



# Heart

Summer 2007

A Journal of the Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province

# ...to Heart

## Dear Friends,

Summer is a time when many of us hope for some experience of rest, relaxation and renewed energy. The Religious of the Sacred Heart in the United States have been gifted with such a summer experience. In July more than 230 members of the province met in Chicago for our provincial assembly and chapter, a gathering full of hope and energy.

One topic of our conversation, which will be the theme of our international General Chapter in 2008, was that of our spirituality as we live it in the 21st century. Our dialogue had begun in January with four of our members reflecting on their lived spirituality. Two of those reflections are included in this issue of *Heart* and two were in the previous issue. Throughout the spring we have been sharing with one another our experience of God and of living God's love in situations where the "piercing of the heart takes place." In Chicago we took time to identify the characteristics of our culture in the United States that contextualize our particular experience and expression of our spirituality. Some of these were: the importance of the individual person, the values of equality and initiative, and a sense that we can change things and make a positive difference in our situations. You may have other values you would add to that list.

In the fall we will draft a statement for our General Chapter, where we will join our reflections to those of Religious of the Sacred Heart in forty-four countries throughout the world.

With this fourteenth issue of *Heart*, we bid farewell to Pamela Schaeffer, our director of public relations and communications. Over the past five and a half years, Pam has advanced many aspects of our communications, and is best known as the



Pamela Schaeffer



Jim Orso

creator and editor of *Heart*. We thank her for investing her "heart" with ours, for bringing to our mission her deep values, the expertise of her twenty-five-year career in journalism, and her gifts of initiative, creativity, enthusiasm, sensitivity and integrity. Pam will become executive editor of *The National Catholic Reporter* where she previously worked for seven years, most recently as managing editor. We wish her the best as she takes up this new ministry in service of the wider Church.

Jim Orso will succeed Pam as director of public relations and communications.

Jim comes with twenty-five years of experience as a journalist, public relations executive and communications strategist, including seventeen years at Fleishman-Hillard, where he served as senior vice president and partner and, most recently, three years as executive director for communications of the Archdiocese of St. Louis. Welcome, Jim! ✦



With love in God's heart,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Conan RSCJ".

Kathleen Conan, RSCJ  
Provincial



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### **Congratulations to Elizabeth Shearman, RSCJ.**

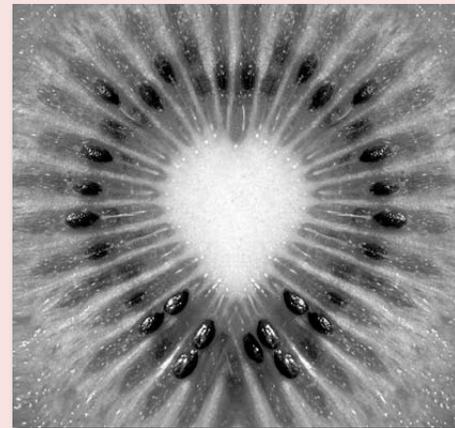
The magazine cover featuring her photo of a lily, taken during her recent service in Malta, took **third place in the Best Magazine Cover** category (all Catholic magazines) in the 2007 national Catholic Press Association contest. Judges wrote: "Unusual use of a photograph to reflect the name of the magazine in the cover image. The bright green colors and single flower blooming is the ideal image of spring and new growth."

*Heart* took two other awards: third place for General Excellence, religious order magazines – garnering kudos from judges for “poignant human-interest stories” and “striking seasonal nature photographs” on the cover – and honorable mention for “Pilgrimage to Mecca” (Spring 2006) in the Best Feature Article category.

*Feature articles and photos are by Pamela Schaeffer, editor of Heart, except where otherwise noted.*

# Heart

*Heart* is published three times a year to highlight the mission and ministries of the Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province, for a wide circle of friends. The covers, photographs of hearts in nature, symbolic of Christ's presence at the heart of the universe, bear witness to the contemplative dimension of the Society's "wholly contemplative, wholly apostolic" mission: to discover and reveal God's love through the service of education.



The Society of the Sacred Heart was founded by Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat in post-revolutionary France and brought to the United States by Saint Philippine Duchesne in 1818. For more information about the mission and ministries of the U.S. Province, please visit [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org).

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# Spirituality embraces the Earth at Assembly

by Paula Toner, RSCJ



Sisters Agnes Hoormann of St. Louis and Joan Hopkins of San Francisco make notes between sessions at the U.S. Province Chapter/Assembly.

Two hundred thirty Religious of the Sacred Heart gathered at Loyola University, Chicago, in early July for a U.S. Province Chapter/Assembly. General sessions were webcast live to Kenwood and Oakwood, where retired sisters joined with us via this transmission on a big screen.

Our July 3-8 gathering was set in a retreat-like atmosphere with communal prayer in a variety of modes. These included music, readings from scripture and our founding mothers, an evening of Taizé prayer, and Eucharistic liturgies. At the last of these, we feted our golden and diamond jubilarians. Time for quiet reflection was built into the schedule.

The major themes for this gathering were our spirituality (the theme of the Society's General Chapter in 2008); care for the environment; and how we organize ourselves as a provincial community. Subcommittees brought forward proposals, decisions and commitments for consideration. The outcomes, in broad strokes, are as follows:

**Spirituality:** During the year we had shared our experience of living our spirituality and identified expressions that speak of its meaning today. At the assembly, in preparation for the General Chapter next year, we shared reflections on U.S. culture as it pertains to our living out of our spirituality. A subcommittee will continue this work, in dialogue with province members, and prepare a presentation for chapter delegates, who will meet in July-August 2008 in Lima, Peru.



In a break from business, RSCJ who formerly lived in Chicago sing their thanks to RSCJ who live there now. (From left, Sisters Mary Lyman, Paula Toner, Margaret Strom, Maureen Little, Sharon Karam and Anne Dyer.)

