

Salt

Spring 2006 • A Publication of the Sisters of Charity, BVM



**Everyday Spirituality:
Living in Relationship**

Mission Statement: 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, No. 10*

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2006 Calendar

April 23 – St. Mary Alumnae Luncheon, The Carlisle, Lombard

April 30 – Immaculata Alumnae Luncheon, Chateau Ritz, Niles

July 22 – BVM Golden Jubilee Celebration, Clarke College, Dubuque

July 27-31 – BVM Gathering, Minneapolis

Sept. 10 – BVM Diamond Jubilee Celebration, Mt. Carmel

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Everyday Spirituality: Living in Relationship

3 Seasoning

by BVMs Joellen McCarthy, Peggy Nolan and Mary Ann Zollmann

4 Spirituality and 'Real' Life in the 21st Century

by Patricia M. Bombard, BVM

6 'Open My Eyes, Lord, Help Me to See Your Face'

by Eileen Fuchs, BVM

7 Volunteering: Unexpected Rewards

by Peggy Keefe, BVM

8 BVM a 'Trekkie' for Faith Formation

by Marge Clark, BVM

10 Healing the World ...Step by Step...Little by Little

by Julie O'Neill, BVM

13 'Always Already Present'

by Associate Dan Abben

14 Married with Children: Spirituality in the Life of an Associate

by Associate Norm Freund

16 Fund Raising and Spirituality: Not an Oxymoron

by Therese Mackin, BVM

17 Veteran Teacher Loves, Challenges Her Students

by Elizabeth Avalos, BVM

18 'O Spirit of Wisdom, Direct All My Thoughts, Words and Actions'

by Amy Golm, BVM

19 SALT Briefs

20 New Presidents Selected for Clarke College, Carmel High School



On the cover: Patricia Nooney, BVM, LPN (seated) ministers with Judith Ladrangan, CNA at St. Francis Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Evanston, Ill. See pp. 10-12.



SEASONing

Dear *SALT* Readers,

Who is God? Where is God? How do we know God? The beauty of our human attempts to describe an infinite God lies in the inexhaustible multiplicity and diversity of our names for God.

On the one hand, God is imaged as up in the heavens far beyond the reach of our daily lives, much like this understanding of the Psalmist:

Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
Our God is in the heavens.
Who is like our God seated on high,
who looks far down
on the heavens and the earth (Psalm 114, 113).

Yet, there is another side to God, the nearness of God, suggested by these images, also from the Psalmist:

Where can I flee from your presence?
If I soar on the wings of the morning
or dwell in the deepest parts of the sea,
even there your hand will lead me.
You find me on the journey and guide my steps;
you encompass me with love wherever I go
(Psalm 139).

Indeed, the beauty and mystery of our God is that God surpasses all knowing and naming and yet is known and named by our everyday experiences.

Some of you may be familiar with the compelling song, entitled "Everyday God," created by Bernadette Farrell. Singing a litany of names for God, each name is followed by the simple refrain, "Everyday God."

In the song, Everyday God is present in our dreaming, in our daring, in our searching, in our sharing. Everyday God is present as a way of freedom, as timeless healer, tender sister, and loving mother. Here in our resting, in our rising, in our hoping and in our waiting, Everyday God is home and shelter, strong and patient. A God of sorrow and a God of laughter, "Everyday God" speaks words of gladness, mercy, friendship and challenge.

In this issue of *SALT* we read testimonies to this everyday God in whose presence we live an everyday

spirituality. For the authors of these articles, this "Everyday God" draws near as we

- Take a stand for justice;
- Choose to do the right thing, no matter what the cost;
- Serve in parishes and dioceses as ministers of faith formation and pastoral care;
- Act in ecologically responsible ways;
- Let ourselves be influenced by the poor and the vulnerable;
- Meet the diverse academic and social needs of students;
- Bring an intercommunity retirement housing project to reality;
- Exercise leadership as president of a high school and college;
- Live in interconnectedness with other persons and all of creation;
- Offer solace to persons who have lost their jobs;
- Release values beyond the duration of a single life through a bequest;
- Share the daily joys and sorrows of marriage and family;
- Engage in small human acts over a lifetime from youth to retirement;
- Volunteer in a food pantry in Illinois or a Hansen's hospital in Ecuador;
- Practice nursing in patient homes, hospitals and juvenile detention centers;
- Provide comfort to persons in hospice care;
- Stay awake all day long to God's greetings in sunrise and bird song, interactions with students, a community meal, and evening rest.

May our enjoyment of these stories and the God they reveal invite us to treasure and to tell our own stories of how an Everyday God draws close to us in the everyday experiences of our lives. And together let us celebrate our awareness of a God who causes us to marvel, "Who has a God so near to us as our God is" (Deuteronomy 4)!

Joellen McCarty, BVM

Peggy Nolan, BVM

Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM



What does spirituality have to do with everyday life?

To answer this question, we first turn to the writings of St. Paul. Sheldrake tells us that for Paul, spirituality meant “that life brought about by the influence of the Spirit.”¹

Spirituality and ‘Real’ Life in the 21st Century

by Patricia M. Bombard, BVM

Paul also tells us of the fruits of this life in the Spirit. They are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). And, he instructs us in I Corinthians 14:1 that we must “pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts.”

This essay attempts to bring a new awareness of how individuals, communities and institutions are able to manifest in growing degrees in their behaviors the fruits of an active life in the Spirit.

I have come to a realization that the terms Paul uses to describe love and the attributes and behaviors that result in striving for the spiritual gifts all relate to a *capacity for healthy interrelationship*, something that in today’s world we seem so infrequently to be able to achieve, both in our personal and in our communal lives.

The attributes and behaviors such as peace, patience, kindness and self-control that Paul describes are, after all, relational in nature. How might they become more easily and habitually manifest in the lives of individuals, and in our institutions and communities?

First, we need to understand that while it had a different meaning for St. Paul and the early Christians, historians tell us that since about the 17th century spirituality was associated primarily in Western Christian culture with the inner life of the individual Christian.

It also was thought to be a realm reserved for those who were striving for more than ordinary holiness. In this understanding, spirituality was thought to be concerned with such individual experiences as mysticism, ascetic practices, a cloistered lifestyle, prayer and “pious” devotions. The focus was on the “interior life” and seeking “perfection” in God.²

More importantly, spirituality was defined in contrast to anything material or physical; in other words, in contrast to the world around us. It was also thought of as dealing more with “eternal life” than “real” life; and in terms of “individual piety vs. social activity.”³

In recent decades, however, what we, the inheritors of this tradition in the West, have generally

referred to as “spirituality” is being redefined and re-conceptualized. One of my favorite definitions of spirituality comes from another BVM, the theologian Anne Carr.

In her book, *Transforming Grace*, Anne has written that spirituality is “holistic, *encompassing our relationships* to all of creation...to others, to society and nature, to work and recreation” (emphasis mine).

Anne also writes that spirituality is “the whole of our deepest religious beliefs, convictions, and patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior in respect to what is ultimate, to God.” She goes on to say: “In relation to God, [spirituality] is who we really are, the deepest self.”⁴

Some of the things I want to stress in this definition are: 1) that Anne is saying spirituality is not just about prayer; it is also about our thoughts, our emotions and behaviors; every aspect of who we are as embodied human beings; 2) that spirituality is not just about our individual souls, but about how we are in relationship with others; and 3) it is about our “deepest self,” the self not always accessible to our conscious thought.

Another modern spiritual writer speaks of spirituality using the image of “health.” Jerome Dollard writes:

“Spirituality is a lot like health. We all have health; we may have good health or poor health, but it’s something we can’t avoid having. The same is true of spirituality: every human being is a spiritual being.”⁵

This image is important to me because it reinforces the notion that spirituality is something we inherently have as part of our humanness.

