes of Davenport and Bishop William J. Condon considered the feasibility of the union of the two communities. The Decree of Execution was signed on June 24, 1947 by respective authorities and 40 Sisters of Humility in Great Falls.

During her life Mother Francis was a deeply religious woman, a woman of vision. Many who knew her attest to her leadership. One sister who knew her during the first years of her religious life, recalled many years later:

I had a good superior in Mother Francis. My three years in the novitiate and nine years of my early religious life were spent under Mother Francis. I could go to her and talk over everything, come away like I was a real cog in the wheel. No sister was set aside and made to feel that she was a nobody. Mother was strict but noble and generous in her dealings with others.

Sister Mathias Lenihan, the first postulant from Ireland, states:

As I knew her, Mother Francis impressed me as being a very secure person of high intelligence and great wisdom, a person whose opinion I could rely on because of her genuine sincerity as well as her knowledge and experience. Mother had a quiet grace and strong personality.

Sister Mary John states:

Even though Mother Francis had retired by the time I entered in 1934, she was still teaching novices religion and spirituality. I remember her as a deeply spiritual person and it was her desire to teach us the importance of prayer in our lives. Prayer was always a priority with her. One comment to me has been an inspiration all my life. We were sharing our experiences in teaching boys and she said, "You're a sister after my own heart."

As we look back with sentiments of nostalgia, we also assess it as a time of great achievement. The sisters responded to the need of education of youth in Montana, whether in traditionally established schools or in vacation schools in remote areas. The sisters were a dedicated group searching for innovative ways of service. They pursued their work as professionals, ever giving, seldom asking, without headlines or spotlights. They carried the torch of education of youth as did the first Sisters of Humility in Dommartin, France. Mother Francis was their inspiration.

Sister Mary John Byers, CHM, is a member of "Project Renewal," an inner-city community. Sister Maurine Sofranko, CHM, resides at Humility of Mary Center, Davenport, IA.



Villa Maria Cemetery Photo by Sister Eileen Mohr, HM

A Jubilee Ode to the Villa Dead

by Sister Leola Hausser, HM

*They enter God's gates with thanksgiving,
God's courts with peace. Ps. 109*

Grace and Emilie
Ernestine and Audrey
Anselm and Antoinette
Paula and Stephen:
You women in your nineties
Who lie among the cypresses--
So brief your time of rest!

Veronica and Ursula
Leonida and Regina
Agatha and Ligouri
Gabriel and Ursula:
Still children in your teens
And twenties and your thirties--
You've rested in your cypress graves
For a century and more!

But to Borromeo goes the prize
For her hundred years of life before
The cypress bed in nineteen-eighty-eight.
And to young Alphonsus Coyne
Whose life at just eighteen
Came abruptly to an end
About a century ago.

I wonder what they said, these
Two who met with a century
Or so to share and reminisce:
Wise old Borromeo (1888-1988)
And young Alphonsus Coyne (1859-1877)!

*Sister Leola Hausser, HM, is on the faculty of
Walsh College, Canton, OH.*

A NEW SPIRITUALITY: LIVING THE CHARISM

by Sister Carolyn Capuano, HM



Villa Maria Chapel Photo by Sr. Therese Pavlonis, HM

Sister Carolyn Capuano, HM, is a member of the HM Council and Director of Ongoing Formation.

Genuine humility is truth. It is truthful acknowledgement of who God is, who others are, who I am. It is truthful acknowledgement of who we (God, self, others) are in relationship. In truth, the humble heart knows that it holds strength as well as weakness, grace as well as sin. There is a balance in authentic humility. The charism of humility begets a sense of at home-ness with God, self, others.

It is this humility which is the original charism of the sisters of the Holy Humility of Mary.¹ Humility was founding charism and is lived charism today. It is this charism, this grace for mission of the Holy Spirit for the Church, which both shapes and is lived out in Humility of Mary spirituality. In his work on religious life, Robert Faricy, S.J. points out that:

No formula can adequately express the charism of a religious institute. A charism can be grasped, appreciated, made somehow perceptible only when we see it expressed in people who have that charism.²

Just as the charism of humility can be recognized in the lives of the first Sisters of the Holy Humility of Mary, so too, it can be recognized in the lives of the sisters today. In many ways, the charism has been handed on from generation to generation in the community in an almost genetic fashion.

The lived expression of charism, the spirituality of the congregation, can be discerned in the Sisters' (past and present) experiences of meeting and serving God in Eucharist and neighbor. It can be noticed in the apostolic attitudes of winning hearts and bringing life. It can be known in the loving reverence of the sisters for one another in community and in the exercise of authority as service in the midst of one's companions. There is in all of this that "certain constancy of orientation"³ of which Paul VI spoke. We Sisters of the Humility of Mary, our relationships, our ways of following and serving Christ, "here and now incarnate the dynamic movement of the charism."⁴ In the living is the spirituality. It is the way of genuine humility.

OF HUMILITY

This spirituality is real, it pervades our lives. Even without naming it, others recognize it as Humility of Mary. It is what attracted most of us to enter the community. Humility of Mary spirituality ran deeper than the devotions and the customs of the founding Sisters. Their devotional practices and religious exercises are all delineated in the original Rule and Statutes. Most of the pious customs described there were common among religious congregations of the day. It is important to note that all of the religious activities are presented in the rule as means to an end, i.e. the end being personal and communal growth in relationship with God (holiness) and Christian service to our neighbor. Consequently, the original rule spoke of the need for adaptation lest the various practices become a hindrance rather than a help.

At certain times of pressing business, as the harvest, the gathering of hay or aftermath, or the vintage, there can be no lessons of preparations; the hour of supper can be changed and the visit to the Blessed Sacrament can be postponed or omitted...There is no particular hour for the recitation of the beads...if the whole rosary cannot be said at once, a part of it may be said at one time and a part at another...⁵

Prudent exercise of common sense and an attitude of healthy balance toward religious practices have always marked Humility of Mary spirituality. Charity, service, affection for the neighbor have always taken precedence over the letter of the rule. Ever since its founding, the community has been flexible in its attitudes toward religious practices. Rather than minimizing the importance of such things as personal and communal prayer, devotions (rosary, adoration, etc.), silence and recollection, this balanced perspective has enabled the community to hold on to what is helpful and to modify or delete what is not.

Actually, current Humility of Mary religious activities bear remarkable resemblance to those deemed most important by the early community.

Activities such as the annual and monthly retreat, celebration of Eucharist, attention to the Scriptures, adoration and rosary are to be found in the original rule⁶ as well as in all subsequent revisions.⁷ Some pious practices are found in the unwritten, lived tradition of the sisters.

Such a common practice of personal and congregational adaptation indicates the sense of spiritual freedom which is part and parcel of a spirituality based on genuine humility. A spirituality grounded in humility is characterized by the honest recognition and loving acceptance of need and limitation in the love of God, self, and neighbor. In the practice of religious activities, Humility of Mary spirituality seeks to foster acceptance of God's grace and response to God's loving invitation to relationship. By recognizing and affirming the uniqueness of God's call to each sister and her relationship with God, Humility of Mary spirituality encourages growth in Christian maturity and responsibility. Trusting that the Divine desire is only that we "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8),⁸ Humility of Mary Spirituality wants devotional and other religious practices to be blessing not burden for each sister.

Spirituality, of course, is far more than devotional practices and other forms of piety. "From the perspective of the actualization of the human capacity to be spiritual, to be self-transcending—that is, relational and freely committed, spirituality encompasses all of life."⁹ Looked at in this way, Humility of Mary spirituality is inextricably tied to the lives of the first and of all the sisters. It is expressed in the experience of Humility of Mary women "attempting to live out communitarian, mutual workstyles which affirm gifts of ministry in all persons."¹⁰ It is expressed in the experience of Humility of Mary women attempting to live out a communitarian religious lifestyle in which all are equal, where authority is exercised as service, where mission is to join Christ in bringing more abundant life to all. These ideals of ministry, mission, and community are as clearly expressed in the rule of 1858 as they are in the rule of 1986. Marked as it is by the gospel vision of interdependence not domination, community not hierarchy, and inclusion not elitism, Humility of Mary spirituality is a striking example of a Christian spirituality which is also a feminist spirituality.

Anne Carr, a contemporary theologian, describes a feminist Christian spirituality as follows:

Such a spirituality would affirm and be deeply at home in the reality of sister-

hood. It would recognize the importance of the supportive network among women of all ages, races, and classes and would espouse non-competitive, non-hierarchical, non-intervention modes of relationship among human beings.¹¹

Carr believes that, for the most part, such a feminist spirituality is new. This is not entirely true. Elements of the kind of feminist Christian spirituality which she describes have been present from the beginnings of Humility of Mary spirituality and can be found in the original rule and in other early community documents.

Having origins, as it does, in the mid-nineteenth century, Humility of Mary spirituality was birthed in struggle. The struggle was that of its deepest values and visions to push through prevalent expressions of self-abnegation, flight from the world, and a sometimes saccharine piety. The struggle was to keep alive in lifestyle and companionship and apostolate all which had surrounded the experiencing of God in Eucharist and neighbor, while attempting to write a rule of life which would gain the congregation ecclesiastical approval. The associates at Dommartin desired to be religious. They also desired to remain true to themselves, to God and to themselves in relationship to God and neighbor. Points of tension in the struggle are found in various juxtapositions in the original rule. Juxtaposed are counsels which read like warnings and those which foster co-responsibility. For example, in the section on Obedience:

They will always be ready to give up their own will, naturally so perverse and contemptible ...

Everyone should do with the grace of God, all she possibly can, that things may go on well ...¹²

The chart which follows will serve to illustrate some sentiments found in the original rule and other early documents which stand as examples of the elements of a feminist Christian spirituality. As early as 1857 these elements were present and were emerging in the beginnings of Humility of Mary spirituality.

The seeds of something new for religious life and for the Church were present in embryonic form as Humility of Mary spirituality was first expressed and lived. Perhaps influenced by the French revolutionary sentiments of liberty, equality and fraternity, certainly influenced by the Gospel,

something new was being lovingly fashioned by a small cluster of country women in cooperation with God's grace. Blessed with their charism of humility, truth, these women put on no airs, no stereotypic roles when they put on their blue costumes, common dress of the common people. They struggled to remain in the midst of their neighbors as they took on a religious life style, which ordinarily meant enclosure in a cloister. They continued to worship in the parish church, praying the public prayers. They invited others to join them during their annual retreat, "if it be judged not inconvenient to admit to the retreat persons from the outside."²⁹ They opened their libraries and their homes. They identified with all common folk who must earn a living by the work of their hands. These women valued education in all areas, sacred and secular, "for nothing can remain foreign to the glory of God."³⁰ And they shared their learning with all others, girls and boys, women and men.

Woven into the fabric of a rule of life traditional enough to secure ecclesiastical approval were threads of something new. The warp of the fabric contained the nineteenth century standards for religious life, warnings about the evils of the world, hierarchical government structures, mandates for schedule and deportment. The woof, however, was woven bright with new threads of liberation through education, diversification of apostolic works, membership without financial means, equality as sister companions, work as the basis for support. Woven throughout were counsels to remain in close, personal relationship with God, "to preserve in their hearts this holy love of God."³¹ This way of life, handed on as spiritual heritage, was a way of living humility. It was living a humility which was whole and sound. It was a humility set apart and dedicated to the service of God, God who touched and was touched in the breaking of the bread and in the loving of the neighbor.

Pope Paul VI in *Evangelica Testificatio* counseled that apostolic religious must:

...combine contemplation with apostolic love. By the former they cling to God in mind and heart; by the latter they strive to associate themselves with the work of redemption and to spread the kingdom of God.³²

This is what the founding sisters and their brother, Father Begel, were about as they articulated an Humility of Mary spirituality, a way of living a humility which was truly holy.

ELEMENTS OF A FEMINIST CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY ¹³	CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ELEMENTS ¹⁴	EXAMPLES OF PRESENCE OF THE ELEMENTS IN EARLY HUMILITY OF MARY DOCUMENTS
SISTERHOOD	at home with the reality of non-hierarchical, non-competitive relationships	<p>The Daughters of the Holy Humility of Mary will treat one another with politeness ... free from all repulsive coldness and distrust, from bitter and withering jealousy ... which cause division.¹⁵</p> <p>...in order to preserve among them union, simplicity, charity and humility, the superioress of a house may be chosen from among those who exercise the functions of corporal or manual work ... who in other communities are called lay-sisters.¹⁶</p> <p>But might it be said that this congregation without a dowry could pose an unfortunate competition to religious compensated for their services by the communes? Yes, perhaps, if it were a question of competition, but, ... maintained in its original spirit, it will do no harm.¹⁷</p>
RELIGIOUS/CHRISTIAN	is open to all, is inclusive, is marked by human mutuality, reciprocity, and interdependence before God who wills unity and community, God who calls community, God who calls us friends	<p>Let them love Jesus Christ, their God ... their friend ...¹⁸</p> <p>To become a member of the Association ... there are some aptitudes required. If these aptitudes required are found in a person who desires to become an associate, joined to a fundamental good will ... there will be no difficulty to admit her ... even without means of dower ...¹⁹</p> <p>...let a Superioress look on herself as being such as in effect she ought to be, the servant of all the sisters ...²⁰</p> <p>in each house ... will be found added to it a workroom. The workroom ... will be a powerful means of working for the glory of God. Adults can be always admitted.²¹</p>
FEMINIST	encourages autonomy, self-actualization, self-transcendence of all women and men, recognizes the uniqueness of the individual	<p>There will be in each house a small library of a few hundred volumes for the use of the sisters and that of the girls and women of the parish ... to give them precious knowledge and a deeper faith.²²</p> <p>To remedy for themselves and others so profound and lamentable an ignorance, the Daughters of the Holy Humility of Mary will endeavor to acquire a solid knowledge of the history of the two testaments and sufficient and suitable knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.²³</p> <p>Each of the sisters will exercise herself at her trade and will endeavor to initiate a younger sister into the same art.²⁴</p>
CRITICAL	recognizes cultural and religious limitations placed on women, past and present	<p>Established on this basis [work, self-supporting], an association would escape all of the numerous and serious drawbacks which religious establishments founded on endowments, foundations and remuneration from the communes present.²⁵</p> <p>Here is your glorious heritage, my sisters, the goal which you have proposed for yourselves and the very holy services which you have been permitted to fulfill. I don't know that such a beautiful aim has ever been allotted to any other religious congregation, especially of women!²⁶</p>
SELF-CRITICAL	recognizes the temptation to impose another ideology as oppressive as the old	<p>If it should happen that ... some articles forbidden by the Rule as being expensive, are found to be in common use among the poor in other places, the sisters can avail themselves of this circumstance ...²⁷</p> <p>... a congregation of this type, visibly poor, would not only be unassailable, but would serve others as a powerful shield. The only things to be feared here are the disadvantages of too great a poverty and the dangers of utopia.²⁸</p>

1 The wisdom of God was contained in what appeared to be the whim of the Vicar General in naming the congregation.

2 Robert Faricy, S.J., *The End of Religious Life* (Minneapolis, Winston Press, 1983), p. 6.

3 Pope Paul VI, James Walsh (trans.), "Evangelica Testificatio, On Renewing the Religious Life," *The Way Supplement* 14 (Autumn, 1971): 3-26.

4 John Carroll Futrell, S.J., "Discovering the Founder's Charism," *The Way Supplement* 14 (Autumn 1971): 62-70.

5 John Joseph Begel, Sister Odile Phibert, H.H.M. (trans.),

Statutes and Rules of the Sisters of the Holy Humility of Mary (Dommartin-sous-Amance, France, 1858 and Villa Maria, PA, 1877), Section III part III, 5. Hereafter cited as *Original Rule*.

6 *Ibid.*, Section III part II; Section III part III, 1-5.

7 See rules published in 1881, 1960, 1986.

8 *The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version* (New York World Publishing Co., 1952).

9 Joan Wolski Conn, ed., "Women's Spirituality: Restriction and Reconstruction," *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development* (New York, Paulist Press, 1986), p.9.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

11 Anne Carr, "On Feminist Spirituality," *Women's Spirituality*, pp. 49-58.

12 *Original Rule*, *op. cit.*, Section I part VII.

13 Carr, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Original Rule*, *op. cit.*, Section I part II.

16 *Ibid.*, Section II part IV.

17. John Joseph Begel, Sister Mary Therese Berry, H.M. (trans.), "Report to Bishop Menjaud, Nancy, on the Development and Aims of the Association at Dommartin, 1857" (Villa Maria, PA, Sisters of the Humility of Mary, archives, 1981). Hereafter cited as "Report to Bishop Menjaud, 1857."

18 *Original Rule*, *op. cit.*, Section I part I.

19 *Ibid.*, Section II part I.

20 *Ibid.*, Section III part IV.

21 *Ibid.*, Section III part II.

22 *Ibid.*, Section II part V, 1.