**Care for the environment:** We voted overwhelmingly to endorse “The Earth Charter” ([www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org)) and to take steps to live by its principles and make them known. We adopted this statement: “As RSCJ whose ecological vision is rooted in the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus, we commit ourselves to deepen our awareness of our unique roles and responsibilities in sustaining the integrity of our planet and its inhabitants.”

**Province governance:** We voted to develop and pilot a new plan for member participation in the direction of the province, while retaining the current structure of provincial administration and the identity of our regional communities.

Several other matters were on the agenda:

- a report from the provincial team and staff highlighting signs of energy and the challenges we face, and as well as updates on progress in improving our financial picture and plans for a major gifts campaign over the next five years.
- the election of three delegates to represent us at the General Chapter. The province elected Sisters Barbara Bowe, Lyn Osiek and Ellen Collesano as delegates and Suzanne Cooke and Maureen Glavin as alternates.
- first reading of a proposal aimed at enhancing the relationship of the province and Sacred Heart Associates (page 7, this issue). The proposal includes support for developing an identity statement, committing resources to the program and engaging in collaborative events.

It is difficult to put into words the prayerful and renewing spirit of this gathering. Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat gave the Society the motto *Cor Unum et Anima Una in Corde Jesu*. The RSCJ gathered in Chicago experienced this as a gift and a treasure to be nurtured, and we look forward to exchanging insights on our spirituality with our sisters worldwide next year. ✦

## *In Memoriam*

Please see [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org)  
for biographical information  
on RSCJ who have died.

**May they live in the fullness  
of God’s love.**

*Sarita Mejía*  
April 18, 2007

*Dorothy Holmes*  
April 23, 2007

*Mary Sessions*  
June 1, 2007

*Brigid Keogh*  
June 1, 2007

*Edna Tierney*  
June 4, 2007

*Adelaide Hickey*  
June 5, 2007

*Christine Webber*  
July 1, 2007

*Susan Campbell*  
July 24, 2007

## EDUCATORS SHARE GLOBAL VISION

Representing nineteen countries on six continents, Sacred Heart educators gathered in St. Charles, Missouri, in late April for an international meeting of heads of Sacred Heart schools. The gathering, just the third such event in the 207-year history of the Society of the Sacred Heart, visibly fulfilled – made incarnate – a vision of our founder, Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat, that the Society’s educational mission would embrace the world.

Meeting in general sessions and in small groups, administrators – many of them pictured below – shared deeply with one another about the challenges of providing a Catholic education in varying parts of the world. U.S. educators talked about the difficulty of giving students a sense of hope amid an ongoing media barrage of mostly bad news, while in Asia, materialism is an ever present obstacle, educators said.

Austrian educators expressed amazement at the ease with which American educators discussed religion and spirituality, lamenting that in secularized Austria, inhibitions make it difficult for people to speak openly about such subjects.

Speakers included Patricia García de Quevedo, former superior general of the Society, who called on Sacred Heart educators to be realistic “bearers of new hope” in a complex world. Cecile Meijer, RSCJ, and Joan Kirby, RSCJ, discussed the Society’s role at the United Nations and urged commitment to the Millennium Development Goals ([www.un.org/millenniumgoals/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)).

Patrick Bassett, president of the National Association of Independent Schools, presented a program for global education his organization has developed.

School administrators prayed in the Shrine of Saint Philippine Duchesne

and toured the schools she established in St. Charles and Florissant, Missouri. With tickets generously provided by supporters of Sacred Heart schools in the region, many participants attended a National League baseball game for the first time, cheering on the St. Louis Cardinals (who went on to win the World Series) in a contest with the Chicago Cubs.

The educators heard proposals for more direct collaboration among schools and left with plans to engage students and faculty in a variety of international, intercultural projects as they look forward to the next worldwide conference in 2011 in Taiwan.

The U.S. meeting was organized by the St. Charles-based Network of Sacred Heart Schools and Academy of the Sacred Heart. The last worldwide conference was held in Sydney, Australia, in 2002. More information is available at [www.sofie.org](http://www.sofie.org). ✦



# ASSOCIATES: THE NEXT STEP

When the first national meeting of regional coordinators for Sacred Heart Associates was about to open in St. Charles, Missouri, in 2003, Sheila Hammond, RSCJ, regarded her upcoming assignment with apprehension. As a member of the U.S. provincial team, Sister Hammond had agreed to convene the meeting in order to get a better sense of groups that had sprung up organically around the country – groups of people who wanted to share in the charism and spirituality of the Society of the Sacred Heart – perhaps with varying agendas and hopes. “We thought it would be good a idea to learn more about how the program was developing and assess commonalities among the groups. I didn’t know what to expect,” she recently recalled.

Afterwards, Sister Hammond delivered a strong and positive message to Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ, provincial, and other members of the provincial team: “It was an experience of God’s Spirit almost like nothing I had ever known,” she said. “The sense of God’s Spirit being alive in that group of women trying to share their faith with one another was like a spring bubbling up. It was so refreshing and so alive.”

Three more national meetings followed (a fifth is scheduled for next year), “and each time I have had an experience similar to that first time,” Sister Hammond said.

The U.S. Province’s associates program began in the early 1990s – though some would trace its roots to the 1970s, when some RSCJ began meeting with groups outside Sacred Heart

*continued*

## NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBER

### CATHERINE KINABREW

When, in the 1990s, Catherine Bouzon Kinabrew was hired as an administrator by her alma mater, Academy of the Sacred Heart (the Rosary) in New Orleans, she found herself “awestruck by the whole sense of Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat’s vision working today.” She saw it reflected in the *Goals and Criteria of Sacred Heart Schools* – “so holistic,” she noted, embracing both heart and mind. “The more I talked about Madeleine Sophie and Philippine Duchesne, and became friends with the RSCJ, the more I realized that Sacred Heart was more than a job, that it was an expression of who I am.” She began to seek a way to deepen the relationship

beyond her contractual connection with the school.

Kinabrew was one of three women who began an associates program in New Orleans in 1999. She recalls telling the RSCJ, “I want to know what you know so I can do what you do.” Only later did she realize the relationship was mutual. It happened when Mary Blish, RSCJ, said, “We want to know how you are making known the love of Jesus through *your* life.”

