

# Heart

Winter 2014     A Journal of the Society of the Sacred Heart, United States – Canada

# ...to Heart

## Dear Friends,

Thank you for connecting with the Religious of the Sacred Heart through *Heart*. As always, we are grateful for the many ways that you are with us and support the mission to which each RSCJ commits herself: *to discover and reveal the love of the heart of God*.

I read through the content for this issue of *Heart* on the feast of Saint Philippine Duchesne. I called to mind that we planned this issue with a theme of “Living a Consecrated Life” to coincide with the beginning of Pope Francis’ Year of Consecrated Life (November 29, 2014 - February 2, 2016).

I invite you to enter into the remarkable ways that RSCJ are living a *consecrated* life in the twenty-first century. Perhaps, like me, you will recall Philippine, the Society’s first international missionary, who arrived in the Americas with great zeal to spread the love of God among the indigenous people and ended up founding free schools and boarding schools throughout the South and Midwest, finally serving among her beloved Potawatomi people at Sugar Creek. Many people have raised the question “What would Philippine be doing now, in the twenty-first century, if she arrived in the Americas?” Most likely she would be standing next to Mary-Jane Ferrier as she works with others to protect the gift that God gave us in the earth. Or perhaps she would be with Diana Wall in Haiti, washing the wounds of a woman with HIV. Or maybe, as an older woman, with Annette Zipple and Martha Curry, beginning a cutting-edge educational program for women in southwest Detroit and then turning it over to others when it was time. For sure, she would be with Irene Cullen, as she searches for ways to support new educational

projects in the heart of Africa. And she would rejoice with the children throughout the Network of Sacred Heart Schools who are going beyond their own borders for the sake of others.

Woven through the stories you read about our twenty-first century consecrated women is not only the zeal to reveal God’s love in very concrete and courageous ways, but also the same depth that the Potawatomi tribe acknowledged when they called Philippine “the woman who was always praying.” The consecrated women you read about in *Heart* root their lives in God – the God one discovers in the writing of icons, the God one discovers in the washing of wounds or the healing of the earth, the God one discovers in the faces of those who long to learn, the God one discovers in the midst of community and in the silence.

Pope Francis urged vowed religious to “wake up the world.” Let us pray for those who wake up the world, those who have gone before us, those who wake up the world today and for women who will join us in this consecrated journey. We count on your prayer! ✚



With much love and gratitude,

*Barbara Dawson RSCJ*

Barbara Dawson, RSCJ  
Provincial

## Heart Lines

- 4 **Province welcomes Evelyn Oluoha as novice**
- 5 **New icon for United States – Canada Province**  
By Patricia Reid, RSCJ
- 6 **Gathering at Oakwood reunites sisters**  
By Nancy Morris, RSCJ
- 8 **AMASC Congress**
- 9 **In Memoriam**
- 10 **Office of Ministry promotes lives of mission**  
By Fran de la Chapelle, RSCJ
- 11 **Sharing memories and hope**  
By Shirley Miller, RSCJ
- 12 **Women's Justice Circles: Duchesne Fund for Ministry grant recipient**  
By Linda Haydock, SNJM

## Features

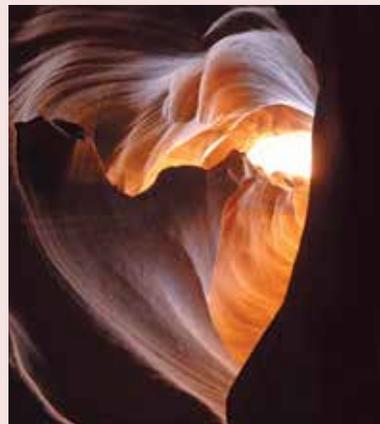
- 14 **Protecting South Portland, our little corner of creation**  
By Mary-Jane Ferrier, RSCJ
- 17 **Have a H.E.A.R.T: Helping Education in Africa – Reaching Together**
- 20 **The mission endures: Madonna University continues SWEEP model**  
By Martha Curry, RSCJ

## Essays

- 23 **Living a consecrated life today: Fifty years after the close of the Second Vatican Council**  
By Diana Wall, RSCJ
- 26 **A life less ordinary**  
By Nikki Gemmell for *The Weekend Australian Magazine*
- 27 **Introducing *My Call Me Back* discernment app**

# Heart

*Heart* is published two times a year to highlight the mission and ministries of the Society of the Sacred Heart, United States – Canada, 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.



© Bernadette Seitelmeier, alumna of Eden Hall Academy of the Sacred Heart and Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart.

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 and to Canada in 1842. For more information about the mission and ministries of the United States–Canada Province, please visit [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org).

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## Province welcomes Evelyn Oluoha as novice

**O**n Saturday, August 9, more than thirty Religious of the Sacred Heart and Sacred Heart Associates welcomed Evelyn (Uchenna) Oluoha – who goes by the nickname “Uche” – as a novice in the United States-Canada Province. It was a joyful celebration of a new novitiate in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

“What we really do here today is open a new dimension of what the noviceship is, and it includes all of us,” said provincial team member Sheila Hammond, RSCJ, during the opening liturgy. “Today we recognize, identify,

bless, commission the noviceship as the adventure of persons and a journey of relationships. Today we open a new way for the life of the Society of the Sacred Heart to unfold with particular persons in this place.”

A native of Nigeria, Uche will be part of a community that includes the provincial novice director, Donna Dolan, RSCJ, and five other Religious of the Sacred Heart. Her time in the novitiate will be spent learning the history of the Society of the Sacred Heart and the apostolic life of the Society, while discerning her own

vocation. Uche is in the second “stage” of formation, the noviceship, the name given to the period of time of prayer, reflection and study during which a woman discerns and prepares for her vocation as a vowed religious. The stages of formation in the Society of the Sacred Heart are:

**Candidacy:** the period of time, usually one year, when a young woman assesses her call to be a Religious of the Sacred Heart by living in community with us and sharing in our life.

**Noviceship:** a two year period of time during which the novice enters more deeply into the life of the Society by prayer, reflection and study. There is also a time for working in a ministry.

**Professed of Temporary Vows:** a name for the religious who have made their first vows. This stage lasts for at least six years after which they make their final profession.

**Probation:** the period of final preparation, usually in Rome, just before a Professed of Temporary Vows makes her final vows. It is a time of prayer, reflection, further deepening one’s love and understanding of the Society and an experience of its internationality. ❖



The new novitiate community in Halifax. Front row: Sisters Anne Wachter, Uchenna Oluoha (novice), Sally Rude and Donna Dolan (novice director). Back row: Sisters Mary Finlayson, Kimberly King and Anne-Marie Conn.

## New icon for United States – Canada Province

By Patricia Reid, RSCJ

One of Sister Barbara Dawson's first acts upon becoming the provincial of the newly-formed United States – Canada Province, in July 2013, was to commission Patricia Reid, RSCJ, to create an icon for the province. On September 15, the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, the beautiful result of that request was unveiled to the province. Here, Sister Reid explains a little about her process.

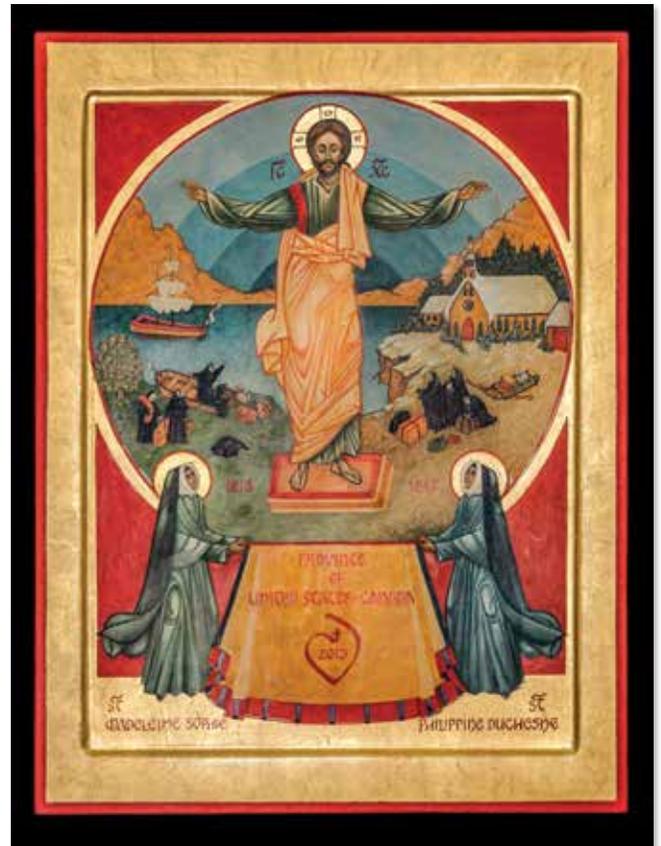
I wrote this icon because it was an opportunity, not only for Religious of the Sacred Heart to celebrate the joining of our two provinces, but also to contribute to the visual history of the Society in North America. I hope it will be a teaching tool for others, as it was for me, and enrich our experience of *cor unum et anima una*.

