

Salt

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BVM Spirituality:
An Evolutionary Unfolding

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.

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2012 Calendar of Events

March

- 10 Northern California Bus Trip to the Women and Spirit Exhibit
- 12-21 Ecuador Service Trip
- 23-26 Ecumenical Advocacy Days, Washington, D.C.
- 30-31 Dubuque's Got Sisters: Discernment Weekend

April

- 10-13 Senate of Elections, Dubuque, Iowa
- 22 Immaculata HS Alumnae Luncheon, Carlisle, Oakbrook, Ill.
- 27-29 Milwaukee Service Experience
- 29 St. Mary High School Alumnae Association Spring Luncheon, Carlisle, Oakbrook, Ill.

May

- 6 Memorial Mass of Remembrance, Mt. Carmel, Dubuque, Iowa

July

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- 21 Former BVM Event, Dubuque, Iowa

August

- TBA Ice Cream Social

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For more information, visit:
www.bvmcong.org/whatsnew_calendar.cfm

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SEASONing

Opening this issue of Salt, we get to go where our deepest human longings insistently and irresistibly draw us: We walk into the great, wide, diverse and infinitely inexhaustible spirit of God.

All too often we can think of spirituality as something reserved for designated holy times and places; the divine spirit gets contained in temples and churches and prayer spaces segregated from our ordinary daily life. Releasing God's spirit from confinement in any particular place and time, the reflections in these pages bring the words of theologian Elizabeth Johnson to life:

The breadth and depth of experience that may mediate holy mystery is genuinely inclusive. It embraces not only events associated with explicitly religious meaning such as church, word, sacraments, and prayer, although these are obviously intended as mediations of the divine. But since the mystery of God undergirds the whole world, the wide range of what is considered secular or just plain ordinary human life can be grist for the mill of experience of Spirit-Sophia drawing near and passing by. (*She Who Is*, New York, Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007)

Testifying to the experience that God breathes in the whole of creation, the authors invite us to look and look again to discover the spirit let loose, on the move, drawing near and passing by when we:

- Gaze in wonder at the moon cradling a star in the night sky;
- Sit at table enjoying the company of loving family and friends;
- Celebrate the baptism or first communion of a child or grandchild;
- Feel a kinship with someone continents away calling to us for attention;

Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM

- Offer or accept a word of forgiveness;
- Are stirred by curiosity and inspired to imagine unforeseen possibilities;
- Meet and gracefully surrender to limits of time, energy and gifts;
- Seek out someone who has made a difference in our life and let them know;
- Pause for a heart-connection with people suffering from a natural disaster;
- Speak our conviction with courage in an unwelcome place;
- Look into the eyes of a friend or spouse and marvel anew at their beauty;
- Companion the dying and glimpse heaven in the tenderness between us;
- Are gripped by the sight of a wounded soldier and mourn the effects of war;
- Teach a child to read or read to a sightless elder;
- Write a letter to a stranger in prison or let a stranger reach out to us;
- Insist on hope in a personal and global world that seems to be falling apart;
- Receive and relish a communication of gratitude;
- Go to a place of need no matter what the personal cost;
- Find companionship in the flight of an eagle or snow-laden pine;
- Do something small or large for the sake of justice;
- Make space for prayer and silence whether convenient or inconvenient;
- Endure the anguish of a broken relationship;
- Create a poem, a piece of music, a work of art, a chapter for a book;
- Are tossed into an abyss of darkness by loss and loneliness;

Mira Mosle, BVM



BVM Leadership team members are (l. to r.) Teri Hadro, Mary Ann Zollmann and Mira Mosle.

- Engage faithfully with the requirements of work and relationships.

As this extensive litany begins to suggest, the possibilities for experiencing the spirit of God are endless. Again, as affirmed by Elizabeth Johnson”

So comprehensive are the operations of the Spirit and so vast the corresponding human experiences by which the Spirit's presence is known. So universal in scope is the power of the Spirit ... that there is virtually no nook or cranny of reality potentially untouched. The Spirit's presence is recognized to be everywhere, somehow, drawing near and passing by.

May the reflections that follow alert our senses to be on the lookout for the shining through of God suffusing any and all moments, to feel and recognize as such the touch of the spirit's breath ceaselessly drawing near and passing by, and to hear God “shuffling around in the daily events that make up our lives.” (Jan L. Richardson, *In the Sanctuary of Women*, Nashville, Upper Room Books, 2010)

In this spirit of infinitely spacious spirituality, we leave you with a simple blessing:

That one image of God will never appease you.
That one word for the holy will never suffice.
That by uncountable names and limitless forms the infinite God will find and delight you.
(Richardson)

Teri Hadro, BVM



What is Spirituality?

by Associate Elizabeth Fitting

“Spirituality has everything to do with active engagement in the here and now, the real moment where each of us lives our lives . . . Spirituality has to be “engaged” with reality or it is not life in the Spirit.”¹

In these words, Joseph Nangle captures the dynamism of spirituality and its permeating presence in *all* of life. The word “spirit” is defined in Webster’s Dictionary as “breath, animating or vital principle held to give life to a physical organism.” “Spiritual” used as an adjective means “of breathing, of wind.” These definitions make it clear how spirituality, like our breath, infuses our being.

How we live our everyday lives manifests our spirituality. We can engage in spiritual practices such as meditation, centering prayer, participating in the Eucharist, praying the rosary, yoga, or T’ai Chi Chih® as expressions of our spirituality. However, protesting an unjust war, taking care of an aging parent, going to work everyday, enjoying nature, suffering through an illness, and buying groceries are also expressions of our spirituality.

In buying our groceries, do we think about where the food comes from, how the soil or the animal was treated to produce the food, the conditions of the workers who farmed the food, the distance the food traveled to get to the store, and whether the food actually provides nourishment? All these questions reveal our spirituality, our values, our beliefs.

Perhaps we have a colleague at work to whom we have an aversion. What do we do about the aversion? Is this person in need of compassion or some other action on our part? What attitude or action do we take?

These are the types of questions that we will learn to ask ourselves, if we take the following insights of Anne E. Carr, BVM (Mary Anne David) seriously. “In its widest meaning, spirituality can be

described as the whole of one’s spiritual or religious experience, one’s beliefs, convictions and patterns of thought, one’s emotions and behavior in respect to what is ultimate, or to God. Spirituality is holistic, encompassing all one’s relationships to all of creation—to the self and to others, to society and nature, to work and leisure . . . As such it is a dimension of life that is generally unexamined, resting on convention, upbringing, or conformity to social and religious expectations.”²

As we go about our everyday life, with all its minute choices, we have the opportunity to deepen our spirituality as we wrestle with how to make each of these choices with integrity.

The consciousness required by such integrity will certainly bring struggle, doubt, conflict and pain as we become aware of our own inconsistencies, challenge long-established patterns or the status quo, and suffer the consequences. But it can also bring joy, a sense of aliveness and connection to all living beings and the larger universe as we break through those unexamined conventions or unhealthy patterns that have limited both our inner and outer freedom. This consciousness is evidence of the breath of the spirit present in all of us.

The articles that follow reveal the exploration and evolution of BVM lived spirituality and its ongoing vibrancy, providing an example to all of us.

About the author: Elizabeth Fitting is a BVM associate coordinator, teacher and massage therapist in Sunnyvale, Calif.

¹ Joseph Nangle, OFM, *Engaged Spirituality*, Orbis Books, New York, 2008, p. 17.
² Anne E. Carr, BVM (Mary Anne David), *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women’s Experience*, Continuum International Publishing Co., Dec. 31, 1997, pp. 201–202.

TECHNOLOGY: Another Window

by Margaret Geraghty, BVM

As technology has transformed our world of communications, BVMs continue to explore new avenues to the world of spirituality via the internet.