23 *Ibid.*, Section II part V, 2.

24 *Ibid.*, Section III part I.

25 Report to Bishop Menjaud, 1857, *op. cit.*

26 John Joseph Begel, "The Special Value of Charity Exercised," *Commentaries on the Rule* (Villa Maria, PA, Sisters of the Humility of Mary archives), Notebook # 1554.

27 *Original Rule*, *op. cit.*, Section I part IV, 1.

28 Report to Bishop Menjaud, 1857, *op. cit.*

29 *Original Rule*, *op. cit.*, Section III parts II, III.

30 *Ibid.*, Section I part III.

31 *Ibid.*, Section I part I.

32 Pope Paul VI, "Evangelica Testificatio," *op. cit.*



Fire at Ottumwa Heights

by Sister Marcia Eckerman, CHM

The Ottumwa Heights College, Academy and Convent, a distinctive building of French villa style and situated on a 125-acre tract north of Ottumwa, Iowa, was destroyed by fire on Tuesday, October 8, 1957.

The fire, discovered at 12:15 p.m. by Sr. Mary Diane who was ill in bed, spread rapidly throughout the building and could be seen through the stained glass windows of the chapel.

Lost in the blaze were most of the historical documents of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary.

The 140 girls enrolled in the academy, the 195 in the college and the 75 sisters on the staff lost all their

possessions except the clothes on their back. None of the 410 people inside the building were injured.

The fire continued to enflame the building, while the sisters and students gathered on the lawn to pray for the safety of the firemen.

Volunteers quickly gathered to find housing and clothing for the sisters and students. Many students were relocated to nearby homes. Some sisters moved to Villa Marie, recently acquired by the community, others to Marycrest College, in Davenport, Iowa, and to the Navy air base outside the city.

Sister Marcia Eckerman, CHM, is a business manager in Davenport, IA.

A DAY IN MAZELEY

by Sister Maurine Sofranko, CHM

On our research trip to France in 1983, Sister Maria Trinitas Rand and I were privileged to spend a day in Mazeley a remote village of 300 and the home of Mother Mary of the Angels Maujean.

Our hosts, Marie and Paul Rullier, grandniece and grandnephew of Mother Mary of the Angels, were waiting to greet us. Paul, 78, on becoming a widower, moved to the ancestral home to live with Marie, 74, who never married. In stature and facial expression, Marie bears a strong resemblance to pictures of Mother Mary of the Angels.

Their home, though without plumbing and modern heating, is quite comfortable. Marie showed us family mementos of her great aunt, graciously giving us a picture of Mother Mary of the Angels for reproduction. Marie treated us royally at the noon meal and used her guest linens and silverware.

Paul proudly showed us his neat vegetable garden, while Marie was equally proud of her colorful flowers in the front yard.

In the afternoon, we walked through the tiny village, stopping first to visit family graves at the cemetery. Since there are no perpetual care arrangements for the dead in France, relatives or friends provide the necessary care. Graves are highly decorated with porcelain and live flowers, pictures of the deceased, crucifixes and other mementos.

The altar in the tiny ancient church, several blocks away, was adorned with an exquisite lace-bordered cloth. It was here that Mother Mary of the Angels and the Grandjacout sisters, Marie and Julie, taught young girls of the village before joining the Sisters of Humility in Dommartin. As in most church yards a large statue of a French soldier was erected in honor of the living and the dead who defended their country.

A van was parked on the side of the gravel road and several women gathered to shop for clothing. It was a reminder of country peddlers in rural United States at the beginning of the century. Piles of wood for heating and cooking were stacked in the yards of most homes.

Farther on we visited the home in which Mother Mary of the Angels was born, and though no one lived there we saw a statue of the Blessed Virgin in a second story window. Next door a woman had just returned from tending her vegetable garden and was cleaning her wooden shoes. Our sisters, too, wore wooden shoes. While we vis-

ited, a farmer drove up in a small American-made Farmall tractor, stopping to chat with a man on the street. Two women across the street chatted in the front yard, all the while observing the sisters from America. Most farmers live in small villages, going out each morning to tend crops and graze cattle. A herd of Holstein cows which are brought back each evening to be milked and kept overnight for safety, was being herded past us.

Throughout our visit we were reminded of the simple, loving peaceful life of French peasants. Some of our charter members came from this background. Today, much is changing but much remains unchanged since the Sisters of Humility were founded in Dommartin. This heritage of simplicity has been handed down to us since 1854. It is a simplicity which characterized us when Father Linus Lily prepared our Rule for approval by Rome and trusted that "... we would always keep it so."

Sister Maurine Sofranko, CHM, resides at Humility of Mary Center, Davenport, IA.

Invitation

(30-day retreat, 1976)

by Sister Victoria Kach, HM

Son of God, Son of Mary,
The Word Incarnate,
Sent by the Father to save us.

Jesus, Our God, Our Savior,
You called, "Follow Me."
We heard, we answered, we are Yours.

Help us, then, to be like You;
Humbly we follow,
Seeking only the Father's will.

Sister Victoria Kach, HM, is in the Eucharistic Apostolate at Villa Maria Community Center, Villa Maria, PA.

VILLA-HOME

by Sister Margaret Daniels, HM

On the gentle swells of Pennsylvania,
on the hillocks that wash against the borders of Ohio,
God planted a quiet place,
ringed round with green
and tucked down by the sun;

For a long time the land was a haven,
a home to wee creatures and singing things
that rolled and rejoiced
on her soft carpets of grass.

And God, content,
blessed the water and earth
and said: "This shall be as a hearth
to my family.
I shall bring a new people from a far-off land,
My poor in spirit, my clean of heart.
This shall be their land,
and I shall be their father."

And God did as He had said,
because he always gives to His children first
that they may have something to give back to Him.

Now the people who came were glad people,
the kind who cling to God's hand
and swing on His arms;
they had strength of heart
and not only that, but they were humble.

And when they came
they walked around the broad flowing land
and thanked God, saying:

"We will feed your children with knowledge,
we will comfort their pain, and wash their miseries;
we shall cleanse their wounds
and dry their tears -
And they shall be made new
and shall come to know Your peace."

And the Lord answered, "Possess the earth."

A century and more has passed...
The earth is still their home;
it is their slumbering robe now,
the pillow of their deep sleep.
In wisdom they bide, gazing across the broad lawns,
nodding and smiling on the Villa's growth,
for as it was once home to them,
it has now become home to many,
to all who come streaming to the Lord's banquet of Peace.



Villa Maria shrine and chapel
Photo by Sr. Therese Pavilonis, HM

*Sister Margaret Daniels, HM, is on
the faculty at Central Catholic
High School, Canton, OH.*

This is a house of prayer...
its echoes lie about us:
solemn prayer and silent prayer,
prayer in sorrow, prayer in need,
chanted prayer and whispered prayer,
morning song and evening hymn,
lamentations, alleluias, and over all -
The Mass.

This is a house of work...
where hearts are willing
and hands are quick
to care for the place where God dwells.
This is a house where we join
in the blessed benediction of work,
for we have come to serve.

This is a house of reflection,
to students who come to learn,
to retreatants who seek God's help;
for all shall be taught of Christ,
Light of the world
Triumphant King.
We shall hear the words that He spoke
and shall mark His wondrous teaching, and
pondering, we shall know the Truth
and the Truth shall make us free.

This is a house of sheltering...
where He welcomes children young and old
to dwell in the eaves of His House,
to rest secure in His fold.
For this is a house of joy...

A home that cradles us from tearing winds
and warms us through the dark of night
till dawn is breaking o'er the land.
We rise to hurry through the halls
on quiet feet, on peaceful feet,
and brush into the silent pews.

Day has come like a green growing thing,
and with uplifted hearts
we offer it to God -
the eager moments running and dripping
as wine and water into the chalice,
and we are mingled,
and become one,
in the Body and Blood of Christ.

This is a house of home-coming,
This is a house of Jubilee.



Villa Maria Lake
Photo by Sr. Therese Pavlonts, HM



OUT OF SILENCE

by Sister Mary-Joanna Huegle, HM

A Symbol, A Commitment

1855. At a quick glance upward, the sky indicates to her alert and practiced eyes (she grew up in this country village) that today there might be rain, perhaps a quick summer downpour. Maybe even before they return from church. And a parlor window, opened for a bit of air on this warm August morning, was forgotten - a good thing she noticed it before leaving! (Once all the way down the road and inside the church it would be too late and too far for even much younger legs to run back.)

Some have gone on ahead and are already out of sight. Giving a sign to the remaining few, she goes back into her house to shut and latch the window. They wait for her, quiet and patient in the humid heat building up around them. In a moment the front door opens - to their obvious relief. It is still quite early, yes, but the walk to church is long; Mass will begin promptly, and on

*Sister Mary-Joanna Huegle, HM,
is archivist for the Sisters of the
Humility of Mary, Villa Maria, PA.*

*Now they are here at last,
their soft blue and crisp white
a public symbol of commitment.*

such a big feast-day, when there's sure to be a crowd present, nobody would want to attract unwelcome attention by arriving even a minute late. So as soon as the door has been gently but firmly closed and locked they all start out together, walking quickly churchward to rejoin their vanished companions.

The road stretches ahead, sunny and dusty, with not a soul in sight except two tiny boys playing with a dog and, farther on, old Mr. Munière walking along slowly with his wife. Now the group, nearing the entrance of the ancient village church, sees a few women of the parish still deep in animated conversation - so they are not late after all, even though the others, who had left the house a bit earlier, must be inside already. Well, it won't be hard to find them - especially today!

Into the cool dim interior they go together, pausing briefly for eyes to adjust to the change of light, dipping fingers reverently into the basin of holy water, making a recollected, unhurried Sign of the Cross, and starting down the aisle toward their accustomed places. Finally the group is one again. Now, kneeling near the cloud-enthroned Madonna holding her beloved little Son on her lap, Marie-Antoinette prays for her own loved children, the six women praying here with her. These six are now a very special part of her life: they share her home, her work, her ideals and hopes - and today even their clothing proclaims it to the whole village.

She recalls with what eagerness they had welcomed the idea of having some distinguishing kind of dress which, like members of other parish associations, they might wear on Sundays and important feast days like this one. She remembers, too, the loving and joyful way they had worked and helped each other, so all would be prepared for this day, and the pleasurable anticipation so evident just last night as they laid out every item in readiness for this morning.

And now they are here at last, their soft blue and crisp white a public symbol of their commitment as "children of Mary" trying to be like her in their ways and words and works. (In this also they will help each other!) Who could have dreamed it?

Marie-Antoinette's glance moves affectionately from one quietly bent white-bonneted head to another. Even looking so much alike, she knows them. They are her own daughters, given to her by heaven's grace, having come so generously to her house to help her to do some small thing for the glory of God - and for this reason alone they have a claim on her love, these eager young "Associates of Dommartin" who, by combined efforts are doing so much good in the parish. Here is sturdy Marie Charlotte, her housekeeper, her companion and good friend; there are the teachers - Josephine and Marie and pretty little Zélie (the three who just last year wore the habit of the Sisters of Christian Doctrine); and onward her eyes move to the two youngest, teacher's helpers and students themselves: Marie Augustine, with her sweet face turned now to catch a glimpse of her uncle vested for Mass and soon to come out of the sacristy - and grave Alexandrine, just turned fourteen but already with such dignity, promise,

*She remembers
the loving way they
had worked and
helped each other.*

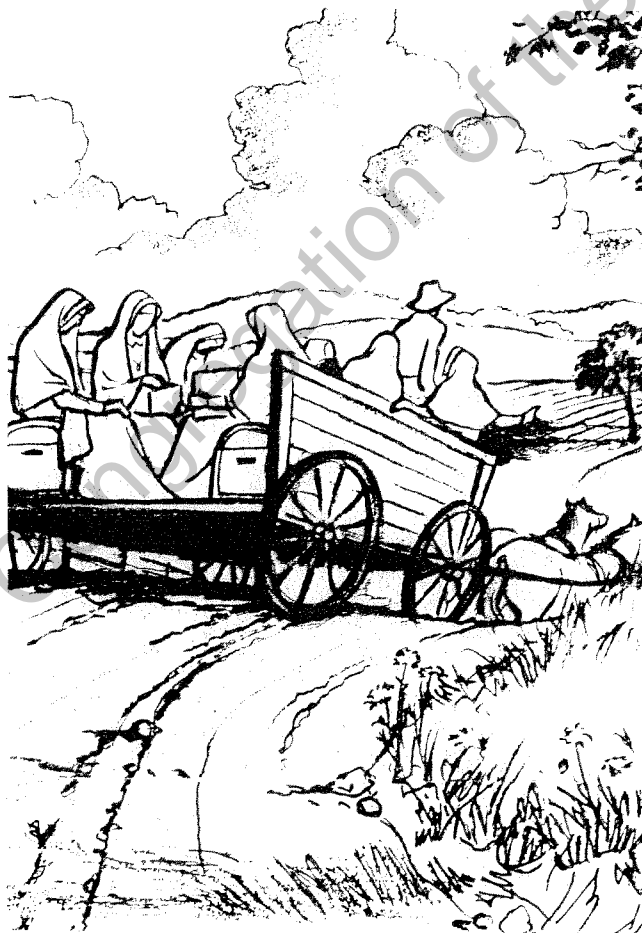
and maturity in her manner as to make for her a place among the Associates. All of them - her dear daughters!

At the sound of a bell the village congregation arises. The priest, with his surpliced acolytes, enters the sanctuary to begin the prayers at the foot of the altar steps. And on this day, this festival of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, how right seem those age-old words to Marie-Antoinette Potier as she, too, looks to the altar of God "who gives joy to her youth" - as here, now, at the age of 36, she kneels with her devout associates! While the parish priest, Father Begel, urges at the Introit, "Let us all rejoice in the Lord," she smiles radiantly, unmindful of tears that blur the image of six white bonnets, symbol of their mutual commitment.

1864. Sudden silence fills the small country church, a silence that hovers between life and death. From outdoors a cool morning light enters through the dusty glass in simple centuries-old windows, but thick stone walls seem to have stilled the usual sounds of everyday village life. This is a time between. Between the ritual of Requiem Mass and the absolution that follows - and the gathering around a grave.

Silence...at this moment, the numbed hearts of the people kneeling within those chilly walls (hands and feet numbed, too, by the late-winter cold) are unaware whether the morning is marked by the faint warmth of March's pale distant sun, or by raindrops on the bare branches so blackly stark against a dull gray sky. These people (their eyelids holding back tremulous tears trying to go the way of all the tears of the past few days) are not really looking; they are not aware right now. Death has touched them.

Here, though grouped together in this shared sorrow too deep for any words, each one is yet alone, soul stifled and swathed in heaviness like the heavy black pall which covers the plain coffin enclosing the spent body of a woman whose life was the source of a renewed life for so many others. Scarcely anyone is present who has not,



An Ending,

in some way and at some time, felt the touch of her loving outreach. In her less than fifty years of living, all she ever wanted was "to do *something* for the glory of God." Because of that, and also because of her generous open sharing of everything she ever received, her now-completed life has made a difference to the old and the young; to people alone or in families; to the needy and the neglected; to the sick, the bereaved, the orphaned; to familiar neighbors and to souls in distant villages, too. Above all, her life has made a difference to the few women who gathered around her and dedicated their own efforts, their own lives, as sisters in a new religious community, to the continuation of what she started.

They are left alone now, these women, to carry on, even to mission fields in far-distant America - those works of mercy, that prayerful spirit of sacrifice and of selfless service. In this silent pause, some words from the morning's Requiem Mass return to mind, renewing their stunned souls with promise and hope and healing. "A vow shall be paid to thee..." Hers was, and theirs is, until all are united in the heavenly Jerusalem.

The Road Home

1864. The hilly road leading south out of New Bedford is very still on this hot afternoon in late July - not a dead silence though, but a busy one. There's the buzzing background of midsummer insects hidden in the woods on either side, a buzzing that foretells more heat tomorrow, even as high-piled cumulus clouds promise a coming rainstorm. That promise seems verified by the rustle of parched leaves turning silvery undersides outward, as if in search of some moisture, but it's a dust-shower that they receive as a large and lumbering wagon lurches along, laden with trunks and boxes, bundles and other baggage, and about half a dozen blue-clad women.

Their posture speaks eloquently of bone-deep fatigue, as it well may: it was early morning when goodbyes were said in Louisville and they climbed to their places in the wagon; now lengthening shadows are a reminder that evening is approaching, and night, and its darkness, with blessed rest after this long, cramped, jolting journey. True enough, it began with the excitement of starting again into adventure - at least the joy-

A Goodbye

"They that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life," so all the good things that she taught them to do must live on, must be continued with a fidelity that speaks of renewed dedication. They have from her a sacred trust. This is not the end! Grief is real, as are the tears and fears adding to the painful parting, but faith strengthens hope, and hope looks beyond grief to eternal love - to *life*.