Today Kinabrew is one of six associates in New Orleans. She describes belonging as “breathing the same air” as the RSCJ – that air being “the breath of the Spirit.” As chair



Catherine Kinabrew works with students in the summer program of the Good Shepherd School in downtown New Orleans.

of the new associates’ coordinating committee, she hopes to strengthen the associates’ identity and find ways for them to participate in the Society’s mission. Another

challenge is financial. “We need to find ways to be self-sustaining as we grow,” she said.

schools. The program grew haltingly at first. For a variety of reasons, some Religious of the Sacred Heart were opposed. Some questioned how lines would be drawn between associates and professed members. Some wondered, too, whether offering such an option would undermine vocations, or dilute the identity of the professed. Others, though, strongly supported the movement, already underway in many religious orders around the world, as the work of the Spirit.

The program got a boost when the Society held its international General Chapter in 1994. Documents declared the Society's spirituality a treasure to be shared and likened potential encounters between RSCJ and associates to the disciples' encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

"We have this deep conviction that our spirituality does not belong to us," the documents read. "It is a gift to be shared,

a treasure others help us discover. With them, we want to continue to search how to live and express it for today, how to proclaim, with hearts burning within us, that we have recognized the Risen Christ in the breaking of bread."

By then, a couple of other Society provinces, such as Australia/New Zealand and England/Wales already had programs underway. (Today at least eight provinces have programs in place, and in some other provinces, RSCJ meet with unstructured groups who share the Society's charism.)

Following the chapter, Barbara Dawson, RSCJ, then U.S. provincial, invited some RSCJ to explore possibilities.

Several volunteered and became the program's pioneers.

By 1999, the U.S. province had seventy-five associates, both men and women, in nine groups, with RSCJ as facilitators.

## *A desire to belong, a commitment to engage in spiritual*

### NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBER

## MARIANNE BASILA

Like many Sacred Heart Associates, Marianne Basila never strayed too far from her Sacred Heart roots. She kept in touch with the Religious of the Sacred Heart after graduating from Kenwood Academy and later, after raising four children, returned to work for two years at Kenwood's front desk. She was there in 2003, when Anne Sturges, RSCJ, one of her former teachers, joined the Kenwood staff and said she would be forming an associates group in Albany.

"That is what I was waiting for," said Basila. Previously, the closest group was in Boston, too far away for a regular commute.

Basila is one of seven active associates in Albany who meet monthly for Mass at Kenwood, followed by a meal, discussion and prayer. In addition, the Albany associates host annual retreats at Kenwood with RSCJ as presenters, and recently each associate agreed to establish a one-on-one relationship with an RSCJ at Teresian House, a skilled care facility in Albany. As a long-term goal nationally, Basila would like to see associates become more involved with RSCJ in ministry.

Basila said the associates program has given her a sense of belonging to a community she had found nowhere else. In addition, she said, her participation has taught her



Marianne Basila, right, recently reconnected after forty-five years with Eleanor Carr, RSCJ, her former teacher at Kenwood Academy, following a retreat for RSCJ at Kenwood.

"the importance of taking time for prayer. It has deepened my relationship

with Jesus and has allowed me to take on new things I never thought possible."

They included alumnae and faculty of Sacred Heart schools, collaborators in other ministries, former RSCJ, and friends. Although the program had developed regionally, with little national direction or oversight, some general goals called for RSCJ and associates to engage in faith sharing, explore together the Society's mission, and seek ways to minister to a suffering world, with particular attention to the poor and marginalized.

The documents of General Chapter 2000 set out relational responsibilities of associates and RSCJ, but left the specific means of organizing up to individual provinces.

Since that time, although some U.S. associates have left the program, many others have joined, and the U.S. program has grown to more than 130 associates in thirteen groups. Over the years, speakers at various gatherings have spoken eloquently of the mutual benefits and richness of the relationships, and

some RSCJ who initially opposed the program have since become solid supporters.

Presently St. Louis/St. Charles has the largest number of associates: twenty-five. San Diego and Houston each have eighteen. The smallest programs – both new – are in Seattle, with two associates, and on the Soboba Indian Reservation, where there is just one. For now, the requirements for associates are simple: a desire to belong, a commitment to engage in spiritual reading and personal prayer, and attendance at meetings. Some groups invite members to make a simple promise of commitment. In some areas, associates aspire to become more involved in working with RSCJ in ministries, or in developing ministries of their own as expressions of the Society's educational mission.

*continued*

*reading and personal prayer, and attendance at meetings*

#### NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBER

## ERIN BOCK

Erin Bock regards her high school experience at Duchesne Academy, Omaha, as fairly typical of those who attended a Sacred Heart school: "It shapes them for the rest of their lives." In college, while working on an essay about religious life and vocations, she learned that many religious orders, faced with declining vocations, are finding other ways to ensure the future of their missions. Bock became interested in participating in such a program with the RSCJ, and in 2003 she and three other women in their late 20s founded an associates group in Omaha. The relative youth

of the group is unusual, Bock said. "From what I have seen, most associates are older."

Today the group has grown to five women, all Duchesne alumnae, and one man: Bock's dad, a widower, who appreciates all the RSCJ have given his two daughters.

"My life has become richer, more multi-dimensional as a result of being an associate," Bock said. "It all has to do with strengthening my interior spirit and my relationship with God."

As for the program nationally, Bock thinks the associates "have a long way to go in

terms of what the program could be," but has learned from RSCJ to let go and trust the Spirit. "I see the program evolving much as Sacred Heart

schools have developed," she said. "Each has its own characteristics and identity, yet they share certain things in common."



Erin Bock (middle row, left) joins other Omaha associates in a birthday celebration for Joanne Fitzpatrick, RSCJ. Sister Fitzpatrick and Jenny Medinger are in the first row. Eileen Fitzgerald joins Bock in middle row. Stacey Badura-Koterba and Paul Nelson, Bock's father, are in the back row. Associate Sarah Stratman took the photo.

