

Salt

Winter 2014 • A Publication of the Sisters of Charity, BVM

**“ ... Your life
illuminates the
longing, like the
eagle soaring
confidently now
over our river,
whose flight ends
in the circle of sun.”**

—Jane McDonnell, BVM
“She Wore a Calico Apron”
Meeting Mary Frances Clarke

**Being Freed and Helping
Others Enjoy Freedom ...**

Mission Statement: We are the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a community of Catholic women called to live the mission of Jesus through our core values of Freedom, Education, Charity and Justice.

SALT is published three times per year for friends and family of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

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2014 Calendar of Events

March

- 14-16 BVM Booth: Los Angeles Religious Education Conference
- 21-24 BVM Volunteer Opportunity: NETWORK, Washington, D.C.
- 26-3 BVM Volunteer Opportunity: Ecuador Immersion Trip

April

- 6 Immaculata HS Spring Luncheon, Chateau Ritz, Niles, Ill.
- 7-17 BVM Volunteer Opportunity: Ecuador Immersion Trip
- 11-12 Dubuque's Got Sisters, Mount Carmel, Dubuque, Iowa
- 18 8th Day Center for Justice, Good Friday Walk for Justice, Chicago
- 27 St. Mary HS Alumnae Luncheon, Carlisle, Lombard, Ill.

May

- 4 Memorial Mass, Motherhouse Chapel, Dubuque, Iowa

July

- 13 Golden Jubilee Celebration, Mount Carmel, Dubuque, Iowa
- 19 BVM and Former BVM Celebration, Best Western Midway, Dubuque, Iowa

For more information, visit:
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On the cover: This excerpt from Jane McDonnell's poem reflects the life of Mary Frances Clarke and the BVM mission of "being freed and helping others enjoy freedom in God's steadfast love." The resting eagles outside Mount Carmel will soon lift off, trusting the wind currents to guide them in flight. In this issue, let your own spirit soar as you read about BVMs who share the core value of freedom—"the gift that permits us to become our most faithful self."

SEASONing

As Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
we are called to participate in the mission of Jesus. Our choice of ministry is in keeping with our BVM mission: being freed and helping others enjoy freedom in God's steadfast love. —BVM Constitutions #10



BVM leadership team members are (l. to r.)
Mira Mosle, Teri Hadro and Kate Hendel.

Condensed to a single word, the mission of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is known as “Freedom.” Freedom also is the charism of our congregation, that is, it is the specific gift BVMs and BVM associates have been given to share for the benefit of the church. Another way to express the meaning of our charism is to say that freedom is the particular lens through which BVMs and associates look to live out the mission of Jesus.

Freedom is one of those universally loved concepts but pinning down its meaning in the here and now can be difficult. Most of us desire freedom from pain, harm, worry and fear; most of us desire freedom to choose for ourselves how and where to live, worship and work. Most of us desire a world where freedom prevails but we are far from agreeing on the details of how to bring it about. Defining freedom can be as slippery as a bar of soap!

Article 10 in the BVM *Constitutions* imperatively links freeing one's self with helping others enjoy the freedom intended by their loving creator. Nelson Mandela, himself a political prisoner for 27 years, put it another way: “For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” Article 10 and Mandela's parallel statement are eloquent, but one might ask, what does such a way of living look like? How does it play out in our everyday world?

The stories in this issue of *Salt* each present a particular image of how individ-

ual BVMs have answered the call to live out our charism of freedom. Each vignette puts flesh on our eloquent statements. Dear Readers, we're pleased to introduce you to these BVMs:

Mary Gene Kinney and Letty Close, whose ministry facilitates the freeing of individuals from the shackles of chemical or process addictions through the sharing of experience, strength and hope among and between those in recovery.

Deanna Randall, now a resident at Mount Carmel, whose commitment to the Montessori method of early childhood education led her to establish programs in Colorado and Mississippi which offered to poor children an educational opportunity in which their choices were honored in ways that encouraged expression of their God-given gifts.

Mary Kay Dum, who initiated Montessori schools in Arizona and California and was attracted by Maria Montessori's belief that children already have what they need to learn and it is the teacher's role to help it emerge.

Vicki Smurlo, hospice social worker, whose ministry embodies her belief that, “For Christians, the ultimate freedom is trusting in God's loving care to ease the transition to a *new life* in God's eternal embrace.”

Mary Ellen Meckley, social worker in Chicago, whose compassionate listening and ministry of connecting people to essential services frees others from the stress of uncertainty and the paralysis of despair.

Patricia Potok and Cora Keegan, both trained nurses, minister to BVM residents at Mount Carmel by accompanying them to medical appointments and freeing them from the anxiety caused by feelings of inadequacy regarding medical matters.

Kathleen Spurlin, a veteran chaplain at a Mississippi state penitentiary, provided literacy classes and spiritual programs for those incarcerated because “these are the tools of freedom” needed by those whose lives are in others' control.

Karen Pollard, working in criminal justice ministry in St. Louis, developed GED courses and religious services for those in jail because “Education . . . can sometimes enable prisoners to become free within themselves.”

Jane Rogers, grief counselor in Dubuque, who sees her ministry not as freeing persons from grief and mourning but freeing them from the debilitating aspects of both.

Authors **Patricia Bombard and Ann Harrington** offer reflective pieces on Mary Frances Clarke whose writings never included the word “freedom,” but whose life and legacy embody its essence.

BVMs are women in mission; their lives embody our constitutional directive to free ourselves and help others to do the same. We invite you to read these stories, to imbibe their three-dimensional imaging of freedom, to understand in a deeper way the charism that is ours as Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Teri Hadro, BVM

Mira Mosle, BVM

Kate Hendel, BVM

BVMs Welcome New Novice and Associate

by Jody Iler

On Sunday, Dec. 8, 2013, the Sisters of Charity, BVM celebrated the reception of Novice Sharon Rezmer and the commitment of Associate Danette Bookstein with a liturgy and dinner at Mount Carmel.

This was the first time two such events have been held in unison, symbolizing the significance of the collaboration between BVM sisters and associates as faith and ministry partners. Each year on the feast of Mary on Dec. 8, BVMs and associates renew their vows and commitments.

BVM President Teri Hadro says, “We are so pleased to receive Sharon Rezmer into our novitiate! We welcome her response to the call of our gracious God, and look forward to working and learning with her. We likely won’t see Danette as frequently as Sharon, but we happily anticipate sharing in how her understanding of association grows as she lives out her commitment within her family, parish and neighborhood.”

Sharon was the associate administrator of Wright Hall, a BVM retirement home in Chicago, for four years, before

“I never envisioned the hearts and hands that would extend out to me and gently lead me over that bumpy threshold.”