‘Real’ Life: We Are Connected

“You are stardust become conscious.” This simple, five-word statement summarizes the essence of what science today seems to be telling us about the origin and reality of our existence. Literally everything in

our Universe goes back to whatever matter and energy emerged from that first explosive moment.⁶

If there is one overriding theme emerging from the scientific story of the creation of our universe, from the single moment of the so-called Big Bang some 13.7 billion years ago, through the eons of emerging galaxies and planetary systems, to the emergence of life on our Earth, it is the message that “*We are connected.*”

At all levels of our being, some of them yet undiscovered or not fully explored: *We are connected; We are connected; We are connected.* Interrelationship is inherent to our human experience. In a profound way, this interconnectedness is what is really “real” about our existence.

It is also important to note that many contemporary theologians now speak about God as very present in all of our Universe, and our Universe as all very much present in God.

The 12th century abbess, Hildegard of Bingen, reported having a vision in which the Spirit said to her something about this state of presence:

*“I am the supreme fire; not dead-ly, but rather, enkindling every spark of life...I ignite the beauty of the plains, I sparkle the waters, I burn in the sun and the moon and the stars...I am the breeze that nurtures all things green...I am the rain coming from the dew that causes the grasses to laugh with the joy of life...I am the yearning for good.”*⁷

Spirituality and ‘Real’ Life

This brings us back to the role that spirituality plays in this “real” life of interconnectedness, of interrelationship with God, self and others.

First, looking at spirituality from this vantage point helps us to understand that we must talk about spirituality primarily in the context of relationship.

The history of human “spirituality” is really the history of our coming to a realization of the relational aspect inherent in our Universe.

For millennia, humans have experienced this reality of interconnectedness on our subconscious, unconscious and, if we are awakened to it, on our conscious levels of our being. *We are connected*, and we know it, at the very core of our being.

O’Murchu has suggested that spirituality has been evident in human experience since at least the development of *homo sapiens*, some 170,000 years ago. He notes that formal religions, on the other hand, have only been around for about the last 6,000 years, a relatively recent development in our human experience.⁸

Spirituality, then, should be seen as something constitutive of our humanity—it is an innate awareness, both conscious and unconscious, of the very real experience of our interconnectedness with all of creation.

If this is true, then spirituality not only will be something only for the very pious or saintly, is not

exclusive or elitist, but is something that all of us have—as part of the makeup of our humanness.

It is not a commodity that we get when we seek it by going off to a mountaintop or a monastery in search of it.

It has been and is within us and is an aspect of our existence, all the time. It is, as Anne Carr suggests, at the depth of our being, and it is what is most “real” about being alive.

A healthy approach to spirituality, then, has something to do with our becoming aware of our interconnectedness, our fundamental stance of relationship with God, the whole Earth community and our Universe.

Then, in this new state of awareness—and this is where it gets challenging—we have choices to make about living in ways that nourish the relationships between self, God, and others *that already exist*.

Spirituality has *not* to do with achieving individual “perfection” of any sort. I think trying to ignore or cut ourselves off from our inherent relatedness is our sin.

I recently read that the word “devil” comes from a Greek phrase that means “to separate or break asun-

...spirituality is not just about prayer, it is also about our thoughts, our emotions and behaviors; every aspect of who we are as embodied human beings... Anne Carr, BVM

der.”⁹ I think of Jesus’ final prayer: “That they all may be one” (Jn 17:21).

To “pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts,” as St. Paul encourages us, is to live in the awareness of our inherent interdependence—and thereby respond to the spiritual nature of our being—each moment of every day.

Endnotes

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About the author: Patricia M. Bombard, BVM, DMin., is executive director of the Institute for Spiritual Leadership (ISL) in Chicago. She holds a Doctor of Ministry degree in spirituality and spiritual leadership and offers workshops, retreats and presentations on contemporary approaches to spirituality grounded in ecofeminism and the new cosmology.



I consider myself very fortunate. I pass a park in St. Louis called Grant's Farm on the way to work every day. At one point in my travels I come around a corner and see the pasture where the Clydesdales grow up.

'Open My Eyes, Lord, Help Me to See Your Face'

by Eileen Fuchs, BVM

Some mornings there is a thin layer of frost on the ground. Some mornings the horses are trotting around. If I leave early enough the Sun is rising just behind the pasture. My reaction is always the same. "Good morning, God."

Spirituality is my daily encounters with the God that surrounds me. Paying attention to the day brings me closer to my God. My first steps in the morning remind me to keep my eyes open; you just don't always know what you will see. God knows how to wake me up.

A chirping bird, the couple down the street who walk together every morning, the students who greet me in the morning with a "Good morning, Sister Eileen," these are my favorite eye-openers.

Once my eyes have been opened in the morning I am more aware of many other encounters with my God. It is the being awake and paying attention that is the hard part.

As the day progresses it is so easy to forget the gifts of the morning. It is too easy to get absorbed in what is "due" that day and forget to pay attention to the God encounters of the day.

Papers need grading, students need tutoring, planning to do, meetings to attend, community reports to read; all of these can distract from the beauty of the day.

With my eyes open I can sense the tears behind the questions from a student, or the excitement and pride of a student when she finally understands something she has worked on for a long time. With eyes closed I can easily miss the frustrated colleague. These, too, are "hellos" from the God who surrounds me.

'Open My Ears, Lord, Help Me to Hear Your Voice'

Most days are exhausting. Some days are frustrating. There are only so many ways to explain how electricity works. There is no time today to think about getting that oil changed in the car. Please don't tell me that the computer is down today.

It is very difficult to hear the chirp of a bird on days like this. Built in reminders such as daily prayer don't always help keep the eyes from being glazed by deadlines. This is when I am reminded that God is in charge.

Just when I may have really forgotten to pay attention, a student will stop me in the hall and say, "Sister Eileen,

it's my birthday today. Would you like a chocolate chip cookie?" I have come to know that these simple encounters are quick "hellos" from the God who surrounds me.

'I Live within You – Rest Now in Me'

It is time to go home. It may be sunset or even dark outside. It might actually be early enough to see the Sun. No matter what time I leave, I am greeted with fresh air which is so nice to breathe in after a long day.

The Clydesdales might not be out on the way home. The birds aren't always chirping, but there is often something in the sky that is an evening gift from God.

Evening means going home to a nice meal, shared prayer and community with my sisters. Often our prayer in the evening concludes with the line, "May we rest in You tonight."

May we all know the God who surrounds us and may we all rest in that love tonight.

About the author: Eileen Fuchs, BVM, is a science teacher at Nerinx Hall High School in St. Louis, Mo. She professed final vows in July 2005.

Volunteering: Unexpected Rewards

by Peggy Keefe, BVM

What are the rewards of volunteering?

When we see people in need and want to respond by helping in some way, we aren't even thinking of rewards. But once we start to volunteer, it isn't long before we realize that we are being rewarded in ways we hadn't anticipated.

What are these "real" rewards?

"Jesus said...I was hungry and you gave me food...I was a stranger and you welcomed me...I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers...(or sisters)...you did it for me." *Mathew 25:35, 40*

What greater reward could there be?

Sacred Heart Food Pantry in Rock Island, Ill., is my spot for volunteering. Ministering to those who come to us in need is both a privilege and a challenge: a privilege, because the Lord looks on that ministering as done to Him; a challenge, because we need to deepen our realization that God is present in us all and with us all.

If we are attentive and alert, seeing Jesus in those to whom we minister can be possible, even a simple matter, made so by the innate goodness of so many of our people.

Grandmothers raising grandchildren, single mothers and single fathers, too, caring for three or four youngsters, two-parent family members suffering financially...they all come especially for the sake of the children they are nurturing. These are God's holy people, something we can realize here at the pantry as well as in our communities and families and parishes.

As we each greet those who come to the area of food supplies where we are stationed, and check with them for their preferences, it's no surprise to hear, "I'll take anything (or everything) you can give me."

Expressions like this, words of thanks, smiles, all coming from the heart, are like the tiny whispering sound in which Elijah recognized the presence of God. What a great gift and reward it is to recognize the Lord, waiting to be discovered by us in these good people!

For those who hunger for nourishing food for themselves and their children, Sacred Heart Food Pantry is a place of help and of hope.

Without dedicated volunteers, it could not exist, and a great group of hardworking and inventive workers care very much that the ministry of feeding the hungry and welcoming the stranger continues, not just one weekday, but all five.