At a national meeting of associates and RSCJ coordinators in October, participants asked the provincial team to appoint a national coordinating committee. With team member Anne Byrne, RSCJ, acting as liaison, each associates group nominated a member to serve. From those, the provincial team chose four: Catherine Kinabrew of New Orleans, who serves as committee chair; Marianne Basila of Cohoes, New York, just north of Albany; Erin Bock of Omaha; and Katherine Waller of San Diego. Three RSCJ serve on the committee: Anne Wente, RSCJ, and Sisters Hammond and Byrne.

Committee members regard this structure as a logical next step. "We are at another moment in which this could blossom in a new way," Sister Byrne said. "We have found that people are interested in the spirituality of the Society and want to be nourished, and they have something to tell us about our spirituality, which can enrich all of us." From the modest beginnings of the program around the country "a relationship that is strong, deep and positive has emerged."

As further sign that associates have become a core component of U.S. Province life, participants in the province's national chapter/assembly in July affirmed support for a proposal calling on RSCJ to contribute resources to associates and welcome their participation in mission-related events – though recommendations encouraged greater clarity and mission-related orientation.

Further, associates were among invited participants in the official visit of Clare Pratt, RSCJ, superior general of the Society of the Sacred Heart, and Jane Maltby, RSCJ, a member of her General Council in Rome. In their follow-up letter to the province, the international leaders noted the strength of the associates program.

They wrote: "We sensed the vitality of the various groups of associates, each with its own rhythm and characteristics, and hope that the newly formed associates' national committee will assure the ways the Spirit is attracting people to come together in living the charism and mission of the Society." ❖

## NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBER

# KATHERINE WALLER

Katherine Waller is a former RSCJ who kept in touch with Religious of the Sacred Heart after deciding in the 1980s

against professing permanent vows. Now retired from university administration – she worked at both the University

of California, San Diego, and at the University of San Diego – she has been an associate for about eight years, and counts it among her major support groups. The eighteen associates in San Diego "are very different in interests and in personalities," she said, "but we all are very sincere about our spiritual development and making a faith journey together."

Waller, who creates beauty through her work as a ceramic artist, said the program has given her an opportunity to be with other women who want to share in the Society's charism, to make known God's love in the world. "We've all experienced some real benefit

in terms of our prayer life," she said. "We've been there for each other through thick and thin."

Waller said she is happy to serve on the national committee "because I have received so much." Associates within the U.S. Province "are trying various approaches around the country, and we now need to take responsibility at the national level," she said. "My hope is that the committee can facilitate a process to articulate a clearer identity for U.S. associates, improve communications across the country, and help the movement grow."



Katherine Waller, a former RSCJ who has stayed connected to the Society through the associates program, enjoys the ocean breeze while working at her art: creating ceramic tiles.



Volunteers and members of the Little Sisters staff dish out donated food to neighborhood residents who joined in celebrating an agency anniversary.



After having her face painted at the street fair, this young girl was among lucky winners of dozens of gift baskets that were raffled off for free.

# Little Sisters, Big-Time Services, In East Harlem

**BALLOONS BOBBED ON TETHERS** in the imperceptible breeze of a mid-July day, a sign that something special was happening at the five-story building that houses Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service in East Harlem – although the multitudes connected with the agency (clients, staff, volunteers, collaborators and donors) could argue that, with or without balloons, something special happens there many times each day.

Staff members who weren't already involved in the physical set-up of the special event took breaks from work to peer from windows at the bustle below. Would people turn out – enough to fill the space, wondered Judy Garson, RSCJ, executive director of the agency putting on this street fair to mark the anniversary of its thrift shop, The Sharing Place, and to thank neighborhood residents for a decade of support. She surveyed the street, now closed to traffic and filled with empty folding chairs.

*continued*



Atziri (left) and Janed were among Little Sisters' clients who participated in a pottery class at Convent of the Sacred Heart (91st Street) earlier this year.

## Health care and education are the basic elements of the canopy of care that Little Sisters brings to the community it serves.

She needn't have worried. As the appointed hour approached, children and adults came in a steady stream from housing projects and apartments nearby. Kids got their faces painted or made chalk drawings on the street. Parents and elders found chairs to await a fashion show of used clothing, or lined up to fill plates with chicken wings and side dishes, most donated by local merchants.

After decades of helping people cope with some of the most intractable problems in this neighborhood, the agency today was dealing in pure fun.

Most days, though, it's serious business at Little Sisters, where services to the poor people of East Harlem – just a few blocks north of New York City's tony Upper East Side – are legion, addressing a wide range of family needs with a collaborative network that is larger than life. Over the years, Little Sisters has brought together religious women of various orders – including a dozen members of the Society of the Sacred Heart – with laity, paid professionals and volunteers, foundations and wealthy benefactors, interested in helping the poorest of the city's poor.

Annual reports and a regular newsletter, appropriately called "The Open Door," help to tell the story, though statistics fail to relate the extent of human suffering – and the satisfaction of finding solutions – that is at the agency's heart.

Just helping families stay together is a key goal, Sister Garson said – easing the tensions that tear families apart; preventing children from going into foster care.

Health care and education are the basic elements of the canopy of care that Little Sisters brings to the community it serves. They stem from the missions of two religious orders: the Little Sisters of the Assumption and the Society of the Sacred Heart.

The East Harlem agency was founded in 1958 by the Little Sisters of the Assumption, an outgrowth of its founding mission to help poor people cope in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution in France. Inadequate health care, substandard housing and lack of legal protections were tearing families apart. The Society of the Sacred Heart, with its mission of providing education to the educationally underserved, came to the agency much later, when Sister Garson arrived in 1984.

Among many of Little Sisters' telling numbers, an

emergency food pantry had more than 5,000 visits last year and provided families with more than 39,000 meals; and six staff nurses, including Eve Kavanagh, RSCJ, made more than 1,700 home visits. These included nearly 900 visits to care for new mothers and babies; more than 650 to care for people afflicted with diabetes, and nearly 175 in support of some 80 children afflicted with asthma.