Most of the icon was inspired by the iconographic tradition regarding such historical or biographical icons. I divided the entire space of the icon into an arrangement of thirds, placing the most important figure – that of Jesus Christ – in the center of the top third. That way it is possible to form a triangle to the figures of our two saints, with their (and our) eyes focused on Jesus.

The central third is devoted to the historical scene of the arrivals of the RSCJ in the two areas of the continent. This was the part that I enjoyed most. My collaboration with our Canadian sisters was invaluable. Several RSCJ sent books recounting the early days of the Canadian foundation in St. Jacques de l'Achigan, outside Montreal, in 1842. Their charming covers (water color scenes that I shamelessly copied as best I could) depicted the arrival of the pioneers in the dead of winter. Drawing the nuns was actually great fun, though it entailed the use of a magnifier since they were only one inch tall.

To balance the snow scene, I depicted the arrival of the *Rebecca* with our saint (Philippine Duchesne) and her four companions in the spring of 1818. Though I lived in Louisiana for four years, I was unable to fit in a live oak, dripping with moss! I settled for a flowering tree to suggest that it was warmer in New Orleans. To unite both arrivals I tried to blend the snow of Canada gradually into the grass and tiny flowers of Louisiana.

In the upper two-thirds of the icon are several typical iconographic images: the mountains represent the spiritual ascent. I simplified these images because I felt that the stylization typically used for mountains in icons would have distracted from the more



Patricia Reid, RSCJ, explains that icons are written, not painted, because icons are meant to be read, not simply viewed.

significant images. Behind the figure of Jesus is what looks like a peculiar rainbow. This image, which invariably accompanies the figure of Christ in glory, is called a mandorla, meaning “glory.” I wanted to tie the mandorla to the various circles already in the design, so I used the same center point as I had for the large circle surrounding the figure of Jesus. Note that this same golden circle also leads the eye directly to our two saints and is repeated in their halos, which seem to grow out of it organically.

Jesus extends his arms in blessing over both parts of the province and looks lovingly upon the pioneers and their founders.

*The icon was written in egg tempera pigments on a gessoed board and varnished with linseed oil applied with the hand. ❖*

## Gathering at Oakwood reunites sisters

By Nancy Morris, RSCJ

Photos by Nancy Morris, RSCJ and Suzanne Dale Wilcox

*An explosion of hugs and kisses, recognition and catch-up questions*

It was, at its heart, a grand family reunion. Mary (Be) Mardel, RSCJ, spent months mailing, phoning and emailing former Religious of the Sacred Heart, inviting them to Oakwood, the Society's retirement community in Atherton, California. Finally the time had come to reunite. On Sunday, October 5, nearly thirty former RSCJ came to Oakwood for Mass, lunch and reunion.

With the arrival of our visitors at 10 a.m., there was an explosion of hugs and kisses, recognition and catch-up questions about the time in-between. The front hall was a sight to behold! We had an hour before Mass to bond again, to share family news and to meet new friends. We enjoyed hearing the ways in which our former sisters continue to reveal the love of God in the world. For instance, Mirta Geddo came all the way from New Jersey where she's been involved with preparing disadvantaged students for college. In her last position, she trained more than 500 students!

She shared that "the Society has always been in my heart."



Ellen Snee and Be Mardel, RSCJ

Suzanne Dale Wilcox traveled from Danbury, Connecticut. She has spent the past thirty-five years in administration in three different universities in and around New York. She and her husband, John, have been involved in retreat work internationally and just completed a new book together entitled *Revisioning Mission: The Future of Catholic Higher Education*.

There was also a little “reunion within a reunion” taking place. Ten members of the probation of 1967 – the women who made their final profession together in Rome – attended the gathering at Oakwood. This group included Religious of the Sacred Heart Kaye Cherry, Ann Conroy, Maura Keleher, Clare Pratt, Deanna Rose Von Bargen and Mary Pat White, as well as former RSCJ Barbara Ivani, Grace Robinson, Suzanne Dale Wilcox and Pat Cannon Willis.

In addition to visiting, we had an informative presentation from Provincial Barbara Dawson, who gave us news of the Society, both in our province and internationally. We concluded with goûter and a short prayer service at four o'clock.

Many who could not attend sent beautiful letters, which were posted on our bulletin board. We heard from 105 former RSCJ around the country! ❖



Top: Suzanne Dale Wilcox, Sister Deanna Rose Von Bargen and Grace Briggs Robinson have been close since they were in Rome together in 1967. Bottom left: Patricia Cannon Willis with Sister Ann Conroy. Right: Barbara Ivani (holding Duke) and Sister Trudy Patch.

## AMASC Congress

### Listening with One Heart

Every four years, alumnae and alumni of Sacred Heart schools around the world gather for the AMASC Congress. AMASC – Association Mondiale des Anciennes et Anciens du Sacré-Cœur (World Association of Alumnae and Alumni of the Sacred Heart) – is the organization that unites tens of thousands of alumnae and alumni as part of an international family. This November, the event was held in beautiful Scottsdale, Arizona, not far from the home of outgoing AMASC president, Pamela Snyder.

The theme of the gathering, “Listening with One Heart,” served as a rallying cry for the past four years and as the focal point for most of the addresses. In addition to attending to the business of the organization, participants heard from Religious of the Sacred Heart Kathleen Conan, Barbara Dawson and Kathleen Hughes, as well as George Coyne, SJ. Sisters Anne-Marie Conn, Maria Cimperman and Melanie Guste led a panel discussion on healthy water and Sister Reyna Gonzalez introduced the *My Call Me Back* app (see inside back cover for more on that). Each day began and ended with prayer provided by Sisters Conn and Shirley Miller, respectively.

The meeting marked the end of the mandate for Pam Snyder and her officers: Barbara Lopiccolo (vice president and liaison to the Congress Planning Committee), Wendy Delery Hills (treasurer), Maureen Elliott (secretary-general) and other board members. On the final day of the meeting, Marisa Moreno de Malcher of Mexico was elected to serve as president for the next four years. Her mandate will have as its theme, “The legacy of Saint Madeleine Sophie: a gift for the world.” ❖

*Videos from the Congress are available on YouTube by searching for AMASC. Learn more about AMASC at [amasc-sacrecoeur.org](http://amasc-sacrecoeur.org). Follow them on Facebook at [facebook.com/youngAMASC](https://facebook.com/youngAMASC)*



Top: Association of Alumnae and Alumni of Sacred Heart (AASH) president-elect Mary Forsyth was the official representative for alumnae/i from the United States

Bottom: AMASC vice president and liaison to the Congress Planning Committee Barbara Lopiccolo greets speaker George Coyne, SJ.



Top: Keynote Speaker Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ, with AMASC President Pamela Snyder.

Above: Religious of the Sacred Heart at the opening Mass. At right, Provincial Barbara Dawson and provincial team member Anne-Marie Conn.

Below: Sisters Imma De Stefanis and Kimberly King provided live Spanish translation throughout the Congress.