—Sharon Rezmer, BVM



Gathered for the reception and commitment ceremony at Mount Carmel are (standing l. to r.) President Teri Hadro, BVM; Initial Membership Coordinators Kathy Carr, BVM and Lou Anglin, BVM; Associate Coordinator Ann Chaput, BVM; (seated l. to r.) BVM Novice Sharon Rezmer and BVM Associate Danette Bookstein.

its sale to Loyola University. Her position brought her into close contact with BVMs, whom she had first known as a student at St. Ferdinand School.

She entered the BVM congregation on Dec. 15, 2012, and completed a year of discernment with Initial Membership Coordinator Kathy Carr, BVM and Chicago area BVMs. “When I contemplated entering through ‘the door,’” Sharon says, “I never envisioned the hearts and hands that would extend out to me and gently lead me over that bumpy threshold.”

Kathy shares that “as members of a religious community we are called in a unique way to live Gospel values, to reach out to those who are hurting and those on the margins of our society. We believe our way of life has much to offer, and welcome those who want to journey with us.”

During her non-canonical novitiate year, Sharon will continue her current ministry as healthcare coordinator for the Cenacle Sisters in Chicago, while living with area BVMs Margaret Geraghty (St. Cabrini) and Diane O’Donnell (Joanella). She will continue her discernment with her novice director, Initial Membership Coordinator Lou Anglin, BVM. Sharon says, “I am willing to explore BVM

community, to deepen my understanding of the charisms and to continue to strengthen my relationship with my sisters. I look forward to further discernment with the BVM community.”

Danette lives with her family in Beach Park, Ill. Her journey to become an associate began with her ministry as catechist at St. Dismas Parish in Waukegan, Ill., where Associate Coordinator Ann Chaput, BVM was director of faith formation. She began her discernment this past year with Ann and Maurine Therese Thiel, BVM as her companions.

“I am very proud and honored to be a BVM associate,” says Danette. “I am passionate about my commitment, which provides me joy on a daily basis and is my rock during the storm. To be a member of a community of believers who live by the values and charism of Mary Frances Clarke allows me to live out my faith to its fullest.”

Ann adds, “The celebration of Sharon’s reception as a novice and the associate commitment of Danette is special because it leads us together into the future. Our BVM charism is now being lived in a diversity of ways which we celebrate and witness in a unique way today.”



Spirituality and Freedom: Being True to Our Destiny

by Patricia M. Bombard, BVM

“Do not mention about the Sisters keeping the Lent. Do as you have done. It would not do to teach school every day, and all day and fast.”

—Mary Frances Clarke
Letter, March 3, 1881

“I was born for this.”

—St. Joan of Arc

Imagine a fine wedding feast. The large crowd is heartily eating and drinking, rejoicing together in the happiness of the new bride and groom. Suddenly, one woman notices a worried look cross the host’s face. Instantly, she moves into action, identifying the problem and then going for help to the one she knows can solve it, her son, Jesus.

When she reaches him, she calls him aside, and with few words defines the unfortunate reality: “They have no wine.” Jesus, in turn, responds to his mother with a deflection: “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.”

Unperturbed by her son’s callous response, the woman, whose name is Mary, turns to a servant standing nearby and, tipping her hand slightly to indicate her son, instructs the servant: “Do whatever he tells you.” Then she quietly steps back into the crowd.

Now imagine yet another woman sitting with pen in hand, perhaps feeling the weight of responsibility for those in her care and recognizing in her own growing frailty the need to acknowledge one’s physical limitations.

Her name is Mary Frances Clarke, and she is writing a letter to address a potential conflict that has arisen among a group of women she has helped to train as educators. Her advice to her companions is simple, direct, heartfelt: “Do not mention about the Sisters keeping the Lent. Do as you have done. It would not do to teach school every day, and all day and fast.”

Now, picture a young Pakistani girl, 16 years

of age, standing up to those who already shot her once in the face and have vowed to kill her. Publicly, Malala Yousafzai says in a news interview, “I have already seen death and I know that death is supporting me in my cause of education. Death does not want to kill me,” she says. “Before this attack, I might have been a little bit afraid how death would be. Now I’m not, because I have experienced it.”

Pausing to consider the stories of these three extraordinarily free women, what implications might we draw regarding the relationship between spirituality and freedom? We describe our BVM core value of freedom as “the gift that permits us to become who we are called to be at the deepest core of our being.” St. Paul in a letter to the Galatians writes: “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another” (Gal. 5:13).

In her book, *Spirituality and Pastoral Ministry*, Joan Wolksi Conn writes, “The mature person is one who can freely surrender herself or himself, who can risk a genuinely mutual relationship with others and with God.”

This, then, is the paradox of spiritual growth in freedom: we find our greatest freedom in the inward ability to be true to our individual destiny, to what each of us is “born” to be, as St. Joan of Arc proclaimed: a person fully free to live on behalf of others.

About the author: Patricia M. Bombard, BVM is director of the Hay Leadership Project, DePaul University/School of Public Service in Chicago.



Mary Frances Clarke: Finding Strength in God's Will

by Ann M. Harrington, BVM

One of the biggest challenges in discussing Mary Frances Clarke

and freedom is that there is no incidence of her ever using the word. This woman who left an Ireland under British domination never alludes to freedom in what we have of her letters. But when I look at characteristics that define the lived-life of Mary Frances, freedom is evident.

A Dedication to 'Doing Whatever is Needed'

She was a simple woman who joined with the sisters doing the physical labor at the prairie motherhouse. These women, including Mary Frances, wore clothing made of calico.

Those who taught in the schools wore merino, a type of wool. She was a humble woman, one who did not need to draw attention to herself, who knew and accepted herself. She was a woman dedicated to service, willing to leave her native Ireland for the unknown in the United States. Besides efforts for education, her work with cholera victims is exemplary, both in Ireland and in Philadelphia.

David McCullough's latest book, *The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris*, vividly describes cholera victims in 1832. There is no doubt that working with such victims was SERVICE in capital letters. A phrase I heard early in my BVM training was sisters should have "hands that would dip in any water." I am certain that the phrase derived from Mary Frances' example: do whatever was needed, no matter how unpleasant.

She was a woman who took risks; McCullough's details about the ocean voyage from Europe to America in 1833 would make many queasy just thinking about it! To greatly understate the truth, it was not an easy crossing. I can only imagine the pain in the prospect of never returning to one's native land. And she

was a pioneer. She left her homeland, suffered misunderstandings and tribulations in Philadelphia, and traveled to Iowa, still a territory of the U.S., presumably to teach American Indians. She was a nature lover who visited the botanical gardens in Dublin and, later, commented in letters on Iowa's natural beauty and the prairie flowers. She does not speak of the hardships.