Pat Taylor, BVM (Wilbur), a long-time Marian Hall resident at Mount Carmel in Dubuque, Iowa, is a striking example of the extent to which the resources of the internet open up a world of spirituality to anyone interested in pursuing the possibilities. In Pat’s words: “As we evolve spiritually and head toward that final transformation to ‘what eye has not seen and ear has not heard . . . (1Cor. 3:9),’ we have in these links a window to a cosmic world and the spiritual evolution occurring in most traditions.”



Pat Taylor has discovered a world of spirituality through her computer and the internet.

Internet Promotes Sharing and Discovery

She reflects on how access to the internet has revealed spiritual worlds previously available only through a variety of printed or audio visual materials. “It also opens up the possibility of communication and sharing at a depth level through email via links,” she adds. She often shares her reflections with the community, and her discoveries of the ideas of leading edge spiritual thinkers have transformed her own world.

A look at one insight into the new cosmology which is part of this broadening

W to the World of Spirituality

of our spiritual vision is available at www.evolutionarychristianity.com, where Passionist sister Gail Worcelo, who was the presenter at the Chicago area meeting in October, shares her vision of Evolutionary Christianity. Gail's particular passion has been the re-founding of religious life within the context of the universe story.

The BVM public website, www.bvm-cong.org, and the members' website provide a wealth of information about access to spiritual documents and experiences. Talks, books, justice issues and a video about the life and ministry of the BVMs are available at the click of a mouse.

At the Mount Carmel Motherhouse, closed circuit television offers daily Mass broadcast from the infirmary as well as wake and funeral services of the sisters. These wake and funeral services are also video streamed live to members and associates and are available on CDs for later viewing. Last year's Apostolic Visitation events were broadcast live on closed circuit television and some were video streamed to the congregation. This type of live action video enables members and associates to experience community in a new, virtual way as they share sacred moments across cyberspace.

Emails from Mary Martens, BVM (Loras), administrative assistant to the BVM Council, provide opportunities for spirituality in action. Mary keeps the congregation updated on social justice issues, many of which call for follow-up action on the part of sisters and associates.

Updates provided by Mary from NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby in Washington, D.C., are a link to American political action, often with suggestions for personal action. She also notifies the congregation about the pending executions of death row prisoners. "Tolling of the Bell" emails allow members and associates across the country to join in



C. Jean Hayen, BVM (l.) and Eleanor Craggs, BVM (r.) watch as Leslie Hays, BVM inserts the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) audio cassette into the player. BVM Eileen Healy (not pictured) downloads the books to the cassettes. The sisters can choose from 20,000 audio books available from the Library of Congress through the Iowa Department for the Blind and Handicapped in Des Moines.

reflection and prayer with the sisters at the Motherhouse who hear the Mount Carmel bell toll for each execution.

Catherine Jean Hayen, BVM, whose ministry at Mount Carmel provides service to the visually impaired, finds that despite the availability of more modern technology, audio cassettes and digital books are more user-friendly for those with limited vision.

Many of these digital books can be downloaded from websites or secured from the Iowa Department for the Blind. Some sisters do use CD copies of *America Magazine* and the daily Mass booklet, *Living With Christ*, on their computers and are looking forward to the latter's production of the new scripture and liturgy translations which will soon be available on CD.

Approximately 140 sisters at Mount Carmel with hearing and/or vision needs receive services through Catherine Jean's ministry.

Technology Offers New Avenues for Spirituality

BVMs have discovered many contemporary authors who provide spiritual insights through their websites and blogs.

Franciscan Father Richard Rohr is one whose thoughts and publications are available at the website, www.cacradicalgrace.org. Among the popular outreaches available at this site is his "Daily Meditations,"

a free daily offering from the Center for Action and Contemplation, which he founded.

Benedictine sister Joan Chittister offers much food for thought in a website she shares with others called "Monasteries of the Heart" at <http://monasteriesoftheheart.org>. Based on her new book by the same name, she calls it "a new movement for a new world." Missionary Oblate Fr. Ronald Roheiser's website, www.ronrolheiser.com, is another resource for reflections by a very prolific spiritual thinker and writer.

The Creighton Jesuits offer a meditation on the scriptures of the day at <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/daily.html>. These are composed by a different Jesuit each day and provide inspiring food for thought.

Finally, another source for daily reflection on the scriptures is found at www.livingwithchrist.us. Those familiar with *Living With Christ* will find additional valuable resources on this website.

It's clear that there is a whole new world opening up as gifted people find new ways to share their deepest spiritual insights across the internet. It's clear, too, that BVMs are very much part of this exciting new reality.

About the author: Margaret Geraghty, BVM (St. Cabrini) is a congregational representative for the BVM community and lives in Chicago, Ill.



Exploring Early Spiritual Influences

Mary Frances never names the spiritual traditions or writers she felt most akin to. BVM spirituality in its beginnings is very eclectic but there are arguably two prominent streams: Franciscan (the first five members were Third Order Franciscans) and Jesuit (Mary Frances will imitate aspects of the Society of Jesus' constitutions and rule). However, narrowing the field to these risks ignoring the influences of Alphonsus Ligouri, Francis de Sales and the New Melleray Trappists. Here I will explore a few Jesuit strands.

Mary Frances's spirituality focuses on the will of God. This devotion to the will of God is repeated in her letters in phrases such as:

"I submit to the most holy will of God."¹

"May the Holy Will of God be done in all things."²

"Pray for us that we may do God's work and in the manner God wills it."³

The early modern period produced a wealth of literature on the "will of God." Ignatius of Loyola laid a significant foundation. Mary Frances possessed her own copy of the *Spiritual Exercises* and other spiritual authors she was likely familiar with, such as Francis de Sales, popularized Ignatian insights. The *Exercises* are grounded in the confidence that God speaks to each individual. Mary Frances shares the conviction. She also shares the saint's mystical sense that the "world" and the "spiritual" are one. BVMs and Jesuits will bend in different directions with regard to obedience.

Anyone familiar with Ignatius' statement that if the pope told to him to disband the Society he would only require 15 minutes of prayer before carrying out the order, can recognize a similar spirit in Mary Frances' letter responding to Bishop Loras' news that the plans for school in Galena failed.

Rt. Revd. Father in Christ,
I bow and submit to The holy will of my God, dear as the community is to me heart, my constant prayer is that it may be dissolved. If it exists contrary to his holy will, or, that it should act against his glory or that Sacred character of religion, as to the future prospects of the community it is in the hands of God . . .⁴

After Years of Crosses, the Crown— Reflections on Mary Frances Clarke and Early BVM Spirituality

by Paulette Skiba, BVM



The Our Lady of Sorrows holy card was given to Mary Frances Clarke from Father Terence J. Donaghoe.

The spirituality of Mary Frances Clarke (1806–1887)

and the early community was shaped by the piety and practices of Catholicism in the nineteenth century. The letters and the relics we possess provide us rich evidence of Mary Frances' religious expression. Petitionary prayer, novenas, litanies, the rosary, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Holy Family and Child Jesus, St. Joseph, Sacred Heart and Sorrows of Mary, attention to feast days and corresponding communal intentions, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, shaped early BVM spirituality. Preparation for and reception of the Eucharist held a central place and were offered for the most pressing needs. This devotional life supported Mary Frances' powerful sense of her "dear Lord" guiding her and her companions in their every step.

Mary Frances Clarke: Listen and Seek God's Will

Mary Frances then suggests that the people of the area determine what services (school, hospital or orphanage) they would support. This deep "listening" to others becomes part of her spiritual discipline as she seeks God's will.

The French Jesuit Jean-Pierre de Caussade's *Abandonment* represents a spirituality focused on surrender of the divine will that emerged in the seventeenth century. An abridged edition is in the BVM archives. Like BVM spirituality, it has a practical nature. Even if Mary Frances never read it (the edition is 1887), she is likely to have encountered its contents in other ways. It may give us insight into how Mary Frances' "will of God" was nurtured by the religious sensibilities of her age. De Caussade builds his spirituality on two key biblical images: Mary's response to the angel, "let it be done according to your word" and Jesus' prayer in the garden, "your will be done."