## *In Memoriam*

*Grace and mercy await  
the chosen of the Lord.*

**Ana Rita Hernández, RSCJ**

*March 29, 2014*

**Elisabeth Brinkmann, RSCJ**

*April 29, 2014*

**Pierina (Rina) Ronconi, RSCJ**

*July 24, 2014*

**Rosalie Chen, RSCJ**

*August 2, 2014*

**Joan Hopkins, RSCJ**

*August 25, 2014*

**Mary T. Clark, RSCJ**

*September 1, 2014*

**Jeanne Moynihan, RSCJ**

*October 8, 2014*

**Connie Campbell, RSCJ**

*November 13, 2014*

**Guilbermina Kost, RSCJ**

*November 13, 2014*

*Biographies are available on  
our website, [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org).*

## The Office of Ministry

promotes lives of mission

By Fran de la Chapelle, RSCJ

Long-time readers of this magazine may have noticed the wide variety of ministries in which members of the Society of the Sacred Heart are engaged. To be sure, while all Religious of the Sacred Heart are educators, not all teach in classrooms. Saint Madeleine Sophie had a clear vision of how members of her “little Society” would serve, as expressed in the *Constitutions of the Society of the Sacred Heart* of 1815. The *Constitutions* were rewritten by the General Chapter of 1982, but the newer document maintains Sophie’s aims and goals.

Religious of the Sacred Heart live out the mission of the Society through the service of education, which includes teaching and formation, activities for human development and the promotion of justice, and pastoral ministry. The *Constitutions* further specify that at the provincial level we discern the place and the means by which we carry out the Society’s educational mission. Apostolic work must:

- honor the Society’s commitment to educate the whole person
- be able to express our solidarity with the poor and our search for justice
- be open and ready to serve the provincial and international communities of the Society
- act as Church, in fidelity and dialogue, so as to participate actively and responsibly in the overall plan of the diocese in accord with ecclesiastical authority
- be able to live and work – among ourselves and with others – in a community of faith
- embody financial realism that is both inventive and responsible.

.....  
*The Office of Ministry, located at the Stuart Center in Washington, DC, serves as a resource to RSCJ as they seek new ministry opportunities.*  
.....

In an age in which personal preference is highly valued, RSCJ have wide sway in choosing their ministries, but they also take into account the needs of the whole Society. To help with the process of ministry selection, the Office of Ministry, located at the Stuart Center in Washington, DC, serves as a resource to RSCJ as they seek new ministry opportunities in order to live life in mission to the fullest. The office communicates ministry openings, assists in the creation of résumés and letters of introduction, and otherwise helps RSCJ prepare for new ministries. The office also assists our international sisters who wish to come to the United States-Canada Province for study, sabbaticals and ministry.

Our work can be illustrated with two recent examples: In the past months, I worked with an RSCJ who had worked in a Network school for more than thirty years. She had always had a desire to teach English as a Second Language. She obtained ESL training, and she is now very happily teaching English as a Second Language on the college level. Another Religious of the Sacred Heart returned home after spending many years as a missionary. After a short time of adjustment and some training, she is serving in prison ministry with people from the country where she served.

Religious of the Sacred Heart serve according to the needs of our time and our communities. By adhering to the wisdom of our *Constitutions*, we live a consecrated life as Saint Madeleine Sophie envisioned it. ✦

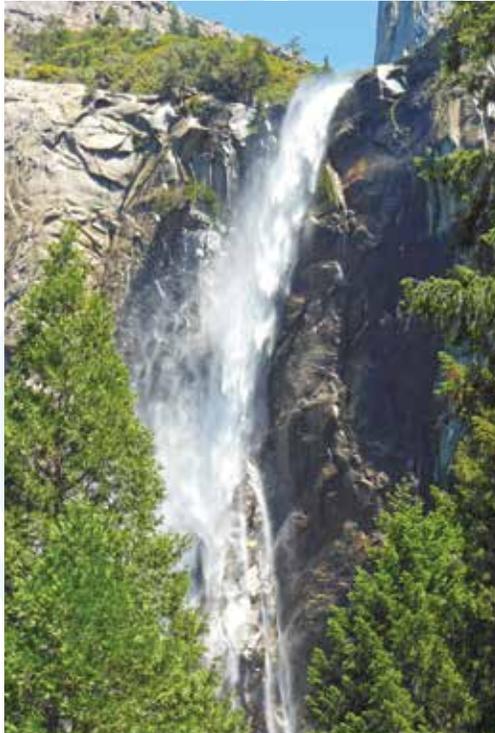
## Sharing memories and hope

By Shirley Miller, RSCJ

Some people have asked me why we continue to have a mission advancement office now that the *In Mission for Life* campaign is successfully completed. The province financial plan includes a goal to raise approximately \$2,000,000 annually – from here to eternity – to help fund our mission and care for our elderly sisters. Therefore, we continue to send our annual appeal in early September and encourage people to join our *Cor Unum Legacy Society* and to visit with individuals about funding special ministry projects.

Beyond the funding needs, however, and central to the Society's mission is the desire to bring people together, to keep us together, in our timeless mission of revealing the love of the Heart of Christ in our world, a world in need of love, compassion, understanding, reconciliation and hope. Relationships are deepened, old friends are reconnected, new friendships are created, faith is strengthened, hope is renewed, and love is spread. Sister Helen McLaughlin, superior general of the Society of the Sacred Heart from 1982-1994, speaks of God's love as a "waterfall of mercy." Close your eyes and imagine that waterfall of mercy pouring down on the whole world.

One of the greatest gifts I have received during my years as mission advancement director is hearing your stories – heroic life stories; daily stories of joys and sorrows; the stories of the lost and found; stories of heartaches and hopes, of sickness and



of health, of great needs and simple pleasures, of gratitude and grace.

Recently I was invited to provide a Saturday morning of prayer and reflection at Duchesne Academy, Omaha, for alumnae, families, friends and colleagues of Duchesne.

I lived for twenty-three years at Duchesne, as a college student, teacher and administrator. As I stood at the podium and looked out at all those gathered, I had an overwhelming sense of gratitude for each person there, for the life stories we have shared for so many years and the impact we have had on one another's lives, generation after generation after generation. Gratitude and grace!

While dusting my bookshelves recently, my eyes fell on a book that has been a friend and guide to me for many years, Walter Brueggemann's *Deep Memory,*

*Exuberant Hope*. There it was – the experience at Duchesne and for all of us – memory and hope. Both are essential to living the dream of Saint Madeleine Sophie.

What great things we have done together and, with God's grace, will continue to do together when love is strong enough, deep enough, kind enough, inclusive enough, compassionate enough, when we love with the Heart of Christ. As William Blake once wrote, "We are put on earth for a little space that we might learn to bear the beams of love." It all begins and ends in love – where memory is deep and hope is exuberant. ✦

*Close your eyes and imagine that waterfall of mercy pouring down on the whole world.*

## Women's Justice Circles

Duchesne Fund for Ministry grant recipient

By Linda Haydock, SNJM



A scene from *La Vida de Juanita* illustrates the sustaining faith of one immigrant.

*La Vida de Juanita* is an eight-act Spanish language play, written and performed to bridge the culture gap between Latina mothers and their U.S. born children. The play tells the collective story of the Women's Justice Circle in New Jersey through the experience of Juanita, who immigrated to the United States to escape a lifetime of poverty and abuse in her small village. Armed with a strong work ethic and the courage that comes from necessity, Juanita faced daunting challenges in her new home: limited English, exploitation, low wages, poor housing and isolation. What she counted on through it all were her faith in God and her indomitable spirit. The play provides an opportunity for children, growing up in a dramatically different culture, to bond in a new way with their mothers.

At the heart of Juanita's story is the Women's Justice Circles, an award-winning, collaborative empowerment program that received a 2014 Duchesne Fund for Ministry grant. The Circles are an alternative feminine model of community organizing. Women who are low-income, homeless or immigrants gather to identify the specific conditions and systems that need to change to improve their lives. The Circles begin with an eight-week process of relationship building, exploration of personal and collective power, leadership and organizing skills and strategic planning for social change.

Examples of the effectiveness of Women's Justice Circles include the women of Jubilee, a house for transitional living in Seattle, Washington, who organized and testified before the legislature. They succeeded in getting a Fair Tenant Screening Act signed into law. In the rural villages of Tanzania, the rainy season offers women a break from the muddy maize and cassava

fields. The women used their time away from the fields to join one of twenty-eight Justice Circles, which were formed to address issues of access to water, environmental conservation, maternal mortality and schooling for girls.