(Asthma is a health problem so prevalent in East Harlem that the agency has developed a multi-faceted prevention program.)

Home visits and the much-utilized food pantry give the Little Sisters staff a broad understanding of community needs, Sister Garson said. Severe housing problems, language barriers, parents needing support services and education, children with learning disabilities or trouble coping in school, and an array of health needs are daily fare for a staff of seventy and almost as many volunteers.

Little Sisters could never meet so many needs alone, but in Sister Garson's twenty-three-year tenure it has become a city-wide collaborator, drawing on government programs, public and private organizations, legal services – anything that can help address clients' needs. The statistics go on and on; the stories staff members tell give them life.

East Harlem, also known as Spanish Harlem, has long been noted for residents who come from Spanish-speaking countries, though other recent arrivals may come from West Africa, Yemen or Bangladesh, and many long-time residents are African-Americans. Most of the neighborhood real estate is divided between public housing projects and privately-held apartments.

“We do quite a bit of housing work,” said Lucia Russett, a former Catholic Worker, who directs Little Sisters’ client advocacy program – the official name for the ongoing challenge of assessing and addressing needs. “The housing stock is increasing in value in East Harlem, and many landlords are trying to push people out of rent-stabilized apartments, so that they can write new leases at a higher rate. One tactic is directly harassing renters; another is refusing to make repairs.”

In one case, Russett learned that a landlord was trying to free up a rent-stabilized apartment by harassing her client with a bogus complaint: too many residents. In reviewing the lease, Russett noted a series of fishy-looking rent increases, all rounded off to zero. She filed a complaint. The landlord was cited for illegal rent increases, and the client’s struggling family got \$10,000 in rent-free living. That felt good, Russett said.

Client advocate Pura Cruz illustrated the critical problem of deficient language skills – much greater even than a parent’s inability to communicate with a child’s teacher – with a story of a woman who nodded her head in response to questions from a city social worker and, as a result, had her child taken away. “Often immigrants don’t understand what is being said to them, but they nod their heads as if they do,” she said. Clearly, it’s a habit that can have disastrous results.

In another case, a woman with no official identification borrowed documents when she went to a hospital to give birth. The result: the wrong mother’s name appeared on the infant’s birth certificate. Cruz got involved (it’s what client advocates do) and is struggling her way through the legal morass – which includes DNA tests for the child and mother – to get the child’s real mother on the books.

Client advocates deal weekly with reams of paper, deciphering and translating bureaucratese for clients who are often helpless and bewildered.

Another staff member, Martha Andrade, fills the role of education advocate, helping parents navigate the city’s school system – a huge bureaucracy, she notes, providing services to a million students in an astonishing sixty-three languages. Often parents aren’t aware of available programs, or they miss meetings with teachers, because they can’t read notes and information sent home, she said.

Andrade, formerly a teacher in California, works with volunteers and staff members, including Maisie Lufkin, RSCJ, who teaches English as a Second Language. Like a number of others on the staff, Andrade came to Little Sisters as a volunteer and liked the place so much she joined the staff.

Education at the agency takes many forms. Last year, more than twenty classes served nearly 500 adults and children. Many classes were aimed at developing literacy and language skills of immigrant adults; others at boosting math and reading skills of bright but educationally deprived youth, making it possible for them to gain entrance and scholarships to the city’s Catholic schools. Summer programs provide enrichment and



Top photo: Sara Muller, RN, MPH, a community health nurse on the Little Sisters staff, checks on a newborn during a home visit.

Above: Joel Adas, coordinator of asthma prevention services for Little Sisters, clowns around with kids in the program.

time away from the city’s streets; a dance group offers lessons in ballet and modern dance to girls. A tutoring program for thirty-two students in elementary school matches twenty-eight reading specialists, all volunteers, with students whose potential is high but reading skills are low.

Other major programs include a toddler nursery and home-based intervention services for very young children with developmental delays.

*continued*



Paola, a Little Sisters' client, shows off certificates earned in educational programs.



Religious of the Sacred Heart on the Little Sisters' staff are, from left, Eve Kavanagh, Maisie Lufkin, Judith Cagney and Judith Garson.

## The satisfaction of finding solutions is at the agency's heart.

It's a wonderful place to work, said Judy Cagney, RSCJ, who oversees finances for the agency and lives with five other RSCJ in East Harlem. Sister Cagney earns high praise from Sister Garson for her financial juggling skill, which assures that funds from an irregular income stream are available to meet expenses of \$4.5 million a year. The Sharing Place, the thrift store celebrating its anniversary, brings about in \$25,000 a month, according to Elsie Sanchez, its director.

Sanchez notes that the store is much more than just a place to shop. It's where people come together to socialize, resulting in a stronger community.

After years of agency services operating from various neighborhood sites, all now share one roof at 333 East 115th Street in a colorful 23,000 square-foot building. When it opened three years ago, the building was hailed in *The New York Times* for its innovative, functional and low-cost design.

Many staff members cite Sister Garson's direction as a reason they stay. It's a happy place, they said, where employees are nurtured. Although she insists, "I never set out to be executive director of anything," she had honed educational and administrative skills during years of Society service.

A native New Yorker with a bachelor's degree in Russian and a master's degree English and education from Manhattanville College, and a master's degree in Slavic languages and literature from Columbia University, Sister Garson has served as a teacher and administrator in Sacred Heart schools in the East, including school head at Stuart Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, Princeton, New Jersey, from 1972 to 1977.

For five years after that, she was a member of the Society's General Council in Rome and, on official visits to provinces worldwide, witnessed firsthand the often oppressive effects of U.S. policies. At the end of her term, she was determined to serve less fortunate people at home.

In 1984, Sister Garson was invited to work at Little Sisters by Margaret Leonard, then-provincial of the Little Sisters religious order in the United States. When she arrived, she found the tradition of collaboration well established: Members of five other religious orders were working there.