What God arranges for us to experience at each moment is the best and holiest thing that could happen to us. All our learning should consist of finding out what God has planned for us at each moment. All our moments are made productive by our obedience to the will of God which reveals itself in a thousand different ways, each of which successively becomes our immediate duty. Together they mold the "new self" (Eph. 4:24) until we reach that complete fulfillment of ourselves which God's wisdom has ordained for us. This mysterious growth of Christ in our souls is the end determined by God, the fruit of his grace and his holy will . . . The more perplexing the situation, the more we can hope for a happy resolution. The heart says, "All will be well. God has the matter in hand. We need fear nothing." Our very fear and sense of desolation are verses in this hymn of darkness . . . So we follow our wandering paths, and the very darkness acts as our guide and our doubts reassure us. The more puzzled Isaac was at not finding a lamb for the sacrifice, the more confidently did Abraham leave all to providence (Gen. 22:7-8).⁵

For de Caussade, we find the will of God in life. We might not understand, but we are to trust that God will work through all for good. Mary Frances makes

the same associations, particularly in times of trials. An example of this is her letter written June 21, 1867. The turmoil indicated in the letter appears to be the arrival or anticipated arrival of sisters from another community who were going to open a school in the same town. This seems to have brought criticism of the present BVM teachers. Father Donaghoe and Mary Frances advise trust through the trial or "cross" of the moment:

Our dear father received your letter late last evening, he told me to write a few lines to you . . . listen to all without reply, no matter how unjust or injurious, to us, it may be . . . put the Sisters on their guard to be prudent, and silent, . . . even, our schools are injured for a time don't be uneasy. go on steady and quiet, and offer all you suffer through the sacred heart of our dear mother to the holy heart of her dear Son, they will help us. and all will come right again you know, in Chicago, and other places there are several communities, and as our dear father says, if God is served it is no matter by whom . . . I fear you are suffering from the heat, as well as your anxieties don't lose courage, after thirty five, or six years, of bitter crosses and labours, you will gain the crown at the end keep up the Sisters, give me love to them . . . we commenced an novena to St Aloysius today for all our schools.⁶

With his focus on finding God's will in the present moment de Caussade advises caution with regard to the "heroic" practice of self-chosen austerities. He suggests these often come from our own will rather than God's. Such "artificial" crosses may even distract us from how God is bringing us to completion in Christ through the needs of others and the demands of life in the present moment. It is there that the angel Gabriel stands before us as he did before Mary, evoking our "yes" to God. Mary Frances' relaxation of the Lenten fast for teachers and refusal to follow Father Donaghoe in the imposition of demeaning penances common for the times is guided by the same insight.

Mission Grounded in Spiritual Traditions

Perhaps even more important to understanding the spirituality of Mary Frances and the early BVMs is the larger movement they were a part of. They were part of an explosion in mission activity. Religious life had, with Ignatius, decisively broken out of the cloister, but women were still seeking that freedom. It is not surprising that women like Mary Frances, who wanted to help those in need, did not articulate their call first of all as a call to religious life. It was still unclear when they began whether the institution of religious life would become flexible enough to contain them. What defined them was doing the will of God as they discerned it and this led them down a dark path. The spiritual traditions they drew upon helped them navigate the present hardships and the unknown future.

Acceptance by the church came when it became apparent that the contributions of women ministering "in the streets," both in Europe and America, were indispensable. Bishop Loras in Dubuque is an example. He is disturbed by the "unapproved" status of the women but he accepted them because he could not find anyone else. In view of this, the word "religious"⁷ (rather than "teacher," "book-keeper" or other appropriate options) written in the *Cassander's* log at the time of sailing to America as the "profession" of Mary Frances Clarke and her companions is a bold, unorthodox claim that perhaps signaled their vision and challenge to the church whose rich traditions nurtured their faith and courage.⁸

About the author: Paulette Skiba, BVM is a professor of religious studies at Clarke University, Dubuque, Iowa.

¹ Laura Smith-Noogle, ed. *My Dear Sister*, Dubuque, IA: Mount Carmel Press (1987), #2 (May 27, 1844).

² *Ibid.*, (May 23, 1877), #60.

³ *Ibid.*, (July 18, 1883), #163.

⁴ *Ibid.*, (May 27, 1844), #2.

⁵ Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*. Image Books: Garden City, NY (1975), 27-28; 101.

⁶ *My Dear Sister*, (June 21, 1867), # 11.

⁷ Ann Harrington, *Creating Community: Mary Frances Clarke and Her Companions*. Dubuque, IA: Mount Carmel Press (2004), 28.

⁸ As a Third Order Franciscan Mary Clarke was aware of the practice of wearing in death a habit one did not wear in life as an outward sign of one's dedication and as a source of grace. Her decision not to wear the BVM habit in life might be influenced by the debates of Irish Franciscans in the 1830s over what practices they should return to with the lifting of the penal code. Dress that seemed contrary to humility and simplicity in life, she might have willingly accepted in death.



Hidden behind rows of steel shelving

in the Collections Room of the Mount Carmel Archives in Dubuque, Iowa, there is a gray cabinet with 15 broad, flat drawers. The cabinet houses architectural sketches and blueprints.

Dreams for the Future

Perhaps the most treasured are the working drawings for construction of the Mount Carmel Motherhouse (1892). In lead pencil and colored pencil on tracing paper, on sheets of heavier substance, and on a kind of linen, there is a “work in progress.” The drawings have become fragile with the years and some details have become obscure, but one has only to glance through the pages to be struck by their beauty and—particularly for those close to BVM life and mission—significance.

Nor are BVMs alone in feeling something akin to “reverence” in the presence of those venerable plans. Resting on top



ADSUMUS! A Word About

by Deanna Marie Carr, BVM



Pope John XXIII greets BVMs Aquin Lally (l.) and Alice Miriam O'Brien at a Papal audience in Rome.

of the collection is a letter of appreciation written by an architectural firm once engaged in a Motherhouse renovation: “We feel highly honored that you trusted us with these irreplaceable . . . original drawings.”

The images on those pages were originally conceived in the abstract, representing little more than “pipe dreams.” But what began with the speculation of a handful of women on the Iowa prairie soon engaged many others—neighbors, bricklayers, carpenters, plasterers, painters, glaziers and load carriers—all laboring together to transform abstract plans into a home for *this new kind of community*.

Fast Forward 70 Years!

A 'New Kind of Church'

Between Oct. 11, 1962, when the Second Vatican Council began, and Dec. 8, 1965, when it ended, another set of architectural drawings had taken shape—this time on the “drafting table” of St. Peter Basilica. Conceived in the abstract, those “blueprints” sketched the galleries and rafters, atrium and narthex of *a new kind of church*, a People of God attentive to the Holy Spirit speaking eloquently in the exigencies of the times. This would be a communion that would relate positively and resourcefully to the human struggle. This would be an assembly speaking respectfully from the wisdom of its tradition and listening humbly to the voices of all creation.

Throughout the Council, diverse architects (visionaries and scholars, saints and bureaucrats) would labor at a task that captured the imagination of the world. And with the close of the Council,

“The joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”¹

believers and doubters, East and West, earth and universe, church and world.

Few anticipated what a strenuous spiritual exercise fidelity to the Council would be. It would require more of an investment on the part of all the faithful than was anticipated: entertaining new thoughts about dignity, freedom, discrimination, rights and yielding to the discipline of conversion. An old hymn says it well: this would involve an arduous climb “up the steep ways of the spirit” where none can walk save love.