Nan Merrill puts it so well in her version of Psalm 26:

"I walk with friends of integrity and associate with those who live in truth... I love the company of faith-filled people..."



Peggy Keefe, BVM assists a food pantry visitor.

Besides the expressions of gratitude made as people leave with their supplies of food, there are many others:

- A little Japanese lady, a survivor of Hiroshima, knit beautiful woolen scarves for the Friday volunteers last Christmas.
- A homeless man and his family, sleeping in their car to avoid being separated at shelters, asked for food, and for a blanket...just one. I offered him my two car blankets: one a gift, soft and warm acrylic; the other, a "relic," a black woolen one (ICA circa 1950s). He would only take one, and the "relic" at that, but with repeated and sincere thanks.
- A young woman, obviously new to the world of the food pantry, and very ill at ease, came for supplies for three. When I set her things on the counter, I smiled and said, "I hope this helps." She reached over and gave me a huge and grateful hug before she hurried out.

To summarize those rewards:

- Having my world widened as I walk out of my comfort zone and meet people I ordinarily would not.
- Knowing that I have helped in some small way to lighten the burdens of people in need.
- Receiving gratitude from those I assist as a representative of many volunteers.
- Working with friendly, faith-filled people of integrity.
- Reading the signs of God's presence in the needy through little ordinary things that alert me to their goodness.
- Serving Jesus in the person of those who come for help.
- Becoming more aware of the presence of Jesus Christ in all of God's people.

I'm quite surprised to note that, strangely enough, this comes to a total of seven...the mystical number of Scriptures! In other words, the rewards and blessing are countless.

About the author: Sister Margaret Keefe, BVM (Paul Leone) is retired in Rock Island, Ill.

National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL)

In 1934 Bishop Edwin V. O'Hara, chair of the Rural Life Conference, had responsibility for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD). He invited diocesan directors of religious education to a gathering of the Conference, and from that meeting a separate CCD office was established in 1935.

In the 1966 the CCD became independent; and in 1978 became known as the National Conference of Diocesan Directors (NCDD), to assist these directors in faith formation of catechists, and ultimately of children and other adults.

A name change came in 1991 as the membership expanded to include parish directors, academics in religious studies, publishers in the field and technology support organizations.

NCCL has close ties with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB); the director is a member of the Committee on Education and the Committee on Catechesis.

The organization now numbers 2,600 members who benefit from a bi-monthly periodical, a national conference, and publication and distribution of multiple resources. Members give direction to the organization through an elected Representative Council and the Board of Directors.

From April 30 – May 4, 2006 NCCL will hold the organization's 70th conference. See www.nccl.org and click on Annual Conference for further information.



Kathy Kandefer, BVM confers with NCCL Director Neil Parent.

BVM a 'Trekkie' for Faith Formation

by Marge Clark, BVM

As an ardent fan of Star Trek, it is little wonder that its images express aspects of BVM Kathy Kandefer's spirituality.

“The concept of ‘The Force’: above, below, in, around and through all we do, that’s the connection to God, to spirituality. God permeates not only persons, but all creation.” Relationship, implied in this description, is the basis of both spirituality and ministry for Kathy.

Everyday spirituality! The image of the force resonates with participants when Kathy uses it in catechetical settings.

“Living in D.C. impacts my spirituality. We are constantly faced with the situations of human beings affected by the government. When brought to prayer I am challenged to think and re-think the gospel of Jesus in light of the D.C.

experience. Homeless persons abound in the shadow of the Capitol of this nation of great wealth. The presence of vulnerable people, and their plight, creeps into our prayer.”

Kathy chose to come to Washington, D.C. in 2001, not to engage in the political environment, but to follow her passion for catechetics. She accepted a position as Associate Director of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL).

During her years of teaching kindergarten and religion in a Catholic school in Omaha, Neb., she realized that she wanted to pursue work in faith formation. After completing a master's degree in pastoral ministry, Kathy became a pastoral associate at St. Clare's in Portland, Ore., coordinating programs for children and adults.

Gradually, Kathy also became active at the diocesan level in Portland, then accepted the position of diocesan director in Norwich, Conn. There she became increasingly involved with The National Conference of Diocesan Directors—which evolved into the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL).

Kathy was elected to a series of offices in the organization before answering the call to internal BVM service. After several years serving as Coordinator of Initial Membership, Kathy was ready to return to the world of catechetics—just as the position she now holds (Associate Director) opened at NCCL.

Her ministry in this position is with adults who are faith leaders of children and of other adults. NCCL's membership includes diocesan directors and their staffs, parish directors, academics in religion, and selected corporate members who support the work of faith development.

Kathy has a passion for faith formation! "Ministry happens through relationships," she emphasizes. She particularly values work with religious educators working with children in parish settings.

Frequently, phone calls with members become times of reflection as Kathy guides them and leads them to appropriate resources for their work with the current faith need of the community. Some of these conversations develop into workshops, retreats and days of reflection for religious educators in a diocese.

Kathy often travels to present and facilitate—"the planning for these events is a wonderful reflective opportunity." The bi-monthly periodical, *Catechetical Leader*, challenges Kathy to synthesize ponderings and reflections into concise articles. "It's a gift to have my work be such an integral part of my own spiritual journey."

Too frequently, conversations with diocesan directors involve giving solace to those whose offices are being eliminated due to financial crises. There is a lot of ache in helping people figure out how catechists will have their ongoing formation needs met with no professional office in the diocese.

And there is the personal pain of professionals who lose their jobs, yet want to remain connected with the organization and the ministry—but do not have the financial support to do so.

The spirit of community among the NCCL staff is critical to the ministry they share as it spirals out to others. Shared reflection and lunch conversations which move to church, spirituality and ministry energize the four full-time staff members.

Kathy cherishes the opportunities she has for mentoring college level part-time workers, usually through individual conversations. Oc-

asionally, a more experienced graduate student in ministry comes as a part-time worker, which further enriches the staff community.

"Our office work fits the field of faith development, as we live in an atmosphere of deep sharing. There are ties between the work and spiritual development of members. As with other organizations, there is also a necessary tension between human resource, business issues and maintaining a caring, loving environment." This can be a struggle, but is also a witness to other groups.

Ministry and personal spirituality intertwine and enrich each other. Catechetics is a ministry of the Word, and many aspects of the work lead Kathy to encounter the story of Jesus. "Frequently, on most days, I am brought back to scripture. My work brings me more consciously to my center."

The Spirit of God is, indeed: above, below, in, around and through all—a ministry of connection to God, to spirituality.

About the author: Marge Clark, BVM is a lobbyist with NETWORK: The Catholic Social Justice Lobby, and shares local community with Kathy.

"It's a gift to have my work be such an integral part of my own spiritual journey."

Kathy Kandefer, BVM



"One must not love oneself so much as to avoid getting involved in the risks of life that history demands of us..."

—Archbishop Oscar Romero

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Healing the World... Step by Step...Little by Little

by Julie O'Neill, BVM

St. Francis of Assisi encouraged all of us with his dynamic quote: "It is in giving that we receive." Eight BVMs and Associates answered the call to give and the healing ministry has remained a common thread in their varied vocations.

Some of the eight were "called" specifically!