The muffled tolling of the church bell breaks into the brief silence. The bishop and Father Begel and the other priests, with their acolytes, are moving into position. Now shuffling sounds begin in the old pews as people prepare to take their part in what is going to happen next. Mother Magdalen, in her coffin, is readied to go down the narrow aisle and out to the churchyard for the last time. There the old great-aunt and great-uncle who long ago received her into their house at the beginning of her life again make a place for her. It's an ending, a goodbye.



*They are left alone now,
these women, to carry on - even to mission fields in America -
those works of mercy, that prayerful spirit of sacrifice
and of selfless service*

ous anticipation of going to a home that would be their own place after almost two months of pilgrimage. So long ago seem the griefs of death, of leaving France forever, of the misery and sorrows encountered in two weeks at sea; the days spent with the dear kind Franciscan nuns in Hoboken; the train ride to Louisville and the month lived there together. Even this morning seems long ago: Father Hoffer, the school-children, the dear parents and other parishioners joining their calls of "Goodbye" and "God bless you" with the farewell embraces and tears of the three sisters remaining to work in the parish. Then the heavy, sturdily-made wagon, with its humble cargo of household necessities and personal belongings, starting out along the many miles to the farm by New Bedford in western Pennsylvania, the farm which is to be the American motherhouse - home.

In the hours past, the little group's attention has gone from eager glances at the wayside

scenery of this new homeland, to prayers and hymns, to hopeful conversation. Now, in the waning day, each weary sister is lost in her own thoughts of what is to come next in God's plan. The big wagon creaks slowly, heavily, onward. The tired team is plodding and straining under the skillful direction of the driver. Clumsily a rise in the road is crested. There's a pause as the brassy early-evening sunshine gilds a panorama of far-stretching green woods broken by an occasional plowed or cleared field.

And then, just as the wagon starts downward toward a bend in the road, a drift of smoke from a chimney to the right catches the light of the setting sun and proclaims to each hopeful heart that at the end of this last mile of lonely country lane there is waiting for them a warm loving welcome, a good simple supper, a much-needed sleep, and, at last, a reunion with those who came on ahead three weeks ago to prepare a home for their sisters.

Blueprint for Progress

by Sister Bernadine Pieper, CHM

"A Blueprint for Progress" is the headline of a story in the August 10, 1966, *National Catholic Reporter*. The full-page article describes the preparation for, agenda and some outcomes of the CHM 1966 Chapter of Affairs.

Now, almost 25 years later, we can re-tell the story as part of our own history, rather than as possible blueprint for others; share some of the agony and the ecstasy with those not intensely involved in the process and, in the telling, evaluate whether we did, indeed, build anything from our own blueprint.

The immediate planning for the 1966 Chapter of Affairs took place over a two-year period. Some time during those years one young sister said, "We can either re-arrange the 'furniture' of our lives or throw it up in the air and see what comes down." We began with re-arrangement and, although there was no end of planning, sometimes it appeared as though even the sky was falling all about us.

Looking back, though, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the creativity and good sense of the community and the leadership and forward-looking spirit of the General Superior and Council are evident.

The first effort, one of re-arranging, came from the grass roots. During the Fall of 1964 the Ottumwa Heights College faculty and administration began studying the CHM Constitution with a view toward updating the document. In November, 1964, the General Superior and Council decided to distribute to every community house copies of articles on scripture, the original 1858 "Rules and Regulations," excerpts from the

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the Church in the Modern World, and Bernard Haring's *Christian Renewal in a Changing World*.

Community members reported on ideas they felt were helpful, and applications to the present and possible changes in discipline or community practice. The ideas which germinated, particularly those from the original "Rules and Regulations," eventually grew into a reformation if not a revolution.

Later in the year, the General Superior and Council proposed a new system of voting for chapter delegates, one which included more grass-roots participation. The results was that a majority of those eventually elected to the 1966 Chapter had not been members of previous chapters.

During the preparation process few sisters, on the one hand escaped fear, mistrust and impatience and on the other faith, hope and excitement. One sister distributed a list of 35 "safe" sisters as possible

*This meant changing
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delegates and, according to some oral reports, another list of "unsafe" ones. Many, like myself, were unaware of any list, so the delegates elected were deemed both "safe" and "unsafe," liberal and conservative, experienced and inexperienced. A decision to include alternates assuaged some fears and partially opened the chapter, which later voted to abolish all secrecy.

In retrospect, the February 1965

decision by the General Superior and Council to begin with a community-wide study of possible prayer and liturgy changes was fitting. Some sisters, however, expressed dissatisfaction when the Liturgy Committee, as authorized by the General Superior and Council, chose the more liturgical Lauds and Vespers instead of the traditional morning and evening prayers. Several sounded even more unhappy about the particular edition chosen.

Common life changes were next on the agenda. The common life or discipline of sisters included many outmoded customs, often intended for monastic rather than apostolic life. During July, 1965, all local superiors gathered at Ottumwa Heights College for a course on scripture and a study of problems in discipline, then participated in the Notre Dame Institute for Local Superiors. As a result of the superiors' recommendations, the General Superior and Council approved a variety of common life experiments, including sisters going alone for shopping and medical appointments, eating with guests, praying the rosary privately, occasionally talking at breakfast, going to bed before 10:15 PM without permission, talking at coffee breaks and no more censoring of outgoing and incoming mail.

In September, 1965, the Superior General and Council divided the community into four geographic areas. From among volunteers they selected sisters for regional committees on each of four areas: poverty, obedience, formation and maturity, and works and apostolate. These committees met, prepared and distributed bibliographies, sent out questionnaires to sisters and their various co-work-

ers, sponsored workshops and finally summed up their work and recommendations in position papers for discussion by all sisters.

Because of the two years of intensive study and prayer, sisters began to see how much they had bound themselves in minutiae and outmoded customs which they incorrectly believed were required of them. They better appreciated the charism of the community and its history of faith, poverty and humility.

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escaped fear, mistrust and impatience,
and on the other, faith, hope and excitement.*

With nearly all sisters having attended regional meetings, 545 recommendations were presented to the 1966 Chapter of Affairs. Liturgy and prayer were among the first topics for discussion. Mass, Lauds and Vespers were adopted as the only required prayers in common; all other prayers were left to the responsible choice of each sister.

During one of the first days, the sisters accepted the principle of subsidiarity and approved putting it into immediate action at all levels. This meant, for example, changing the meaning of the vow of poverty from asking for "permission" from one's superior to individual simplicity of lifestyle, corporate witness and professional justice.

The Book of Customs was put aside, along with many disciplinary requirements and after years of mandatory silence, sisters were encouraged to engage in inter-personal communication. The chapter also authorized sisters to begin handling minor finances and expanded the apostolate to include Latin America and work with the poor.

The sisters agreed that flexibility, simplicity and planning by each house should characterize the daily horarium. One pointed out that

"getting back the things we gave up" is not freedom from, but rather freedom for better carrying out our apostolate. There was a long discussion on "Why am I here?" and of religious life as only one means to make God's love more present in an ever-changing world.

The chapter set up and gave specific and general tasks to Commissions on the Apostolate, Formation and Renewal, and Finance and Development. (With different names these continue today.)

Decrees were as general, flexible and principled as possible. They were based on scripture, the charism and experience of the community and attentive listening to the Spirit who comes in many forms.

At the time, it appeared that most of the "CHM furniture" following the Chapter was new, although some was really from the time of Jesus. Many pieces of pre-chapter "furniture" never did come down, though some people looked nostalgically for them. In a later survey, however, not one sister wanted Chapter of Faults or mandatory silence reinstated.

Not all sisters were ready to accept personal responsibility for their actions and many Catholics resisted losing the "good sister" whom they expected to be the "Church's cheap help," and who were to pray for and in place of them.

Even more important than any legislation, I believe, are the sisters' present sense of responsibility for themselves and the earth and the process for making community decisions.

Sister Bernadine Pieper, CHM, is regional pastoral associate in Malloy, IA.

Born Again

by Sister Mary Nativity Heaney, HM

Did you know
Jesus
Is the Olympic winner,
Who finished first
Two thousand years
Ago?

And because of him,
You need not be
A sinner?
Step up, and get
Your "T" shirts
White as
Snow!

Now all the Joy and
Innocence,
Success and fun
Are yours again.
You have a second
Chance!

Reach for the gold!
And at the finish line
Look up - your eyes
Will meet the Lord's
Delighted
Glance!

Sister Mary Nativity Heaney, HM, is in the Eucharistic Apostolate at Villa Maria Community Center, Villa Maria, PA.

Whisper

Whisper
O lily fair
Wherein lies your secret
That thou so chaste,
pure and humble
Can be.

Sister Claire Marte Patik, CHM, is on the faculty of Malala High School, Papua, New Guinea.

A TRIBUTE TO THE SISTERS OF HUMILITY

by Sister Marita Bartholome, CHM



St. Mary's Institute Great Falls, Montana, 1911

From my earliest years with the Sisters of the Humility of Mary at St. Mary's School in Great Falls, Montana, my spirit, like Mary's found joy to be with the Sisters of Humility, who resembled God to me.

Sister M. Loyola Domke, my saintly kindergarten teacher, was quoted as saying, "She who does her best is a hero. And I am a hero," she said laughingly. As a child, Sister Loyola had been run over by a car (I was told) and in her last years suffered greatly while seeking God's Will perfectly. She died at the age of 43 in the year 1930 a few years after teaching me in kindergarten.

Sister M. Annunciation Mahan was a pioneer who assisted in the foundation of the Sisters of Humility in Montana. She was my first grade teacher and a great lover of God and children to have come all the way from Iowa to teach us of the wonders of God's love. As a Christmas gift to me, she gave a book which contained a poem "Virginia" (my legal name) which my mother and I cherished as coming from her.

Sister M. Catherine Cherpski prepared me for First Holy Communion, and seemed ahead of the times in having me receive Our Lord accompanied by my parents and with

no special white dress or veil. My mother saw that I always said the Communion prayers from the Communion prayerbook. Some of these prayers I can still remember.

In the third or fourth grade I remember putting Sister M. Carmelita Davis' black shawl on my head as a veil and remarking, "I am going to be a Sister some day." This must have been the beginnings of my vocation. As a postulant, Sister Carmelita was a mystery to my brother, Jack, in her postulant outfit. He kept asking her, "What is your name?" Sister Carmelita said each time, "Sister Mary." When she later came to school in the full habit, Jack had the biggest surprise of his young life. He ran home to tell his mother that Sister Mary had the big veil and habit and her name was Sister Carmelita.

Jack loved domestic animals and brought two white mice to school to "show and tell." One white mouse promptly ran up the large inside sleeve of Sister M. Gabriel Wolf, our second grade teacher. She was helpless with fright and asked Jack to remove it which he hesitated to do, but must have resolved the situation somehow.

These are just a few incidents in my early childhood with the Sisters

of Humility. I spent thirteen years at St. Mary's grade and high school. To all of my teachers I am indebted for a superior education.

The only years not spent in immediate association with the Sisters of Humility were the two years I attended the College of Great Falls where I associated with some of the Sisters of Providence.

Then as Mary said, "*I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say.*" (Luke 1:38) The Lord showed me the humility of His lowly servants and from henceforth I was called to be blessed among them. My entrance date to the Sisters of Humility was September 8, 1943, at Sacred Heart Convent in Great Falls, Montana.

Mother M. Francis Mangan, with Mother M. Rose Dimke, welcomed my mother and me on my entrance day. Mother Francis tried to brighten the day by trying on the black checked aprons I had made for my year of postulancy. I had previously heard much of Mother Francis as the Mother General and foundress of the Sisters in Montana but did not learn of all her leadership qualities until years later.

Much happened that postulancy winter of 1943-44. Besides attend-

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ing the College of Great Falls, my brother Jack was killed in a Naval Air Corps plane accident in Rio de Janeiro, and Mother M. Francis died in January of 1944 at Sacred Heart Convent. Up to this time I had not heard that there were other Sisters of Humility in the United States and was surprised to see two Sisters of Humility from the Midwest at Mother Francis' funeral. They had missed the regular Empire Builder train and had come through St. Paul, Minnesota, to Great Falls on the Great Northern mail train. I then found out they were both Mother Generals--former and present--Mother M. Colette Troja and Mother M. Geraldine Upham from Ottumwa and Davenport, Iowa. I thought (as a young postulant) that they looked very officious in their very different habits from those of the Sisters of Humility in Montana. Little did I know then of the changes that were soon to come.

"My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord." (Luke 1:46) After receiving the habit at Sacred Heart Convent and starting my canonical year as a novice, my novice mistress, Sister M. Angela Quinlan, started preparing Sister M. Monica Antonich and me for a change in our life plans. The whole community in Montana was studying and meeting, with definite plans to reunite with the Iowa Sisters of Humility.

In August 1944, after much discussion, prayer, planning, and celebrating, the new postulant, Marie Wight and I, accompanied by Sister M. Regina Thill, were on our merry way to Iowa. We travelled on the Empire Builder train to St. Paul and then just Marie and I continued to Ottumwa. Mother M. Rose Dimke, our Montana superior and

a model of humility, found a trunk for me and packed every bit of it herself in an expert manner. The trunk is still in my possession as a memory of her greatness.

After many humorous incidents on the train with travelling soldiers and sailors wondering about Marie's garb, we reached our new land of Ottumwa, Iowa. We were welcomed by Mother M. Colette and Sister M. Magdalen Wilmes. Marie was taken to the dining room to be introduced to the postulants and novices who nearly did a double flip when they saw her. I was given a quick change in veil, to a white one, before joining my class of eleven novices. Sister M. Magdalen (now Mother M. Magdalen Wilmes) was our beloved novice mistress for the two years I remained in Iowa. These were memorable years of growth with the Humility novices and professed Sisters. At times I thought I was in heaven but the humidity of summer days brought me back to earth.

First Profession came on July 17, 1946, at Ottumwa Heights Chapel with my uncle, Bishop Peter W. Bartholome, as celebrant. There were twelve happy Professed.

My college program was finished at Marycrest College, Davenport, Iowa, in January 1947 and with a B.S. in Business Education, I returned to Montana with fond memories of the many Sisters of Humility I had met in Iowa.

In returning to Great Falls, Montana, during a cold January 1947, the Sisters at Sacred Heart Convent had many questions to ask about the Iowa Humilities. I was

assigned to St. Leo's School in Lewistown, Montana. The union of Motherhouses - Ottumwa and Great Falls, came the summer of 1947. The great change of habits took place that summer with a time of dying and rising. *"Sing to the Lord a new song."* (Isaiah 42:10)

From 1947 on there was much coming and going of Montana and Iowa Sisters of Humility. My ten years in Montana were spent at St. Leo's, Central Catholic High School, Great Falls, and at Sacred Heart Convent. In 1957 I was assigned to Marycrest College, Davenport, Iowa, as librarian of the College. The Marycrest Sisters were the delight of my seventeen years with them. They were truly refreshing, charitable, intellectual, faith-filled models of Mary.

After seventeen stimulating years in and around Davenport with many Sisters of Humility, I returned to Montana to assist my mother in her last years and to live with five Sisters of Humility in Great Falls who had been my former teachers and associates.

This is far from the end of meeting with Sisters of Humility. My ambition is to visit the Sisters of the Humility of Mary (HM) in Villa Maria, Pennsylvania, to see our original foundation, to visit the place where Mother M. Francis Mangan made her novitiate, and to be introduced to our Humility cousins. I'm sure Father Begel would welcome another Sister of Humility praying at his shrine.

Sister Maritta Bartholome, CHM, is a reference librarian with the Great Falls, MT, public library system.

Have We 'Solitality'?

by Sister Mary Johanna Rickl, CHM

Identifying a community charism is like answering the question, "What flavor of air do you breathe?" It is something so much a part of us, so intertwined with the daily unfolding of our lives that it is difficult to separate it out as one thread in the whole fabric.

Nevertheless, I've coined a new word to communicate the unity of the concept. It embodies elements of **SOLID**arity, hospi**TAL**ity and equal**ITY** but is lived as an integrated response to the reality encountered daily. Hence the charism of "solitality."

In Mary's life, I see this in her visit to Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56). Knowing that her cousin was in need, Mary chose to assume the interests of Elizabeth as her own. She chose to experience Elizabeth's style, her reality and the difficulties she faced as an older woman about to have her first child.

Scripture doesn't tell us much of what went on, but Elizabeth's response to Mary's greeting lets us know that she felt visited by one greater than herself. In cultures

believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled." At this, Mary responds with the Magnificat, positioning herself as an equal, exulting in God because God has "looked upon his lowly handmaid." She stays with Elizabeth doing the tasks which transform a house into a home, a welcome dwelling to all who enter there.

Another example of solitality is seen in Mary's response at the wedding feast in Cana (John 2:1-11). Here we see a more mature woman secure in her self-knowledge and confident of being in harmony with God's way.