A popular exercise among spiritual writers following the Council has been

over servant leadership. In many a conversation among thinking people today, the euphoria of those years following Vatican II has been replaced by sadness and disillusionment.

Some say it is too late. We’ve squandered our opportunity. Others say it is too soon to pass judgment on the Council’s impact. We are slow learners, or perhaps like Oscar Romero, we are prophets of a future not our own.

In the Epilogue to *Receiving the Council*, Ladislav Orsy proposes a course of action. “Whereas the years from 2012 through 2015 will be the fiftieth anniversaries of the Council—when the entire people, ‘from the bishops to the last of the faithful’ (LG 12 quoting St. Augustine), recalls the memory of the ‘Sacred Council’ (SC 1), studies its determinations, and exposes itself to the transforming light and force of the Spirit—as the Council Fathers did. Over four years again, let the cry *Adsumus*² ‘we are present and attentive,’ resound—not within the walls of St. Peter’s Basilica but throughout

t the Council!

the same spirit that had animated those architects drove the vision forward, boldly empowering all the baptized. The pilgrim church embraced the spirit’s guidance, confident that the God who had begun the work would bring it to completion.

In words many readers will find familiar: “The joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”¹ If the Second Vatican Council gave new meaning to “spirituality,” it also set the bar high. The Council challenged the baptized to test boundaries: clergy and laity, women and men,

to draw the line. Pre-Vatican II spiritualities might be called rigid, insular, private, passive, within the box. These things can be said with some justification. Vatican II spiritualities might, with justification, be called free, expansive, accepting, involving, inclusive, communal. Perhaps the distinctions have been overdrawn. In the *Confessions*, Augustine speaks of a blending ever ancient and ever new.

Unfolding in God’s Time

It has been said of late that the Council has failed to deliver on its promise. There is a tendency to favor “either/or” over collaboration, discipline over dialogue, judgment over engagement, power

the face of the earth.”³

The blueprints are still on the table. It is in our hands to build. Now, as then, the spirit of God will not fail!

About the author: Deanna Marie Carr, BVM (Bernita) is the archivist in the Mount Carmel Archives, Dubuque, Iowa.

¹ Preface to The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, promulgated by Pope Paul VI, Dec. 7, 1965.

² *Adsumus*, from a prayer before a meeting from the Roman Pontifical. “We have come, O God, the Holy Spirit . . . Teach us what we are to do . . . show us what we must accomplish . . . be Thou alone the author and the finisher of our judgments.”

³ Orsy, Ladislav. *Receiving the Council*. Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2009.



'Spiral' Evolvment of BVM Prayer Life After Vatican II

by Kathleen Mullin, BVM



Harriet Holles, BVM



Mary Frances Reis, BVM



Therese Jacobs, BVM



Dorothy Feehan, BVM



Mary Jean Ferry, BVM



Mary Anne Hoopoe, BVM



Colleen McGinnity, BVM



Dolores Kramer, BVM



Kathleen Mullin, BVM

The design of a spiral suggests the

action of evolvement. On a solid base a coil moves upward, around and outward, expressing continuity. Mary Frances Clarke and the early sisters inspired this evolving image for BVMs today.

In the middle of the 20th century, the lives of BVMs tended to be quite structured, as was the practice then in religious communities. Scheduled prayer in each convent reflected a protective yet rigid framework. Communal prayer, meditation and Mass began the day. At specified times during the day there were opportunities for two examinations of conscience, praying the rosary, and other devotions prayed in common. Sisters had a weekly holy hour and a monthly Sunday silent recollection. On weekends they prayed the "Little Office." Sisters were assigned to an annual eight-day retreat preached by a Jesuit priest. Prayer patterns were useful, yet failed to acknowledge differing experiences and needs of sisters' evolving spirituality.

'Journey of Ongoing Change'

BVMs, wanting to be open to the spirit and "faith-full," were studying, reading and sharing new understandings of personhood, scripture and prayer styles, along with how to teach new math, linguistics, current events and religion before, during and after Vatican II. They participated in ecumenical dialogue groups and bible study sessions while taking night courses and correcting papers.

Such openness prepared BVMs to welcome reforms in the Catholic Church and to collaborate in creating freer, responsible lifestyles with one another. The sisters grappled with pertinent Vatican II documents and began an intense journey of ongoing change with no map.

The years of practical implementation involved:

- Reconstruction of BVM governance;
- Opening congregational meetings to all members;
- Expressing BVM commitment to justice;
- Adapting to new forms of common life and prayer patterns;
- Changing ministries to meet new needs in church and society;
- Reflecting on BVM roots and Mary Frances Clarke's writings;

- Engaging members in dialogue with the writers of the new *Constitutions*;
- Dealing with loss and insecurity in the community and in society.

Members were helped through the long period of renewal by congregational leaders who invited and empowered BVMs to responsibly live the core values of freedom, education, justice and charity.

A significant area amidst BVM religious life changes is stated in the *Constitutions*: "Growth in prayer depends on the Holy Spirit, who guides us in discovering life-giving patterns of prayer, both personal and communal" (23). A prayer and renewal committee developed prayer services for feast days and themes. The Carmelites of Indianapolis, Ind., published *People's Companion to the Breviary* (two volumes), for praying the Liturgy of the Hours. Small community groups determined times for communal prayer. Area cluster groups shared days of reflection. Available retreats—preached, guided, directed, charismatic, contemplative and later, *Constitutions*-based, were experienced.

In 1967, a small group of BVMs inspired by Harriet Holles, BVM (Agneda) prepared an eight-day structured retreat for each other; participants contin-

ued as a prayer group for years. Two summers later, David Hassel, SJ from Loyola University Chicago was invited by Rich-ardine Quirk, BVM to lead a nine-day directed retreat for nine BVMs at Clarke College (now Clarke University).

Opportunities Lead to Diverse Ministries

Such meaningful experiences led sisters to deeper, unique prayer patterns and expanded ministries in spirituality. Sisters sought spiritual directors to help them ponder their God experiences. Retreat centers flourished. Many BVMs made 30-day retreats. Evolving spirituality reinforced by ongoing workshops and tools on communication skills, prayer, discernment and ministry were offered to members for personal growth and community building. With these opportunities, BVMs in various new roles, such as ministers on campuses, in parishes and in pastoral care, were invited to be spiritual companions and to lead prayer services and retreats.

With training and the guidance of the spirit, sisters individually and on teams have served as spiritual directors, retreat facilitators and in related spiritual ministries. Mary Frances Reis, BVM (Paul Adele) acknowledges that she seemingly “wandered” on such a spiritual path and has added hospital chaplaincy and bereavement groups to her ministries. She

has also gifted BVMs and associates with *Fragments* and *A Retreat with Mary Frances Clarke*.

Therese Jacobs, BVM (Therese Carmelle) helps people learn about centering prayer. For more than two decades in Mississippi and Ghana, West Africa, Therese has led groups in centering prayer and trained facilitators for centering prayer groups. As a parish minister, Therese offered spiritual direction and directed retreats. In Jackson, Miss., she remains involved in these ministries as outgrowths of her own personal faith journey.

In Colorado, BVM Dorothy Feehan (Agnes Cecile) served in parish ministry in the Denver area, where she built up a relationship with homeless women and facilitated retreats with them. She led Catholic Worker staff and their clients through a four-day retreat at a spirituality center in Colorado Springs. Now in Missoula, Mont., Dorothy enjoys being in faith-sharing groups where readers ponder *The Emergent Christ* by Ilia Delio and *Fields of Compassion* by Judy Cannato.

Mary Jean Ferry, BVM (St. Christopher) offered retreats to BVMs in northern and southern California, and teamed with others to offer directed retreats at Mount Carmel in Dubuque, Iowa. Over many years, Mary Dingman, SSSF, Julie Wingert, PBVM, and BVMs Mary Jean, Harriet, Therese and I have had turns on these teams.