Trust, Love and Justice Reflects Leadership

Mary Frances trusted her sisters. Shortly before she died, she approved the BVM staffing of a school in California. Given travel and communication at that time, this was about as far as one could go from the motherhouse, demonstrating trust in God and the sisters.

She loved her sisters, as is clear from her letters, and she was a woman who had good friends. She suggested that teaching sisters did not have to keep the Lenten fast, but advised, "Do not mention about the Sisters keeping the Lent. Do as you have done. It would not do to teach school every day, and all day and fast." (Letter, March 3, 1881). It seems it was especially their father superior, Terence Donaghoe, who need not be alerted.

As a woman who resisted injustice, she wanted the sisters paid for their work. She stood behind her sisters, or "had their backs," as we say today. If Mary Frances believed the sisters were wronged, she withdrew them from schools. She wanted education for all students—those who could

**"... Your pledge of service,
a calico apron, your rolled
sleeves a sign of hope in an
immigrant church caught
in contest for nationhood.
... Your life illumines the
longing, like the eagle
soaring confidently now
over our river, whose flight
ends in the circle of sun."**

—Jane McDonnell, BVM
"She Wore a Calico Apron"
Meeting Mary Frances Clarke

pay and those who could not. In the latter case the distinction was not to be evident.

She was a smart woman with a strong business sense, having learned this skill keeping her father's books, and thus kept the BVM account books for a good part of her life. Bishop John Hennessy, her adversary at times, said of her in his funeral eulogy that she had the appearance of an old woman whom the sisters had taken in but added that her "humble exterior hid away a mind of no ordinary ability, an ability which became manifest at the call of duty only, and then in the utmost simplicity and apparent unconsciousness."¹

Doing God's Will Fosters Freedom

As an immigrant living in the United States through the Civil War, she must have experienced great unrest. While never mentioning it directly, perhaps appropriately for an immigrant, the Military Road

(the old Highway 151 in Dubuque, Iowa) ran nearby the prairie motherhouse, so awareness could not have escaped her.

A woman of prayer, she was deeply committed to doing the will of God which she discovered in talking with her friends and in listening to however God's voice was made manifest to her. In that desire to do God's will, she found her freedom and her strength.

All of this sets the stage for Mary Frances' determination to gain approval from Rome shortly after Terence Donaghoe's death in 1869. It appears that only with that assurance could she be certain of the validity of the institute, and that the sisters would no longer be open to challenge.

In fact, Bishop Hennessy tried to thwart the freedom of the sisters by changing the Rule to read that there could be "[n]o new foundation in another diocese without the consent and approbation of the Bishop of Dubuque."² This clause,

deemed invalid by the Capuchin friar consulter in Rome, was removed. Without consulting Mary Frances, the sisters voted unanimously in 1885 that she remain superior general for life. Final approval for the Rule came that same year, and Mary Frances exclaimed, "Well thank God!"

Her dream of responding freely to need wherever it took the sisters—even to faraway California—was now possible. She could die in peace. At the time of her death in 1887, she was a woman who headed a congregation of 499 women.

Endnotes:

- 1 "Eulogy, 1887," Mary Frances Clarke file, Mount Carmel BVM Archives, Dubuque, Iowa.
- 2 M. Jane Coogan, *The Price of Our Heritage*, Volume Two (Dubuque, Iowa: Mount Carmel Press, 1978), 49.

About the author: Ann M. Harrington, BVM (St. Remi) lives in Chicago and is an author of BVM history.

SALT | BRIEFS



Helen Jean Hurley, BVM was the recipient of the Flos Carmeli Award presented to her on March

24, 2013, at a reception in Orland Park, Ill. Honored for her work teaching boys for over 25 years at Mount Carmel High School in Chicago, she continues to creatively challenge her students, sharing her wisdom, experience and expertise.



Katherine E. Heffernan, BVM received a 2013 CSM Alumnae Achievement Award from the

College of St. Mary, Omaha, Neb., on Sept. 14, 2013. CSM honors individuals who embody the values of the college in an exemplary way. A graduate of the class of 1943,

Katherine went on to earn a master's degree in social work and advanced certification in psychoanalysis and administration. Her ministry has focused on social work in Chicago for the past 30 years.



Georgeann Quinlan, BVM (Immaculate) was honored on Sept. 30, 2013, as "Long-time Friend

and Activist for Seniors" in a proclamation awarded to her by the City and County of Denver, prior to the 10th Annual District One Senior Resource Day on Oct. 4. Georgeann says, "My ministry is not so much 'hands-on' for individuals as it is helping seniors know what is available for them. I find great fulfillment in networking with other organizations to help seniors."



Patricia Kerz, BVM (St. Julianna) was one of the recipients of the Christifideles Award at the 2013 Chicago Archdiocese Recognition Ceremony at Holy Name Cathedral on Sunday, Nov. 3. She ministers at St. Agatha Parish, where pastor, Rev. Larry Dowling, shares that she "is a woman of deep faith and strong commitment to the sick and the poor." Pat coordinates parish care ministry, directs the food pantry at the old Blessed Sacrament Parish, coordinates senior groups' activities and meetings, and works with the scouting program.

The **Sisters of Charity, BVM** are the second religious community in the country to receive partner membership status with Catholic Research Resources Alliance (CRRRA). Mount Carmel Archives holdings from the 1830s to 2013 will add to the collecting themes established by CRRRA, including Catholic education, missions, social action, and citizenship. CRRRA's mission is "to provide enduring global access to Catholic research resources in the Americas."

Addiction Ministry Gives Hope to Religious

by Luann Brown, BVM

The Intercongregational Addictions Program (ICAP),

founded and directed by BVMs Letty Close (St. Noel) and Mary Gene Kinney (Antonilla), connects to the BVM mission through “Walking and Working with Sisters to Initiate and Sustain Recovery” from alcohol, drug and other addictions.

ICAP provides services to religious communities and sisters living with addictions. It maintains a mutual-help network of women from various religious communities who are in recovery. ICAP sponsors two summer retreats that are conducted by the sisters who attend them. The organization provides education on addictions, individual mentoring, consultation and interventions for sisters in need of in-patient treatment.

Mary Gene is active in making referrals for addictions services available to religious sisters in Chicago and throughout the United States. She has also engaged in assessment and counseling for the adolescents of Mercy Homes in Chicago.



Sharing Experience, Strength and Hope

Letty and Mary Gene understand their ministry as being at the core of the BVM charism of “freeing ourselves and helping others to enjoy freedom in God’s steadfast love (BVM *Constitution* #10).” Through working personal 12-step programs of recovery, they strive to maintain their own freedom from the bondage of addiction.