- by an RN friend—Associate Joan Lum
- by her novice mistress, Sr. Mary Leo—Nancy Feldman, BVM
- by the patients in the leper hospital in Guayaquil—Associate Paula Smith
- by an assignment to care for retired BVMs at Marian Hall—Pat Nooney, BVM

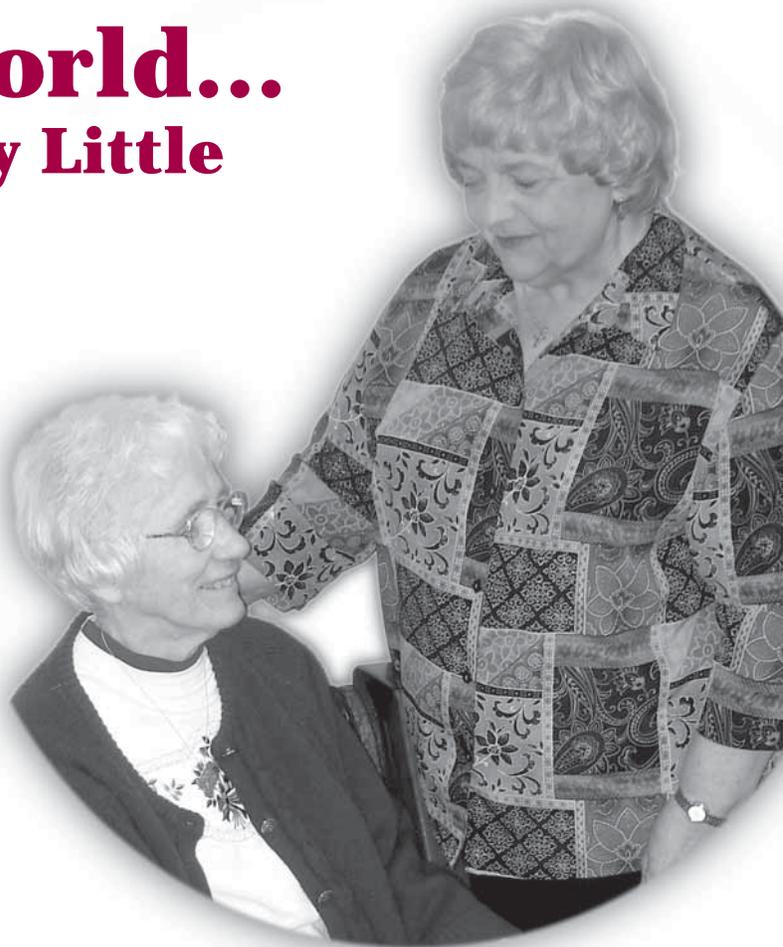
Each of the eight finds it a privilege and honor to serve, to "be present," and striving to fulfill the BVM mission of being free and helping others to enjoy freedom in God's steadfast love.

Ecuador Journey

Paula Smith wanted to "make a difference" when she went on a medical mission in late 1994. She joined a group traveling to Ecuador in answer to the prayers of BVM Ann Credidio who was seeking help to continue God's work among patients with Hansen's disease in Guayaquil.



Associate Paula Smith teaches CPR in Ecuador.



Nancy Feldman, BVM assists Francis Eileen Dunne, BVM, in her move from St. Eulalia Convent to Wright Hall. Nancy is health care coordinator for the Great Lakes region of the BVM congregation.

The team of which Paula was a member traveled to various clinics in the poorest areas of Guayaquil, often meeting patients who had been abandoned by family and friends. Some were medically able to go home as they were no longer contagious, but they no longer had a place to call "home."

Since 1994, Paula has made one more trip to Ecuador where she taught CPR at the hospital and the day care center. Since then, Paula's contacts in the Pensacola area of Florida have been successful in sending medications and medical supplies several times a year.

Paula is now a member of the board for the Hansen's hospital and a BVM Associate.

A Second Call

Across the miles in Chicago, Nancy Feldman, BVM (Dorothy Mary) recalls being asked by her novice mistress, Sister Mary Leo, if she would consider becoming a nurse instead of going to the Scholasticate since the numbers there were so large at that time.

She calls her "vocation within vocation" a true blessing! "God heals," Nancy says, "and we, the medical professionals, treat."

Through the years of her nursing career, Nancy has been particularly touched when she received a

letter from a patient or family member in which they expressed their gratitude for some small act of kindness. Such occasions reminded her of the words of St. Therese of Lisieux, "little acts done with great love."

At one point, Nancy was briefly transferred to lab, where she determined the pathology of spinal fluid specimens and informed the physician about the results.

At that point she "truly felt the life of the patient was in my hands because the treatment would be determined by those results."



Nursing in Varied Settings

In contrast to Nancy's nursing ministry, Associate Joan Lum's career traveled from raising her own six children, to Marymount University in Virginia where she attained her RN, to 25 years in a medical unit at the local hospital, to a part-time position at Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center as a staff nurse. More recently, she is helping to raise her three youngest grandchildren!

Looking back, Joan treasures the memories of many patients whose condition brought her to both tears and laughter, especially the intense experience having to "code" people when their hearts had stopped beating.

The early '80s were particularly challenging with AIDS patients on her floor of the hospital. The nurses got to know the patients quite well from admission to their deaths about 18 months later. It was a time of "continuous grieving."

At the Juvenile Detention Center, Joan remembers with great affection administration and staff who strove to bring LOVE into the lives of young people who had never experienced it. For many of the residents, "Juvie" was the only secure haven they had ever known.



Hospice Ministry

AIDS also played a major role in BVM Vicki Smurlo's development in hospice ministry. She traveled from San Francisco, where she had been doing volunteer work with visiting nurses and hospice for cancer and AIDS, to Chicago where she continued her volunteer work at Bonaventure House, a residence for people with AIDS.

In 1999, when Vicki was completing her work for her MSW, "Hospice" was the specific topic that piqued her enthusiasm for her thesis research. Eventually, she attained a full time placement with Kaiser Hospice, home care with a goal of providing comfort to patients with a terminal diagnosis for which additional treatments would not likely provide a cure. A nurse, doctor and social worker are the core members of the hospice team.

Vicki has journeyed with people of many ages—from 11 days old to 106 years.

On any day, her ministry might include meeting with patients and their families to provide supportive counseling and validating feelings regarding death and dying, aware that everyone's death will be different.

"Being sensitive to cultural diversity (one of our BVM values) is of great importance in this work."

"Truly," Vicki said, "it is a journey of faith as people transition from fear and denial to a peaceful acceptance of God's will for them."

It is a "gift to be present to them and hear their reflections on life and their concerns. In doing this, I believe I am living the BVM value of helping others enjoy freedom in God's steadfast love."



Parish Nurse

An article in the *Bellevue Herald-Leader* highlighted the career of Associate Mary Pat Sheehan as a parish health nurse. Mary Pat "more or less fell into parish nursing" as she was completing her career as a part time telephone triage nurse in one of the medical clinics in Dubuque.

When the possibility of a parish nurse program arose, Mary Pat took an orientation program. As soon as the parish was ready to launch the program, Mary Pat was ready, too!

Since Mary Pat was a parish nurse before she became a BVM Associate, she recognizes the goals in her career which were similar:

- to serve those whose spiritual, physical and mental health are being under served
- to enhance one's own spiritual goals
- to teach and share nursing skills much as BVMs have held teaching in the forefront for many years.

LPN Opportunities

Just as a parish nurse connects with the patients/parishioners in their own homes, so did Joel Kramer, BVM connect with hundreds of BVMs during her years (1965-68) as "food manager" at Marian Hall.

When she finished, she took advantage of the LPN fund in Mt. Carmel's treasury. Eventually, Joel became the night supervisor at Marian Hall and then, in 1970, returned to teaching in Sioux City while moonlighting at Mercy Hospital every other weekend.



Joel Kramer, BVM (right) assists a terminally ill patient and his wife in Sioux City.

Patricia Nooney, BVM, LPN (seated) ministers with Judith Ladringan, CNA at St. Francis Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Evanston, Ill.



After retirement, Joel worked for Home Health Care and frequently was “borrowed” to do night duty for hospice. In the mid-90s, Joel added hospice volunteering to her jobs because of the need to give caretakers a break!

She has been a hospice volunteer for caretakers ever since. Some people have no children or no children nearby, or no close relatives to give relief and no extra funds to find a qualified sitter.

She has been sent by hospice to sit with dying patients in nursing homes. She’s taken care of clients from every race and their gratitude has become the common bond.

On Nov. 15, 2005, Joel was chosen from the Sioux City office to attend the Honored Volunteers at the 2005 Iowa Hospice Organization Fall Conference.

Full Circle

Pat Nooney, BVM (Ann Carol) has come full circle in healing ministry. Hers starts and ends in geriatrics. After profession, she was assigned to care for the older and retired sisters at Marian Hall. Eventually Pat became a Licensed Practical Nurse.