The Women's Justice Circles have spread from fifty cities in Washington and Oregon to six countries in Africa and Central and South America. What makes this possible? *Cor Unum!*

As a Sacred Heart alumna (Forest Ridge School of the Sacred Heart in Seattle), educator and now executive director of the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center, I believe Madeleine Sophie Barat's education of women was intended to empower us to transform the world for the common good. My Sacred Heart education has prepared and propelled me to make a difference in our church and world.

Giselle Carcamo, the Coordinator of the Women's Justice Circles, is an alumna of the Women's University of the Sacred Heart (Universidad Femenina del Sagrado Corazón) in Peru. She says, "Community organizing is about re-defining spaces for dialogue and interaction, appreciating people's situation within context, honoring collective power, and most importantly, trusting the human potential of the women to discover what they care deeply about and to create new realities."

We believe that the Women's Justice Circles represent a living legacy of the spirit of Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne.

In my youth, my classmates and I were indebted to the then-Blessed Philippine because she made it possible for us to be children of the Sacred Heart in the United States and Canada. We also were taught about her love for those who were poor. Today, I know Philippine as a pioneer and a prophet. The French Revolution and ban on religious life plunged her into the heart of the world and exposed her to the plight of the poor. Catherine Mooney, in her book *Philippine Duchesne: a Woman with the Poor*, wrote of her:

*"She had no set rule or routine to follow, just a vision. The varying situations that she found herself in led her to modify her self-styled religious routines to respond better to the work at hand. Rather than follow directives, she had to initiate each new undertaking. Rather than continue the same routine, she had to constantly adapt her work and her prayer. The skills she cultivated ... were invaluable for her future as a pioneer missionary on the American frontier."*

All alumnae/i of the Sacred Heart are called to be prophets and pioneers in our day. It is possible! Pioneers lead others to something new. Prophets, in tune with God and attuned to



The Seattle Justice Circle, a place of safety, sharing and empowerment.

the Sacred Heart of Jesus, evoke a new consciousness in people, which calls them to respond to the signs of the times.

A Duchesne Fund for Ministry grant for our Women's Justice Circles makes it possible for low-income women to lead, to name conditions of oppression and to collaborate with others to find a way to move beyond poverty. It makes it possible for Luz, an undocumented woman who says that "before the Women's Justice Circle I only went out of my house to go to the grocery store and to church," to become a member of the Sunnyside School Board and a key leader in her local community.

In the spirit of Saint Philippine, we are honoring the indigenous wisdom of the women in our Native American Circles and we share her missionary vision as we expand the Circles in rural Nicaragua, Bolivia, El Salvador and Peru. The women of the Justice Circles are crossing boundaries and borders, experiencing *Cor Unum* as they transform their communities and the world.

My twelve years of Sacred Heart education provided the foundation for who I am as a woman religious and in my collaborative ministry of peace and justice. Rooted in the Sacred Heart tradition and inspired by Jesus of the Beatitudes and Mary of the Magnificat, I believe that nothing is impossible with God! ✦

*Linda Haydock, SNJM, (Forest Ridge, 1973) is a Sister of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, and the executive director of the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center in Seattle.*

# PROTECTING SOUTH PORTLAND

## OUR LITTLE CORNER OF CREATION

By Mary-Jane Ferrier, RSCJ

The Society of the Sacred Heart expresses its mission as “making known the love of God revealed in the heart of Jesus Christ.” In recent years, that mission is also expressed through the lens of our commitment to “justice, peace and the integrity of creation.” If only we could put this notion into a “portmanteau word,” one that would emphasize the unity of these three notions all in one word that would speak to the unity of purpose our commitment leads us to.

Since last March, I have been reading and pondering Elizabeth Johnson’s *Ask the Beasts*, a theologian’s dialogue with Darwin’s thought. It has been a deeply moving experience and an enrichment of my own lifelong love of “the beasts,” whose lives speak to me of trusting love. Her discussion leads me to her expansive vision of the Spirit of God dwelling at the heart of creation, “because creation is the self-giving gift of the Creator.” In the light of this, the degradation of the Creator’s gift of self confronts us with the true gravity of our collective actions. As Johnson wrote, “the ongoing destruction of life on Earth by human action, intended or not, has the character of deep moral failure.”

My experience with the Protect South Portland organization has its roots in this world of insights, in this “justice-peace-integrity-of-creation” mission the Society embraces. It is a nuts and bolts story about real people in real world situations. It is an example of what “contemplation in action” can look like.



Mary-Jane Ferrier, RSCJ

The City of South Portland, Maine (pop 25,000), shares a harbor on Casco Bay with Portland. It is the home to the Portland Montreal Pipeline (PPL), a pipeline that carries imported crude from ships to refineries in Montreal. Elsewhere in the great country of Canada, in landlocked Alberta, large deposits of tar sands are buried deep underground.

Petroleum refineries seek a port on the Atlantic or the Pacific, or perhaps on the Gulf of Mexico, to bring tar sands oil to world markets. In recent years, the companies mining the tar sands have been building pipelines to carry them across Canada. As the pipelines have expanded toward eastern Canada, some people have considered reversing the flow in the PPL to bring tar sands oil to South Portland for export to world markets.

In response to the talk of bringing tar sands into Casco Bay, the Natural Resources Council of Maine hosted presentations with graphic pictures and scientific data about the potentially devastating effects of tar sands on our environment. In January 2013, a coalition of environmental groups rallied in bitterly cold weather to march through Portland in opposition to bringing tar sands to our port. The South Portland City Council hosted a workshop at which hundreds of people gathered to speak out against any possible reversing of the PPL. South Portland found

Citizens of South Portland and beyond make their voices heard in objection to tar sands oil in their port.



itself in the unique position of being able to exert its home rule authority to prevent the existing pipeline from being reversed, becoming a conduit for the crude from the Alberta tar sands.

In the shadow of these events Concerned Citizens of South Portland (CCSP), of which I was a member, began meeting to plot a course forward. A member of this group, Natalie West, an attorney with expertise in municipal law, crafted a proposed city ordinance, the Waterfront Protection Ordinance (WPO), that would effectively ban tar sands oil loading in South Portland. CCSP decided to focus on getting a citizen initiative on the ballot for fall of 2013 to make this ordinance law. Within eleven days of active canvassing, the group collected four thousand signatures, well over the 975 required. In August, the City Council voted to send this ordinance to the voters in November 2013. We were off and running!

For this new phase of advocacy, we became a political action committee and changed our name to Protect South Portland (PSP), to capture the more active intent of the group.

That fall, PSP recruited volunteers from the city, from surrounding cities and towns, from colleges, schools, churches, elder groups and individuals who came forward to carry out the myriad little tasks that go into a campaign. They knocked on doors to talk with voters, made countless phone calls, prepared materials, greeted, trained and entered data. In the end, our volunteer list numbered over four thousand. What was clear was that we were working on an issue that spoke to people of all ages. It also became clear to me that *a huge task of education was taking place*. The citizens of South Portland were learning a lot about the dangers of tar sands oil, but they were also tapping in to the threat this oil poses for the beautiful environment in which we live.

It did not take long to realize that we were taking on the petroleum industry, not just a little regional pipeline. A new opposition entity emerged, Energy Citizens, which was traced back to the American Petroleum Institute, the lobbying arm of the oil industry. They spent large sums of money to convince the citizens of South Portland that the Waterfront Protection Ordinance

would shut down the waterfront and make jobs disappear. Eventually, in November 2013, our grassroots campaign was defeated. The WPO lost by 193 votes out of more than 8,000 cast.

It was a disappointment, for sure. But, remember all that education that had been taking place? One group that had paid attention was our City Council, who heard from constituents that they felt they had to vote against the WPO to protect jobs, but they really did not want to see tar sands oil in South Portland. The day after the election, the City Council convened an emergency meeting, at which they proposed a six-month moratorium on all waterfront development and the appointment of a committee to study the issue of bringing tar sands oil to South Portland. Within days, the city received a three-page letter from the American Petroleum Institute threatening to sue the city. Didn't work. When the time came to vote on the proposed moratorium, the council passed it and appointed the Draft Ordinance Committee with a clear mandate to find a legal and defensible way to ban tar sands oil from the city.