For over 34 years, Letty and Mary Gene have spread the message of hope for recovery to sisters across the United States and in other countries such as Canada, Croatia, Ireland and Italy. Personal experience with the transformative journey of recovery has equipped these sisters with an authentic ability to share their experience, strength and hope with sisters who still suffer from the devastating disease of addiction. Their professional training and years of experience working in the field of addictions counseling provide credibility.

When Mary Gene traveled to Croatia, where alcoholism is prevalent in society and religious life, to provide education and consultation, a community leader commented to her, “You are free. Our sisters need freedom.” Mary Gene reminisces, “In Croatia we received a warm and wonderful reception as well as a heartwarming openness to and gratitude for the information we shared. A sister there came to the United States for treatment and returned for ICAP retreats. A seed was planted and she is now considering training in addictions counseling in order to help sisters in her home country.”

The Evolution of ICAP

ICAP originated in the mid-1970s, when the BVM leadership recognized the need for a way to reach out and help sisters who were addicted to alcohol and medications. The administration called for experienced or interested BVMs to serve

as a task force. Fifteen sisters from various parts of the country, five who were in recovery and 10 who were interested in the topic, responded to the call to address the issue. The task force recommended a plan of education and a process for intervention which included:

- Visiting large and small BVM community houses to provide information about addiction and stories of recovery to the sisters.
- Creating a community policy that recognized that alcoholism is a disease as stated by the American Medical Association (AMA) and acknowledged the right of sisters with the disorder to recover.
- Providing open 12-step meetings at congregational assemblies and senates.



BVMs Letty Close and Mary Gene Kinney received the Annual Award for Service at the National Catholic Council on Addictions in New Orleans on Jan. 23, 2008.

This process, especially the group educational gatherings, was well received and appreciated by BVM sisters. Eventually, other communities began to contact Letty and Mary Gene for help and consultation.

ICAP grew out of that movement. Letty submitted and received a number of BVM grants for funding for this inter-congregational effort to reach addicted sisters. They brought information to the Leadership Conference for Women Religious (LCWR) meetings and provided ways for local communities to connect with ICAP and other sisters in recovery.

Prior to the 1970s, sisters recovering from addiction believed that they were alone in experiencing this “problem.” When Mary Gene and Letty wrote to communities in LCWR and asked to connect with sisters working in the field of drug and alcohol counseling, they received an encouraging response. In Minneapolis-St. Paul, ICAP organized a gathering of

women religious concerned about alcoholism that was attended by 81 participants. In addition to BVM grants, Letty and Mary Gene have funded their ministry through other grants and compensated professional work for Catholic Charities, Mercy Homes, and their own DUI program under the state of Illinois.

After the National Catholic Clergy Conference, now known as the National Catholic Council on Addictions (NCCA), included sisters, more educational and networking opportunities opened for ICAP.

Letty and Mary Gene organized small conventions for ICAP members all over the country. These often featured authors of articles on addictions in *Sisters Today* and *Review for Religious* as speakers. Relaxation and fun became celebrations of recovery for these formerly marginalized sisters. The gatherings did much to end the isolation and shame for sisters with addictions.

Over the years, ICAP has connected with many congregations, representing hundreds of sisters. As Mary Gene and Letty insist, it is all about connections, bringing people together in recovery networks to experience freedom from a common debilitating disease.

Letty has served on the advisory board and the board of directors for Guest House Inc., in Lake Orion, Mich., an inpatient treatment facility originally for clergy and male religious suffering from addictions. When Guest House was considering opening their program to women religious, they approached ICAP for advice and consultation. Letty has worked diligently to keep the unique needs of women in treatment in the dialogue.

In 2007, Letty received an award from Guest House in recognition of her significant ministry to women religious affected by addictive disease. Mary Gene and Letty earned the Sister Ignatia Gavin Award from

the NCCA in 2008 for their contribution to recovery efforts for religious. Letty acknowledges, “Being a BVM is an integral part of the process of my journey in personal recovery and ministry. The awards I received are recognition for our community and my own personal achievements.”

Ending Isolation and Social Stigma

Some of the challenges on the journey have been confronting the historical and contemporary stigma for individuals, especially sisters, with addictions, gaining wider acceptance of addiction as a disease, and addressing on-going ignorance about and facing society’s desire to bury the problem or to take a harsh, judgmental, and punitive, zero-tolerance stance toward it.

Emerging awareness of process addictions such as gambling, hoarding and compulsive spending, as well as eating disorders, demand new educational initiatives to promote the understanding of the underlying processes of all addictions. Guest House is one of a handful of facilities that treats multiple addictions. Access to treatment is a critical societal issue. Only a small percentage of individuals in our society who need treatment actually receive it.

Letty and Mary Gene identify a multitude of gifts and blessings of their ministry. They have experienced the joy and freedom of making their own creative decisions as their dream unfolded, enjoyed acceptance as peers in the circle of professionals in the field, earned the respect of other organizations through credibility and constancy, and nurtured a deep connection with people in the recovery world.

About the author: Luann Brown, BVM lives in Brookfield, Ill., and recently completed an internship in addictions counseling.



Walking and Working with Sisters to Initiate and Sustain Recovery

www.icaptoday.org

Restorative Justice Fosters Freedom for Inmates

by Mary Nolan, BVM

“There is so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us that it behooves all of us to find the good in each other.”

—Author Unknown



Karen Pollard, BVM listens to a prisoner at the St. Louis City Workhouse.



Kathleen Spurlin, BVM sits next to a crucifix hanging on the wall of her room at Mount Carmel. It was made for her by a prisoner in trade school.

Kathleen Spurlin, BVM Prison Chaplain

The paraphrased quote above, remembered by Kathleen Spurlin, BVM (Bernardone), provides a lens for her 25 years in prison ministry (1976–2003) at Mississippi State Penitentiary (Parchman) near Clarksdale, and South Mississippi Correctional Institution in Leaksville.

During these years, Kathleen learned the meaning of restorative justice: a practical, biblical approach to the problems of crime and punishment in society that provided the framework for her ministry. She coordinated educational opportunities and scheduled inter-denominational services for the inmates. She was known for her approachability, calmness and ability to call prisoners by name. Was she ever

afraid? “Only once,” she said. “I felt a hesitation in the presence of a 6 foot 6 inches tall male but I saw him as a vulnerable, needy human being and as I prayed with him, my fear vanished. It never returned.”

Using Tools of Freedom to Break the Cycle

Reflecting on the BVM mission statement of “being free and helping others enjoy freedom in God’s steadfast love,” Kathleen saw the need for literacy classes and spiritual programs and said: “These are the *tools of freedom* you need when you are incarcerated.” With education there are alternatives to violence, to crime, to failure. She created a successful mentor program, selecting some prisoners to be trained as tutors, using their time and talents to work one-on-one with other inmates.