Mary, as an invited guest, had no responsibility in the matter of hospitality or attending to the guests. Yet her attentiveness to the needs of others manifests an habitual stance of concern for them and a willingness to become involved in satisfying their needs. When Mary commented, "They have no wine," she was not only expressing something she had observed, a neutral fact that had nothing to do with her. Rather, she had already placed herself in the shoes of the embarrassed hosts, experiencing and

God's people and with a simplicity and confidence she allowed God to work through her.

In the early history of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary, this same charism is visible in the lives of the members. The needs of the people, both children and adults, provided motivation for the founding members of the community to group together as they began responding to these needs. "Later in 1854, when the three women, united in their common concern for the poor children and young girls of the area, asked Father Begel for a rule of life."¹ This concern of the sisters expressed itself in the action of providing a high quality education to those children whose poverty had made other schools unavailable to them.

Solidarity with the poor was expressed in the 1948 Constitution of the Ottumwa Humility Sisters: "The Sisters of this Congregation shall try to devote themselves especially to poor children and to those who are neglected."² The Sisters were exhorted to "cast off all special attachment for persons, places, or offices and endeavor to see in all, and more specially in the poor, the image of their Lord. . . ."³

Solidarity with the poor was expressed in the 1948 Constitution of the Ottumwa Humility Sisters.

where age is valued over youth, it is surprising to hear an older woman say, "Why should I be honored with a visit from the mother of my Lord?" But Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and so is capable of seeing beyond her cultural programming to the authentic reality of Jesus' presence within Mary. And Mary has come to "stand with" the poor and needy Elizabeth.

Elizabeth affirms Mary's faith saying, "Yes, blessed is she who be-

taking as her own their need to provide the elements of hospitality appropriate for such an occasion. Mary's commitment is evident from her next words which seem to ignore Jesus' response, "Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not come yet." Mary had no hesitation in saying to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." She already knew God's will and neither asked nor ordered Jesus' intervention. She was neither less than nor greater than; she knew herself as one of

The degree of equality in membership can be measured in part by how the members share material goods, information, knowledge and power. The original group was composed of women of different classes, educational levels and skills, but each shared what she had with the others.⁴ Each put her gifts at the service of God's people and "whatever her specialty, each one was expected to share her expertise with at least one new member."⁵

Mother Anna's biography of Fa-

ther Begel tells that "it was a group decision" to leave France.⁶ We can conclude that there was a healthy spirit of mutuality and love among the members. Marie-Antoinette "recognized the gifts where they were found and made special the contribution and interaction of each sister."⁷

The 1948 Constitution mandated equality among the Sisters: "The Congregation is composed of but one class of Sisters. . . All enjoy the same indulgences, privileges and special favors. . ."⁸

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mutuality among
the members.*

The aspect of hospitality was evident in the openness of the group to non-members. The orphans were so much a part of the community that they also came to America with the Sisters and Father Begel.⁹ The CHM cemetery in Ottumwa reminds us of the bond between the community and a variety of other persons.

This brief look at a Humility charism which I've called "solitality" causes me to ask whether it is present today in my life and in that of the whole community. It challenges me to examine my own stance; I invite you to join me in this reflection.

Solidarity: With what frequency and enthusiasm do I lift my eyes to see the reality beyond my own living and working environments? Do I truly believe that all peoples and cultures have aspects of truth to be shared, that my way is neither the "only" nor the "best?" Am I capable

of taking on the interests and needs of others as if they were my own? How am I present to the needy and the poor? How do I share their lives?

Hospitality: How do I manifest my oneness with others? do I make others welcome in my/our home? Are my language and actions inclusive or do they tend to produce a sense of "in and "out" groups? Do I hold "my" goods lightly and do I place them at the service of others?

Equality: Can I let go of images I have of myself and of others? Do I share information and knowledge or do I use these as a way to feel myself above others? Do I value group participation in the making and implementation of decisions? Does my attitude encourage and allow others to learn and practice new skills? Do I choose to and do I make an effort to see beyond the superficial (and at times annoying)

differences of people in order to recognize our equality as children of God and centers of Love?

If we accept "solitality" as a Humility charism, then let us faithfully nurture it.

Footnotes:

¹ Pieper, Bernadine, CHM. Footprints: The Story of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary. Part I. Ottumwa Printing Co. Ottumwa, IA. 1978. p. 13.

² The Constitution of the Sisters of the Holy Humility of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Camden Press. Minneapolis, MN. 1948. P.2, article 5.

³ Ibid. p. 2, article 8.

⁴ Pieper, Bernadine, CHM. Op. cit. pp. 15-20

⁵ Ibid. p. 51.

⁶ McKean, Sister Gretchen, CHM. Humility Wholeness: The CHM Charism as Interpreted by Marie Antoinette Potier's Jungian Journey. 1984. p. 29.

⁷ Ibid. pp. 28-29

⁸ Constitution. p. 5, article 14.

⁹ Pieper, Bernadine, CHM. Op. cit. p. 64

*Sister M. Johanna Rickl, CHM,
lives in Lewistown, MT.*

An Epiphany

by Sister Luz Maria Orozco, CHM

Between the Magi and the manger
Shone a star, a path, a goal
That led to Jesus.
Between Mexico and life's meaning
The CHM's became that star
In distant land
Pointing to an uncharted journey
with Faith
Filtering light on an unexplored quest
with Hope
Sharing their mystic vision
with Love.
The Sisters of Humility,
An epiphany of a lifetime.

*Sister Luz Maria Orozco, CHM, is on the faculty of
Marycrest College, Davenport, IA.*

Twenty-five Years Later

by Sister Coletta Bast, HM

On December 20, 1988, the three sisters who established a mission in Temuco, Chile, on December 20, 1963, celebrated their twenty-fifth anniversary by recalling memories of their years in Chile. Sisters Sheila Salmon, Helen Libens and Coletta Bast laughed heartily as they remembered how different each one was and yet they all agreed that they were able to form an open, free, happy life together in community. Theirs was an experimental kind of community for the times. It included sixteen college girls who lived with them and whatever group needed them at any particular time. Their numbers increased to five sisters when Sisters Mary Ann

sisters made in their professional life.

Three of the sisters taught English, American History and Phonetics at the Frontera University, providing a natural contact with students. Sisters Coletta, Helen and Mary Ann each taught classes as well as provided required hours of conversation in English for the students. This latter was a natural opportunity to exchange views on religion, politics, culture and other life situations. This was a two-way advantage for the sisters. They learned Chilean ways and customs as well as being able to explain American life to the students.

natural for our mission among university students.

During the summer months several sisters helped with the nationwide mission among the Mapuche Indians who lived in the country area surrounding Temuco. The sisters took several volunteer university students with them to help with the house-to-house visitation, Bible classes, and discussions of life issues. This experience provided leadership training for the students as well as had far reaching effects on the isolated lives of the Mapuche Indians. The mission activities brought them together as neighbors so they could realize their common economic, religious and recreative needs, which could be fulfilled by the people themselves in dialogue with each other and with God.

The mission activities brought them together as neighbors so they could realize their common needs.

Sebian and Raquel Dominguez joined the mission in 1966.

The nebulous mission that was given the sisters by Bishop Bernardino Pinera was to establish a center for youth that would help change young people's attitude toward God and the Church. The large town house that was purchased for this purpose was ideally located within easy access to the three universities and the Regional Hospital in Temuco. The House of Humility became a student center, a residence for sixteen university girls, a meeting place for PAVLA and Peace Corps workers, for missionary priests and sisters in the area, as well as the countless friends the

Sisters Sheila and Raquel were nurses working in the highly developed health system of Chile. Sister Raquel worked with the poor in the well-baby clinics along with a team of Public Health nurses who were piloting a program for the government. Her work involved attending the well-baby clinic in the hospital several days a week and conducting a neighborhood clinic the remainder of the week.

Sister Sheila, after validating her nursing degree through oral exams given in Spanish, was asked to head the surgical floor at the Regional Hospital. Her contact with student nurses whom she instructed and supervised was a

This unity in dialogue within community and with God was an outstanding characteristic of the HM Temuco Mission. Far from their larger HM Community, the missionaries were given the freedom to experiment with the renewal directives of Vatican II that were being discussed in Rome at that time. They weren't able to have cloister, silence, early rising, nor restrictions on the time they must be home at night. There were no long habits, nor the usual protocol accorded a religious superior. Then what was left of living in community? Everything. The essentials of mutual respect, initiative, adaptability, prayer and outreach to others provided the basis for the new style community. This group of highly individualistic persons re-

*This group of highly individualistic persons
resolved their differences through weekly meetings,
learned to respect each other's talents,
ideas and human rights.*

solved their differences through weekly meetings, learned to respect each other's talents, ideas and human rights. They absorbed two new members and together the five sisters projected the corporate image of simplicity, openness, availability, joy and friendliness that char-

Sister Raquel helped set up the well-baby clinics in Temuco. Through her efforts the neighborhood clinic that she served was taken over by the people of the community.

Sister Sheila was vitally involved

Sister Coletta was a part of the Diocesan Council for Religious both in Temuco and in Santiago. Through dialogue and sharing experiences with sisters of other communities who had boarding houses such as the HM house, she was able to encourage a change in



Sister Coletta Bast, HM, with children in Temuco, Chile

acterizes the Sisters of the Humility of Mary wherever they live.

One might ask why the sisters closed their mission after only seven years. The training they all received from Ivan Illich in Cuernavaca, Mexico, before leaving for Chile conditioned them for enablement. They heard over and over again that they should prepare people to replace them and come home to sensitize the people of the United States. This they did.

in the training of nurses and practical nurses that would inevitably replace her. Both she and Sister Raquel helped form a group of active Catholics among the personnel in the hospital to try to break down the godless atmosphere that prevailed there.

The three teachers in the Frontera University were all replaced by students they had taught. Had they stayed they would have been taking jobs away from Chileans.

the handling of college students that would better enable them to be whole, adult Christians.

As painful as it was to leave so many friends behind, the sisters all felt that it was best for all concerned. After twenty-five years the sisters look back and wonder, "Did we give half as much as we were given?"

Sister Coletta Bast, HM, is Director of Religious Education and Pastoral Minister at St. John the Baptist Church, Canton, OH.

Women scholars can be credited for pointing out some differences in the ways that women and men have traditionally expressed religious experience.

pressed religious experience. There are several elements that seem to distinguish the language and symbolism of the feminine mode from the masculine. Men's religious experience and spirituality, more often than not, has been cast in the mold of Augustine. The record that survives in writing is usually a monologue, whereas the women's writing seems more dialogic. In their visions, journals and autobiographies, the women speak; but God and other personages also speak. A two-way process of communication is implied. Commentators have speculated whether this difference may be due to the empathic orientation of women and their socialization for relationship.

The imagery that women use in describing their devotional or mystical experience also has a distinctive quality. To the extent that they borrow images from other sources, there may be little to

Illness, Metaphor and Spirituality

by Sister Madonna Kolbenschlag, HM

We live in an era that emphasizes holistic health and wholesome holiness. Today many of the ascetic and eccentric practices of the past can seem ridiculous and, at worst, perverse. The Lives of the Saints and the spiritual rigors of the Desert Fathers can intrigue and amaze, but seldom inspire in the contemporary scene. The flesh-flagellating attitudes of some of our spiritual mentors have been mercifully dispersed, not only because of the general exorcism of dualistic thinking but also because so much of the spiritual advice of the ancients was tainted with blatant misogyny. So much of the "classical" spiritual literature taught us to hate and mistrust not only our bodies but our selves, our womanity.

Sometimes to look back at our predecessors, our founders and foremothers, is to shudder as well as admire. The devotional language and practices seem so foreign to the spirituality that is lived out today. Yet there is continuity, and there is wisdom to be discovered in these archives of the spirit. We are fortunate that the re-discovery of the great ages of mysticism is a contemporary phenomenon. In examining some of this literature we can find some of the threads of continuity that characterize women's spirituality then and now.

Women historians and scholars can be credited for pointing out some of the differences in the ways that men and women have traditionally ex-

pressed religious experience. But where the imagery is original, it frequently has more of a quality of bodiliness and earthliness. It is often richer in the metaphors of concrete existence--of basic physical functions, of the natural world, and of social experience--than that of their male peers.

Some commentators have speculated whether this may be due to the fact that religious men were more often trained in Latin in the schools and in the forms of abstract thinking that accompanied that education. Women were closer to the language and idiom of the folk. The Latin they knew best was the rich, poetic Latin of the liturgy.

There are differences too in the way that men and women tell their stories of religious awakening. In the men's stories there are often more heroic gestures of casting aside money, property, family, or in some cases, profligacy. Their stories are told in terms of crises, filled with symbols of reversal and inversion. Masculine motives are commonly externalized in dramatic actions. Women's religious histories seem to be characterized by continuity, by vocations that begin earlier, often in childhood. Instead of focusing on extraordinary turning points, women more often refer to ordinary experiences (nurturing and service, illness and powerlessness) as the symbolic and structural framework of their spiritual development. "Women's images are most profoundly deepening, not inversions, of what

LOVE BEYOND TELLING

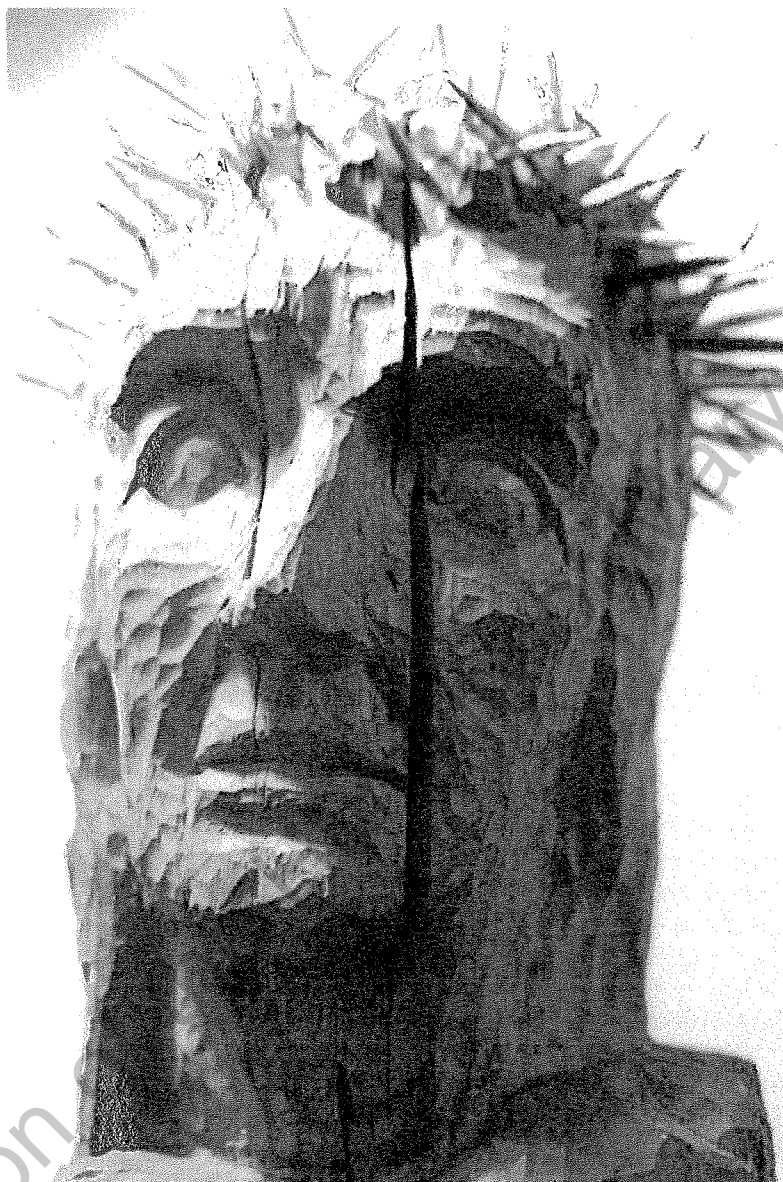
by Sister Clarice Eberdt, CHM

Hard oak, two feet high

Rugged weather beaten inspired carving

Built composition around crack in log. Crack comes down side of nose and cheek, appears weeping and suffering, gives character to the face.

Sister Clarice Eberdt, CHM, is Professor Emeritus at Marycrest College in Davenport, IA.



'woman' is; women's symbols express contradiction and opposition less than synthesis and paradox." (Bynum, 1987, 289)

Women writing of their religious experience seem to reveal more awareness of their inner feelings, of their experiences of illness, anxiety, depression and physical suffering. Their spirits seem attuned to the shadow side and finiteness of existence as well as to the transcendent dimension. Anne Ulanov claims that "for women, the body is the spiritual director." Thus the primary idioms for women's reality in many devotional texts have an affinity with women's sense of bodiliness, with change, with birthing, with the normal waxing and waning of female functions, with physical and emotional sensitivity to their environment, with hunger and pain.

Indeed, the central image for women's reality in the Middle Ages is illness.