In the early 1980s, BVMs Mary Anne Hoope (Bernarde Marie) and Colleen McGinnity (Rose Maureen) arranged weekend directed retreats at Mount Carmel and Wright Hall in Chicago. Dolores M. Kramer, BVM (Jeanne Michele) has offered retreats in Chicago and Dubuque. Every year other retreats are also available at these places. The 2011 summer retreat for BVMs and associates held at Mount Carmel represents another evolving retreat.

Parish ministry allows me many ways of serving: as spiritual director, participant in ecumenical peer ministry, and in team facilitation of various styles of retreats. Faith-sharing groups evolving from the Cursillo Movement, the Christian Family Movement (CFM), spiritual renewal in the Catholic tradition (RENEW), and JustFaith Ministries support many of us. I belong to a nurturing women’s group which has met since 1987. Prairiewood Spirituality Center, near Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is a spiritual resource for me and many BVMs in the Midwest.

The spiral image affirms our spirited movement through changes and obstacles into widening relationships and collaboration with citizens of our world.

About the author: Kathleen Mullin, BVM (Robert Mary) is a pastoral associate at Sacred Heart Parish in Moline, Ill.



The Moline, Ill., prayer group began in 1987 and continues to meet regularly. Six of the eight members gathered for a meeting are (l. to r.) Diane Kennedy, Maureen Bennett, Rosemary Schmitt, Jean Edmunds, Kathleen Mullin, BVM and Jan DeGreve. Not shown are group members Perrine West and Twila Mitchell.



**“Truly we live with mysteries
too marvelous to be understood.”**

(Evidence, Mary Oliver)

Although our cosmos has always offered us items of beauty and ideas of challenge, our present age seems to be overflowing with the impetus to wonder and awe at the “mysteries too marvelous to be understood.” We are the first generation to know the vast details of the journey of the universe. In recent years science has teased any who would listen with concepts like energy and evolution, probability and paradox, quanta and quasars. However, our science story is not so recent, for it began some fourteen billion years ago. The “fecund void” erupted into a fiery, flaming forth from which everything we know of our universe was born. Some name this explosion “The Big Bang.”

An Introduction to **COSMOLOGY**

by Harriet Holles, BVM

Our Judeo-Christian creation myth tells a similar story. In the beginning, the spirit hovered over the chaos and called forth light. Light was everywhere. Then followed into being the entire universe: sky, earth, waters, vegetation, animals, humans. And all was good!

During the early epochs of its history, our cosmos cooled and expanded. Galaxies, stars and planets formed. Our Milky Way, our sun, and our earth came into existence. Centuries of scientific questioning, experimentation and skill followed and provide for us today an ongoing story of the development and purpose of our universe. Some aspects of the story evoke awe and wonder in us. Others create fear at such incredible newness and the change it not only brings but requires.

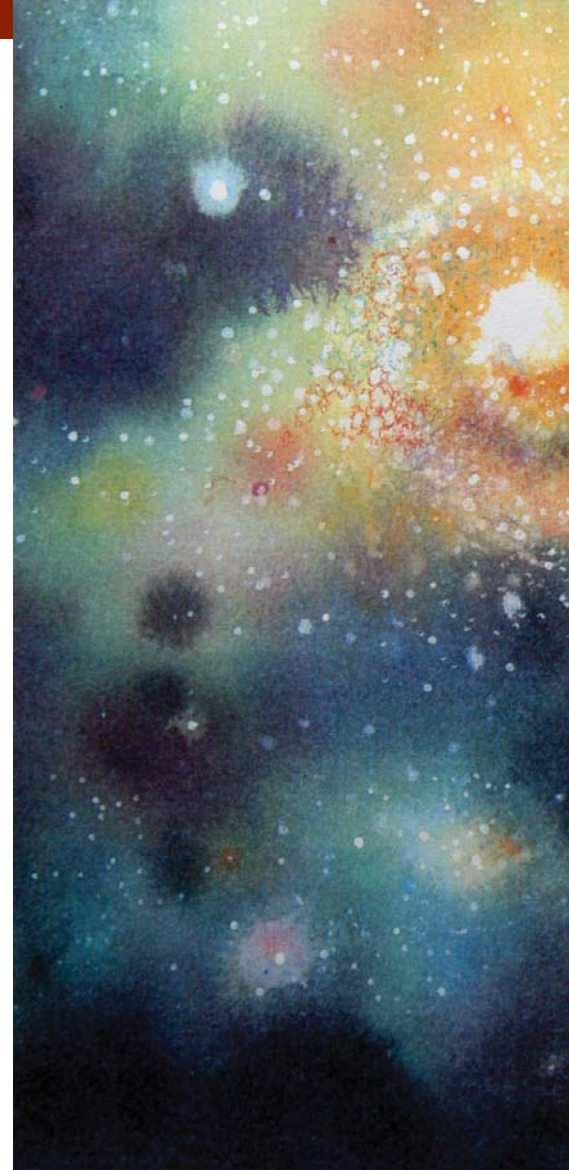
Journey of the Universe: A Calendar Analogy

To help us understand the enormous journey of the universe from the beginning, let's collapse a few significant markers of our 14-billion-year history into a calendar year of 12 months. The great “Flaring Forth” happened early in January, bringing with it the potential for all that was to be. The Milky Way galaxy self-organized in late February. Our solar system emerged in early September and Earth awakened into life in late September. The dinosaurs lived for a few days in early December. The universe began reflecting consciously, in and through the human with choice and free will, less than ten minutes before midnight on Dec. 31. Jesus was born on Dec. 31 at 11:59 p.m.

In the final seconds of the year the major recent scientific discoveries happened.

Followers of Jesus pray daily, “your kingdom come,” and choose to live a style of life characterized by loving and responsible relationships. This was Jesus’ primary message when he walked this earth: You are to be just and forgiving; accept and include all; care for the “poor ones.”

In recent decades, the spirituality and science of the cosmic story has become entwined with the spirituality of the Judeo-Christian story, clarifying, amplifying, challenging each other in a mutual dance. The reality of the lifestyle Jesus offered as the “kingdom” is also the imperative for subjects of the universe although the words may seem quite different.





“Homage to Teilhard: Noosphere Galaxy” is one of BVM Blanche Marie Gallagher’s many works influenced by Teilhard de Chardin. Blanche passed away in November 2010.

Three Dynamics are Key to the Balance of Existence

Contemporary authors writing about the cosmic story reflect on three key dynamics of everything, absolutely everything, in the universe. The first of these is often called *subjectivity*, that inner power which enables each subject to “know” from the inside how to express its unique identity. It’s easy for us to understand this about humans and even about animals and plants, but harder to consider for inanimate objects. And yet we are told there is incredible activity even within the solid-looking mountain, which we could perceive if our senses were fine enough. One might use the word “soul” for this dynamic. It tells a subject what it is to be!

A second dynamic is *differentiation*. There is incredible diversity in our uni-

verse. Each and every being is different from all the rest, no matter its class or species. At every level things differ from one another; such diversity provides richness and it also brings strength. According to the scientists Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme, the universe exhibits “an outrageous bias for the novel.”

Everything in the universe is related to and involved in everything else. *Communio* is the dynamic that overcomes isolation and draws everything into relationship. It’s impossible for anything to exist by itself; each individual subject is valuable to complete the fullness of the whole.

It’s instructive to imagine the situation of the universe if any one of these dynamics is dropped, leaving only the other two. It’s also a helpful practice to notice

expressions of differentiation, subjectivity and communion in your every day, and to become aware where your life may be out of balance.

Activity in the universe is considered good if it enhances subjectivity, differentiation and communion. Choices which cripple any of these dynamics are considered evil. The pattern of these three dynamics at the very heart of the universe suggests the presence of a creative power whose bias is for the very fullness of being.