The City Council meeting was moved to a larger facility to allow for the large numbers of people interested in the Clear Skies Ordinance.



The Draft Ordinance Committee (DOC) toiled for a little over six months. The process was entirely open, inviting input and broadcast on Community Television. A local columnist described it as a stellar example of democracy in action. Ultimately, the committee came up with an elegantly simple ordinance that bans the loading of crude oil onto tankers in South Portland's harbor, an activity that has never been part of the large petroleum presence here. No jobs would be affected, no businesses shut down. The rationale was based on the right of a city to regulate the quality of its air. Hence the ordinance's name: the Clear Skies Ordinance.

Protect South Portland continued our work. Our focus was on getting the ordinance drafted and approved. We knew our success would make a huge contribution to the work of environmental groups all over the United States and Canada. PSP members attended innumerable council meetings and workshops, speaking out in support of the work of the DOC and countering allegations made in "Energy Citizens" ads. It was my job to rally support from neighboring cities and towns and from professional organizations, like the Maine State Nurses' Association, the American Lung Association, etc. It also fell to me to be the spokesperson whenever someone was needed to comment on new developments.

The initiative passed to the City Council at a workshop in mid-June, 2014. PSP came prepared with hundreds of sky blue t-shirts, making the hall a sea of blue. The council agreed to put the ordinance on the agenda for its next meeting, for the first of the two votes required for passage into law.

Buoyed by this favorable reception, we were unprepared for the events on July 7. When I arrived at City Hall for the council vote that day, there were long lines of men and women blocking the entries. They were all wearing red t-shirts emblazoned with "American Energy." When the doors opened, they surged forward into the chamber to fill the seats. The majority of us in the blue shirts were left milling around. The mayor asked that people there who were not citizens wishing to speak give up their seats and go to another space where they could watch on closed circuit TV. No one budged. Meanwhile, several of our group talked to the people wearing red shirts. It turned out, many of them did

not know why they were there. They had been told to come and just sit and stay. It turned out that this action backfired, stiffening the resolve of the councilors not to bend to outside pressure. They did not take kindly to having their business obstructed like that. One of those councilors told one of us that she was impressed with the peaceful way in which we had handled the situation. In the end, the Council postponed the Clear Skies item to the following week, when they would have an emergency meeting in a larger space.

Ultimately, the council voted 6-1 to send the ordinance to the Planning Board for its input. From that day on my life became one interview after another to get our story out. This was news! We were halfway to the finish line and everyone interested in environmental issues wanted to hear about it.

A week later, the Planning Board registered its approval and



Supporters of the Clear Skies Ordinance celebrate their victory.

sent the ordinance back to the council for the final vote. A year and a half of planning, strategizing, mobilizing, persuading and doggedly attending meetings was about to come to an end. On July 21, we packed the auditorium again. Long lines formed of people who wanted to speak. The meeting seemed to go on forever as, one after another, people went to the podium, some in wheelchairs or with walkers, some with babes in arms, boys and girls who

needed to stand on a chair to get to the mike. It was as if they wanted to bear testimony to something sacred happening.

This city was about to speak up for the earth.

When the vote in favor was announced the auditorium erupted in cheers, hoots, laughter, even some dancing and a lot of hugging. I found myself in tears.

Later, a man introduced himself and said to me: "I hear you are a nun." I replied, "Yes, I belong to the Society of the Sacred Heart." At this he threw back his head and laughed, "You're kidding! I went to your elementary school in California, in Menlo Park." There ensued a long conversation about connections. It turned out that this man had been one of the principal donors to our campaign, through one of the environmental organizations. In some mysterious way he has given back to make it possible for me and my colleagues to participate in that twenty-first century version of the Society's mission. Together, and with his backing, we had done our part to protect the integrity of our little corner of creation. ✦



## Have a HEART.

Chiara Libraro, a fourth grade student at Sacred Heart Schools, Atherton, has a compassionate heart and a pragmatic mind; she heard of a need and took action. After learning about students in Africa who couldn't afford to go to school, Chiara organized a sports camp and sent the fees collected to the Sacred Heart Primary School for girls in Uganda to help with a child's tuition. Her reasoning was simple and beautiful: "I have a place to go to school, and I want to give something to help those who don't have the same opportunity." Like a true daughter of Saint Madeleine Sophie, Chiara feels it is important for every child to have the opportunity to go to school. We are blessed to have other generous students like Chiara throughout the Network of Sacred Heart Schools, and many of them are making sacrifices big and small to support the students at the Sacred Heart schools in Africa.

This activism started with an invitation. In 2000, Clare Pratt, RSCJ, then superior general of the Society of the Sacred Heart, wrote a letter to Religious of the Sacred Heart around the world, urging them to create more awareness and support for the peoples of Africa to help them with the overwhelming challenges they face. That letter prompted a deepening of what it means to be part of the Sacred Heart family. We welcomed into our hearts and into our considerations people outside our schools, outside our neighborhoods and towns, far away across the globe. By coming to know the people of Africa, especially those in Uganda and Kenya, we have seen the faces of hope and promise, the generosity of young people, women

## HELPING EDUCATION IN AFRICA - REACHING TOGETHER



Top: Students at Sacred Heart Schools, Sheridan Road, raised funds for the Sacred Heart school in Uganda through penny wars during Spirit Week.  
 Right: Chiara Libraro, Sacred Heart Schools, Atherton, earned money for Sacred Heart Primary School in Uganda by hosting a sports camp.



Above: Two of the posters the Network Schools received from the Uganda/Kenya Mission Support Office.

Below: Students from Convent of the Sacred Heart, 91st Street during a walk to raise money for the Uganda mission.

Bottom: Students from Convent of the Sacred Heart, San Francisco (Broadway) walk for tuition aid.



and men who create and reverence life. We have seen children whose potential is stunted without education. We've come to know young people searching for meaning, people of all ages suffering from HIV/AIDS, women abused and discriminated against, and refugees displaced by war, violence and poverty. The faces of these people reveal to us the Heart of God.

At about the same time the letter went out from Sister Pratt, the Uganda-Kenya provincial invited Irene Cullen, RSCJ, to help them raise funds and friends for their educational mission, beginning with securing the funds to build Sacred Heart Primary School for girls in Kyamusansala, Uganda. This school would stand as a way to continue the province's work of educating young people and building futures filled with hope. A year later, with the new Uganda/Kenya Mission Support Office in place, Sister Cullen invited Network schools to join the H.E.A.R.T program: Helping Education in Africa - Reaching Together, an acronym originally coined by Sacred Heart students in Australia. Already living out Goal Three of the Goals and Criteria for Sacred Heart Schools (a social awareness which impels to action) with care and enthusiasm, the Network of Sacred Heart Schools now had a new way to connect with the Society's global mission.

As we approach the fifteenth anniversary of Sister Pratt's letter, we can marvel at the many ways our Sacred Heart family has been engaged with the people of Africa, from learning about the major challenges for young people in securing an education, to spreading awareness, to fundraising. Some examples:

- During Lent, the girls at Duchesne Academy, Houston, do extra chores at home and raise money for tuition or other necessities at the schools in Uganda. Sometimes the students take it a step further and have bake or art sales on their own. Social Awareness Coordinator Paige Hellman says, "Not only is it important because it helps us support the Sacred Heart goal of social awareness, it also gives our students a better understanding of the world outside their immediate community. Global education is a means to better understand situations of people in other parts of the world."
- Mary Grace Henry from Convent of the Sacred Heart, Greenwich, started out making hair accessories to raise money for tuition aid and wound up establishing a foundation called Reverse the Course that supports dozens of students in four countries. She was honored with the World of Children Award this fall. Greenwich was recognized this year as a Charity Champion, which came with a cash award for the RSCJ educational mission in Uganda-Kenya.
- Alumnae/i groups and individuals from Sacred Heart schools sponsor Ugandan students in honor or in memory of a classmate, teacher, parent or friend.

✠ A mother who has struggled to give her own girls a Sacred Heart education sponsors a Ugandan student in gratitude.