In 1971, Pat left Iowa to work a medical/surgical floor at St. Francis Hospital, Evanston. There she cared for pre-op and post-op patients before moving into the outpatient department—a totally different type of nursing.

The primary focus was caring for the marginalized in the South Evanston/Rodgers Park communities. All phases of medical care were provided for those who had no insurance.

Now, Pat’s ministry is oriented toward desk work, documentation and public relations with patients, physicians and pharmacists.

Home Care

Another Sister who began her caregiving at Marian Hall is Sarah Braig, BVM. Sarah volunteered in the summers between 1968 and 1976. That successful

venture set the stage for the next 30 years!

In Oregon, Sarah worked at Marylhurst, the infirmary at the provincial house of the Sisters of the Holy Names. Her most special memories are of singing to/with the sisters during their last hours.

Currently, Sarah is working for CSJ Care in St. Louis. Twelve religious communities collaborate in the ministry of visiting the elderly in need of assistance in their homes. “We enable our clients to experience some sense of independence by allowing them the freedom to get outside their homes weekly.

“Mother Mary Veronica was one of the clients I had with CSJ Care for a year and a half. She had been the Abbess of the Poor Clares, suffered from Alzheimer’s and required more care than the Sisters were able to provide. I was permitted to enter the cloister in order to care for her.

“I assisted Mother with eating, prayed with her, sang to her, and helped her to walk with the assistance of one of the other sisters. I was able to get Mother to march up and down the hall in time to the music while singing ‘How I Love to Go for a Walk Along the Street.’

“All these years of working with the elderly, infirmed and being with the dying culminated in my being able to be with my dad as he returned HOME! What a gift!”

Eight stories—eight individuals linked by their common thread of healing.

“Ultimately what really matters is a courageous spirit and a generous heart.” —*Kirschensteiner*

How grateful are all of us for their GIVING ministry!

About the author: Julie O’Neill, BVM is retired in San Francisco, where she volunteers in the archdiocesan Office of Religious Education.



Sarah Braig, BVM brings home care services to Kinchlo, a young 83-year-old.

'Always Already Present'

by Associate Dan Abben

On a sunny afternoon not too many Mays ago, the Clarke College Kehl Center was alive with hope as my class, the College's 161st graduating class, was sent out into the world.

It was during my four years at Clarke that I began to understand what spirituality really is: our way of being in relationship with a universe that exists within a God whose very essence is love.

There are a few presuppositions that this connotation of spirituality assumes. First is the understanding that spirituality is both personal and communal.

It is personal in how I as an individual relate to the cosmos through choices both simple and complex, from what television programs to watch to what career to follow.

Spirituality is communal in how the social structures and systems to which I belong live out our collective choices.

Second is a belief that spirituality is supported by a web of mutual relationships: I listen openly to all so that I can learn from the wisdom of everyone. In this model of spirituality, I am not trying to gain power over another person or group, and because of this I do not feel threatened by those who are 'different' from me.

Third is the notion that spirituality is not a static state of existence, but rather a dynamic process of becoming, a becoming whose purpose is salvation: being freed from all that which prevents us from being fully aware of God's presence among us.¹

One way in which I am freed is by letting go of the patriarchal model of kingdom, and adopting a familial kingdom model which still emphasizes the already and not yet tension of God's nearness.

The kin-dom of God is fully among us whenever we concretely live out the call to love our neighbors as ourselves. It is not yet because the human community in this time and place continues to make choices that thwart others from realizing the abundance of God's loving presence in the here and the now.

Fourth is an acknowledgment that spirituality is participative. I cannot simply allow it to happen to me.

I must actively develop and nourish my spirituality by using a variety of methods such as personal reading and prayer, spiritual direction, BVM/Associate Cluster dialogues, and by working for peace with justice.

Ultimately, I shape my spirituality by making decisions which build up the kin-dom of God.

Habits of Being

From these four presuppositions of a relational spirituality flow four habits of being that I am called to live out in my daily life.

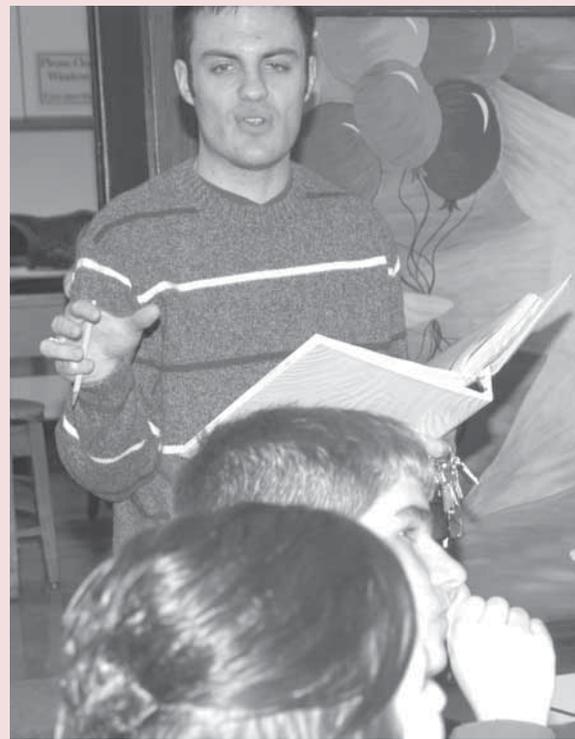
The first is a habit of freedom. This is not a freedom from the ordinary and quotidian, but a freedom that exists within these realities. It is only through my day to day experience that I can know what it is to "be freed and to help others enjoy freedom in God's steadfast love."²

In my own life I strive to live out the habit of freedom through working for peace with justice by protesting militarism and by attending the annual SOA/WHISC demonstration. Because I am supported and empowered by my communities, I am freed to stand up for what I believe to be right.

Education is the second habit of being. My goal as a Director of Faith Formation is to help parishioners develop a more intimate relationship with God so that they too can know what it is to be freed within the context of this relationship. I do this by frequently asking my students what is going on in their lives, and how God is present in those events.

Living as a person of charity is the third habit of being. Through my experience of God's greatness, I have shifted from a mentality of scarcity in which there are not enough resources for everyone to a mentality of abundance in which God has blessed the universe with everything that is necessary for lives of dignity. The most wonderful of all the gifts God has given is self revealing love, of which there is more than enough for everyone.

For me, the most important habit



is the habit of justice. The belief that I am in relationship with a cosmos made in the image and likeness of God influences every decision I make. I know the outcomes of my choices will affect more than just me.

Furthermore, everything I think, say, and do has the potentiality to either build up or tear down my relationship with the beings of the universe.

Therefore, I strive to act in ways which bring about justice for all, from simple activities such as recycling, to more complex decisions such as how I invest my financial resources.

Twelve years of Catholic education left me with a vague notion of spirituality based on an 'out there' God who was accessible only through Christ

Because of my Clarke education, however, I began to experience spirituality in a new way. Central to this experience is a belief in cosmic relationships rooted in an always already present God.