Understanding ‘the Presence Who Lives and Moves in Us’

How are we to understand and name this Holy Mystery? This is the Source “in whom we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28) This is the Presence who lives and moves and *is* in us! Two descriptive words traditionally used to speak of the Divine Mystery are immanence and transcendence. The Holy One is immanent, deep within everything, closer than you can imagine and at the same time the Holy One is transcendent, not identified with any of it, beyond it all.

As we become increasingly aware of evolutionary action in our universe, this quote from the mystic Meister Eckhart (1260–1328) is particularly relevant, “For all eternity God lies on a maternity bed giving birth.” God must create!

Gradually we who are “subjects” of this universe are being helped to understand that the universe is not a container but rather a “process” and we are in the process. We are also learning nothing exists outside of this process and that change happens at a particular moment when the conditions are just right! And that change is always in the direction of the more complex and the more conscious.

How important it is to have companions in this journey of life with the universe and so we again attend to words of Mary Oliver!

“Let me keep company always with those who say ‘Look!’ and laugh in astonishment and bow their heads.”

About the author: Harriet Holles, BVM (Agneda) teaches classes at the Roberta Kuhn Center in Dubuque, Iowa, and is available as a resource person in spirituality.



New Cosmology In Practice

by Marilyn Wilson, BVM



Rose Mary Meyer, BVM



Eloise Thomas, BVM



Blanche Marie Gallagher, BVM



Dee Myers, BVM



Mary Frances Reis, BVM



Kathleen Conway, BVM



Bette Gambonini, BVM

**Blow through me, Breath of God
Blow through me, like a pipe, like a flute, like a reed
Making melody, the cosmic song in me, Breath of God.**

(“Breath of God,” Miriam Therese Winter © Medical Mission Sisters, 1987)



How do the mind-boggling ideas from the “new cosmology” translate into everyday spirituality and practice? What do these new understandings of an

ever-expanding universe that came to birth 13.5 billion years ago mean to God-seekers in an ever busier, complicated, violent and cyber-spacial world?

I decided to ask companions on the spiritual journey some questions:

- How did you first hear about the new cosmology?
- What does it mean for you?
- How does it influence your spirituality?

For Rose Mary Meyer, BVM (Sebastian), it was her connection to a north-west Missouri farmland which taught her interconnectedness and interdependence. She describes the new cosmology as “an ancient, fascinating, faith-inspiring story of universe. Understanding Earth as a living entity provides now ongoing energy, awe, respect and reverence for all creation.”

In the '60s, Eloise Thomas, BVM influenced many BVMs by stressing care and responsibility for Earth. Blanche Marie Gallagher, BVM introduced Teilhard de Chardin’s *The Divine Milieu* and *The Phenomenon of Man*.

Dee Myers, BVM (Dolore) comments: “Blanche gave us ‘a visual picture and wild imaginings of what could be . . .’ She called us to think differently and look larger than what we had been taught and what could be. In *Meditations with Teilhard De Chardin*, Blanche herself said, ‘He startled me into a new awareness of the universe; the material of the Earth came alive for me as cosmic energy.’”

Chardin also influenced Mary Frances Reis, BVM (Paul Adele). Though her

books are now “yellow and crinkly,” the ideas are kept alive by more recent works of Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme standing on the same shelf. On her recent retreat at the Springbank Retreat Center for Ecospirituality and the Arts in Kingstree, S.C., she had the time to integrate her 12 years of T’ai Chi Chih® practice with the universe story: “An exciting and profound discovery was that the process of this meditative movement could be juxtaposed over the span of 13 billion and more years of the cosmic story. I found that each movement can relate to a special phase of the cosmic evolutionary dance. For example, the first simple movement, ‘the rocking motion,’ is a delightful embodiment of the primal explosion of love, the ‘flaring forth,’ the beginning of the cosmic unfolding of matter and life. Its invigorating thrust puts us in kinship with the cosmos.”

**Universe Story—
Both New and Ancient**

“The Universe Story changes everything,” Kathleen Conway, BVM (Richard

Marie), believes. "I have been focused on the Christian story and Christian scriptures all my life and I now see that 'our' story is so much larger and older and that the Christian story is embedded in the Universe Story."

For more than two decades, Rose Mary's retreats have focused on the meaning of the ancient Universe Story and how she is called to live as a universe being amidst interrelationships, diversity, and awe-inspiring species inhabiting planet Earth. "This year's retreat was nourished by *Journey of the Universe* by Mary Evelyn Tucker and Brian Swimme, and the multiplicity of birds singing and munching, the abundance of greens as well as mosquitoes and deer in the woods, simple nourishing earth-foods, solitude, and a universe-centered spiritual companion."

A Matthew Fox retreat that Dee attended at the Jesuit Retreat House on Staten Island also pushed her "to think more musically, mystically and with broadened perceptions of God."

For Bette Gambonini, BVM (Esther Mary), music connects her to the amazing new cosmology. "Music touches both our inner being and our outer being. To breathe in the air of our universe, to breathe out the breath of our soul connects us with the God within and the God

of the universe." Her daily mantra makes space for God and connects her with all creation.

**Breathe the body empty.
Breathe the body full.
Mind in perfect stillness
Like a mountain dew.**

(*Stand Up Sisters*, Patty Leinweber. Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center, 1999)

New Cosmology Evokes Changing Images of God

Understanding the new cosmology may change one's image of God. For Dee, God is vast, abundant, unknowable and always inviting us in relationship. The question becomes, "How we can lie in eternal embrace?" For Kathleen, "God is the energy within me and all of life urging all toward greater growth and complexity . . . I'm here today because I meet some need in the universe."

For this author, after reading Judy Cannato, Margaret Wheatley and Diarmuid O'Murchu, the Universe Story influenced my awareness of the awesomeness of the Divine who created such a complex, beautiful universe that is continually expanding. I am left speechless and yearning for a more contemplative

lifestyle. The gift of freedom from this God enlarges my responsibility with and for all living things and challenges me to confront injustice, oppression and life-diminishing circumstances.

The new cosmology motivates Rose Mary and strengthens her "not only in deepening her spirituality but also in her daily living and acting for justice." For Dee, social awareness and liberation theology framed a God in constant connection with people. "Bliss is where my gifts and the world's need intersect," says Kathleen.

All of these insights often translate into new spiritual practices such as Thich Nhat Hahn's "mindfulness; ritually walking the Cosmic Walk or the labyrinth." Engaging in centering prayer as taught by Thomas Keating, Ispiriya RSCJ, and John Main bring others to a sense of connectedness with the universe.

So as we study, contemplate, reflect on and live out the meaning of the new cosmology, let us remember, "We are made of the ashes of dead stars." (John Polkinghorne from Sallie McFague, *The Body of God*, p.44)

About the author: Marilyn Wilson, BVM (Claudia Mary) is a teacher aide and spiritual director at St. Frances Cabrini School in San Jose, Calif.

Join us for a BVM Volunteer Opportunity!

The Initial Membership Team and Associate Coordinators Sponsor Opportunities for Education and Service!



Ecuador Service Project—

March 12–21, 2012

Deadline: Feb. 1, 2012

Learn more about ministries in Ecuador and the BVMs and associates serving there. In Quito, visit the Working Boys' Center (BVMs Cindy Sullivan and Miguel Conway), and the education ministry of BVMs Saskia Alquinga Cahuatijo and Luann Brown. In Guayaquil, visit Nuevo Mundo (Associates Pat McTeague and Sonya Rendon), and Damien House Hansen's ministry (BVM Ann Credidio).

For more information contact:

Lou Anglin, Initial Membership Coordinator:
langlin@bvmcong.org

Elizabeth Avalos, Associate Coordinator:
eavalos@bvmcong.org

Milwaukee Service Project—

April 27–29, 2012

Deadline: March 27, 2012

Serve the needs of the poor and marginalized in Milwaukee County. Work with BVM sisters and associates, sharing prayer and community as they live out their core values. Meet with Sr. Josephe Marie Flynn, SSND, a leader in immigration issues in Milwaukee, and interact with immigrants and immigrant organizations to better understand current issues. Room accommodations are provided. Registration forms will be available in early January.