Sister Garson knew little about health care – a core service of the agency – and had doubts about her ability to lead. But she was persuaded by the tremendous opportunity to provide collaborative services to the poor, and by a public health model that she recognized as activist and "profoundly educational."

"I started to learn what I needed to know about health programs and social services. Most important, I learned that there is a way of being a health care worker, a social worker, a teacher, that is both educational and empowering," she said. During her tenure, the client base has increased tenfold and the staff has increased threefold.

If the turnout for the street fair was any indication, the number of people the agency serves may grow still more. "I see a lot of new faces here," Sister Garson said, surveying the crowd, in particular the parents, children and grandmothers she hadn't seen before.

You could almost see her brain ticking, her focus shifting from "will lots of people come" to "how can we work with those who did?" What can we offer these people of our neighborhood beyond a good time for an afternoon? What do these families need in order to cope, to stay together, to thrive? ❖

# Stillness and Compassion

## The reflections on spirituality

on the following pages, by Eve Kavanagh, RSCJ, and Suzanne Cooke, RSCJ, are two of four reflections read by the authors during a national teleconference on January 21 in preparation for the U.S. Province Chapter / Assembly, held in early July, and the international General Chapter next year. (A report on the provincial assembly appears on page 4 of this issue). The General Chapter's theme will be "Our RSCJ Spirituality," based on a decision of the Society's provincials when they met in Uganda in November 2006.

The provincials, in calling for conversations about spirituality to begin across the globe, noted, "Today there is no single way to live our charism and, by the same token, we cannot speak of a single expression of our spirituality."

The first two reflections from the teleconference, by Beatrice Brennan, RSCJ, and Elisabeth Brinkmann, RSCJ, were published in the Spring 2007 issue of *Heart*.

The four RSCJ selected to offer reflections represent different age groups, ministries and geographic areas.

## *Into the depths, forward in hope*

SUZANNE COOKE, RSCJ

When I was asked to be part of this panel, and describe how I see myself living our spirituality today, the examples that came immediately to mind were the ordinary day-to-day conversations that occur in my life as an administrator in a school that is part of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools – a school that bears Christ's name. I interact with many individuals and groups – 730 students, 140 employees, alumnae, parents, grandparents.

That's a lot of people.

I have always believed that it is through the quality of our relationships that we communicate the love of God to others. That is how we help the other person sense the immediacy of Christ's presence, of his love.

Much of my day is spent in meetings, scheduled and unscheduled. Often I seem to meet with people in moments of extreme: students in moments of glory or deep trouble; adults sharing news of joy, like being pregnant or getting married; or people in times of despair – facing cancer or the diminishment of a parent or spouse, or the loss of a job.

It is clearer and clearer to me that the majority of people, whatever their ages, have a need to acknowledge internal dissatisfaction with the immediate surface reality. I believe that is because we know in our hearts there is something much more real, much more important, much more necessary to our very beings, to who we are, that we must come to know.

At the Society's Chapter of 2000, we saw a link between this internal dissatisfaction and our spirituality as Religious of the Sacred Heart. We became convinced that only by contemplating Christ's presence and action

*continued*

in the world would we find the strength and generosity to respond to the needs of our world today, such as the thirst for God, the hunger for justice, the desire for equality, the longing for meaning and the ache to belong.

Every day I am confronted by someone's aching or longing for meaning, by their thirst for God. Simultaneously, I experience their and my own inclination to allow the crazy, mad pace of life to dull the sometimes obvious, but more often subtle, invitations of the Holy Spirit to experience the intimacy of God's presence.

So after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, after countless and horrible acts of violence in schools across the country, and in the midst of the confusion the war in Iraq has caused, I said to myself, "How can we help anyone, but particularly young people and children, to actually experience God's love? How can they trust in hope?"

I remembered the practice of *espacio* from Chapter 2000 and, more important, I remembered its profound effect on delegates, especially in moments of conflict. So I declared that at Carrollton we would have five minutes of silence at 11 a.m. – every day, everyone. I didn't worry about the disruption to schedules or whether people would like it. I suspected that in fact some would find such silence uncomfortable.

Nonetheless, I decided, that, like me, most of our school community never had what Religious of the Sacred Heart who are older than I have had: a noviceship that included structured silence for two and half years. I felt that it was imperative that we at Carrollton develop the capacity for silence, the instinct to be still.

We have practiced *espacio* now for a year, sometimes very well and sometimes not so well. I think that, through this structure, I have helped people learn about Madeleine Sophie's urgent desire to find her heart so that she would render herself permeable and available to God's mystery. I think that in explaining to students, faculty, parents and alumnae why silence is an essential practice, I shared the essence of our spirituality as Religious of the Sacred Heart, because I have helped others take the time to

stop, be still, and experience the presence of the Holy Spirit urging us to know we are God's Beloved.

We all appreciate Sophie's statement, "If I had my life to live over again, I would seek to live in complete openness to the Holy Spirit," but I found an even more compelling quote and prayer of hers that help me want to find other structures that would promote capacity for silence, for others as well as myself.

Sophie wrote in 1853, "But at least we must unite solitude to the work we do, and counter this whirlwind with a deep cavern where the soul can take refuge as often as possible. For us this cavern in the rock is the Heart of Jesus."

And the prayer:

O Jesus, my most sweet life, let us make a pact together, if you will:  
May I die so fully to myself, that you alone live in me;  
May I keep a silence so deep that you alone speak to my heart;  
May I abandon myself so fully to you, that you alone are at work in my soul, doing whatever you wish. Amen!