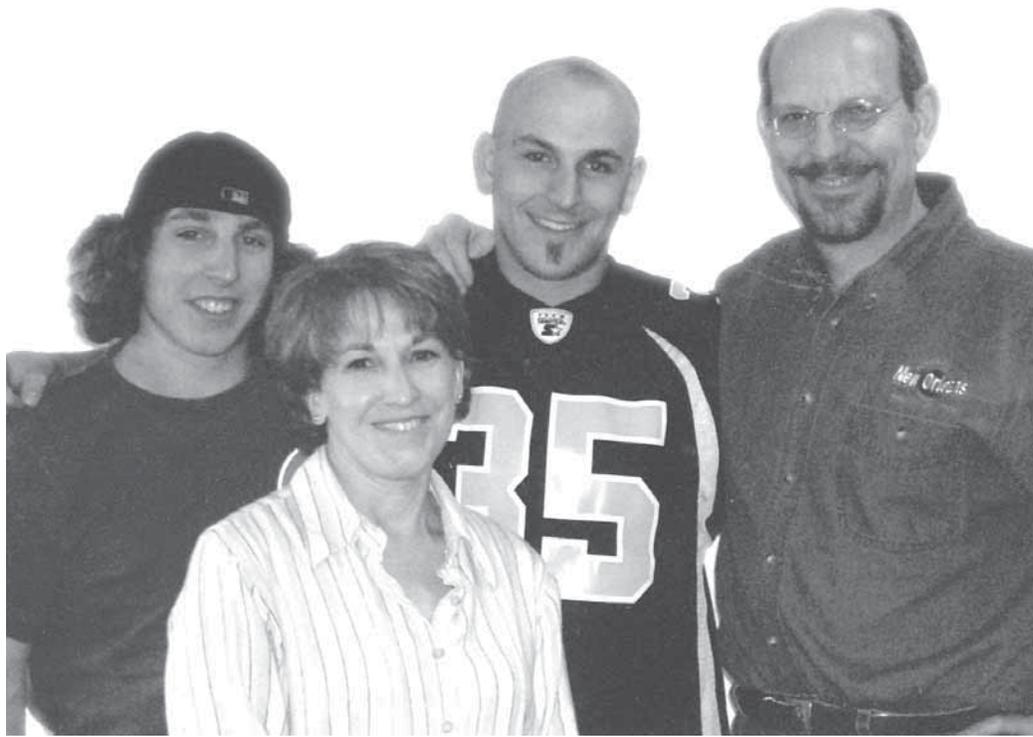
Endnotes

- 1 Morwood, Michael. *Is Jesus God?: Finding Our Faith*. New York, Crossroad Publishing Co., 2001.
- 2 *BVM Directory*. #1.

About the author: Dan Abben, BVM Associate, is a graduate of Clarke College and is currently the Director of Faith Formation at St. Columbkille Parish in Dubuque, Iowa.

For some years now, the Liberal Arts Task Force at my place of employment, Clarke College, has grappled with the meaning and definition of “spirituality.”

At its most basic level, spirituality is a way of living in relationship. Relationship ripples outward from self to include others, society, global community, the planet, and God, in a wondrously expanding circle.



“The Fantastic Friends” they call themselves: (l. to r.) Gabe, Marabeth, Josh and Norm.

Married with Children: Spirituality in the Life of an Associate

by Norm Freund

For me, spirituality is also about a “more-than-ness,” a powerful sense that I am more than what science and the secular world says that I am. This involves a powerful intuition that after biology, chemistry and physics have chimed in on who and what I am, much yet remains!

My understanding of spirituality involves mystery, wonder, love and a deep conviction that there is truth and goodness beyond the experiences of my daily life.

Living in a world which often denies or ignores the spiritual, we are challenged to see the extraordinary in the ordinary, to experience God in the rhythms of our routines. Three of these “rhythms” for me are marriage/family, parish life and work.

Marriage

I have often told my friends that my favorite sacrament is marriage. It is also my most challenging! Like so many of my married friends, I entered this spiritual relationship when quite young (I was 22 and my wife, Marabeth, was 19).

Ideals of true love, fairy tale endings, and that perfect wedding day dominated our engagement and first years of marriage.

In reality, marriage is only a beginning, of which the wedding is but one day. There is no perfect marriage because there are no perfect people. And the “messiness” of life is a reality to which marriages must creatively and effectively respond.

Over our nearly 30 years of mar-

riage, Marabeth and I have learned to make faith an integral part of our relationship, to understand our journey together as a holy experience with an ongoing challenge to be better and more loving people. And not just toward one another, but towards others, society, world and God as well!

We have a daily ritual of sitting down each night for a half hour with a glass of wine and gentle music playing, in order to discuss the unfolding of our day. This grounding involves both the joys and sorrows of our days with encouragement over the former and support over the latter.

Parish Life

But matrimony is an outward witness as well. My wife and I actively

My understanding of spirituality involves mystery, wonder, love and a deep conviction that there is truth and goodness beyond the experiences of my daily life.

minister to our parish, based on our God given gifts (she does music for liturgy and I minister to the Word).

More recently, we have joined a small faith sharing group with four other couples. This too has called us to be more than the immediacy of our lives by encouraging us to find meaning in desert periods, and challenging us to avoid complacency and move beyond our current experience of the spiritual.

Family Life

Just as I entered marriage with unrealistic expectations about this relationship, and no real lived experience of it, so too did my wife and I begin parenthood.

I knew from my own rearing that there were things I was committed to passing on to my children while there were also things that I wanted to do quite differently.

Nonetheless, I found myself reflexively parenting exactly as my parents had done, even in ways that I had affirmed I wouldn't. It took great effort, prayer and trial and error to become a better parent. I had to learn that children can make poor and even hurtful decisions, that parenting, like all aspects of life, is tinged with both joy and sorrow.

Above all, as parents, Marabeth and I learned the true meaning and power of unconditional love. More than anything else, this has defined my understanding of what it means to be a spiritual person.

Work

At Clarke College, I have much more than a job. I experience my service there as a vocation, just as I do marriage and parenting. At Clarke we take our mission very seriously and, thus, what we hold important closely intersects with BVM Core Values.

We are the oldest continuously existing BVM mission, just ten years younger than the congregation itself. For over 160 years we have been empowering students with freedom, education, charity and justice.

In our most recent general education reforms at Clarke College we have mainstreamed spirituality into the curriculum. It is one of four broad outcomes for the liberal arts core of the education we provide.

Before this change, some of us on the faculty taught about, and from the perspective of, spirituality. And of course, campus ministry has long been an oasis of spiritual growth.

Now, however, every Clarke student will learn about spirituality, its value, and how to integrate it into one's life and world. We even have a rubric for evaluating spiritual growth!

Taking Time

As I reflect upon spirituality in daily life, I am impressed by the need to set time aside for it. "I will come to you in the silence," is a lyric from a popular liturgical song and it rings oh, so true to me. More often it is in

quietude that our creator speaks to us. We need to set aside time for this, especially in a culture that is defined by constant sensation.

But this is but the beginning, for spirituality is more than God and I, it is God and others. As an Associate I have a deepening realization of this, one which spurs me on to fuller personhood by way of living in relationship to self, others, society, global community, world and God.

About the author: BVM Associate Norm Freund is professor of philosophy at Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa.

A Most Meaningful Gift

Of all the gifts that you give during your lifetime, a bequest (a gift you designate in your will) may be the most meaningful gift you will ever make.

Through a bequest and other "planned gifts," you can

- remember your loved ones,
- perpetuate your values and
- assist the charities that are near and dear to your heart.

What better way to thank the people or organizations that have impacted your life than to make a contribution from your estate through a bequest?

If you plan to give a charitable gift by will, please think it through carefully. Then meet with your attorney to discuss and update your will. Tell your attorney exactly what you want given to whom. An up-to-date will serves as the foundation of your estate plan by outlining your current intentions and creating tax-saving opportunities for your estate.

If you decide to include the Sisters of Charity, BVM in your will, the following language may be of help to you and your attorney:

"I [name], of [city, state, zip], give, devise and bequeath to the Sisters

of Charity, BVM; Dubuque, Iowa, [written amount or percentage of the estate]."

We would hope that you will inform us if you have named the Sisters of Charity, BVM in your will. We would like the opportunity to thank you for your generosity and thoughtfulness.

While publicly acknowledging a gift often inspires generosity in others, we also understand that you may prefer to keep your gift anonymous. If this is the case, your gift will remain completely confidential. We truly appreciate your support and will honor your wishes, whatever they may be.

This material is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal or financial advice. For such advice, please consult an attorney, tax professional or investment professional.

***Diane L. Brondyke
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www.bvmcong.org

Fund Raising and Spirituality: Not an Oxymoron

by Therese Mackin, BVM

When I joined the faculty at Clarke College a close friend asked me how I could ever consider “theatre” as a viable ministry. Twenty years later, the same friend was aghast that I would consider “fund-raising” as a ministry. Clearly, in her eyes, becoming a development officer was sliding even further down hill.