Kathleen practiced restorative justice, enabling inmates to move from despair to hope based on honesty and self-discipline. She said: “God will guide you but first you must move your feet.” The superintendent of one prison shared: “If I were in prison, there is only one chaplain I would like to visit me and that is Sister Kathleen. She’s your friend but if you mess up she will surely tell you so.” This kind of trust instilled self-determination and inner freedom in many prisoners that could help break the cycle of recidivism.

Kathleen also believed in the power of prayer. She advocated for a chapel for all denominations to be built on the prison grounds at South Mississippi Correctional Institution. In 2003, a chapel was completed and named “The Sister Kathleen Spurlin Chapel.” One prisoner commented: “Sister never tries to make us Catholic, she respects our freedom.”

Karen Pollard, BVM Criminal Justice Administrator

Karen Pollard, BVM worked as director of Criminal Justice Ministry at St. Vincent de Paul Society in St. Louis from 1987–1995. A hands-on administrator, she supervised three programs for inmates: Direct Service to all the jails/prisons in the Archdiocese of St. Louis; Education consisting of GED classes, motivational talks and religious services; and Advocacy to legislators for laws impacting sentencing and prison conditions.



Freedom Within—and Beyond—Prison Walls

I asked Karen, “Is it possible to become free while being incarcerated?” She commented, “Education within the prison can sometimes enable prisoners to become free within themselves, even though they might never be set free into society again.” An inmate named Mike, attending a session on “Mindfulness Based Change,” said, “You make me feel and think beyond the normal way of prison thinking.” Other inmates often reflected,

“If I weren’t in prison, I would be dead!”

One chaplain confided this story to Karen. A teenager was sentenced to life in prison. As he was escorted to his cell, he stood there, holding on to the bars. The guard said he must go in. The teenager stood motionless. He said, “In one minute, my life was changed forever.” The chaplain told Karen later, “I felt so helpless but at least I was a comfort to him as he realized his fate.”

Karen worked with three programs that continue today to provide education beyond the prison walls:

- **“Alternatives With Education (AWE)”** by Elaine AuBuchon, SSN, provides activities and programs for prisoners to motivate and equip them to make transformative changes in their lives, whether they remain in prison or return to their communities.
- **“Let’s Start”** by Jackie Tobin, SSND, is a program run by women for women as they are released from prison and re-enter the community.
- **“Center for Women in Transition”** by Mary Jo Hemann, OP, is a mentoring program for women re-entering the community. The Center matches an ex-offender with a volunteer mentor who accompanies her for a year, either by phone and/or in person, assisting in finding a job, housing and reunification with family.

All three programs have received grant monies from the Sisters of Charity, BVM.

Both Kathleen and Karen connected with prisoners by setting aside their judgments and beliefs to be fully present to inmates and their stories. These sisters agreed that in prison, the worst and the best converge and new possibilities emerge leading to transformation and inner freedom. Their courageous presence, competence and compassion enabled prisoners to bridge the gap between freedom and incarceration.

About the author: Mary Nolan, BVM (Patricia Mary) ministers in companion care to the elderly in their homes in St. Louis, Mo.

BVM Associates: Active in Prison Ministry

by Associate Marilyn Highlander-Pool



Since 2001, **Associate Erica Brown** has arranged for housing, assisted with a food bank, located rehabilitation

for inmates, and is now involved in letter writing and sending cards of encouragement to inmates in Lancaster, Pelican Bay and Soledad prisons in California. Erica says, “It is quite rewarding to write to these inmates and receive a reply back from them. Inmates are people too, and should not be cut off completely from society, as many are.”



For the past four years, **Associate Barbara Harper** has tutored women incarcerated at Elmwood Correctional

Facility in Santa Clara County, Calif. The one-on-one program is voluntary. The women can request a tutor to help them prepare for taking the GED test or for more personal reasons: “to help my daughter with her math homework after I am released,” or “to write a letter to my children without misspelled words.” It is hoped that these women will continue their education upon release.

Both Barbara and Erica see their ministry as rewarding, giving them an opportunity to share the BVM core values—especially freedom—and giving inmates a choice to improve their lives.

About the author: Associate Marilyn Highlander-Pool lives in Pacifica, Calif., and is president of the St. Paul Alumnae Association.

BVM Mary Ellen Meckley knows the importance of listening and affirmation when interacting with her clients.

BVM Embraces the Challenge of Social Work

by Marion Murphy, BVM



Mary Ellen Meckley, BVM (Davidette) had a strong desire to be a social worker since her early years as a BVM. In preparation for the day in which that would become a reality, she commuted for five years to Mundelein College, Chicago, where she served as an administrative assistant/liason family worker.

She became a paraprofessional social worker for high school students in the Upward Bound program, a federally funded program providing fundamental support to participants in their preparation for college entrance. This gave her an opportunity to support young women in their decision-making, freeing them from concerns so they were able to focus more on their studies. Mary Ellen enabled students to realize their best qualities through one-on-one contact.

Ministry Dream Realized

In May 1975, Mary Ellen received her master's degree in social work. Her long-term desire became a reality when she found a position at the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute on the Westside of Chicago.

In that role, she served persons in jail who were being evaluated to determine if they were mentally fit for trial. This ministry freed these persons and their families

from some of their anxiety. In her work, Mary Ellen became very aware of the importance of one-on-one relationships as key to helping others.

Following this experience, Mary Ellen served at Sinai Health System in Chicago for over 28 years. Imbued with the BVM core value of freedom, she also reflected on words of Fr. Adrian Van Kaam, CSSp, that suggested true freedom is not just freedom *from*, but also freedom *to be* and *to be for others*.

In the supportive atmosphere of Mount Sinai, Mary Ellen reached out in love to her clients. There was a strong system in place with connections to supportive services which were staffed by persons willing to share their expertise with her.

Positive Relationships Focus on Others' Needs

A lesson learned early by Mary Ellen was that what she would do each day would be determined by what the client was seeking. This called for establishing a positive relationship so the client would feel free to express needs. Listening is critical to fostering this freedom to tell one's stories.

The needs are many: help for non-readers, housing assistance, completion of forms and applications, medical assistance programs, food stamps/Link cards, mental health assistance, homemaker assistance,

meals on wheels, transportation, and relationships with family.

One challenge is the reality that often there may be only one personal session with a client, so phone contact follow-up is essential to reinforce the effort to help persons become more whole.

For many people, these interactions are blessings; they may not have had such respectful communication with agencies in the past. Clients come from varied backgrounds; when they begin to feel good about themselves, they become free enough to speak of their gifts and talents.

Today, Mary Ellen works for several private home health agencies that receive referrals from doctors. She sees people bound by the complexities of life: people needing to be freed from despair to find hope; those needing to see the beauty of their own lives; and people needing to be comfortable throughout the aging process.