For more information contact:

Associate Mary Ann Krems:
jmak@charter.net or 715-344-2453



Evolutionary Christianity

Chicago Area Meeting

by Patricia M. Bombard, BVM



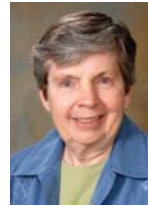
Associate
Dan Abben



Teri
Hadro, BVM



Joellen
McCarthy, BVM



Mary
Martens, BVM



Mary Alma
Sullivan, BVM



Marge
Sannasardo, BVM



Jane
Rogers, BVM

“I am in you, you are in me.”

John (15:20)



These words drawn from the Gospel of John (15:20) hold a key message of the presentations on “Evolutionary Christianity: A Moment of Grace” by Gail Worcelo, RGM, during the Chicago area meeting held Oct. 7–9, 2011. Citing the prophetic voice of the late Passionist priest and cultural historian, Thomas Berry, Worcelo challenged the more than 100 BVMs, associates and guests present to respond to

his vision that the “Great Work” of our time is the transformative movement from a “separation consciousness” to a “communion consciousness.”

Such a transformation of consciousness is central to the spiritual journey, as described by mystics. It is characterized by a unitive worldview, one that we are coming in our time to see not only through mystical experience, but also through empirical science.

BVM Associate Dan Abben said, “What resonated with me is the notion that—whether we are fully aware of it or only know it in the deepest stirrings of our heart—interconnectedness is our primary form of existence as God’s creation. I’m glad that our advances in science allow us to articulate in another way what our collective conscience has known and taught for generations.”

In addition to the message of interconnectedness, Worcelo said this shift to communion consciousness represents a new stage in the evolution of how we live out our spirituality, particularly as women and men gathered together for community and ministry. She stressed that change is a central dynamic in our universe.

Lastly, Worcelo said a new vision of our interconnected and evolving universe demands a shift in the way we have understood and imaged the Divine and one another.

Following the weekend presentations, a few BVMs and associates were invited to reflect on how these insights resonated with their own spiritual journey and that of the BVM community. Their observations are offered here along with a brief summary of the key points in Worcelo’s presentation.

An Interconnected, Emergent Universe

Thomas Berry is the author of several books which summarize the current scientific approach to the evolution of our universe and its implications for every facet of modern society, including religious life. One of the key implications of the emerging story of our universe is the deep interconnectedness of every thing that exists within it, because everything present today—from stars to us—has its common origin in the original birth process and the 13.7 billion years of its evolution.

Teri Hadro, BVM (Teresa), offered this reflection on the message of interconnectedness and its meaning for BVM spirituality: “One implication of the cosmic story for the ongoing development of BVM spirituality is that we’re on the

right track when we insist on inclusion in our processes, and in our interpretation of Jesus' actions as including a seat for everyone at God's table. If the basic building block of all that we meet is stardust, then our challenge is how to 'be in love' towards the other from the start rather than to exclude out of fear, ignorance or arrogance. Everything—persons, animals, plants, earth, stars, asteroids—commands our care and respect."

"I came away knowing that Gail's presentation had reinforced for me the interconnection of all reality," commented Joellen McCarthy, BVM. "I want to keep being reminded of this reality."

A second key point Worcelo emphasized is that, contrary to the worldview of previous generations of humans, we are coming to a new understanding that our universe is not fixed or static, but is "emergent." This view of our universe as constantly undergoing change can help us to better understand both our past and our present, Worcelo said. It will also empower us to be active participants in our future.

"When I first came across the concept some time ago that we co-create with God, that phrasing seemed a bit presumptuous," said Mary Martens, BVM (Loras). "Now I appreciate that within our human relationships and in our relationship with all of creation we are indeed an integral part of creation's evolutionary movement toward God. As the cosmic story continues to be a conscious part of BVM spirituality, it leads us into the future, strengthening the bond of unity among ourselves and with all of humanity. It highlights our interdependence within the web of all creation itself."

Talking of her own spiritual journey and Worcelo's presentations, Mary Alma Sullivan, BVM (Robert Emmett), said: "Gail's observations actually built on and gave names to what I experienced growing up. My brothers and I learned early on in our own backyard the interdependence of things. Mom always had a garden. We helped in whatever way our ages allowed. Through three seasons—rhubarb to autumn tomatoes—we witnessed how sun, rain, wind and even darkness affected the soil, seedlings and maturing plants. These experiences have remained central to my spirituality."

Answers to Spiritual Questions

Many scholars suggest that the term "spirituality" refers to the human capacity for meaning-making. It reflects the attempt through the ages by humans to answer the questions that lie within the deep mystery of existence, such as: "Who am I? Why am I here? How am I to be here with others?"

Worcelo gave new answers to these questions based on the insights of modern physics like the concept of "morphogenic fields." Like the field of gravity or a magnet that draws iron filings to itself, the human being is a morphogenic field that holds knowledge and energy. Speaking to an audience whose members were mostly middle-aged or beyond, Worcelo used the image of the morphogenic field to suggest that concern for the future should not be focused on the median age of the congregation, but on the question, "What is the energy like?"

Drawing on the teachings of cosmological physicist Brian Swimme, Worcelo answered the question, "Where are we?" with his view that "one ocean of energy is the basis of all life" and "a realm of pure potentiality." This concept of reality requires a new question: "How do we access it together?"

A new image of the Divine also emerges from this context, in which some scientists have identified an "implicate order" within our universe. Behind this order "is the mind and heart of God," said Worcelo.

Teri tied this change in viewing the Divine with her personal journey of faith development. "I reached the 'age of reason' in the early '50s. Based on what I heard at home, church and school, God was some kind of 'super-parent,' loving, but also the ultimate authority and with a punitive side (e.g., sin and hell). As an adult with an interest in the biological sciences, my developing spirituality found a home with the God of Creation, source and sustainer of all that lives. The new cosmology challenges me to further expand my appreciation of God's mystery by growing in awareness of the dynamic relationality of all creation. And this means all of creation, from the tiniest subatomic particle to the furthestmost star.

The notion of a big bang generating an ever-expanding universe is an apt metaphor for expansion of my God-concept from childhood to adulthood. But it's more than metaphor since each new, exciting piece of data about our cosmos also holds a new and exciting revelation about God for me."

Worcelo said the work of all Christians to build "the kingdom of God" strengthens the field of relationality, interconnectivity and compassion "through our own intentionality."

BVM Margaret Sannasardo (Paul Joseph) saw implications in the presentation for BVM spirituality. "I believe, as BVMs, our interior transformation continues to evolve and unfold to a oneness that bonds our spiritual consciousness to the whole of creation. Hope never dies and life continues to resonate with challenges, crisis and interior growth."

Jane Rogers, BVM (Jananne), reflected on the implications of this new worldview for her own spirituality. "Gail's presentation reiterated my thinking once again that *life is a mystery* to be lived. Each moment provides a choice in how I try to do that. Love is key. With no judgment attached, freedom can await me in doing that. I no longer entertain the 'next place' because the universe will take care of that! I simply want to make a difference through the choices and spirit I bring to *life now!*"

Dan tied all of these reflections together in a question concerning our future vision of BVM mission. "Gail affirmed one of the core aspects of our communal self identify: wherever there is one, there are all. At the same time, Gail's presentation challenged my thinking about that statement, especially as we continue to read our own signs of the times. So, for me, the question becomes, how can we support people all over the world who are authentically living out the mission that we name as our own—of being freed and helping others enjoy freedom in God's steadfast love?"