Fund-raising and volunteer work often go hand-in-hand. My involvement in the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Dubuque, the Dubuque Hospice Foundation and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Iowa taught me that. Volunteer work is one of meeting, greeting and working with and for the people of God; so too is fund-raising.

Both fund-raising and volunteerism provide a variety of experiences. People are marvelously different while frequently similar. Life experiences can be simultaneously inspirational and supportive to causes meaningful to so many people. Thus enters the spiritual life...my spiritual life.

I think of and pray for the donors, prospective donors and beneficiaries as members of my spiritual community.

- How do I incorporate the BVM Core Values into my relationships with others?
- How can I enable a person to become a better person while striving to become a better person myself?
- How do I join the individual in educating and empowering both of us to move toward goodness and wholeness?

It is in “...recognizing our gifts and developing our potential. It is in recognizing our interdependence. It is in becoming whole and integrated...” It is sharing the core value of *education*.

Take for example, the individual who does not have the gift of philan-

thropy but truly has the capacity for it. Creating a meaningful proposal with such a person is a slow process of conversion.

Nevertheless, my striving to empower this person to understand that “to be free is to... recognize...that we are empowered to make loving choices...to move toward goodness and wholeness...” This reflects back to me the core value of *freedom*, how I think about it, and how I live it.

As a fund-raiser, my practice of the core value of *justice* not only requires my concern for “...the whole hurting person...the oppressed, the marginalized and the person without access to resources” but also includes beneficiaries whose lives can be made better by my endeavors. When donors truly comprehend that every human being deserves dignity and respect, many will respond favorably.

Stewardship is an integral part of justice. Without this all my concern and assistance may well fail. As a fund-raiser I need to be enthusiastic about humankind and its present needs, think ahead, conserve resources and demand they be used judiciously. Meaningful stewardship is based in an attitude which makes the best decisions for short term impact and long term viability. My spiritual life helps to mold my fund raising attitude.

The core value of *charity* asks of me “To live a life of love...and to possess the power and courage to make loving choices. As Sisters of Charity, BVM, we are called ‘to bring charity to an uncharitable world.’”

This requires me as a fund-raiser to recognize my sisters and brothers in need. At the same time I strive to encourage those who have the gifts of time, concern and financial resources to share with those in need.

Philanthropy is truly a gift from God. Many fund-raisers define philanthropy as “the love of humankind.” How well that phrase fits with the BVM Core Values. It is critical to me that my

spiritual life frequently is enhanced by the chance “to love humankind.”

“As a form of ministry, fundraising is as spiritual as giving a sermon, entering a time of prayer, visiting the sick or feeding the hungry!,” writes Henri Nouwen, in *The Spirituality of Fund-Raising*.¹

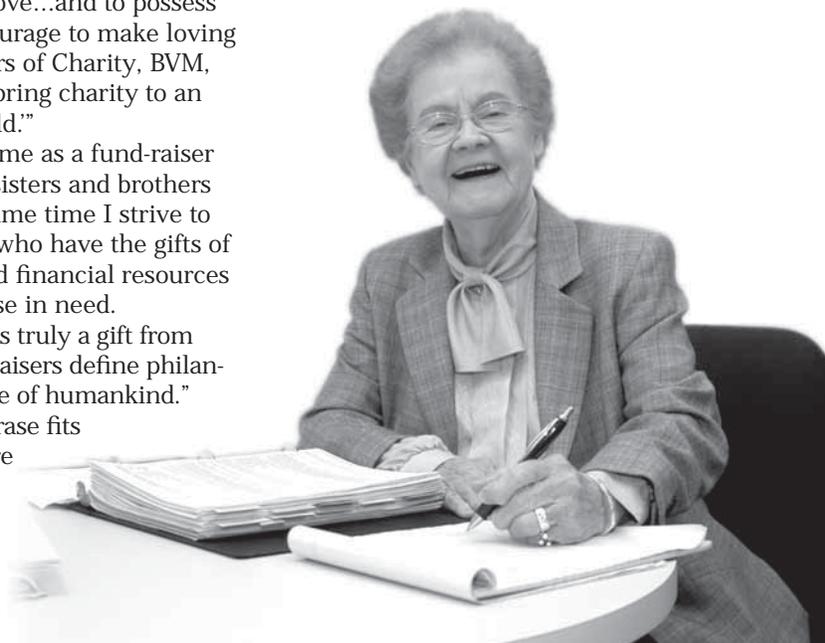
“Fund-raising is a very rich and beautiful activity. It is a confident, joyful, and hope-filled expression of ministry,” he continues. “In ministering to each other, each from the riches that he or she possesses, we work together for the full coming of God’s Kingdom.”

If there is such equity between Nouwen’s words and my fund-raising, is it any wonder that my spiritual life has benefited accordingly?

Endnote

- 1 *The Spirituality of Fund-Raising*, Henri J.M. Nouwen. Used with permission of the Estate of Henri J.M. Nouwen. Order a copy of Nouwen’s *The Spirituality of Fund-Raising* from www.HenriNouwen.org or call toll-free 1-866-226-2158 x101.

About the author: Therese Mackin, BVM (Jeremy) is executive vice-president and former vice-president of institutional advancement at Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa. She was a charter member of the BVM Development Board, and received the Dr. R.S. Gerard Outstanding Development Professional Award in 2000 from the Eastern Iowa Chapter of the National Society of Fund Raising Executives (NSFRE).





Veteran Teacher Loves, Challenges Her Students

by Elizabeth Avalos, BVM

Teaching is not only a profession, but also a way of life. Ann Dress, BVM, aptly exemplifies this truth. She has taught at St. Clare's Elementary School in Santa Clara, Calif., for 21 years. She has taught first, sixth and fifth grades. Presently she is teaching primarily fifth grade and sixth grade math.

Ann's classroom is filled with the quiet noise of learning. A group of fifth grade students sit at tables facing one another, memorizing the capitals of the states. When some are informally quizzed, they know the capitals of North Dakota, Missouri and many others.

Another group is busily organizing the reading section of the room. These students volunteered for this project. And the teacher, oh yes, Ann is helping a few students with class work that they did not understand.

She enjoys teaching this age group, and loves to see how they slowly develop into more mature young adults. She encourages her fifth graders to become more responsible, to develop a deeper relationship with God, and to appreciate how important it is to be a good person.

She wants them to understand that being peaceful and non-violent is their goal and that they always have a choice to do the right thing, no matter what the cost.

Ann's room is decorated with student class work. When it is time for recess, Ann raises her hand and soon all students have quieted down. She never raises her voice.

It is only November and students are already abiding by the rules of the

class and beginning to understand that they are members of a community where the action of one affects the well being of others.

It is important to her to assist her students to become critical thinkers and responsible Christian folk who do social justice. So in small ways through class projects, teaching respect of individuals, collecting money for tsunami victims, students learn to look outside of themselves and to be for others.

Ann works with her students in preparing school liturgies and prayer services. As they deepen their spiritual life, Ann hopes they are building a foundation they will carry with them beyond St. Clare's, and that her students will come to know their God and believe that God loves them unconditionally, just as they should love others.

What Ann finds most challenging is trying to meet the diverse academic and social needs of her students. Some students are very creative and intellectually curious; others struggle to learn how to understand concepts that they read.

Another challenge is the growing number of children from blended families. Ann tries to help them deal with relating not just to one pair of parents but two families with half siblings and four parents.

Ann's professional life is not finished when the school bell rings at the end of the day. She knows her students' parents, and having taught many of their siblings, she knows their families.

She has rejoiced with her students at the birth of a baby in the family and on more occasions than she would like to remember she has grieved with students at the death of a sibling or parent. She is also godmother to many children who have walked through the doors of the school.

The BVM core values of charity, education, freedom and justice are central to Ann's life and they are values that she endeavors to have her students learn and live out.

She accepts her students where they are and strives to bring them to the realization that they are becoming young people who are free to live justly, to respect others, to love tenderly, and to respect the earth.

About the author: Elizabeth Avalos, BVM is parent coordinator at Nuestra Casa in East Palo Alto, Calif.