The modern consciousness is quick to leap to implications of spiritual "masochism" and "self-starvation"--and not without some reason. Given the state of the art of medicine today, the modern perspective sees illness as a condition to be "cured," whereas the medieval perspective--particularly that of women--viewed illness as something to be "endured." Significantly, patient suffering of diseases or illness was seen as a certain way of gaining sanctity for women, but not necessarily for men.

Thus historians note that women account for only 17.5 percent of those canonized in the late Middle Ages, but they account for 53.2 percent of

*Instead of focusing on extraordinary turning points,
women more often refer to ordinary experiences
as the symbolic and structural framework
of their spiritual development.*

those saints whose patient bearing of infirmity was a factor in their reputation for sanctity. (Bynum, 199) The bodiliness of women's spirituality is further reflected in the fact that the physical phenomena associated with extraordinary mystical experience occurs more often in women than in men, for example, stigmata, inedia, bodily elongation, levitation, effluvia, etc. In the expression of holiness as well as pathology, it would also seem that women are more likely to manipulate their bodies (at least unconsciously) and men more likely to manipulate their environments.

The contemporary phenomenon of anorexia certainly raises many questions about the ascetic practices of women saints and mystics. The association of women with food runs throughout the vitae of women; it permeates their ascetic, contemplative and charitable practices. Women prepared and distributed real food to others; but food was also a spiritual metaphor that infused the pattern of eucharistic devotions and visions, the rigorous fasts and feeding miracles that are described in so many of the lives of holy women. Fasting was a peculiarly feminine type of renunciation. It was not inspired by the example of the Desert Fathers, for whom fasting was an expression of discipline, of control of the spiritual over the fleshly. Rather it was more likely a response to the conspicuous consumption of the secular merchant classes, and it was primarily symbolic: a way of identification with Christ, a necessary hunger in preparation for the true nourishment of the spirit.

While some of the women's devotional practices were self-imposed, much of the discipline of their spirituality revolved around illness. Illness was often a harbinger of spiritual transformation. It signaled a turning point, as did the more public gestures of men. Hildegard of Bingen and Teresa of Avila are examples that come to mind. Hildegard was overcome with illness just prior to her dramatic resolution to finally "write down" her visions and communicate them to others. From that moment on she was transformed into an extraordinary creative personality. Her prolonged

ennui and congested spiritual energy exploded into a continuous cascade of visions, sermons, letters, books, plays, poems and songs--an opus that is unequaled in medieval history in its scope. Likewise Teresa of Avila suffered for 20 years from severe muscular and digestive illness and catalepsy. After her conversion--in the form of a complete surrender to a personalized divinity--her health and creative energy was restored. Biographers of women saints have noted this familiar theme in their lives: the movement from sickness to service and spiritual empowerment.

Undoubtedly some of these sicknesses had psychosomatic origins. But many of these women were chronically physiologically ill. For Hildegard illness and weakness were an intrinsic and constant aspect of her personal reality. Her visions, her struggles, her interventions often left her exhausted and ill. She suffered intensely from migraines; her body reacted to every change of wind and weather. She was extremely sensitive to her surroundings, to foods, and plants. Always, she was conscious of not being able to depend upon her body. Her experience of frailty and helplessness was profound. Her prophetic and mystical temperament, her passion for justice, the pain and distress she suffered when the divinely ordered cosmos and call were not respected--this bodily resonance intensified her suffering. Illness was a permanent reality and the great metaphor of her life.

The memoirs we have of the founders of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary suggest that illness played a similarly important role in the formation of the spirituality of our community. In the short but extraordinary life of Marie Magdeleine Potier, the daily ravages of chronic tuberculosis were apparent. Her periodic pulmonary hemorrhages left her prostrate and unable to undertake her regular duties. Moreover, Mother Magdeleine's illness was an integral part of her spirituality; her patience in bearing it probably attracted other individuals who were afflicted with infirmities. She was familiar with the writings of some of the women saints and took her spiritual cues from them as well as from Fr.

Begel. Thus it is not surprising to learn that she often asked for leftovers as her usual diet. Like many holy women before her, she regarded the eucharist as her primary nourishment. Her personal asceticism was also perhaps a response to the excesses and affluence of some of her natural siblings in Nancy.

John Joseph Begel had smallpox as a child and grew up sickly and frail. When he sought to enter the Carthusians, he was persuaded that his "delicate health and constitution" would not permit it. His biography contains a reference to his "feeble health and physical weakness." (vol. 4, 153) Letters from his friends are often urgent in their insistence that he look after his health.

Marie Tabourat, destined to become the leader of the small community of Dommartin after Mother Magdeleine's death, seems to have developed scoliosis after a severe bout with typhoid fever. Before joining the sisters at Dommartin she was refused entrance to two other religious communities, supposedly because of her infirmity. In 1883, almost twenty years after emigration to America, Anna Tabourat was struck with paralysis and remained confined to her bed, from which she continued her ministry as a spiritual leader of the young community until her death in 1903.

Too often in describing the spirituality of a movement or community there is a tendency to focus on abstract and rationalized qualities or ideals rather than on the personal experience that is the ground of authentic spirituality. In this respect, the experience of illness had a distinctive existential character in the lives of the founders of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary.

If there is any spiritual quality which seems obvious in the consciousness of those who suffer from chronic disability and illness it is probably the awareness of contingency, of not being in control. This heightened awareness of one's vulnerability and fragility often fosters an extraordinary dependence on God, all out of proportion it would seem, to the precariousness and helplessness of one's condition.

Perhaps this is the crucial quality that made it possible for a small band of weak women and a man of delicate constitution to embark on the dream of a religious association uniquely different from existing religious congregations--a proj-

ect many called "utopian." And perhaps this was the ultimate quality that made it possible for the sisters to sell all of their property, and Begel his library, to pay the cost of passage to an unknown future in America.

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Sister Madonna Kolbenschlager, HM, is author of Lost in the Land of Oz, and other books and articles on feminine spirituality.

Sister Rose de Lourdes

by Sister Mary Nativity Heaney, HM

There is a presence in our midst,
That time will not erase
A lovely figure kneeling there,
Transformed by inner grace.

And when we see the empty pew,
Sometimes we almost nod,
Or reach out at the "Kiss of Peace"--
Forgetting she's with God.

She left us all so suddenly, Lord.
The little veil is gone,
But in the witness that she gave,
Her life goes on and on!

Sister Mary Nativity Heaney, HM, is in the Eucharistic Apostolate at Villa Maria Community Center, Villa Maria, PA.

Notes of an Affirming Nature

by Sister Maureen Brown, HM

WE BELIEVE THAT OUR GOD FROM HER THREESOME OF LOVING

If there were not such an enormous fineness in what my eyes know

SENT PORTIONS TO LIVE ON IN OUR LOVE

I should not have to turn and extend these joys to you

WE BELIEVE IN THIS GOOD EARTH SHE CONCEIVED

but my eyes do know and so I turn toward you and rise in the telling:

AND WE BELIEVE IN THE GOOD OF US ALL

I know the unmatched marvel of your gentle worth
as a fact of quiet clarity.

WE BELIEVE IN THE DIGNITY OF A PERSON AND HER TRUST IN US

So I jerk from the scar and the scald of those who find you
a person once beloved, now living at variance, and who

FOR WE BELIEVE (AS SHE KNOWS) THAT WE'LL SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS AND

avert their gaze as your essence knows God who is mindful
that they've hoaxed themselves using fake fences.

WE BELIEVE THAT WE CAN ENDURE THE RISK OF LIVING

I flip through my mind's indices for some healing handout
only to hope-helplessly place many hands of my heart

THROUGH STRENGTH WITHIN US AND THROUGH HER STRENGTH WHICH COMES

for you before you
and to have you write me that I need not have rummaged

THROUGH PERSONS AND ALL ITEMS OF THIS EARTH

through my mind's wrappings for right hopes, that I got through not
as a pierce but as soft soaking.

WE BELIEVE THAT WHAT WE MOST NEED IS LOVE

(Not would, but) could you eat the noodles from your soup and
in our presence and with hearty blitheness

AND WE BELIEVE WE MUST LOVE IN RATIO

pick up your bowl to drink the broth - i.e.,
could you swivel from that soup to joy

TO OUR FULLNESS OF AWARENESS, TO THE DEPTH OF OUR GLANCE

in our presence?

WE BELIEVE IN THE BLESSING OF CHANCE WHICH IS GROWTH

I see life die in her eyes held more dear than my own
and I tear at myself to find her same life there enmeshed

WE BELIEVE IN LOVE'S STRENGTH WHEN EMBRACED, A BRACE TO OUR PERSON

and she lives yet

AND WE BELIEVE IN THE PRESENCE OF LOVE AS A GIFT, AS AN ESSENCE

and now rising as a summary phrase, a cross-index, an advertisement,
a more-than-surface sheen,

IN THIS OUR OWN TIME AND THAT TIME WHICH RESTS TIMELESS.

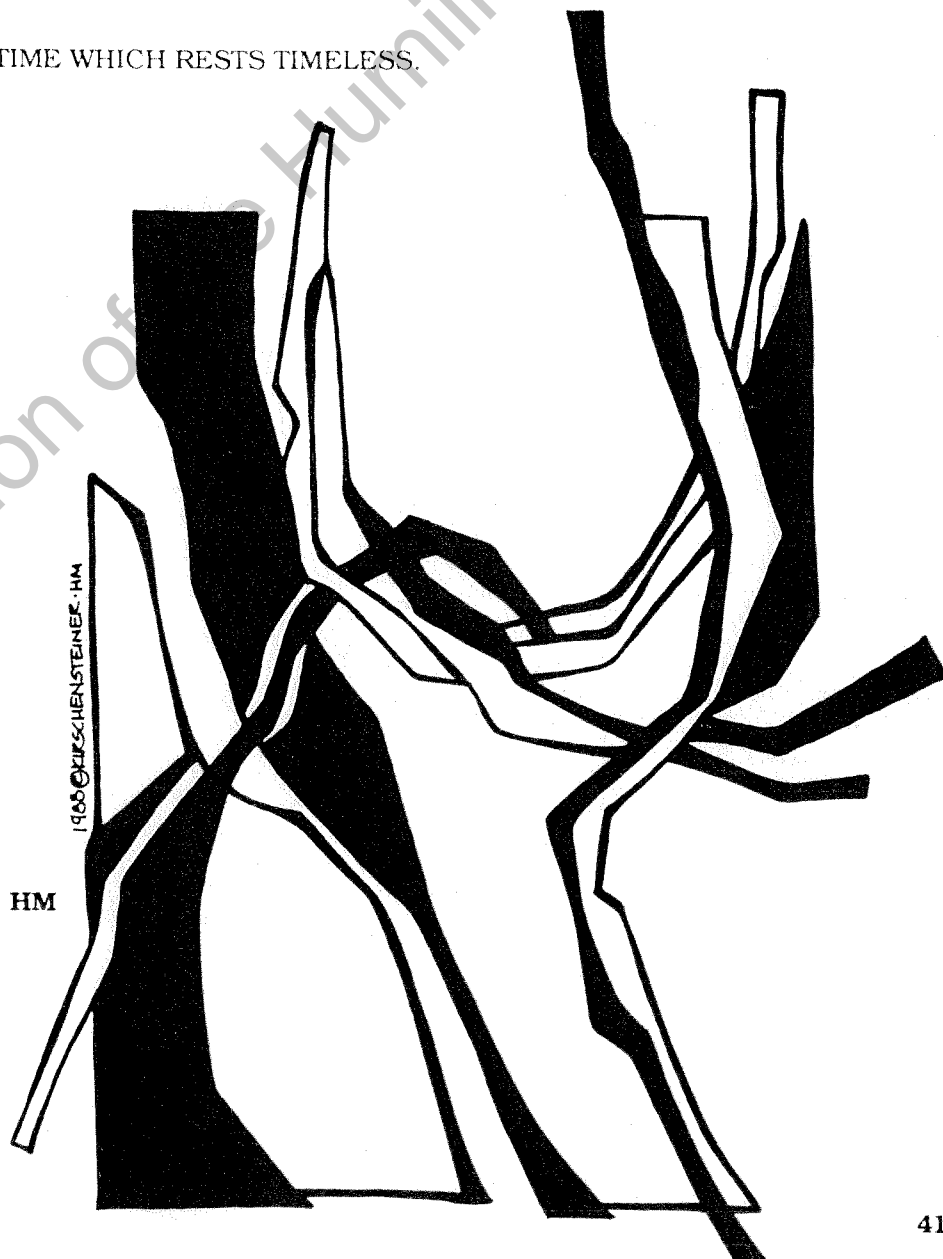
and as a true variegate
we joy

*Sister Maureen Brown, HM, is on
the faculty of the School of
Nursing, St. Elizabeth Hospital
Medical Center, Youngstown, OH.*

WONDERING WEAVING

by **Sister Paulette Kirschensteiner, HM**
sketch design

*Sister Paulette Kirschensteiner, HM,
is an artist and faculty member at
Kent State University, Kent, OH.*



Global Awareness Through Experience

Reflections on Day 3, Mexico City

by Sister Mary Jo Moran, HM



Face of Mexico



Woman and Child

Photos by Sister Mary Jo Moran, HM

Today we visited the city dump and Barrio Norte. Both left me feeling that even though I had grown up in Chicago and certainly hadn't led a sheltered life, I really knew nothing about the poverty people experience in the Third World. Those living in our urban ghettos are rich by comparison and that reality boggles my mind.

The dump is located outside the city, far away from the eyes and consciousness of government officials, international business people and tourists. It makes its presence known by emitting a smell which snuffs out life for miles. I have never before smelled anything even close to it. Waves of nausea accompanied each breath I took.

People live in the dump (not outside of it or around it but IN it) in either green or white houses. The company that owns it encourages competition between the two groups so that they will not unite and riot. These people are Mexico City's recycling plant.

Endless lines of garbage trucks

Sister Mary Jo Moran, HM, is a member of the HM Council and Director of Community Life Development.

make trips here to discard their precious cargo. Garbage wrapped in green bags comes from the hospitals, and the residents are told not to search these bags because of their human, disease-infested contents but many do search them because often these green bags contain the most "valuable" remains. Most children do not attend school so that they can help their families to sort the garbage for recycling.

In the center of the dump is a tent-city -- women and children living amidst the piles of garbage in canvas "protection" -- clothes hanging to dry on a piece of rope amidst the rubble and stench. Pigs roam freely and eat to their stomachs' content. The people are troubled by scorched feet because the garbage is burned after they have sorted it, and new garbage is piled where the old was; however, the earth often smolders under the fresh garbage, resulting in scorched feet for the dump's barefooted inhabitants.

Rats, the likes of which I've never seen in any urban ghetto in the States, scurry for cover under rocks as they become aware of our presence. To the right of the dump and somewhat elevated is a beautiful soccer field for the children. Ironi-

cally, the Mexican government does not consider the inhabitants of the dump poor because they get housing with their jobs and they have meat (they can eat the pigs who roam through the dump). As unbelievable as it seems, there is a waiting list for the dump even though disease runs rampant and sanitation is unheard of.

From the dump we continued on to Barrio Norte. Marc, an albino leader of the base community there, showed us around while the rain pelted us and attempted to wash away the filth. We toured one section of the barrio where we had to descend roughly hewn, uneven stairs, which were wet and slick, to view the "Black River," a river of raw sewage and waste of every type. The houses we passed seemed made of cardboard or paper mache, and even doghouses back in the States offer more protection and sturdiness. Marc pointed out where whole rows of houses had been washed away last year when the Black River rose and claimed her own. The river ended in a stagnant, deadly pool which was waiting to rise again. Wiring was done by homeowners and so we often stooped to avoid the poorly positioned wires which brought light to such darkness.

Marc showed us all of this without a hint of pessimism or hopelessness. He explained that until ten years ago all of this land had belonged to only one person and when he died, the people came. They came by hundreds, thousands to claim what they believed to be theirs. The government had tried to evict them so that moderately priced housing could be erected, but they refused to leave and so the government, fearing a riot, left them alone.

The base Christian communities offer the people hope. They study Scripture; they see, they analyze and then they act. Recently the base Christian communities have opened a clinic and a library for the residents of Barrio Norte. I think that I will never forget the look of pride that claimed Marc's face when he was asked how long he had been a leader of the base Christian community and how long he would remain in that position; he replied he hoped to serve the rest of his life; nothing would give him a greater sense of satisfaction or purpose for living.

In the streets children kicked balls, climbed on trucks, played soccer and posed for pictures -- oblivious to their fate, while sad-eyed parents looked on and uttered half-hearted, hesitant, words of encouragement.

The walk through the barrio with Marc is one like I've never made before, and one that I hope will live forever in my memory.

Never before have I confronted Lady Poverty as I did this day. I would just think I had seen the worst when she would expose me to another scene even worse than before. I hope I can keep the sights, sounds, smells and most especially the people ever present because if they can find hope and God in their everyday situation, then certainly I, who really want for nothing, can do likewise.