One-on-one relationships, intense listening, strong affirmation, and long-term assurance of help are empowering clients to become free enough to be giving persons, using their gifts in the service of others, and being grateful for new life.

About the author: Marion Murphy, BVM (John Patrice) is director of the food pantry at Holy Family Parish and director of Westside Employment and Education Center (WEEC) in Chicago, where she also teaches.

BVMs Minister as Nurses, Companions

Cora Keegan, BVM ministered as an RN for 31 years in California. In earlier years, she gave summer service at Mount Carmel, Dubuque, Iowa, where today, she utilizes her nursing experience by serving as companion for sisters with medical appointments.

To free a sister of the worry of recalling what the doctor has said during her appointment, Cora offers to take notes during the conversation and go over them with the sister after the appointment. Fostering a relationship of trust is essential. The patient then feels free to turn to Cora during the appointment and ask if there is something else she should be telling the doctor.

Occasionally a patient asks Cora to meet with her before the appointment to assist her in determining what they should say to the doctor. This allows the patient to be confident in expressing her concerns to the physician.

Once again, it is not just the kind of ministry, but the manner in which it is carried out that nurtures freedom in persons.

Patricia Marie Potok, BVM (Liberata) has ministered in various ways as an LPN at Mount Carmel for 43 years. Currently, she performs health testing, serves as companion for sisters with medical appointments, and cares for those with foot issues. She brings freedom from physical pain to sisters.

Pat also provides the convenience of on-campus care from her office near St. Joseph Hall or in patients' rooms. Through flexible scheduling, patients have less anxiety in regard to their appointments. They no longer have to travel outside in inclement weather for care.

When she serves as companion, Pat enables patients to feel less fear of the unknown as she shares information with them about what to expect prior to the appointment.

As a kind and caring person, Pat reflects the charm of freedom, sharing it with those she serves.

BVM Cora Keegan companions Dorothy Townsell, BVM (Mildred Ann) as they leave Mount Carmel for a visit to the doctor.



Patricia Marie Potok, BVM brings welcome relief and comfort to sisters with foot difficulties in her office at Mount Carmel.

School Named After BVM Offers Children Choices in Learning

by Lois Dolphin, BVM

The 2012 documentary film, “A Place at the Table,” is about hunger in America. One of the communities featured in the film is Jonestown, in the Mississippi delta. According to the website, USA.com, Jonestown has a population of 1,298, down 24% since 2000. Median household income is \$19,773, 350th of the 361 Mississippi towns polled. Public school performance ranks 489th of the 497 Mississippi public schools contained in the report.

In the midst of the poverty is the Jonestown Family Center for Wellness and Education, which includes “Deanna’s Montessori Children’s House.” Deanna is Deanna Randall, BVM (Mariel), founder and lead teacher at the school from 1998 to 2012, when ill health forced her to resign.

Moving From Traditional to Montessori

After completing her degree at Clarke University, Deanna taught primary grades in traditional schools in Grayslake and Chicago, Ill., and Bellerose, N.Y. In the early 1970s, she became interested in Maria Montessori and her method of teaching young children. She attended the Midwest Montessori Training Center from 1970–71.

Deanna established the Montessori Child Development Center in Denver in 1972 and operated it until 1987. The school continues today with one of her former students serving as director.

In 1987, Deanna went to Jackson, Miss., and created a Montessori School at Christ the King Parish, staying there for 10 years. BVM Mary Francile Luking lived and worked with Deanna in Jackson.



On a visit to the Jonestown Family Center in 2013, Deanna Randall, BVM visits with a young student at “Deanna’s Montessori Children’s House.”

Francile came to the school every day and read to the children. Deanna says that the children would see Francile’s car down the block and run to the door, crying, “I want to read.”

Deanna and her moving van of Montessori materials (some of which her father, an excellent carpenter, made for her years ago) next traveled north to Jonestown, Miss. The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM) sponsor the Jonestown Family Center. Teresa Shields, SNJM is the director. She and

Kay Burton, SNJM, who also works in Jonestown, lived and worked with the BVMs at Immaculate Conception School in Clarksdale, Miss. The building to house the Montessori School was constructed in 2002. The builders envisioned a traditional school with several rooms and Deanna had to convince them that she wanted no walls.

Children are ‘Free to Explore’

When I ask Deanna to describe the Montessori method of education, she

explains, “It is child-centered, ‘hands-on,’ individualized and sequenced. The Montessori classroom is an environment that children are free to explore. The children learn by doing.” Maria Montessori says, “The greatest sign of success for a teacher . . . is to be able to say, “The children are now working as if I did not exist.” Parent nights at school in Jonestown are an example of this. Deanna says that when the children come to school with their parents, they immediately get a set of materials and demonstrate for their parents what they have learned. They are scarcely aware of the teachers in the room.

And yet the teacher is very important in Montessori. He or she prepares all the materials, watches each child to see how she/he is progressing, may present a lesson to a child, and is aware of moving the child in a meaningful way through an activity. On a practical note, the teacher has to be able to get up and down from the floor, with the goal of being at eye level with the child.

Fostering the Natural Desire to Learn

Maria Montessori’s first school was in the inner city of Rome. I ask Deanna

why Montessori is particularly appropriate for poor children. After some thought, she answers, “Choice.” Children living in poverty have few choices. At school the child has many choices of activities and is free to choose something that interests her/him. Deanna says that the younger children tend to work alone but as they get older, they choose to work together, asking for help when needed and giving help to others. Both independence and cooperation are valued.

She adds that children are the same across all economic spectra—they have the same needs and the same natural desire to learn. Wealthy children usually get what they need from their parents. Poor children are less likely to have access to resources to stimulate their imagination and encourage the growth of their natural gifts.

In Deanna’s classroom in Jonestown, she had 24 children in the 3 to 6-year-old range and two assistant teachers. She has returned twice to Jonestown since her move to Mount Carmel, Dubuque, Iowa, in 2012. She visited in March 2013 for the Center’s 20th anniversary, when her contributions were celebrated. The Montessori School was named for Deanna at that time. The anniversary booklet

contains this statement: “We will be forever grateful for Sister Deanna’s professionalism, competency and love for the children.” Deanna spent another week in Jonestown in September 2013, working with teachers and staff.

In 1861, Mary Frances Clarke wrote, “My dear Sister M. Seraphina you have the most laborious duty, but the most profitable for time and eternity, you teach the poor of Our Lord, do thank him for that glorious privilege . . .” In her commentary on the letter, Kathryn Lawlor, BVM writes, “Mary Frances’ encouragement and solicitude for Seraphina are encouragement and comfort for all teachers for all times. She considered the education ministry of the Sisters to be the continuation of the ministry of Christ.”