*Espacio* has helped me in my conversations with others to attend to the Spirit within each. Enhancing the capacity for silence within our school community seems to have strengthened people's desire to attend to the quality of relationships and treat others with dignity and respect. I have a renewed sense that Christ is acting through us, that the Spirit of His Heart is calling all of us forward in hope. ✦

*Suzanne Cooke is head of school at Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart, Miami; former head of school at Forest Ridge School of the Sacred Heart, Seattle; and former teacher and administrator in Sacred Heart schools in the East and South. She holds a bachelor's degree in English and history from Manhattanville College and a master's degree in social sciences from the University of Chicago. She has a special interest in the role of technology in fostering relationships and often enlists Carrollton staff members to do webcasts of Network of Sacred Heart Schools programs.*



Suzanne Cooke, RSCJ

## *Praying on 'the lowest rung'*

EVE KAVANAGH, RSCJ

### **DURING THIS PROCESS OF "REMEMBERING,"**

I have found myself looking at the history of my prayer over the last forty-five years or so. And I realized, not for the first time, but with more focus, that I never knew prayer was a problem until I entered religious life. I had thought prayer was simply part of life.

The first problem for me was what is sometimes called "discursive meditation." Basically, I couldn't do it. Luckily, in the early years I had to stay put, and so, I passed the time browsing endlessly through Scripture, and grew to love it.

The second problem was that somehow it was conveyed to me that a prayer life was ponderously serious: Indeed, if I was not diligent about it, I could lose my vocation and even my faith. That prospect was so stressful for me that one day I decided to put it to the test by giving up prayer. (I never shared this decision with anyone). And what I discovered was that I could give up the methods and time frames, but I could no more give up prayer than I could give up breathing. Prayer kept happening to me.

It was mostly intercessory prayer. Then, of course, I remembered classes in spirituality where the professor presented us with a "hierarchy" of prayer. I can't recall the whole list, but I do remember that intercessory prayer was on the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder.

So there I was on the lowest rung. Obviously I had to shape up.

After Vatican II we were introduced to all kinds of methods besides discursive meditation. I tried, if not all, at least many of them, one after the other, year after year, hoping, I suppose, that I would find a method that fit me and would help me to become a good Religious of the Sacred Heart by becoming good at prayer.

*"To this day I don't  
know what it means  
to be good at prayer.  
But the wonder is,  
I don't care. "*

To this day I don't know what it means to be good at prayer. But the wonder is, I don't care. Somewhere along the way, and without noticing it, "I-Me-I" stopped being important in my so-called interior life. Rather, the world that God loves so much became the focus of my prayer. Through no conscious effort on my part, my prayer had become looking at the world as best I could, with whatever courage I could muster, and interceding – for its poverty-stricken people deprived of abundant life, its children deprived of any meaningful future, its women and men deprived of dignity, its misguided

*continued*



Eve Kavanagh, RSCJ

leaders, and its sensitive, fragile environment.

I didn't know that any of this had anything to do with our spirituality until Patricia García de Quevedo, when she was the Society's superior general, told us in the New York Area that the spirituality of the Society was the spirituality of the pierced heart, and that that meant being able to take the suffering of the world into our hearts because we share in the pierced heart of Christ.

I recognized that I had been doing that all my life but without knowing that it was our spirituality.

This gave me the courage to go on with my own prayer – basically a prayer of solidarity leading me to intercession. I have always found God in bodies – other people's bodies. But now I find God within my own body – in the chaos of feelings and emotions I experience daily, the shared grief over the mess, the anger at the incredible injustice and destruction everywhere, the helplessness and confusion, the desire for change and transformation, the compassion for ever present suffering, but also the joy and delight in the beauty, laughter, and goodness, which keep popping up all around, and the

neighborliness that is part of daily life on New York city streets, where thousands of ordinary people quietly live the beatitudes every day.

I now believe that my feelings are not a burden or an accident of temperament, but the grace of baptism – the result of putting on Christ way back then in my infancy and slowly but surely taking on the attitudes, desires, feelings and emotions of the Word made flesh.

And I am still on the lowest rung of that "hierarchy" of prayer. I also believe that with me there is the Risen Lord who "lives always to intercede" for us who are going to God through him. ✚

*Eve Kavanagh is a native of Ireland and was educated as a nurse in England. She came to the United States in 1960 and entered the Society two years later in Albany, New York. She has spent many years as a hospice nurse and was a founding member of Hospice of Central Iowa in Des Moines, where inpatient facilities were named Kavanagh House in recognition of her work. She has worked for the past two decades as a community health nurse for Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service in New York City.*

## Prayer for Loving Kindness

**Many were touched** by a Buddhist-Christian prayer read at the U.S. Province Chapter/Assembly in July by Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ. Her reflection was based on one offered by a Buddhist theologian to the Society's provincials when they met in Korea in 2004. Below is this "prayer for loving kindness," in a much-abbreviated form. It has five parts: a blessing for oneself, for a loved one, for a stranger, for an enemy, and for all creation. It assumes an attitude of mindfulness and selflessness. In each stage, the words are recited over and over.

In the first stage, recall a time when you were deeply content, and bless yourself: *May I be at peace. May my heart remain open. May I awaken to the light of my own true nature. May I be healed. May I be a source of healing for all beings.*

In the second stage, imagine a person you love surrounded by the light and love of God, and recite the same blessing, substituting "you" for "I": *May you be at peace ... etc.*

In stages three and four, recite the same blessing for a stranger, perhaps someone you recently passed on the street, and then for "the enemy," someone who has left you angry or hurt.

Finally, in "the gathering of all," bless all people with the same blessing, substituting "all" for "you," and conclude with these words: *May all creation be blessed. May all creation be a blessing to all that is. Amen.* ✚



## CAPTURING IMAGES, FINDING GOD

by John Storjohann

The sun has barely crested the hills to the east, and in the warm bath of that early light I am making my way toward a small pond that still lies some two miles up the overgrown trail that leads there. I pause to shift the weight of my backpack and adjust the waist belt before resuming my hurried pace down the path.

*Slow down.*

Ignoring the voice that has tried to temper my progress, I push forward, eyes to the ground, surveying the trail for anything that might disrupt my pace. I find myself wishing I had left an hour earlier, were already immersed in the day's shoot.

*Slow down.*

*continued*

Once hunted to near extinction for its breeding plumage, the Great Egret is the largest of the white herons in North America. In this image, taken in early June, the egret still exhibits the green lores around the eyes that are typical of this bird's breeding colors.