✠ Sacred Heart Schools, Sheridan Road, spent months studying global water issues and communicating with Sister Cullen to see how they could help the Uganda Primary School for girls. The primary school children pledged to remain aware of their use of water each day and to raise awareness of those who lack water around the world. They organized a bake sale and other activities. With the monies raised, they supported the Sacred Heart Primary School water tank project and other clean water and water conservation projects. Outreach Coordinator Maria-Paz Salas shares, “The worldwide mission of the Society helps our students learn about social issues, and gives them cultural understanding of people of so many different backgrounds.”

✠ A group of Sacred Heart Prep, Atherton, fellows ran a summer camp with the goal of raising funds for financial aid at our Uganda school. Jesus Ramos, a Sacred Heart Associate who works at the school, says the connection with our sisters and brothers in Africa is vibrant because the goal is “to build a stronger, more human and tangible sense of community, of belonging to a Sacred Heart ‘world’ beyond our own world.”

Many of our schools also garnered the same compassionate energy when hearing of the fire at the Sacred Heart school in Congo in February, again rallying creatively to raise needed funds for the rebuilding of the destroyed dormitory.

### THE ANSWER TO “WHY?”

Sister Cullen is often asked by our Ugandan students, “How is it that people who do not know us care so much to bring us hope by helping us receive a life changing education?” Why is it important to be involved with the RSCJ worldwide mission within struggling countries where children, especially girls, face a big challenge to receive an education?

Sister Cullen’s answer: “The intentional energies and involvement by all of our Sacred Heart constituencies are shaping imaginations to participate ever more fully in God’s world of grace, calling forth empathy, creativity and commitment. The activities that flow from this global view are bringing hope to thousands of young people in Uganda and Kenya.”

Members of our Sacred Heart family articulate it in their own heartfelt ways:

✠ Michael Chung, community outreach director, Convent of the Sacred Heart, 91st Street, says, “Sacred Heart education is a way of life. Lives are rooted in a deep faith that guides them to action, setting God’s Kingdom right.”

✠ Abby Hayes, class of 2015, co-head of the Service Committee at Newton Country Day School, says, “We are all ‘Sacred Heart Sisters,’ and it is our duty as Christians to help one another and to give girls the opportunity for education so that they can fulfill their maximum potential.”

✠ From Jennifer Tompkins at the Academy of the Sacred Heart (the Rosary) in New Orleans we hear, “Our students’ hearts respond generously. In the posters we received this year, our students see that, despite these difficulties and challenges, these are happy little girls who, because of the gift of a Sacred Heart education, are with their friends, learning about computers and dressed in school uniforms similar to their own. It is so important for our children to feel at one with the children of the world, as they do when we point out these obvious similarities.”

✠ Lori Wilson, Sacred Heart Associate and community service coordinator at Greenwich, and her daughter Abbi say that, “If we were in need, our African family would reach out and love us. We are connected by love, a deeper bond than geographic location, and this relationship encourages our connection, our responsibility for each other, and our commitment.”

✠ Brenda Davis, a math teacher at Convent of the Sacred Heart, San Francisco and a Sacred Heart Associate says, “My desire is for my students to see themselves as part of the solution rather than becoming apathetic to the cries of the world. These students have the means to make an impact in the world. Mentoring them to have a heart for worlds beyond their own can help shape them to be the change of the future.”

Amen. ✠

*Thank you to Irene Cullen, RSCJ, director of the Uganda/Kenya Mission Support Office, and Lori Wilson, Sacred Heart Associate and director of campus ministry for Convent of the Sacred Heart, Greenwich, who gathered the information for this story. And an abundance of thanks to all in the Sacred Heart family – those named in this article and those who are not – who are opening their hearts to our sisters and brothers in other parts of the world and acting to improve their lives.*



# The mission endures

Madonna University continues SWEEP model

By Martha Curry, RSCJ

This past summer, Religious of the Sacred Heart celebrated a milestone in the history of the Southwest (Detroit) Women's Education Empowerment Program (SWEEP), a project initiated by Religious of the Sacred Heart Annette Zippel and Martha Curry in the early 1990s. The history of SWEEP and its transition to a program fully operated by Madonna University is the story of a successful collaboration with partners outside the Society to advance Saint Madeleine Sophie's mission.

## Meet Carmen

Carmen Ramos had a cosmetology license and worked in the beauty industry. She wanted to advance in her career but was not eligible for positions that required a college degree. She had been taking classes at Wayne State University's Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies, but she was unable to finish because she had a child to support. Then she learned about SWEEP from a flyer. She learned she could take classes in her own neighborhood at times that fit her schedule.

"The convenience of classes in my neighborhood appealed to me," she wrote. "SWEEP provided workshops to support non-traditional students in adapting to college courses."

Carmen is now one of the more than one hundred students who have earned a degree through SWEEP. A 2004 graduate of Madonna University through SWEEP, Carmen wrote, "SWEEP has had a profound impact on me. It gave me the vehicle to complete my bachelor's degree. I am not sure I would have been able to complete the required courses if it weren't for the positive support I received from SWEEP."

Carmen has used her degree in social work to great advantage. "SWEEP taught me to use my voice well. I use my voice to serve and advocate for the underserved. To give a voice to those who are not understood or do not understand by interpreting, providing resources, educating and leading. ... SWEEP helped me become more



Far left: In the footsteps of Saint Madeleine Sophie, Religious of the Sacred Heart Annette Zipple and Martha Curry turned dreams to reality in Detroit.

SWEEP students can take classes in their own neighborhood, at times that fit their schedules.

empathetic, and I use these skills on a daily basis. Through SWEEP, I developed the skills to think critically and to assess and examine everything. I developed my professionalism and found the person I knew I could be.”

### The history of SWEEP

SWEEP began when Rosemary Bearss, RSCJ, then provincial of the United States Province, called upon members of the province to reflect on how the Society’s ministries could address the realities of the twenty-first century. At the conclusion of the social analysis process, in 1992, the province published a seminal document, *An Act of Hope*, which called Religious of the Sacred Heart to structure concrete programs that would transform their dreams into realities. The Detroit area Religious of the Sacred Heart determined that the community’s most pressing need was access to quality education for the women of metropolitan Detroit.

Annette Zipple, RSCJ, had a dream, a way of living Saint Madeleine Sophie’s mission of educating the underserved. She dreamed of a project that would enable the women in southwest Detroit to earn degrees beyond the high school level. In 1996, she invited several women to the home she shared with Martha Curry, RSCJ, and asked them to share their hopes for strengthening themselves, their families and the community. Sisters Zipple and Curry learned of the challenges that

these women faced: limited financial resources, the absence of educational opportunities in their neighborhood, and the limits to advancement resulting from lack of education. They developed SWEEP as a way to address those challenges. Their plan was to bring college classes to southwest Detroit. By 1998, Madonna University, based in Livonia, Michigan, agreed to provide the classes if the RSCJ could guarantee twelve students for the fall enrollment. That September, twenty-eight women became the first SWEEP students.

Madonna provided the opportunity to earn bachelor’s degrees in three fields: social work, early childhood development and general education. Additional courses in business, finance, psychology and in both remedial and standard writing and mathematics were encouraged. Associate’s degrees and certificates were offered in such specialties as healthcare, hotel management and communications. Special programs also helped prepare students to continue their education in Madonna’s nursing program.

In the meantime, Sisters Zipple and Curry founded the Women’s Cultural Collaborative (WCC), a nonprofit organization that would provide funding for SWEEP. The WCC was itself funded in part by the Duchesne Fund for Ministry of the United States Province. The WCC helped provide the extras that the women needed to work toward their degrees, such as child care, books and fees. Occasionally the Women’s Cultural Collaborative even stepped in to help with a mortgage payment or utility bill.

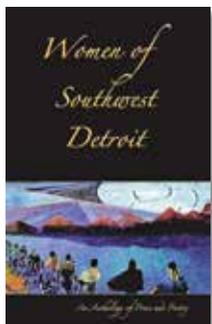
Sister Zipple served as director of the board for the Women's Cultural Collaborative; Maryellen Harmon, RSCJ, was the treasurer, and Sister Curry the secretary. Over the years, other RSCJ and associates also served on this board.