Mary Frances Clarke is surely pleased and proud that the educational ministry, especially among the poor who were so dear to her heart, continues today in the work of BVMs like Deanna Randall.

About the author: Mary Lois Dolphin, BVM volunteers as care minister at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Chicago, and serves on the BVM Communications Advisory Committee.

Mary Kay Dum: Montessori Pioneer

After 14 years in parish schools, Mary Kay Dum, BVM (Meda) recognized the need for parental involvement in the education of young children. She was also impressed by the writings of Maria Montessori, noting that the child has the learning inside herself; the teacher’s role is to bring it out. Freedom is key in this approach—there are no boundaries. The children are encouraged to be as independent as they can be.

After studies at Xavier Uni-

versity in Cincinnati, UCLA, and an internship at Simon Beck Temple in Los Angeles, Mary Kay launched her first Montessori School at Sacred Heart Parish in Phoenix, Ariz. After Sacred Heart School closed, Barrio Montessori merged with a Phoenix Montessori School and is still in operation today.

In 1976, Mary Kay moved to Oceanside, Calif., to open Old Mission Montessori School at Mission San Luis Rey Parish. When more space was needed, the parents engineered the



Mary Kay Dum, BVM works with students using Montessori math materials at Old Mission Montessori School, where she served as principal/director for 10 years and as volunteer from 2005–07.

acquisition of two houses damaged in a landslide and had them moved and renovated for use by the school.

Today the school serves a diverse population of 2½ to 12-year-old children—children

from the city as well as children of migrant workers. In 2016, Old Mission Montessori School will celebrate 40 years in operation. The BVM charism continues in these excellent schools.

Immersion Experience: Crossing the Border to Human Dignity

by Mary Martens, BVM

Freedom of movement across geographic borders is something that can be taken for granted by those who hold a U.S. passport. In mid-October, a group of 12 BVM sisters, associates and friends took advantage of that freedom to cross the Arizona/Mexico border at Nogales. There, a four-day immersion experience provided by the Kino Border Initiative (KBI) put us in direct contact with a broken U.S. immigration system crying for reform.



BVM Mary Martens serves returning deportees and their families who are gathered for a meal at El Comedor in Nogales, Mexico.

The bi-national KBI works in the area of migration, promoting Arizona/Mexico border and immigration policies that affirm the dignity of the human person.

Guided by KBI Director of Education West Cosgrove, our group met Shura Wallin, a member of the Green Valley Samaritans. Because they believe in one's ethical responsibility to assist those who are suffering, Samaritans drive the back roads offering water, food and first aid to people in need. They create a humane presence and maintain relationships with the Border Patrol.

We walked along a known migrant route in the Arizona desert, pausing

under an overpass to survey silently and thoughtfully the articles left behind: empty water bottles, a jacket, shoes, jeans, a backpack. The Samaritans collect such belongings and clean and recycle them. They try to discourage migrants from crossing the desert because of the physical dangers—cold nights, daytime heat, inadequate water and food, the unforeseen injury, and the risk of death.

Leaving the desert we drove to Shura's home. Inside, in a shrine-like setting, was a table of artifacts similar to those we had just seen. Each item on the table silently held a story of the person who had left it. We wondered about the baby bottle, the



Spanish AA book, the hand-embroidered cloth for wrapping warm tortillas, the purse containing cosmetics and family photos. Our reflections concluded with a heartfelt prayer for all the “Unknown Ones.”

We spent time in the Tucson federal courthouse, observing Operation Streamline (a zero-tolerance border enforcement program) play out its well-rehearsed script. Here sat 70 handcuffed and shackled male “defendants,” randomly picked from a detention center. Each man had met with a lawyer for perhaps 20 minutes. Court proceedings were explained in English, with each man receiving a simultaneous Spanish translation via headphones.

In groups of five, they stood before the judge who addressed each one in turn by his full name. She asked each man a series of questions to which he responded, “Si” or “No.” Each pleaded guilty to illegal entry. Sentences, delivered immediately, ranged from 30 to 180 days in prison. A U.S. Marshall escorted each group of five out of the court, and the next group took their place. All 70 were processed in under two hours. Those convicted would com-




 View a short video of BVM sisters who share their immersion experience:
youtube.com/bvmsisters.

Participants in the October Immigration Immersion Experience gather at the Kino Border Initiative at the Arizona/Mexico border.

plete their prison time and be deported. Those not selected for Streamline would, at some unspecified time, be put on buses and driven to the border crossing. All now have criminal records.

From Nogales, Ariz., we crossed into Nogales, Mexico, to visit Casa Nazaret, a shelter for deported women and children staffed by the Mexican Missionary Sisters of the Eucharist. This was an opportunity for personal contact with several of the women, and the American-born children belonging to one of them.

It was here that we fully recognized the love and self-sacrifice of mothers; they had faced a dangerous trek into an unknown yet hopeful future for their children, in order to escape desperate poverty. And it was here that we viewed a DVD which dramatized how families are shattered through deportation of parents, their children placed with child protection services, and then into foster care or adoption.

At El Comedor, a center where meals are served twice daily to groups of returning deportees, we helped with plate and

juice service, and later with preparing vegetables for the following day. One of the Mexican sisters welcomed the guests, and a Mexican Jesuit encouraged all of them to become sparks of goodness wherever their paths took them. He led a prayer of blessing and gratitude before the meal, as heads were bowed in quiet contemplation.

Again there was personal contact with men and women who were now relaxing and recouping their dignity after detention or prison. Clothes, shoes and toiletries were available for those needing them. Some would continue toward home, their dream denied or at least deferred. Others would try again to cross, driven by poverty, by hope for work or by the desire to rejoin family members—the push and pull factors of immigration.

Why do they not “get in line and come legally,” as many Americans demand? Many who object to immigrants may not have had the opportunity to hear the heartbreaking individual stories; perhaps they do not know that there is simply no way for people like those we met to come legally. Their very impoverishment disallows them under current U.S. policy, and begs for comprehensive immigration reform.

Our group came to the border between the United States and Mexico with open minds and hearts. Not only did we cross this geographic border, but each of us also crossed a personal border between what our minds perceived and what our hearts now hold as we remember God’s vulnerable ones.

About the author: Mary Martens, BVM (Loras) lives in Dubuque, Iowa. She is on the board of National Farm Workers Ministry (NFWM) and is a contact person for the Loretto Community Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).



Tricia Lothschutz has joined the Sisters of Charity, BVM as the new Outreach/Volunteer Coordinator. If you would like to learn more about how you can get involved and make a difference in the lives of others, contact Tricia at 847.650.0464 or email her at bvmoutreach@bvmcong.org.