This time, with reluctance, I listen to the voice. Fingers looped through the straps of my pack, I pause again, closing my eyes, drawing a slow, deep breath, and stilling the thoughts that cloud my mind. Eyes still closed, I listen. Nature has its own rhythm and pace that will draw us into the ebb and flow of its presence if we don't shut it out. Another deep breath, and the distractions – the obstacles – to the nuances and connections, to the simple harmony that I have come here seeking, begin to diminish.

Opening my eyes, I take in the almost ethereal glow of the field I am walking through, attuned for the first time this day to the ripple of the grass as it sways in the dawn breeze, and I have to laugh at myself. Why is it that I – that we – so easily dismiss the integrity of time and place we so desperately seek in our lives; that we so readily avoid those rare sacred places and moments that seal us off from the temporal world and, for the briefest of moments, give us a glimpse of the Kingdom within?

*Slow down.*

We all search for meaning. Many of us journey relentlessly toward a deeper understanding of God in both Spirit and Word. For me, photography has become a vehicle for meditation and prayer, a means of seeking (and seeing) not only a personal reality, but also a universal truth. Consider for a moment, though it may sound grandiose, God's presence within each of us. When capturing an image, a photographer in essence brings one way of seeing the world to life, transforms the ordinary, whether through lighting, composition or perspective, into a creative expression of God's creation. If we can bring ourselves to *slow down* – to still the inner turmoil, to quiet the invasive noise of our culture – we can open ourselves to God's presence in all things by seeing all things through the eyes of God.



In his introduction to *The Hero's Journey: Joseph Campbell on His Life and Work*, Phil Cousineau wrote, "Life is not a problem to be solved, but a *mystery* to be lived. You are the



This image of an American Lotus was taken at the Prairie Garden Trust, 180 acres of restored prairie land in central Missouri. Native to the Midwest, most eastern states and California, the plant features cream-colored six-inch blooms and distinctive seed pods.

mystery which you are seeking to know." That journey – that lived mystery – is the tension between *what* we believe and *how* we live our lives, the journey between our physical presence and the presence of God within. Photographing nature has taught me to pay closer attention to the manifestation of God's presence through the recovery of an almost childlike wonder of the world and the way it appears through the lens. By approaching photography as a meditation – as a prayer – the line between aesthetic beauty (composition and light) and a deeper, timeless, more spiritual approach to the subject has *continued*



This Mexican Gray Wolf is the mother of more than two dozen Mexican Grays that have been released into the wilds of New Mexico and Arizona over the past few years. Being in enclosed acreage with sixteen of these magnificent animals was a humbling experience, one that gave me a sense of what we have lost over time from hunting, trapping and senseless slaughter of our native wildlife.



I watched these two bull elk, each weighing probably close to 700 pounds, joust with one another for close to an hour in the early dawn of October. The only sound was the splashing of the water and their gasps for breath as they worked their way deeper into the lake.

blurred, and, in rare moments, disappeared. The image becomes less an artistic interpretation of what is before me and more an unveiling of my search for the God within. This way of seeing not only continuously teaches me about myself, but about my connection to God – something that I don't understand and can't explain, yet something that continually inspires and confuses, delights and frustrates, as God is revealed, if only for an instant.

Father William McNamara, a Carmelite priest and the founder of the Spiritual Life Institute in Colorado, has described contemplation as a “long, loving look at the Real.” That, for me, is the essence of photography as a way of simply being with God. It allows me to surrender to God's presence at that moment; to discover a dimension of God's existence in my life that I had not seen until I was able to quiet my soul and listen to that inner voice saying, “*Slow down. Be still. And know that I am God.*”

It doesn't guarantee that the images I capture are going to be great images or even satisfying photographs; yet more than once the *act* of capturing an image has allowed me to transcend Self and given me a glimpse – an experience – of God's love.

I also relate to what naturalist John Muir once wrote: “The world's big and I want to have a good look at it before it gets dark.” Standing knee deep in the water of the small pond, surrounded by a canopy of American lotus, and lost in the deep silence, I often discover when I am alone with nature that I can once more connect with the natural, rhythmic pulse of my journey with God. I find God's presence in the luminescent glow of the morning light upon the still water, in the raucous screams of the blue herons from their nearby rookery, and in the slow unfolding of the bloom that I am photographing. I am able to take pause, a respite that allows my soul to recover the spiritual cadence I had missed in my haste.

These thoughts are with me as I reach my destination and gaze across the pond, where a green heron peers into the depths, motionless, waiting for breakfast to surface, for life to come full circle once more.

*Slow down. Be still.* God is waiting. ❖



This dragonfly, a blue dasher, was a patient subject for several minutes while resting on a lotus stem. Commonly seen around ponds and swamps, this insect's iridescent green eyes have up to 30,000 separate light-sensing facets, affording close to a 360-degree field of vision.



This sunflower is one of my few studio shots. It was taken at the request of someone whose family had a special fondness for sunflowers and wanted to give it as a gift – in the middle of winter, when I couldn't find a bloom in the wild.



*John Storjohann has been a faculty member since 1979 at Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Charles, where he teaches technology skills and coaches track. On his own time, he heads for places of natural beauty in or near St. Louis. He has been shooting photos since he was 12 – digitally for the past six years – and does work for the St. Louis Zoo, the Wolf Sanctuary and the National Tiger Sanctuary. He and his wife, Debbie, have two children.*

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Students illustrate the Society's international growth at Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Charles, Missouri, where **Educators Share Global Vision.**



Patriot, a feisty, independent 12-year-old bald eagle, has been a resident of the World Bird Sanctuary in St. Louis County, since she was injured in a storm shortly after being hatched. She was photographed by John Storjohann, who enjoys **Capturing Images, Finding God.**



Julia Tanner, staff, and Sabine Kowalski, volunteer, fill emergency food orders for **Little Sisters, Big-Time Services, in East Harlem.**

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