SWEEP quickly caught on with area residents. Affordable tuition, accessible classrooms and help with child care made getting a degree a real possibility for more women.

### Notable accomplishments

One of the notable events of SWEEP's history was the establishment of the Ana Tabares scholarship. Ana Tabares was actively involved in the community of southwest Detroit and by 2008 was one semester away from completing her bachelor's degree through SWEEP. Unfortunately, she died unexpectedly that year. In her honor, the Ana Tabares Educational Assistance Fund was established, offering tuition grants to Hispanic students registering for the first time. In this way students received an initial incentive, seed money for their future investment in their education.

Two publications grew out of SWEEP classes. The first, *Women of Southwest Detroit: Anthology of Prose and Poetry*, published in 2004, consisted of essays written for SWEEP classes. This publication, according to the authors, gave a voice to women who previously thought that no one wanted to listen to them. They knew they had a story to tell, an important message to convey, and in vivid and loving tones they found this voice. The second volume, *Stories of Hope & Learning*, was published in 2013.



### Transition

By 2013, Sister Zipple, who had been actively involved in SWEEP throughout its fourteen years, realized she could no longer continue as director of the SWEEP board. She recognized that it was time to dissolve the Women's Cultural Collaborative and hand over its remaining assets to Madonna so that SWEEP could continue. The transition was accomplished through the endowment of a scholarship. The board decided to name the scholarship in honor of Elizabeth Briggs Fisher, the mother of Mary Elizabeth Fisher, RSCJ, and a graduate of the Academy of the Sacred Heart in Grosse Pointe. Through the years, the Briggs Fisher Foundation has been the major donor to WCC, and it seemed right to name this scholarship in honor of the matriarch of a Sacred Heart family with ties to Detroit. As Sister Fisher said, "From heaven Mother would be thrilled with all the help that SWEEP has given Detroit women."

A second donation from WCC funds was to Freedom House, a temporary home for survivors of persecution from



Some members of the SWEEP team who gathered to celebrate the promise of the future for non-traditional college students in southwest Detroit.

around the world seeking legal shelter in the United States and Canada. The money will be used to assist Catherine, a twenty-two-year-old refugee from Uganda, whose dream is to become a nurse. (Catherine's last name is withheld because she is in the process of seeking asylum in the United States.) Freedom House will turn over the donation from SWEEP to Madonna so that Catherine can enter its nursing program.

The celebration of the transition last summer included the SWEEP board, several Detroit area RSCJ, Madonna University president Sister Rose Maria Kujawa, Madonna's director of Outreach Programs Dr. James Novak, SWEEP coordinator Tia Silva, several others from Madonna, current and former students, friends and neighbors. All celebrated the fulfillment of the dreams of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, of the women of southwest Detroit, of Madonna University and of the generous donors who made it all possible.

Madonna University will continue to fund SWEEP scholarships for students from southwest Detroit majoring in child development, social work or computer technology, and taking classes at the center in southwest Detroit. Eligible students pay a small fraction of the tuition costs each semester. In addition to providing the scholarships, Madonna University also provides a discounted tuition rate for SWEEP students.

SWEEP is moving on without Annette Zipple or Martha Curry, but their imprint remains on the program and on the women – past, present and future – who saw the value of education for themselves and its impact on their families and community.

Saint Madeleine Sophie knew that the way to rebuild a community is by educating the girls and women. Her daughters in the Society are following in her footsteps – and passing the knowledge along. ❀

*Photos courtesy of Cheryl Phillips, RSM and Madonna University.*

# Living a consecrated life today: Fifty years after the close of the Second Vatican Council

By Diana Wall, RSCJ

## *What IS the year of consecrated life?*

**O**n November 29, 2013, Pope Francis announced that 2015 will be a year dedicated to the celebration of consecrated life. He asked the Church’s religious sisters, brothers and priests to “wake up the world” with their testimony of faith, hope and service. The year will conclude appropriately on the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s decree, *Perfectae Caritatis*, on the renewal of religious life.

Consecrated life, in the canonical sense defined by the Catholic Church in the *Code of Canon Law*, “is a stable form of living by which the faithful, following Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, are totally dedicated to God who is loved most of all, so that, having dedicated themselves to His honor, to the building up of the Church and to the salvation of the world, they strive for the perfection of charity in service to the Kingdom of God...” (Can. 573 § 1).

What makes the consecrated life a more exacting way of Christian living is the public profession of vows whereby the person commits him/herself, for the



Photographer: George Martell – Archdiocese of Boston

In announcing the Year of Consecrated Life, Pope Francis called on vowed religious to “wake up the world.”

love of God, to observe as binding the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Over the 215-year history of the Society of the Sacred Heart, the way members live a consecrated life has evolved according to the times. Before the Second Vatican Council, the Society of the Sacred Heart was an institute that obtained recognition as a “Society” with the equivalent of solemn vows. The Society’s *Constitutions* of 1815 form a foundational document that expresses clearly the thought of the founder, Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat, and her plan

for “the nature, the end, the spirit and the character of the Society of the Sacred Heart” (*Constitutions*, §8). The *Constitutions* outline the rules of life, rights and obligations, which the sisters will observe. It articulates the aim of the Society: “to glorify the Sacred Heart of Jesus by labouring for the salvation and perfection of its members through the imitation of the virtues of which this Divine Heart is the centre and model ... especially through the education of youth” (*Const.* 1815, §4 IV). This statement of the aim remained unchanged from the beginning of the Society until after the close of the Second Vatican Council (1965).

## **Impact of Vatican II**

Much has changed since Pope Paul VI’s call. The decree, *Perfectae Caritatis* (PC), was taken up enthusiastically by all: we undertook discernment and renewal, and we continue to commit ourselves wholeheartedly to it. The Society’s Special Chapter of 1967 commenced the dialogue within the international Society on ways to implement the directives outlined in the decree (PC). The focus centered on the renewal of religious life and its adaptation to the needs of our times, “employing

appropriate and even new programs and abandoning those works which today are less relevant to the spirit and authentic nature of the community” (PC, §20).

This process culminated in the updating of our *Constitutions* by the 1982 General Chapter. During this time, the Society *lived into* the changes; the evolving manner of our consecrated

*While prayer and service are essential, it is community that holds the consecrated life together.*

life was dramatic and quite visible to the public. The Society went from a semi-cloistered lifestyle with uniform dress (the habit), in large communities incorporating two classes of religious, with a corporate ministry centered on our educational institutions, to living a simpler lifestyle, being in the world with people, living in small communities with one class of sisters, wearing secular dress appropriate to our increasingly varied ministries and ways of living our consecrated life.



Sisters Kathy McGrath and Diana Wall at their final profession ceremony in Rome.

It is now the eve of 2015 – the Year of Consecrated Life – fifty years after the close of the Second Vatican Council and the calls of *Perfectae Caritatis*; I maintain that this seminal document is as relevant today as it was then. It calls me (us) to renewal through a “constant return to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time,” and

stresses that the “founder’s spirit and special aims ...” (PC, §2b) be faithfully accepted and retained. It is in keeping with this document that consecrated life is lived in myriad forms in the Society and in the Church.

### **Prayer: the bedrock of religious life**

For me, in today’s world, the way I serve Christ and the Church while answering the call to live a consecrated life is rooted in my experiences of prayer, service and community life. My daily prayer is central to living the consecrated life; without it, this life makes no sense. It is in the daily pouring out and being washed over that I deepen my experience of being loved by Love.

A superior once gave me sage advice: “Go deeper, then, go deeper....” I have taken this to heart because, without taking the time to do so, I cannot nurture my relationship with God. Practically, each day in prayer, I recommit myself to my Beloved with my “Yes!” – with a renewal of my vow

formula: “trusting in the [reciprocal] fidelity of God” – He who knows and loves me. This daily (re)commitment is coupled with St. Ignatius’ *Suscipe*: “Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will, all I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace. That is enough for me.” This prayer reminds me that all I have, and all that I am, comes from God. All is gift!