It is important to her to assist her students to become critical thinkers and responsible Christian folk who do social justice.



Catherine McHugh, BVM (St. Thoma) is president of the Intercommunity Housing Corporation in Chicago. Three congregations of women religious—including the BVMs—and the Chicago priests began IHC 16 years ago as a response to the housing crisis for Sisters. It has evolved into affordable housing for adults 55 and over.

After years of effort, construction on the five-story, 68-unit Roosevelt Place has now begun. Its directors are both lay and religious; **BVMs Ann Kathleen McDonnell** (front

row, 2nd from left) and **Jacquelyn Rice** (Vianney) (back row, l.) are among those on the Board.



Mary Ann Hoopes, BVM has received a certificate of appreciation from the Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana, for her “outstanding contribution toward the spread of the Word of God.” She has ministered there for 18 years and is director of the Centre for Spiritual Renewal in Kumasi.

Alpha Sigma Nu, the honor society of Jesuit institutions of higher education, has also listed her among 90 members who are “living the pledge of scholarship, loyalty and service.”



Wright Hall BVM residents **Catherine Gibbons** (l. next to statue) and **Virginia Hughes** (r.) join employees in celebrating the gift.

A statue of **Our Lady of La Vang**, patroness of Vietnam, now graces **Wright Hall**, Chicago. Employee Lai Truong obtained the statue when she traveled to her son’s ordination. On her return, she gave the 14” statue to the Sisters, who “are grateful to have this statue with us as a reminder that God is faithful, and that Mary’s maternal protection will safeguard all who call upon her. Our Lady of La Vang is the central and national shrine of Vietnam.

‘O Spirit of Wisdom, Direct All My Thoughts, Words and Actions’

by Julissa Duggan, BVM as told to Amy Golm, BVM

This simple prayer is prayed throughout each

day by Marian Hall resident Julissa Duggan, BVM.

It is the heart and soul of her spirituality developed over a lifetime of faithfulness. Julissa reflects on her life of prayer and service.

First Age: Early Life

“The very young years of my life were based on the concept of prayer. All nine children and my parents prayed the rosary after dinner and before bedtime. The very young children would be taught to kneel at my mother’s knee and say a night prayer. Prayer was most evident from my young years.

“I was born in 1919 in South Garryowen, Iowa—30 miles south of Cascade, an Irish settlement. The teacher in our little one room school was a Catholic. She would hold religion classes early in the morning or after school.

“There were no more than 14 students in the school, many of whom were my own brothers and sisters. The KKK (Ku Klux Klan) objected to this so the parents banded together to begin their own school, essentially forming the first parochial school in South Garryowen. They even supported the teacher.”

As the family grew older, her parents sold the farm so the girls could go to high school in Dubuque. The BVMs staffed both St. Patrick’s and Cathedral, where she went to school.

She later attended St. Joseph Academy. “We understood the benefits of daily Mass. Through winter and summer, this was an important aspect of my spiritual life—with my friends, five of whom entered the congregation.

“The Sisters were always so friendly both in the grade school and the high school that they had an influence on our lives spiritually and otherwise. Their complete dedication to the spiritual life and to teaching was inspiring. We often went down to visit with them in the evenings.

“At the Academy, religious education was taught by diocesan priests. Retreats were usually three days. They were strict in a sense. A certain amount of silence was observed. The priest preached these retreats on subjects such as the sacraments, the gifts of the faith, etc. These helped us in our formative years to prepare us for our future life.

“As early as 8th grade, I looked seriously at coming

to Mt. Carmel. The call came as I observed the Sisters who did so much good. I desired to spread God's love as they did."

Second Age: Active Ministry

With her mother's blessing, Julissa and her five good high school friends came to Mt. Carmel. She recalls that the novitiate was "a training time, a beautiful time even though it was very strict. Even with the strictness, I never thought of leaving. It was the grace of God who gave me the opportunity.

"Meeting so many Sisters from so many states really helped. We formed so many friendships. One of those who came from California remains my closest friend in the community to this day. Some of this was because we were all striving for the same goal. The novitiate was a test of our endurance.

"My very first mission was in Chattanooga, Tenn. The places where you had to endure more and had less were the happiest missions. There was a 'togetherness.' We all saw the ends for which we were working and we were together in work and play.

"Then I went to Muscatine; I ended up being there a total of 39 years. I was administrator most of the time. I also taught 7th and 8th grade, had the choir and the altar boys.

"This was a satisfying time spiritually because the people with whom I lived and those with whom I worked were so appreciative. I stayed because I felt I was part of their lives. I still hear from many of them and I feel very close to them.

"I got my M.A. in the '50s. There was always time for retreat and vacation. We, staff, members of the Muscatine community, had many times that we would get together for prayer and sharing.

Third Age: Retirement at Mt. Carmel

"My retirement years at the Motherhouse have been exciting and satisfying. I was able to initiate different projects such as creating a dinette to provide coffee and snacks for Mt. Carmel employees who did not have access to a break room.

"In time, many Sisters, too, came down because we put bird feeders outside the windows and this attracted viewers. This was a way that I was 'feeding the hungry.' I was inspired by the charge, 'Do whatever Mother Clarke would do.' These happy years continued until Caritas Center was finished and a beautiful break room was provided for the employees.

"In 2002, one Saturday night, I developed a very high fever and collapsed the next morning. This was the beginning of a very serious illness which affected the spine and muscles. It required serious surgeries and grafts.

"One of the surgeries was so serious that the Sisters and family were told that I would most likely not survive. I wasn't the least bit afraid. I felt like I was in the hands of God. My spiritual training from childhood through my training as a religious prepared me for this time of my life.

"I have great devotion to the Divine Mercy of God. Because in his mercy, God has given us of his flesh and blood which provides for us Baptism and the Eucharist.

"When I am lying in bed I pray, 'Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, soul and divinity of our Lord, Jesus Christ in atonement for my sins and those of the whole world.'

"And to this day, I say this in my mind all the time. We began to pray this during my time in Muscatine. It seemed so true—that Jesus being human and divine is what it's all about.

"To make a story short, after many weeks, I returned to Marian Hall to recuperate. This was the beginning of my 'senior' years which have given me a chance to get to know God even better. In this way, the sickness has been a gift.

"Now, in spite of health deficiencies, I still am able to attend most of the spiritual opportunities provided at Marian Hall and to live the religious life. I feel I have been given a great gift to be able to carry on the vocation given to me as a very young person."

About the author: Amy Golm, BVM is a campus minister at Clarke College and a graduate student. She is a member of the Communications Advisory Committee.



Salt

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New Presidents Selected for Clarke College, Carmel High School

BVM leaders of two schools with long congregational legacies are stepping down this spring, and their successors have been announced.

Catherine Dunn, BVM (Catherine Michele) will leave the Clarke College presidency in June after 22 years as president. Clarke was founded in 1843 by BVM founder Mary Frances Clarke.

Joanne Burrows, SC, PhD will be the college's next leader. A Sister of Charity of Cincinnati, she is currently chief academic officer at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, Terre Haute, Ind. She previously held positions at Indiana State University, Terre Haute; Holy Names College, Oakland, Calif.; and Mt. St. Joseph College, Cincinnati.

She holds a doctoral degree in higher education from The Ohio State University and a M.A. in philosophical and systematic theology from the Graduate Theological Union and Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, Calif.

After ten years as president of Carmel High School, co-sponsored by the BVM congregation, Mary Fran McLaughlin, BVM (Virginia) has resigned. Her successor will be Judith Muccheck, effective July 1.

Judith is currently Superintendent of Schools for the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, where she oversees 15 elementary and three high schools. She was previously Assistant



Catherine Dunn, BVM presents a copy of the Mary Frances Clarke icon to Joanne Burrows, SC, PhD, during a news conference on Feb. 2 announcing Joanne's selection as the new president of Clarke College.

Superintendent of Schools for Secondary Education there, where she had responsibility for the total formation of two Catholic high schools.

She holds a M.A. in Secondary Education from the University of Dayton, and is a PhD candidate in Educational Policy Studies from Georgia State University. Her BS is in Biology and Secondary Education.