About the author: Patricia M. Bombard, BVM is the directory of the Hay Leadership Project at DePaul University, Chicago.



Sr. Mary McCauley, BVM (Mercedie) was honored on Oct. 2, 2011, as the Jubilarian of the Year at Divine Savior Holy

Angels High School in Milwaukee, Wis.

The award is given to an alumna who graduated 50 or more years ago and best exemplifies the school's mission. Mary (1956) was nominated for her dedicated life as a BVM; her work in education, administration and healthcare; and her compassionate service in immigration issues and reform.



Sr. Mary Sattgast, BVM was honored Nov. 5, 2011, at a President's Dinner hosted by Carmel Catholic High School Board of Directors and President Judith Muccheck, Ph.D., in recognition of the school's 50th anniversary.

Mary has served Carmel for 49 years as an educator and is currently registrar. Francis Cardinal George was in attendance as CCHS honored Mary. The event was held at the Sanfilippo estate in Barrington, Ill.

BVMs Join Catholic Sisters in Launching 'Welcoming Communities' for Immigration Reform

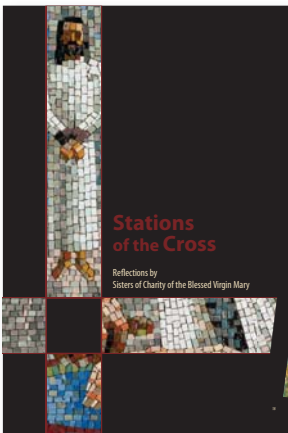


In response to the affirmation of the comprehensive immigration reform at the 2010 BVM Senate, BVM leadership has joined with 10 communities of Catholic sisters based in the Upper Mississippi River Valley who are calling on President Obama and Congress

to work together to enact comprehensive immigration reform and launched a media campaign to inform delegates, potential candidates and voters of this critical issue.

To make their point, the sisters have issued a statement on "Welcoming Communities," placed billboards throughout eastern Iowa as well as 10 in Des Moines prior to the January caucuses, and held prayer services in cities where billboards were located.

To learn more about 'Welcoming Communities' and to read the sisters statement, visit:
www.bvmcong.com | www.facebook.com/catholicsisters



IN TIME FOR LENT: Stations of the Cross Booklet Available

In tribute to BVM life at Wright Hall in Chicago, a second printing of *Stations of the Cross: Reflections by Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary* has been published and is now available as a keepsake of a treasured time and place.

The booklet depicts the mosaic Stations of the Cross created by Edmund Demers, then associate professor of art at Clarke College, who was commissioned in 1958 by Helen Wright, BVM.

For over half a century, Demers' extraordinary work has fostered personal spiritual encounters with the passion of Christ, and inspired the BVM authors' reflections in each of the booklet's Stations of the Cross.

Sara McAlpin, BVM (Philip Mary) served as project coordinator, Communications Director Angie Connolly designed and produced the booklet, and Lucy A. Kennedy photographed the mosaic art.

Order Form

Stations of the Cross: Reflections by Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

(Please print)

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Number of copies (\$5.00 each): _____

Includes postage and handling

Total amount enclosed \$ _____

Mail completed form and payment to:

Stations of the Cross
 Office of Communications
 1100 Carmel Drive
 Dubuque, IA 52003-7991

Make checks payable to Sisters of Charity, BVM.



Sister on the Hill: Carmelina Meyers, BVM

by Jody Iler

From the time she was a little girl, pressing her nose against the window of her house as she watched older children walk to school, Carmelina Meyers knew she would be a good student. Before she finished eighth grade, she knew she wanted to be a sister *and* a teacher. As a student at Immaculata High School in Chicago, she knew she wanted to be a BVM. "I loved it there; there was such a friendly spirit between the sisters and the girls."

Although a good student, Carmelina didn't like to talk in front of the class. Her freshman class teacher, Geraldine Barker, BVM (Henrietta), encouraged her to speak up, saying, "If you have a talent or

gift, you need to share it." In time, she and Henrietta became very close—and sharing her gifts would become a way of life for Carmelina.

After three years teaching elementary school in Illinois, Carmelina went to teach in Hempstead, N.Y. After six years, she moved to St. Gregory the Great in Belterose, where some of her most cherished memories were made, and where, she says, "Life was *very* interesting!" The school and convent were in the process of being finished; before it was quite ready, the sisters shuttled classes around from church halls to the vestibule and even outdoors, making things both fun and challenging.

Carmelina later went to St. Ferdinand in Chicago, teaching religion and English to seventh and eighth grade students for the next 28 years. St. Ferdinand's pastor encouraged the sisters to become more involved in liturgy. Carmelina completed a two-year program at the Liturgical Institute of Chicago and became active in the liturgy while also teaching.

This groundwork was instrumental in the serendipitous turn of events leading to her work in campus ministry at Madonna High School in Chicago for seven years. She prepared liturgies, readied students

for first communion and confirmation, scheduled retreats and taught morality and social justice classes. "The students were ethnically diverse and so interesting," she remembers.

In retirement, Carmelina volunteered regularly at Ten Thousand Villages, a fair trade shop featuring handcrafted articles from developing countries. "I loved meeting all the different people," Carmelina recalls. Later, she turned to creating hand-made crafts that she donated to fundraising events.

In 2009 Carmelina came to Mount Carmel in Dubuque, Iowa, where she can be found working with the "Cut-Ups" craft group every weekday except Tuesdays, when she attends class at the Roberta Kuhn Center. She does cross-stitch and keeps in touch with family and friends. "Retirement also gives me extra time to pray," she shares.

"I feel I've been very blessed and I'm grateful for all the gifts I've received. At those rare times when things seemed dark, a new dimension of spirituality often opened up for me. I've lived with, laughed with, and been supported by many wonderful people. Being a BVM is one of my most cherished gifts."

IN LOVING MEMORY

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

Please pray for the Sisters of Charity, BVM who died September – December 2011

Elizabeth G. Sullivan
(Timothy Mary)
May 15, 1940–Sept. 11, 2011

Ann Patrice Durr
Oct. 27, 1915–Oct. 7, 2011

Marguerite Neumann
(Marguerite Christine)
May 7, 1914–Oct. 10, 2011

Lou Marie Fideler (Louis Marie)
Aug. 28, 1923–Oct. 14, 2011

Peggy Nolan (Timothy Maura)
March 12, 1943–Oct. 18, 2011

Roberdette Burns
Aug. 28, 1909–Nov. 3, 2011

Anina Allen
July 11, 1920–Dec. 1, 2011

Ellen Murphy
June 4, 1912–Dec. 5, 2011

Nan Ross (John William)
Feb. 21, 1928–Dec. 19, 2011

BVM Associates
Rose Nebel
Jan. 7, 1917–Nov. 15, 2011

To read a sister's obituary/reflections, visit: www.bvmcong.org/whatsnew_obits.cfm. A memorial fund has been established for the sisters. If you would like to add to this memorial, please send your gift to the BVM Development Office. For online giving, go to www.bvmcong.org.



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BVM docents share their experience of the exhibit at the National Mississippi River Museum:



Lou Anglin, BVM: Adult visitors told me about sisters they had had as teachers and what loss they feel for students today who will not have the same experiences. Many adults who spoke of those teachers recalled sisters' high expectations and at the same time, their kindness and availability.



Sara McAlpin, BVM (Philip Mary): My response to listening to exhibit-goers was one of both pride and humility—proud that people said such commendable things about women religious, yet humbled to think that so many people happily remember their experiences with sisters in various ministries and praise them highly.



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an immigrant
I was a ~~stranger~~
and you welcomed me.

Matt. 25:35

Jesus

Catholic Sisters of the Upper Mississippi River Valley | www.facebook.com/catholicsisters

Turn to p. 18 to learn more.

**BVMs Join Catholic Sisters in Launching
'Welcoming Communities' for Immigration Reform**

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