### **Wholly apostolic**

The grace of service is summed up best by Luke 12:48: “Everyone to whom much is given, of him/her much will be required.” I have received much, and I need to use what I have received in an optimal way – for others. The Society has afforded me untold opportunities to serve the Church and our world both nationally and internationally. I have served in Bellevue, Washington, as the director of Forest Ridge School’s institutional advancement office; at the Academy of the Sacred Heart (the Rosary) in New Orleans as its capital campaign director; in eldercare at both Kenwood in Albany and at Oakwood in Atherton, California. Internationally, I have served in the humanitarian aid effort in Haiti in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of 2010; in the bursary in Uganda/Kenya and so forth. I am confident that my missionary heart would not have found expression outside the Society, nor would I have served our institutes, both inside and outside the borders of our country, without the support and encouragement of my sisters calling on my gifts and inviting me to serve. Each

of these – sometimes hard – experiences has been pure gift and has deepened my awareness of God’s unconditional love, kindness, truth, compassion and mercy, often manifested in the people I encountered along the way.

The most poignant example of this was my desire to answer a call for registered nurses to assist in the relief effort in Haiti. I recall having an overwhelming sense of being drawn to answer this call; it was a moment of clarity. After discerning with my provincial, I was encouraged to go. Two months later, I found myself in Haiti as one of two RNs in a small rural “hospital” in Verettes, Haiti, a village where the Society has a small community educating young adults. Each day, for the four months I was there, I ministered to individuals from the remotest mountain villages up to six miles away, providing care for their various afflictions. This was an incredible challenge because of the disrupted supply chain and thus limited medical supplies, coupled with my own lack of Haitian Creole.

I remember one woman who was ostracized because of AIDS, but who needed wound care every day. It was difficult because I did not know Creole, and I was used to communicating when I gave treatment. As I neared the end of my service, this same woman told me through an interpreter: “Thank you. You have shown me dignity.” I had wondered if I was making any impact, and I received this most poignant confirmation.

## Community

While prayer and service are essential, it is community that holds the consecrated life together. I know I am not alone in moving our mission forward. I find the

communal aspects of prayer, mission and service to be the most rewarding. My present community is made up of six women with a breadth of professional training and skills. We are an educator/theologian, an administrator/environmentalist, a lawyer/educator, a hospital chaplain/pastoral educator, a translator/archivist, a Biblical scholar/archivist, and me – an administrator/registered nurse. Clearly, we are a diverse group of women, ages 51 to 81, who are interested in ministering to the world in various ways. One of the joys is that with the diversity comes a depth and breadth of knowledge, skills and interests. I know that I can call on any of my sisters for her gifts, her expertise and her knowledge – and she will share them.

Daily we negotiate the give-and-take of life in community as we honor one another’s opinions. Archbishop Jose Rodríguez Carballo, the secretary for the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, best sums up the reality of the consecrated life: “In consecrated life, there are lights and shadows, and recognizing this is an exercise of lucidity and courage. There are lights and shadows, just as in every area of the life of society and of the church” (*National Catholic Reporter*, 2/1/14). In both my professional and communal life I find lively conversation to be part of the “light.” Communal life has helped me know myself and others better.

I believe that if each one offers her best self to the whole, we, the Society, can go further in living our mission. There is a saying of Sir Isaac Newton: “If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” This quote conveys the importance of those who



Sister Wall (back row, right) lives with (seated) Sisters Barbara Dawson, Frances Gimber, Sheila Hammond, (standing) Carolyn Osiek, Meg Causey and Anne-Marie Conn.

have gone before us: our (my) sisters. Upon the shoulders of their wisdom, insight and strength, are built our present and our future. Based on the solid foundation they offer, the lens of the calls of *Perfectae Caritatis* to a continual renewal, given the times, always through the original inspiration of the founder, and because of my own daily commitment in prayer, service and community life, I see a bright future for the Society.

Consecrated life is a gift of the Spirit to the Church affording me the opportunity to express my vocation in a way and with the means to live it meaningfully in the world, in the Society of the Sacred Heart in accordance with our *Constitutions*. It is an ongoing and progressive identification with Jesus Christ. As the times change, I too, need to change – to renew – to recommit. And this Year of Consecrated Life is calling me to do just that! ✦

*Diana Wall, RSCJ, is a member of the provincial team of the United States-Canada Province.*

## A life less ordinary

By Nikki Gemmell for *The Weekend Australian Magazine*



Sister Philomene Tiernan

A lone figure walked around the high-walled institution. She was noted in a way others weren't. It was the audacity of difference. It was arresting, moving. It felt as if there was a still centre to her being; a conviction that she was strongly, joyously here, in this place; doing exactly what she wanted to do in life. She glowed with contentment: She was living freely, as a female; with great purpose. It felt oddly, exhilaratingly feminist. Empowered.

She was a nun. And now she is gone. Sister Philomene Tiernan had been on the ill-fated Flight MH17. And buried deep within all the layers of that sobering tragedy is a tragedy for the school she wandered around, often, and is now gone from. She is irreplaceable as

a beacon of spirituality, compassion and intellect to many, many young women, over decades. And at a time of diminishing communities of observant women, as we witness a generational shift into a post-Christian world.

The school is my old one, Sydney's Kincoppal-Rose Bay. Sister Phil was woven into its very fabric as a striking and relatively constant presence; a lone, lovely waypoint of feminine spirituality. Walking the beautiful harbourside grounds, the flinty stone corridors, the boarding dormitories, constantly nodding, smiling, chatting; warming and stilling with her presence.

The Kincoppal nuns were my earliest role models of strong womanhood. The Mother Superior was a career woman in the best sense, a glowing advocate for her choice in life. A working woman, and purposeful with it. The nuns looked out for me, the scholarship kid in the second-hand uniform, raised by a single mum – the only child of divorced parents upon arrival in Year 7. With the nuns, I felt encouraged to fly.

Germaine Greer, on her convent education: “[The nuns] brought out the best in me and it needn't have been brought out – it could have stayed right where it was. I could have married a stockbroker and settled into a life of three cars and a carport. They made that impossible because I was hungry for something else.” I don't think my nuns would have wanted a stockbroker and carport for me, either.

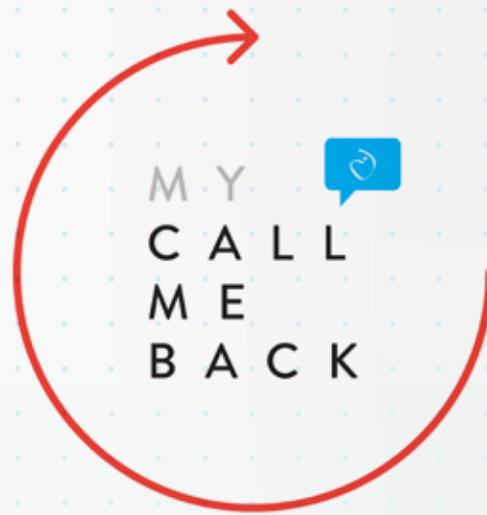
They were man-free by choice. It seemed a liberation. Freedom from the burden and demands of sexuality gave them a strength, an energy, a lightness. To pursue other areas of life. These singular women travelled, had study breaks, espoused the powers of meditation and contemplation, even wore lipstick on occasion (the shock of speech day!). Their world didn't feel oppressive, or subservient, or crushing.

Sex was not presented as wrong or distasteful or alien – it was to be learnt about. Information was power and they were practical with it. A sister gave us some sex ed classes (not actually called that) I'll never forget. It was all related with great warmth and laughter. The nuns seemed strong and secure with their singular life choice. It was a great lesson to learn, as a teenager - that it was possible to live your life free, uncrushed, with an intellectually enquiring spirit, wedded to your job and your vocation.

It feels like nuns are living the life prescribed by the New Testament. Many whom I've come across have an intriguing core of stillness. They're not completely a part of this world, not swallowed by it like the rest of us, have the strength to be something else. Even their makeup-free faces feel strong; they show us you can be utterly beautiful without it.

Sister Phil, you were a beacon of many kinds, a powerful presence in an unravelling world, and you are grievously missed. ✦

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▲ **Gathering at Oakwood reunites sisters**  
like Mamie Jenkins, RSCJ (left)



▲ Sister Mary-Jane Ferrier is passionate about  
**Protecting South Portland, our little corner of creation.**



▲ We give thanks for the students, faculty, staff and parents who **Have a HEART for our mission in Uganda.**

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