Photo taken in Calloway Gardens by Sister Barbara Sitko, HM

Seasons of God

by Sister Rose Bator, HM

You were a gusty spirit breath
who filled and emptied me.
And quietly as rising sap,
greened me.

Then you were steady, summer-long daylight,
outlining edges and sharpening distances.
Stretching and playing shadow patterns
across the days and years,
You made the fall of evenings
seem gentle.

Now, you are earth mother.
I want to dig roots into you
But you crumble and crack, push me away.
You will not cradle me.
Not anymore.
You midwife foreign land in me.

Someday I think you will become water-god.
Flowing around our frozen boundaries,
making us susceptible to dissolving
and connecting,
you'll carry all with your fluid movement.
And our thawing will change your colors.

*Sister Rose Bator, HM, is campus minister
at Lorain County Community College,
Lorain, OH.*

The Nature of Things

by Sister Helen Jean Novy, HM

I went up to the zoo to view:

a young giraffe stretching skyward to mimic a parent;
a bald eagle posing frozen-eyed as if for a postage stamp;
and two freshly born tigers almost too tenuous for viewing

When into my view suddenly were gathered
members of The Institute for Creative Living
a symbiotic colony of serious leaders and exuberant followers.

Ringed by reminders,
the circle angled polygonally with
a stray arm, a lurching leg, a loose excitement.

Now with an encircling preface from each leader of six
"Stay with your leader, hold on to your friend!"
followed by a slightly less than earth-moving command
an energy was loosed:
each determined spirit collecting all its power to marshall
gnarled joints, crippled limbs, humped back,
jerking hand, scrunched neck, large head.

Forward!

Soon
a trembling body stilled in the contemplation
of a macaw's perky conversation;
a jerking limb suspended in the rapture
of a lion's muscle rippling with each four-pawed move;
a lopsided neck straightened at the marvel
of humming birds appearing and disappearing in mid-air;
a dwarfed frame enlarged at the apparition
of the rhythm of bigness in elephants' lumbering;
a single eye seeing for two in the abandon
of a monkey's sense-defying leaps, limber and agile because of a pliant tail.

Then
the group having created living
at the zoo
instituted for more joy
than keepers could calculate would ever be uncaged
gathered for leaving

lighter in body and comforted in spirit because of
a giraffe with an elongated neck,
an eagle with an irrepressible stare,
and tiger cubs in tumbles from miscalculations.

I went down from the zoo, a flawed form reshaped
by the art of seeing the nature of things.

*Sister Helen Jean Novy, HM, is on
the faculty of Magnificat High
School, Rocky River, OH.*

Two Sisters

Based on Luke 15, 11-31

by Sister Ruthmary Powers, HM

Once upon a time not so long ago there lived a mother, a father and their two daughters. The elder daughter was a fairly plain girl, but very obedient. She did everything her parents asked of her, and many things they didn't.

The second girl was very pretty. She delighted her parents' hearts. She was very social and outgoing. As the girls grew, they developed very different interests. The elder child was smart and good in school. The teachers praised her. The younger girl was popular and fun-loving. Teachers said, "You're not like your sister." The parents received many calls from the teachers saying she just wasn't working up to her potential.

The younger girl, bored with studies and wanting more action, started experimenting with drugs and alcohol. She enjoyed drinking, enjoyed the drugs and enjoyed the popularity and reputation of being a real party girl. Her older sister knew what was going on, but neither her mother nor father would listen.

One Saturday morning, the younger daughter, still high from the night before, announced to her shocked parents that she and her boyfriend were headed for the Big Apple. Before the grieved parents could act, the girl was gone. The household was sad. The elder child tried to please her parents, tried to comfort them, but they missed their younger child dearly. They wanted her gaiety and laughter, they wanted her to be home with them.

In the meantime, the young girl found herself in bad straits. Her boyfriend had dumped her soon after arriving in the city. She was

alone on the streets and in no time came under the control of a pimp who directed her every action. Many times, cold, hungry and hurting, she thought back to her parents' home and how she had abandoned it.

One day, bruised, weak, sick and pregnant, she had a chance to escape from the ever-watchful eye of the pimp--he didn't like his girls to get pregnant anyway, so before he turned his back, he had given her a good going-over. She thought about going home: "Even the cleaning woman at my home was treated much better than this. I'd better rehearse a line for my parents..." Slowly she made her way to the bus stop and started the trip home.

She was broken-hearted as she thought about how she had treated her parents and her sister. She thought about many things and resolved, if given a chance, she'd try to do better.

As she got off the bus in her old hometown, a friend of the family saw her, recognized her and called her parents. The mother and father were overjoyed and ran out of the house to wait at the bus stop for their daughter's return.

The elder daughter drove around a long time. She was not married; in fact, she'd spent most of her time trying to comfort and support her aging parents. Recalling the scene at the bus stop, she felt foolish. Bitter tears slid down her cheeks as she remembered the joy and delight mirrored on her parents' faces as they hugged her sister.

Surely she had been a fool. Surely her sister would once again be the center of attention, especially since

she would obviously soon be a mother. Tears, unshed from years past, flowed down the elder girl's face. She felt robbed and betrayed. How could she go home and party?

She pulled her car silently into the drive, turning off the headlights. She'd go down the street. Maybe sleep over somewhere. Somehow her mother must have heard her car, or else maybe she had been watching. The mother reached out to the elder girl and held her tightly. "Dad and I love you so much. You have been our support and strength during these years."

The bitterness and sadness seemed to become tangible as the two clung together for a long time.

Finally the mother spoke again. "Your sister is home. Your father and I are happy that she is safe and relatively healthy. But we know it will not be easy for you." And then, more softly, "Will you share our joy?"

The girl's heart wanted to shout with the anger and hurt of it. The choice she faced was both difficult and liberating. She hugged her mother hard and said, "I think I'll be moving out soon. You and Dad will have plenty to keep you busy."

The mother smiled a gentle, sad smile that was filled with understanding. Arm in arm the two entered the brightly lit house, toward a future filled with promise. The elder daughter stepped forward to hug her sister.

Sister Ruthmary Powers, HM, is on the staff of the Office on Women in Church and Society in the Diocese of Cleveland, OH.

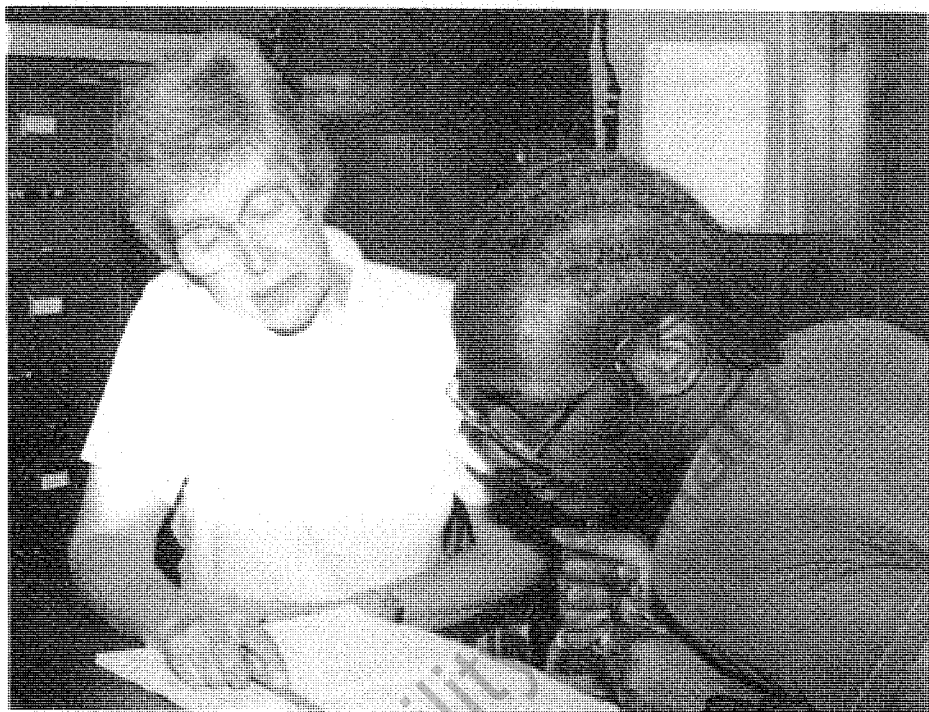
Special Feature:

LIVING OUR SPIRITUAL LEGACY TODAY

The spiritual legacy we celebrate in this Anniversary Year is rich in tradition - tradition expressed in a new voice each time a Sister of the Humility of Mary says 'yes' to a call from someone in need. We continue the tradition of our first sisters who, 125 years ago, said "yes" to an invitation from a distant land, a foreign culture, a strange tongue.

Few of us will have the opportunity to risk what they risked, to set foot on rough waters with faith to keep from drowning. American chapters of our history are filled, however, with stories of women who did and still do "walk on water." It is the same faith and the same "yes" that find HMs and CHMs responding to the needs of people in new places and new ways. Here are the stories of some of them.

Sister Marcia Eckerman, CHM, is a business manager in Davenport, IA.



Sister Nancy Schwieters, CHM, tutors a student in reading.

Worthwhile People in Unlikely Places

by Sister Marcia Eckerman, CHM

Befriending criminals can be a risky undertaking - one few of us would pursue with eagerness.

Not only must one contend with the slight possibility of danger involved in dealing with people who have committed serious, sometimes violent crimes, we must also realize that sustaining any type of relationship with someone in confinement subjects a person to some degree of personal humiliation, i.e., full body searches, and family and peer pressure.

Nevertheless, Sister Nancy Schwieters, CHM, sees prison ministry as her means of living out the Gospel.

Today, in addition to her job as a fifth-grade teacher, Nancy serves as a volunteer chaplain at the county jail through a program coordinated by Churches United of Scott and Rock Island Counties. She has

also arranged a weekly support group for women who have served time for drug and prostitution convictions and has even provided shelter in her own home for one former drug and alcohol abuser.

"It's important for me to do what I can, to be honest and trustworthy with these people because so often they've been burned in life."

She has learned through her association with jail prisoners that the majority suffer from a poor self-image, an abusive family life, a history of sexual and/or physical abuse and inadequate education. "Prostitutes have frequently been victims of sexual abuse," she said.

While offering friendship and encouragement to prisoners, Nancy says her main objective is simply "to let them know they are worthwhile people."

A Christlike Welcome: Common Ground for Social Service

by Sister Susan Corrigan, HM

As a clinical therapist at the Catholic Community League of Canton (CCL), I enjoy a sense of continuity with our founders and with all who have served in ministries of prayer and service for these 125 years in America. Being in the mental health profession gives me daily opportunities to engage in Jesus' mission of enhancing life for God's people.

My duties include counseling of individuals, couples and families, group counseling and short-term counseling of students at a nearby school. An area of particular interest to me is the counseling of divorced men and women, both individually and in a group setting. On Monday and Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings, I cofacilitate the ON WITH LIVING program for divorced persons. It is exciting and rewarding to witness the rebirth that occurs as hurting men and women move beyond the crisis of divorce to search out their own patterns, increase self-awareness and get on with living more fully.

In 1986 our CCL staff worked with a core group of volunteers to implement a special outreach to the homeless and hungry of the downtown Canton area. I am happy to be involved with Samaritan's Table each Thursday. The mission of our therapeutic hot meal program is consonant with our Humility of Mary mission of compassion for those most in need. St. John the Baptist parish has been our companion in this ministry, providing volunteers and a safe comfortable atmosphere in the parish hall. In working with volunteers and in planning meals, we hope to ensure for our guests a Christlike welcome as we provide both a meal and a milieu worthy of

each one. Guests are greeted at the entrance and seated at tables where places are set and meals served by volunteers. Other volunteers circulate and spend time interacting with guests, sometimes making referrals to helping agencies in the Canton community. An outgrowth of Samaritan's Table is a literacy training program connecting adult non-readers with volunteers in literacy education. In October, we will present the Samaritan's Table model at the National Catholic Charities Convention where the focus will be on the homeless and hungry of America.

Having a background in education is a strength for me as I combine knowledge of human development and psychology as a member of our Primary Prevention Training workshop staff. Each summer our CCL team sponsors two week-long workshops for teachers, parents, clergypersons, and counselors, who work with

young people facing many life stressors. Topics explored include chemical abuse, divorce, AIDS, teenage sexuality and suicide. Following principles of group dynamics and highlighting model programs that work, we demonstrate ways to build self awareness, self esteem and problem solving skills to help the young make positive life choices. This summer both workshops will be at Villa Maria Community Center.

This Fall I will teach a course in psychology to students at Walsh College in Canton - more diversity! In my struggle for balance, I am strengthened by our tradition of unity in mission, diversity in ministry. I rejoice in the liveliness and timelessness of our connection as we work to bring God's abundant life to all.

Sister Susan Corrigan, HM, is a counsellor at the Catholic Community League, Canton, OH.



Sister Susan Corrigan, HM, meets with a counseling group.

A Teacher with a Mission

*My students, 'blest and broken,
poured and flowing' have become a gift
of God and a sign of love.*

by Sister Margaret Cessna, HM

Death and life happened again last week. We buried Ann Patrick: Monday. Meg made her final vows: Sunday. Both teachers. As I sat in the same chapel and witnessed Meg's promise to be faithful forever, a million thoughts and feelings came together.

"Turn it around. Turn it around." Words from Cotton Patch Gospel took on a new meaning. The communion hymn did, too. "To be your bread now. . . ." The past and the future locked in a moment of clarity and personal re-dedication.

1963. At last. My own classroom. My first class. I was finally a teacher—a teacher with a mission. I was called to share the truth, to mold

tomorrow's leaders, to teach what I knew to those who knew little. As I look back I realize that those ambitions, that mission, had a touch of nobility, but a touch of arrogance as well.

1989. My 15th year in an urban high school. I don't remember growing older. I don't remember when I first realized that my students had turned it around. But there has been a growing awareness that they teach me as much as I teach them. I teach them to read; they teach me a new way to look at people. I teach them to write; they teach me to listen. I teach them to read the signs of the time; they teach me to read the signs of their lives. I teach them the road to perseverance; they share with me their strength of character. I share with them what is whole in me; they share with me

what is broken in them.

My students, "blest and broken, poured and flowing" have become a gift of God, of God's life and a sign of love. They have come to change me, to recreate me, to help make me whole.

There are nights when sleep doesn't come easily, when my shoulders bear the weight of cosmic realities: poverty, hunger, violence, nuclear threat. Tossing and turning does not change the world. So, I get up at 6:00 to be in my classroom at 8:00. Christa McAuliffe reminds me that there, in a rather simple but significant way, "I touch the future. I teach."

Sister Margaret Cessna, HM, is on the faculty of Erieview Catholic High School, Cleveland, OH.



Art students at Erieview Catholic High School for Girls designed and executed this billboard which was displayed in downtown Cleveland.

Their Cheerleader

by Sister Marcia Eckerman, CHM

When offenders found guilty of driving under the influence of alcohol are placed in an alcohol-dependency program, the last person they expect to see as their counselor is a red-headed nun. Sister Camille Clark, CHM, was recently appointed counselor of the Mercer County Addictions Office.

Substance-abuse programs are nothing new to Camille. "I am a recovering alcoholic and I believe it is genetically predispositioned," said Camille.

Now sober for 12 years, she is involved in helping others with substance-abuse problems, primarily alcohol. Helping others is also very beneficial for her. "We have a say-

ing. You have to give it away to keep it," she said.

For some ten years, she has been giving it away, first in Moline, Illinois, where in 1977 she was instrumental in the opening of a New Hope Lodge for women with addictions, and in 1985 she began working at Beacon House, a home for men. She has worked as lead counselor at both homes.

She seems to thrive on the work, for Camille is very enthusiastic and sprinkles her good sense of humor through all she does.

"It's mostly rewarding watching them (alcoholics) grow, seeing them become spiritually, physically and emotionally whole," Camille said.

After working with abusers in Moline for several months, Camille said it was gratifying to see past residents come back to visit and find that they had found their way back into the mainstream of life with their families, friends and jobs.

One past resident offered firsthand knowledge of Camille's dedication and care. "Camille reached out and grabbed ahold of my heart," she said. "And no one had ever gotten that close to me before. Of course, I was in a very bad way and I had not really accepted my alcoholism nor where I was. She said, 'Just let us love you until you can love yourself.'"

Sister Camille's formula for helping others is simple but effective. "I tell them that I will share my experiences, strengths and hopes," she said, adding with a smile. "Maybe on my tombstone it will say I was their cheerleader."

Pastoral Ministry: Ongoing Conversion

by Sister Linda Valasik, HM

"I am divorced and remarried outside the Church. Our family wants to receive the Eucharist together. Can I talk to you about my circumstances and find out what the Church says? I want to make things right and practice my faith fully."