Left: Tricia visits with Noe, a recent deportee at the Kino Border Initiative (KBI) on the Arizona/Mexico border of Nogales.

BVM Volunteer Opportunities 2014

NETWORK

Washington, D.C. | March 21–24, 2014

Ecuador Immersion Trip

March 26–April 3, 2014, or April 7–17, 2014

8th Day Center for Justice

Good Friday Walk for Justice
Chicago | April 18, 2014

“I give you a choice between life and death. The Lord your God will bless you in the land you are about to occupy. Choose life.”

Dt. 30: 15-20, paraphrased



Mutual blessings are shared by social worker Vicki Smurlo, BVM and her patient Antonio Tapia during her hospice visit.

Choosing Life in Hospice Care

by Victoria Smurlo, BVM

Though it may seem a little strange

to say that hospice care is about choosing life, it is. Many people I have encountered associate hospice with death—“giving up”—and they become discouraged and/or fearful. At times, denial is a way of coping with what is happening. (One of our doctors used to say “denial” [de-nile] is more than a river in Egypt!) In reality, my ministry experiences indicate that when those attitudes change, hospice empowers one to have the freedom to choose life.

Changing Attitudes

People often say “we all have to die.” I like to think of it as “we all get to die,” and hospice can enable a person to live with dignity for as much time as God gives to that person.

Various illnesses bring people to a decision to choose hospice: cancers, heart and lung diseases, and dementias are examples. A patient, or the designated

Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care [DPAHC], can opt for hospice when the treating doctor determines that nothing more can be done to cure the disease.

When the patient or DPAHC enrolls in a hospice, that person chooses life by:

- seeking quality of life, not quantity;
- receiving comfort care, not curative treatments;
- remaining wherever home is, in lieu of a hospital, so as to enjoy the presence of loved ones as well as familiar sights, sounds, smells, and even pets; and
- preparing for new life after death.

I have had patients ask how much time they have to live so that they can get their affairs in order. Others do not want to know; they simply trust in their God and wait for a natural end to life as they have known it.

How Hospice Works

A person’s treating physician makes the referral, anticipating that if the disease follows its normal course, the prognosis would be six months or less. Care can go beyond the six months if the patient continues to show symptoms of decline. Likewise, if symptoms of decline diminish, the patient might “graduate” from hospice for a period of time.

Hospice is a Medicare benefit so team member visits, use of equipment, and medications for the treated disease are covered. For those without Medicare, hospice care depends on a person’s current health insurance benefits.

The goal is to provide physical, emotional and spiritual support for the patient and loved ones for the remainder of the patient’s life. The team includes the physician, nurse, social worker, chaplain, and ancillary services, such as volunteers and other kinds of therapies available to provide comfort.

For many, loved ones are new at being caregivers and appreciate all the help they

can get. I learned this firsthand when my own mother was on hospice care and now I appreciate even more those who are caregivers because theirs is a 24/7 job. Bereavement support for the survivors is also part of the hospice program.

Freedoms

It may take a while to arrive at the freedom to *let go*, and patients and loved ones likely arrive at this at different times. For people to express verbally what the head knows and the heart has to accept can be difficult, but this acceptance has its reward: peace anticipating new life.

Also, patients often exhibit their freedom to choose when to die; for example, when surrounded by loved ones, or, when no one is present so as to spare others having to watch them die. One of my elderly Hispanic patients had five adult children constantly hovering over her like hens. At the five-minute interval when each had something to do in another area of the house, she died. I have always considered that her final gift to her children.

For Christians, the ultimate freedom is trusting in God's loving care to ease the transition to a *new life* in God's eternal embrace.

The Gifts of Hospice

My personal goal in this ministry is to bring hope and joy to my patients and their loved ones. *Hope* is for a peaceful end to this life. *Joy* often comes when I use this directive, if appropriate, as I leave: "Until my next visit, promise me you will be well, be happy and behave!" Their laughter is a gift to me in return.

All of the hospice team members have a hope to help others embrace life as best it can be in the final days on earth, transitioning to new life thereafter. It is a privilege and a grace to accompany all affected by a terminal prognosis by providing comfort care—physical, emotional and spiritual. This ministry also helps us keep things in our own lives in perspective and that is a precious gift. May we all choose life! And through hospice, *freedom to new life*.

About the author: Vicki Smurlo, BVM (Marie Stephen) has been with the Kaiser Permanente Hospice in Los Angeles as a medical social worker for 14 years.



PAPAGENO
(C) 2008 by John August Swanson
Serigraph on paper 17 1/2" by 12"
www.JohnAugustSwanson.com

From Grief to Growth

by Jane Rogers, BVM

My task is to assist people who are working through their losses. Grief is very demanding and the process of working through it is slow. One does not rush into an immediate fix! It takes at least two months or longer for a person to be open to productive grief work.

After coming to some understanding of the grief process, the skills to help lessen the pain are to talk about it and feel it. This must be done over and over with a person or persons who listen to the spoken and unspoken words and who do not give advice or show any impatience or annoyance that "one is not getting over it."

Visuals often draw out the mourner's pain, as they help provide words to express and feel their loss, which can assist others to go deeper into their work. Tom, who lost his daughter, brought a turtle to share with the group—showing how it moves slowly, protects itself by hiding or resting under its shell, and if flipped on its back, needs help to be turned upright. Pictured above are other visuals that bring comfort to the bereaved.

Significant loss changes one's sense of who one is and one's place in the world. At the same time, it can be an opportunity to create positive change and growth, freeing oneself to find new meaning and purpose in life.

About the Author: Jane Rogers, BVM lives in Dubuque, Iowa, and volunteers as a grief ministry facilitator at Mount Carmel.



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IN LOVING MEMORY

**"Lord, for your faithful people
life is changed, not taken away."**

Please pray for the Sisters of Charity, BVM
and BVM Associates who have died
October 2013 – December 2013

Doris M. Walsh (Thomas More)

Jan. 21, 1925 – Oct. 1, 2013

Bridget Ann Henderson

Sept. 17, 1928 – Oct. 4, 2013

Mary Verelyn Kelly

June 18, 1922 – Oct. 17, 2013

Helen Sherrard (Agneselle)

Dec. 17, 1925 – Oct. 21, 2013

Mary Elizabeth Eaton

Jan. 30, 1913 – Nov. 6, 2013

Jane Reehorst (Marcello)

June 28, 1925 – Nov. 10, 2013

Margaret Marso (Ann Elise)

June 10, 1925 – Dec. 7, 2013

BVM Associates

Mary G. Dunne

Dec. 11, 1932 – Nov. 20, 2013

To read a sister's obituary or her funeral reflection,
visit: www.bvmcong.org. A memorial fund has been
established for the sisters. If you would like to add
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To register or for more details,
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