"I know I'm dying of cancer. I have, at the most, six months to a year. Will you walk with me to my death?"

"Mike loves our son, but he suffers from many personal problems that he is passing on to the boy. I want our son's pre-school years to be influenced by God and the goodness I find here in this parish community. How can I learn about the Catholic Church and understand God in my life?"

"When I was a young man I was

too busy to go to Church. I've missed sharing my family's relationship with God. I want to make up for lost time in the years I have left. Will you help me do this?"

Such is the stuff of parish pastoral ministry. The needs are as individual as the persons who make up the parish, and as collective as the corporate personality into which each parish continually evolves.

Many sisters involved in parish ministry are Directors of Religious Education. They provide "womb to tomb" programs which address faith needs through all of the life journey. Others are primarily involved in social service, caring for people who need food, clothing, financial help with heat or rent, job placement, or support because of various dependency problems. Sisters bring Eucharist to, counsel and pray with the elderly, homebound, terminally ill and

grieving, the divorced and separated. Some sisters in parish pastoral ministry act as advisors and resource persons to the various parish committees and organizations that are the backbone of parish life and growth. Each parish is unique and so is the type of pastoral presence needed to help contribute to its development.

My ministry has an adult focus that zeros in on the journey of faith which adults are actively experiencing and wanting to share. Here are some examples.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is a process of faith growth for adults inquiring into the Catholic way of life. As director of that group, I join them, their sponsors, and catechists in a common journey for many months. My pastoral work is

that of catechist, resource person, liturgist, spiritual director, counselor, facilitator, to name a few facets.

Another way I share with adults in faith is to assist them with the annulment process. The acknowledgement of a broken relationship requires stark honesty and compassionate support. It is a time of deep conversion and God's healing grace.

Many adults hunger for a real knowledge of the scriptures and seek to live a gospel life. My ministry in learning and praying together with them is a real support for my own faith journey.

The liturgy is a focus of spirituality in our parish. Over the years many adults have grown in their understanding of and responsibility for celebrations that speak to God's work of conversion in us.

As a member of the Liturgy Committee I prepare lectors and Eucharistic ministers for their ministry. I also assist in doing special rites and environments unique to each Sunday and holyday celebration. As we pray and create in word and symbol we grow in faith together.

As I am involved with people in these areas of parish ministry I sense very deeply that I help to birth the Kingdom. I know the truth of this because I have shared the ongoing conversion that each of these experiences requires. They speak to me of God moving in our hearts, in our lives of service, reconciliation and commitment.

The Sisters of the Humility of Mary began because a group of women opened themselves to conversion. Their experience of God's loving presence urged them to join their parish priest in service to others who were seeking God's call. Sisters in parish ministry continue that journey of faith with others in many ways today.

Sister Linda Valasik, HM, works as a pastoral minister in St. Joseph parish, Mantua, OH.



Sister Becky Dobbels, CHM, calls on a patient

Losing Special Friends

by Sister Marcla Eckerman, CHM

"Three-thirty p.m., my Sunday afternoon shift is finished. Now home, to put my feet up and take care of my nagging headache - no. I will drive to a nearby town and say goodbye to John, my former patient of eight months and his family. The wake is at 4:30 p.m.

John and his wife Mary have been special friends these last months. As an oncology nurse I have spent many hours with John during his diagnosis, outpatient treatment and his final days on earth. Mary and I have spent many hours praying and talking about their life, their family and their dreams for the future. They hope to celebrate 40 years of marriage in June, and John asks me if he will be here to dance at the celebration.

My drive along the countryside is quiet and prayerful. I am losing two friends. God help me to accept the loss of another patient - another friend. It is hard to lose a patient that I have spent so much time with. Give me the grace to open my heart again, for tomorrow Karen is scheduled for her first of many weekly treatments."

Sr. Becky Dobbels, CHM, BSN, OCN, is an oncology nurse at Mercy Hospital, in Davenport, Iowa. The care, the hopes and the dreams a nurse has for her patients makes it a special loss. They become a special part of her life. Their smiles and their faith help her to accept the loss of a friend.

Rite of Healing From Sexism

Reclaiming Our Voices

by Sister Rose Bator, HM

Call to Gather:

Leader:

Today we pause to reflect on sexism and its effects in our lives and in our world. We gather to reclaim our lost voices, voices that have been silenced, have been absent throughout history. We speak in our own voices and we take up our power to name. We name what is violence for women and we name what is life-giving for women. We stand in solidarity with each other and with all who are still voiceless in our world.

Song: "Gather Us In" (Marty Haugen) or other appropriate song

Blessing of Apple: Renaming Symbol of Sexism:

The apple represents the silencing of women through Eve as the first sinner. It has symbolized sin in a world that wounds women. It has symbolized sin in societies that have stripped women of dignity and wrapped them in shame, fear and guilt. The sins of false judgment, violence, betrayal, self-rejection, closed mindedness, scape-goating have contributed to the marginalization of women. We denounce all power that is used to manipulate, violate, or diminish women.

Today we transform this symbol of apple into an image of empowerment for women. We receive the apple as gift of creation and remembrance of a God who becomes food for us.

Litany of Naming Violence:

All participants mention sources of violence. After each one, the group responds, "is a violence against Creation."

Example: "Turning my back on my own giftedness. . . is a violence. . ." "Physical, mental, sexual force. . . is a violence. . ."

Dance of Healing and Forgiveness:

Song: "Be Near Me O God" (Colleen Fulmer). One person dances to song.

Reading: Woman of Wisdom (Adapted, Proverbs 31:25-26, Wisdom 7)

Blessed is the woman of wisdom. She is clothed with inner strength and dignity and because of

this, she laughs at the days to come. Divine Wisdom, Sophia, the artist of Creation, is her teacher. In her is a spirit holy, unique, subtle, transparent, graceful, at peace with herself, moves freely, lifts up. She is not bound by brokenness or darkness. Rather, she mirrors pure light in her wholeness. She is an aura of the creative power of God. In her simplicity, she radiates the glory of God. Blessed is the woman of wisdom; she is clothed with inner strength and dignity, and she laughs at the days to come.

Blessing of Grapes:

Leader:

Today we create a new symbol for women. We bless these grapes and name them a symbol of our sisterhood and community. They are the fruit that gives refreshment to those who thirst. The image for us sharing, equality, mutuality and connectedness. They remind us to be nourished from the True Vine.

(The bowl of grapes is passed around the circle. Each person takes one from the vine and eats it.)

Remembering Our Name:

Leader:

Many of us have experienced brokenness because we have been named, defined by others in ways that diminish us and we have also chosen to identify ourselves by these names. Today we re-name ourselves by choosing a name that calls us to be whole and reflects the Woman of Wisdom in each of us.

(Each person chooses a name, says it aloud and then comes to the center of the circle where the group repeats the new name aloud. Then, water is poured over her hands from a crystal pitcher, symbolizing the community's affirmation of her new name.)

Example:

Dancing Flame
Steady Stream
Living Water

Closing Song: "Blessed is She" (Colleen Fulmer)

Sister Rose Bator, HM, is campus minister at Lorain County Community College, Lorain, OH.

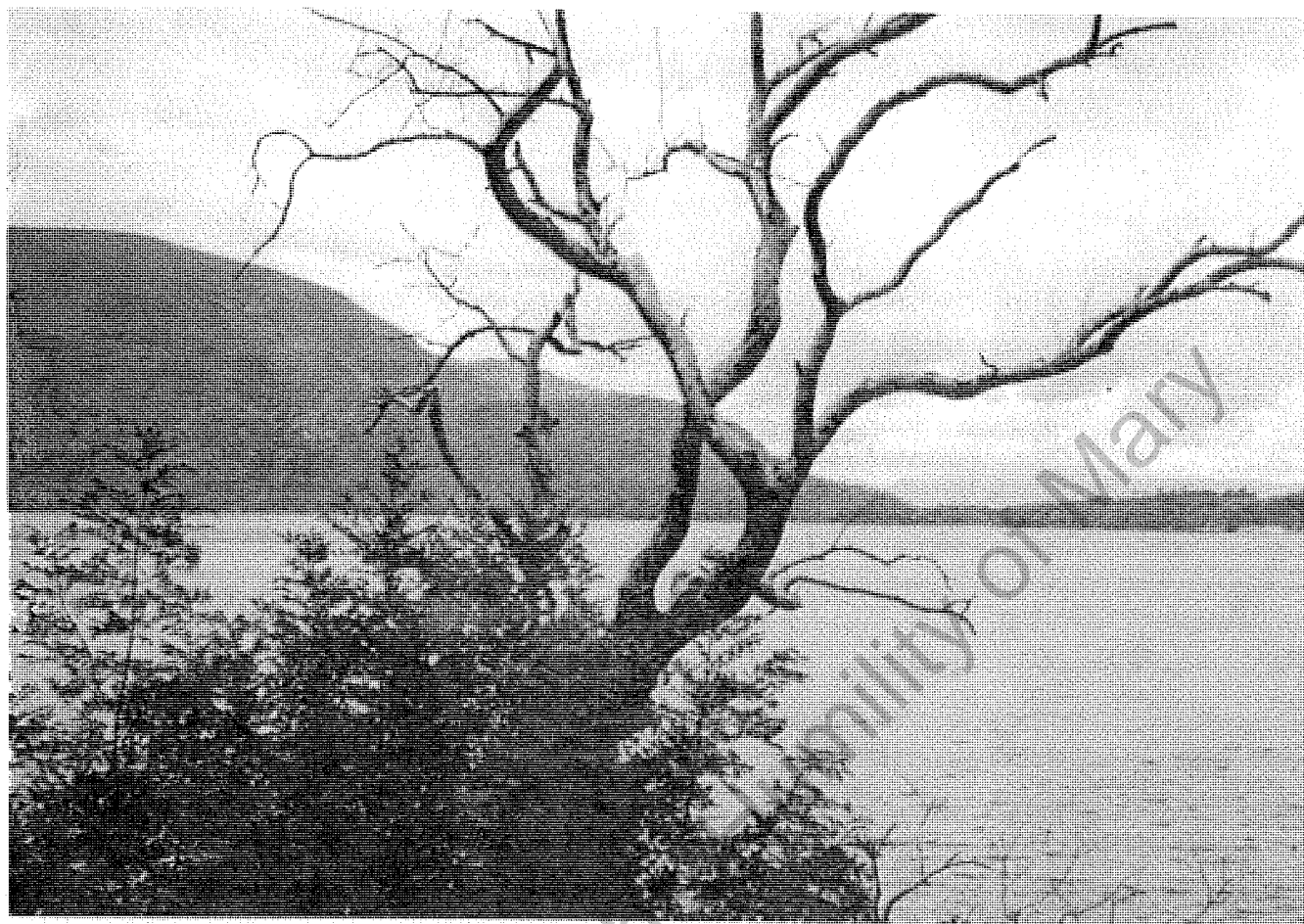


Photo by Sister Mary Dolores Staudt, HM

Personal Psalm

by Sister Mary Daniel Jakota, HM

Yahweh, what beauty must Your heaven hold
When what You've shared with us on earth
Exalts the soul and holds the heart a captive to Your love.
The mind staggers at the many forms and colors You have given us:
The blue of the sky and all its lovely changing clouds,
Its shining orbs of sun and moon and ever-sparkling stars;
The varied greens of tree and bush and grass;
The ever-moving, ever-beckoning tides of lakes and sea.
And who can try to enfold the varied hues of flowers!
The tiniest insect to the giants of the wild!
I cannot get my fill of all this beauty, Yahweh.
I can only bow my head and fill my soul
With ever-new, yet ageless Alleluias!

*Sister Mary Daniel Jakota, HM, died August 12, 1988,
after many years of service in parish elementary schools.*

Back to our beginnings: the pilgrimage to France

A celebration of beginnings inspired the members of the HM/CHM committee to plan the trip to France, "a visit which creates links," as the Bishop of Nancy called it. It did, indeed, bring together our communities in an unforgettable experience of unity. And it also linked us to the people of the villages with bonds of warmth and affection. It brought together relatives of Fr. Begel and Mother Magdalen who had never met each other before. It even brought together church and state as bishops,

vicars, pastors and religious joined mayors and other public officials to welcome us. It was an extraordinary event which we record sketchily in the pages that follow.

Photos clockwise from top left:

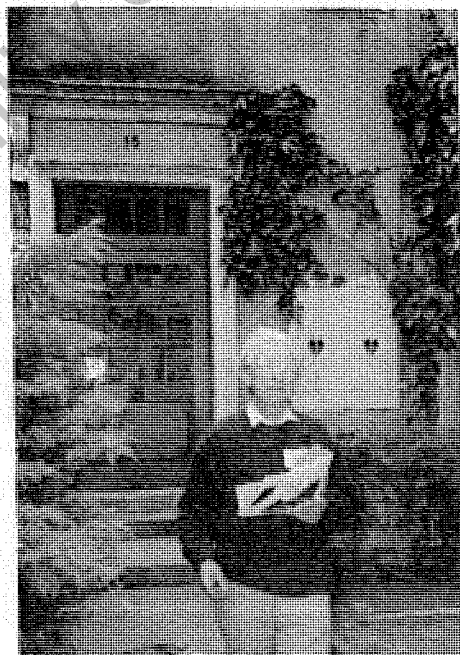
1. HMs and CHMs gather for a photo and a song outside of the Church in Mazeley.

2. Fr. Guerner, great-great nephew of Fr. Hoffer who was a colleague of Fr. Begel's, is pastor of the same parishes and lives in the same rectory as our founder.

3. "Let there be peace on earth." We joined hands in spontaneous expression of unity at the liturgy celebrated at the shrine of Sion.

4. "Dommartin!" Tangible proof that we had really arrived at the home of Mother Magdalen.

5. The generous reception and elegant dinner with which the villagers welcomed us were evidence of the origins of hospitality which characterize the Humility of Mary spirit.



A bronze plaque - 'in loving memory'

The day was bright and beautiful. Trees shaded the whole altar and birds were also cheerfully lifting their voices in praise to God. The altar was flanked by an abundant supply of ferns and garden-fresh flowers.

When the plaque was seen for the first time, there was much rejoicing in the beauty and reality of this finished product. I was happy to learn that the plaque would be placed in the church on the wall next to the Madonna where Mother Magdalen prayed over 125 years ago.

Sr. Kathleen Henneberry, CHM



A dream come true! Srs. Bernadine and Mary-Joanna examine the bronze plaque dedicated "in loving memory" of Mother Magdalen.

Dommartin-Coming Home!

I never would have believed that journeying to our foundation would be like going home; but it was.

The French country-side reminded me of the rolling hills of Iowa. The rural folk were like the ones I have enjoyably encountered and worked with in our farming communities. It is not hard to see how such people, so close to the earth, could have produced the first Humilities.

As I ponder our pilgrimage of HMs and CHMs, I discover once again how aptly we are named. That "humus" from which we sprouted still permeates the being of our two communities.

We are HUMILITIES - women of the earth - simple, strong, joyful and faith-filled, radical. It is evident that neither group of women has lost the charism so ingrained and lived out in the early pilgrim band.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have traveled with these wonderful women. I am grateful, too, for the opportunity to have experienced a small part of the flavor of a land which produced such saintly and valiant women and men: Mother Magdalen, Mother Anna, Mother Mary of the Angels and Father John Joseph Begel.

Sr. Cathy Talarico, CHM



Salmon and a tomato basket-the first course of seven! The people of Dommartin welcomed us to dinner in our original convent which is now a youth center.



We are united in a moment of prayer and song in the parish church of Dommartin where Mother Magdalen often prayed.

Celebration in a garden-- reunion and renewal

A special highlight for me was kneeling in the Church in Dommartin in front of our Lady's statue where the first sisters often knelt, and feeling the continuity of the life of faith. As the celebration on the village green ended, one by one the sisters found their way into the church and soon our thoughts overflowed into song, "PEACE is flowing like a river," followed by prayers and hymns.

It seemed so right that we pray here together on the hard little benches in this most poor little church. We walked from the church singing the Lourdes song, processing two by two to the convent garden of 125 years ago. That spot is still a garden--vegetables and flowers well tended--and in the corner under the tree where originally a statue of Mary overlooked the sisters as they sewed, we stopped to pray and sing.

Sr. Gretchen McKean, CHM



Srs. Maria Trinitas and Mary Therese recited our vows in French and we in English. The Joan of Arc Boys' Choir from Nancy is in the background.



The memorial plaque, designed by Sr. Mary Joanna and presented by our two communities, was blessed at the Mass and will be placed in St. Martin's church in Dommartin.

*On sacred ground,
'humus'--humility
has new meaning.*

Mother Magdalen--joyful gatherer

Meeting the families and descendants of Mother Magdalen and Father Begel was like a family reunion. We were not just visiting French people; we were meeting relatives whose lives touched each of us. Some of the people who came to greet us met their own blood relatives for the first time. Our sharings and receptions were opportunities for them to have their own family reunions.

From historical readings, visiting the country and culture and much reflection, I believe our

founders, especially Mother Magdalen, have a great deal to say to us about the name of our community - HUMILITY. Along with meanings familiar to all of us, an additional meaning for me is "inner power." Mother Magdalen was an enabler, a facilitator, an inviter, a discernor, one who gathers or welcomes the surprises of God and others into her life. It was because of her that we were gathered into this community. And now, it was because of her that we gathered in this holy place.

Sr. Marie Veres, HM



We gathered to pray and sing in the same garden where our first sisters prayed and where the French Madonna once stood.

A welcome of bells in Nomeny- home of Mother Anna Tabourat



The bells of St. Stephen Church ring out as we arrive at Nomeny.

Bells have always played a significant part in our lives: calling us to prayer, announcing death or a wedding, but when we got off the bus in Nomeny, bells sent out the message that the pilgrims from the United States had arrived. Most of us came to find the roots of our religious family, but some, like Sr. Mary Kay, could say that their natural family came from here, too.

Since my pilgrimage to France, many things make more sense to me. I understand myself better, my family, my HM community and my time spent in Vietnam. I also realize where my excitable nature, my love of a good laugh and warm hospitality come from.

I know why my old aunts used to kiss me on both cheeks, why my mother always had clean, lace curtains on our windows and fresh cut flowers inside our home, why she lit candles when she went to church and visited her parents in the cemetery often, why she always welcomed people into our home with warm

affection and good food, why she taught us to laugh at ourselves and have a good time without any money.

My HM community has always taught me to extend hospitality to others, have a joyful spirit, love fresh flowers and good food. To trust in God is very much a part of our tradition, too.

When I was in Vietnam, I used to think the Vietnamese were the reason why we didn't have screens on our windows, and that things changed overnight and no one bothered to tell us. Now I realize that many of these attitudes were French in origin and not Vietnamese as I had once thought.

To say my pilgrimage to France was a wonderful experience is a gross understatement. I was expecting to be greeted warmly, but nothing like the outpouring of love and generosity that greeted me wherever I went, even in the poorer villages.

Sr. Mary Kathryn Pillot, HM

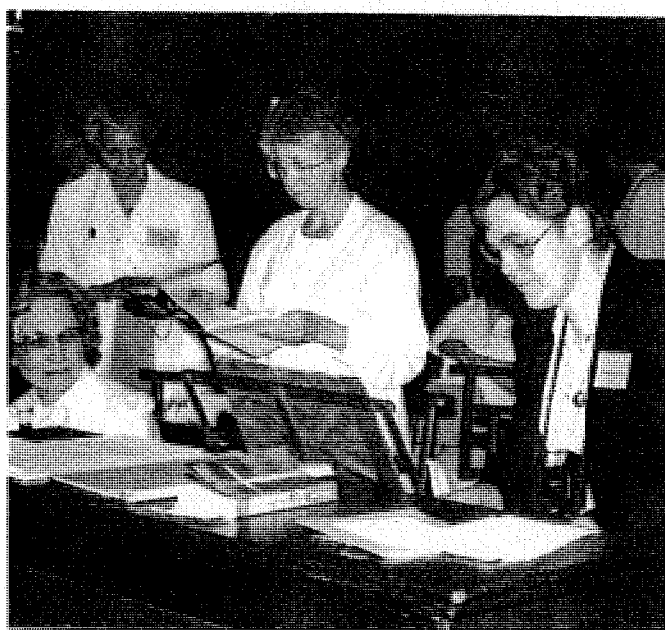
'History-in-the-making'

Journeying in France to our founders' homeland has renewed my spiritual sense of history. The simple lifestyle they shared remains 125 years after their decade of ministry with the town folks. To understand our religious roots, I became sensitive to the political and social events impacting on our earliest members. The history of the Alsace-Lorraine area is full of destruction and death. This experience was history-in-the-making, bonding us with our past, strengthening us for our future.

Sr. Barbara Walter, HM

The trip to France was not for me a step back in time but the sacrament of the present moment. I felt I was truly standing on holy ground in the chapel of Dommartin as I renewed my HM commitment vowed 35 years ago at Villa Maria. However, in Dommartin, the environment was filled with the simplicity and humility which were lived out by our founding sisters and passed on to me.

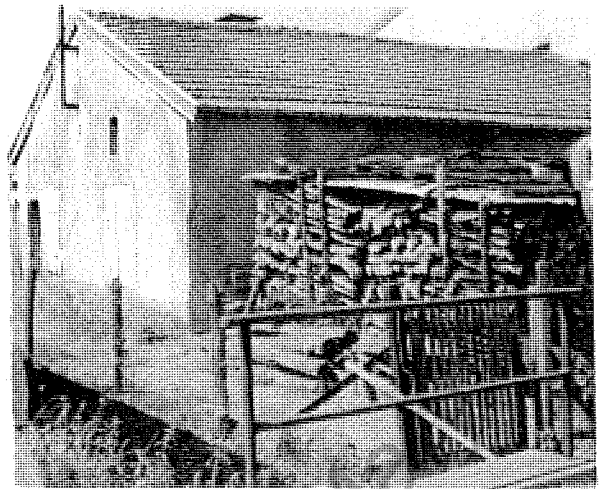
Sr. Elaine Wellinger, HM



Srs. Rosemary, Mary Kay and Marie join Sr. Barbara Sitko as she plays Mother Anna's music.



The CHM pilgrims join to sing the "Ave Maria" around the font where Mother Mary of the Angels was baptized.



This simple house was birthplace and home for Mother Mary of the Angels.

'Ave Maria' in memory of Mother Mary of the Angels

The "Ave Maria" echoed in the tiny church as the CHMs clustered around the baptistry in Mother Mary of the Angels' parish church. We all felt moved by the experience and could identify with the following reflections.

villages where our founders lived, were baptized, prayed and dedicated themselves to God brought to mind the faith they shared in humble beginnings.

Sr. Mary Anne Leto, CHM

Walking in the churches and The trip to France and to our origins will be unwrapped like

Strangers No Longer

by Sister Marilyn Brinker, CHM

Pilgrims were we - strangers in a foreign land,
Crossing barriers of language, culture
and environment we became one.
The warmth of welcomes
through embraces, hugs, kisses, and smiles
quicken the experience of being "home."
The sharing of liturgy, the common breaking of bread,
made us one in the "spirit" of Jesus' life and love.
The walking along the paths of our founders
and listening to their "handed-down" stories
deepened our feelings of oneness.

The experiencing of a "simple life-style,"
respecting and caring for the land
wove a common thread
through Dommartin, Epinal, Ohio and Iowa.
The leaving left us no longer strangers,
but friends, kindred spirits
and family embracing new life and fulfillment.

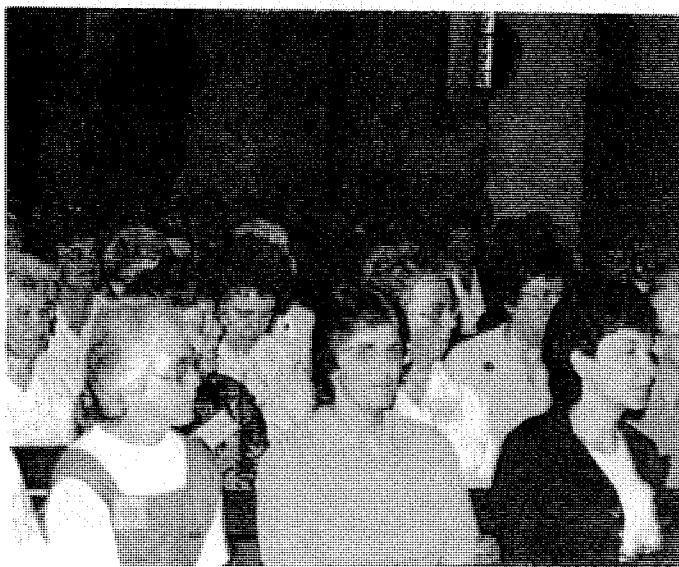
Pilgrims we were - pilgrims we are.
Our journey now more deeply rooted in the past,
more challenged by the future.

an onion over the months and years to come, as I recall and discover new meaning from the sights, sounds, events, and feelings I experienced. I was surprised at how rural the area is where the sisters first came together. At this point of reflecting on my trip, my greatest learning is a new appreciation of the radical-ness of the migration of the small community from their simple, family-oriented, rural roots in France to the unknown in America.

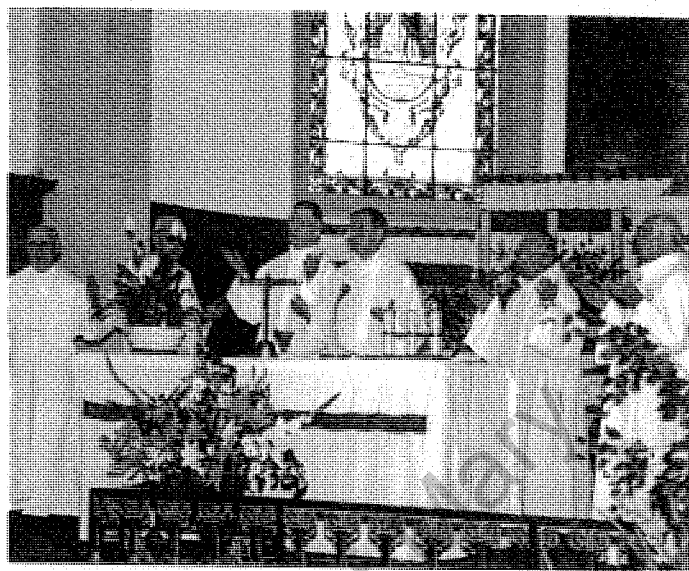
Sr. Mary Rehmman, CHM



Sr. Maria Trinitas chats with Marie Rullier, grandniece of Mother Mary of the Angels.



The relatives and friends of Fr. Begel and his family filled the church and our hearts.



Frs. Vaxelaire, Dautrey, Crevisier, Andre, Francois and Antoine Guerner celebrate Mass in Urmenil.

A full church and full hearts make a family reunion

Hundreds of parishioners, a corps of volunteer firemen, six priests, an energetic choir--all contributed to the excitement at the Mass in Urmenil. John Joseph Begel's families had come together to celebrate!

morial cards which they discussed as the choir tuned up in earthy voices. We sang "Gentle Woman" and the Solemn Magnificat, and renewed our vows in the words of our first sisters.

the church taking pictures of the people taking pictures of us!

It was a totally unexpected, and delightful experience--the kind that usually happens when families get together after a long, long absence. This was really a family reunion!

We gave the parishioners me- After Mass, we gathered for pictures--we on the steps outside

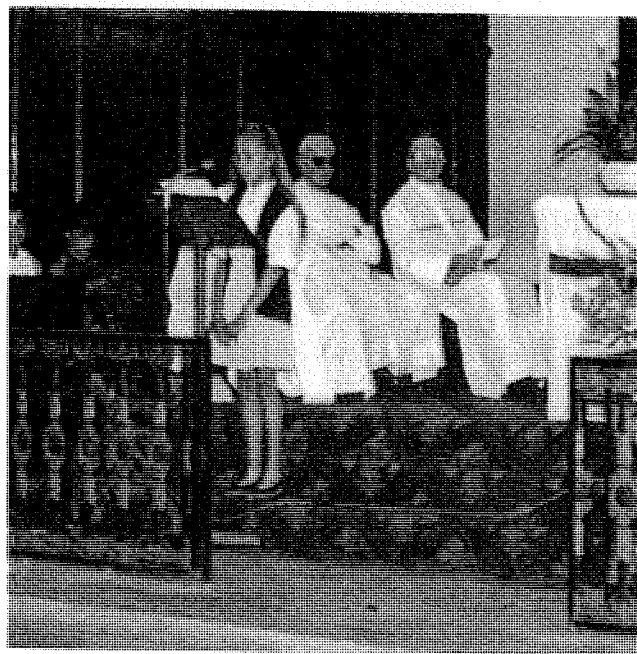
A special welcome invites us to work for peace

(Welcome speech delivered at the Mass in Urmenil in French and English by 13-year-old Marie Laure, a relative of Fr. Begel's).

Dear Sisters of the Humility of Mary, you are welcome among us. First of all, we would like to thank you a lot for having made such a long journey to return to basics and visit the area your Father came from. Maybe you know that man far better than we do, but we still live the same hard and simple lives in our "Vosages," and I do think we've kept his true spirit alive until now.

We also want to say thank you for this exchange of views between our two faraway countries. Aware of the trouble and misunderstanding throughout the world, we want to do something to help solve all of this and replace it with peace and happiness. Let's hope that everybody may do his best for universal understanding and brotherliness and pray together for this great cause.

You've brought us your friendship; let us offer you our hospitality as well as our warm and hearty welcome. We wish that there will be more holy meetings to come and we're all hoping to see you again very soon.



Marie Laure, one of Fr. Begel's youngest living relatives, welcomes us in English at the Mass.



The "pompiers," volunteer firemen of Urmenil, pour champagne at the reception.



Paulette Luck, great grand-niece of Fr. Begel, gives flowers to Srs. Susan and Mary Clare.



Sr. Margaret admires the daisies picked from land which once belonged to Fr. Begel.

When language failed, flowers and smiles said it all

I had not expected the warmth and joyfulness of the reception we were given and so my own emotional response is deeper and more personal than I could have hoped for. The bronzed faces and steel-like grip of farmers welcomed us with the words, "Cousin," or "Family Voinier." Most spoke only a few words of English and I almost no French but there is communication beyond words of good will and welcome. Fortunately, Sister Mary Therese Berry was a fluent translator and the prepared greetings were instantly translated to our eager ears.

Sr. Gretchen McKean, CHM

The children were so taken by our visit that they found ways of telling us "Welcome" - singing together and collecting our autographs.

Sr. Mary Anne Leto, CHM

It wasn't the historical scene of our humble beginnings that moved me. It was the warmth of the people we met along the way of our pilgrimage that gave me a sense of rootedness in joy and simplicity. Over and over again those two words came to us in striking ways. People went out of their way to tell us how much they appreciated our joy. The newspaper article that reported our visit described us as wearing simple, bright-colored dresses and sturdy shoes. The receptions given in our honor showed genuine appreciation for our life both in the past and in the present. I was grateful for the affirmation of my vocation.

A surprise for me was the unity I felt with the Humilities of the West. The people saw no difference between us. In fact, there weren't two groups. We were one community of 44 individuals. Mother Magdalen, Mother Anna

and Mother Mary of the Angels would have fit well into our group as we prayed together, laughed together, sang together and walked the cobble streets together in our sturdy shoes. It was a grace-filled pilgrimage that I will always treasure.

Sr. Coletta Bast, HM

This trip was my first to another culture, and I felt dislocated, disoriented and out-of-control. When I transferred that experience to the group who left everything behind and came to America knowing they would probably never go back, I was able to share something of their feelings of separation. Especially for us western CHMs, migration to new vineyards has been characteristic of our history--from Pennsylvania to Missouri, then to Ottumwa, Iowa, some to Montana, and eventually to Davenport. Each separation calls for new kinds of detachment and exposes us to new and unknown risks.

Sr. Mary Rehmann, CHM



Jeanne Mercier, our friend and companion on the pilgrimage, gives flowers to a relative of Sr. Ange Balland, Fr. Begel's niece and one of the first sisters.



The Nancy City Hall provided an elegant setting for the Mayor's reception.



We received candy and macaroons, specialties of the Nancy region. Sr. Mary Joy says "Merci," a word we learned to use often.



The end of the tour! Some of the pilgrims wave "au revoir" to those on the bus heading for Charles De Gaulle airport.



The view from Fr. Begel's bedroom window! Fr. Guerner welcomes some unexpected help.

Moments from a memorable trip

Chris, our guide, told us that according to a German legend, when the sky is a beautiful blue or without clouds, the angels are passing by. We must have been watched over during our tour because everywhere we went, we had sun.

I am grateful for all I experienced, but particularly at:

Nomeny--to view St. Stephen's Church where Mother Anna was baptized.

Amance--to be welcomed by

bells to Fr. Begel's church here.

Laltre--to walk through Fr. Begel's rectory, still being used by his successor, Fr. Guerner.

Dommartin--to assist at the Mass celebrated by Bishop Bernard of Nancy, and to hear Abbe Pierre de Latte, Vicar for Religious, who cited our pilgrimage's similarity to Mary's movement and service in the Visitation.

Mazeley--to visit the church of the baptism of Mother Mary of the Angels.

Sr. Jean Babeaux, HM

"Va sans baggages," words from one of the songs at the Mass in Urmenil had special significance for me after I was forced to live for three days on the trip without my one piece of luggage.

In traveling back to our Humility birthplace with sisters from the East and West, I have learned how the generosity of each sister to share her life and "essentials" with others makes the on-going saga of the communities possible "sans baggage."

Sr. Joanne Talarico, CHM

Congregation of the Humility of Mary