

Salt



Winter 2010 • A Publication of the Sisters of Charity, BVM

**Living with Less ...
Discovering More**

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, 10*)

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2010 Calendar

April

- 18 Immaculata HS Alumnae Luncheon, Chateau Ritz, Chicago
- 25 St. Mary HS Alumnae Luncheon, The Carlisle, Lombard, Ill.

May

- 2 Mass of Remembrance for Friends, Family of Deceased BVMs, Mt. Carmel

BVM Website Feature:



Did you know you can send an email to a sister from the BVM website?

Simply type in her name, or religious name, in the appropriate field and then click search. When you find the sister you are looking for, click on the email link to the right to send her a message.

To find the sister directory go to:
www.bvmcong.org/contact_directory.cfm.

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On the cover: "We are people of faith who believe that the seed's death brings new life, that having nothing may result in gaining everything." In this issue, journey with BVMs who are choosing to live with less—and who soon discover, like the winter tree that lies dormant and stripped—the abundance of spring. Photo by Angie Connolly.



SEASONing

Dear *SALT* Readers,

“You hollow us out, God, so that we may carry you, and you endlessly fill us only to be emptied again. Make smooth our inward spaces and sturdy, that we may hold you with less resistance and bear you with deeper grace.”

Jan L. Richardson

As *Salt* goes to the printer, Lent 2010 begins. The articles in this issue, fittingly, are about stripping, emptying, simplifying—both voluntarily and as a necessary part of life.

The theme, “choosing less,” captures a challenging facet of the Christian paradox. Stripping, emptying, simplifying are discouraging words in our consumption-driven economy. To those who are materially poor, stripping, emptying and simplifying are anything but voluntary. Reflections by BVMs and associates illumine the other side of the paradox and illustrate the kind of “spirituality of hollowing out” described in Jan Richardson’s poem.

Most of us are familiar with the necessary stripping that accompanies the life cycle—we move to smaller spaces and need to surrender possessions and mementoes from our past; we’re not as agile as we used to be so the exercise equipment gathers dust; our eyesight dims or our reaction time slows and we decide that driving the car is no longer a good idea.

The stripping of a life, piece by piece, can be a discouraging and grief-filled process. The paradox of choosing the stripping rather than shying away from the pain, comes with what happens next: the empty spaces of our hearts become filled, not with sadness or resentment but with a new understanding of the things that matter. Our experience of doing without gives us increased sensitivity to the deprivations others endure. We become predisposed to empathy, more inclined to share what we have, freer to advocate for those who lack food, shelter, clothing, dignity.

Another part of the picture emerges when the stripping, emptying or simplifying is voluntary. Choosing to recycle water, conserve electricity, consume less gasoline so that the world’s natural resources will last longer and benefit more people also is part of the paradox. Cynics may say that when we use less, those likely to gain more are folks who have the means to purchase what they want rather than those who are disadvantaged. How our choices impact our sisters and brothers who are thirsty or cold or isolated is the core of the paradox. We believe that what we do makes a difference, that our choices make positive change for our world.

For Christians, this isn’t as strange as it sounds! After all, we are people of faith who believe that the seed’s death brings new life, that having nothing may result in gaining everything. We believe that the cross was a beginning and not an end.

We say with the poet,

“You hollow us out, God, so that we may carry you.”

Mary Ann Zollman, BVM

Thina Thale, BVM

Jeri Hades, BVM



Scripture-base Reflections:

Living our Values with Hope, Gratitude and Interdependence

by Rose Mary Meyer, BVM

The Values of Jesus

One of the headlines in a recent *National Catholic Reporter* was “The Grace of Living on the Margins.” As I was reflecting on this headline, I recalled the values portrayed in the Jesus story revealed in the Gospels. Jesus grew up and lived on the margins of a colonial society ruled by the imperial powers of his time.

In contrast to societal expectations, Jesus valued a life of radical hospitality, creating a space for attentiveness to the Divine within and around him. Jesus chose to spend time in the desert for contemplation. He used the lilies of the field as teachers so that we might understand more clearly the value of ourselves, formed by our Creator.

Aware of the pressing needs in society, Jesus used the beatitudes as invitations to action. Honoring the diversity and uniqueness of gifts, he provided a variety of ways to offer generous outreach to others. Generosity was a theme in his parables of the prodigal child and the payment of the same wages to all the workers, no matter how long they worked.

Perhaps one of the most quoted passages from Luke is “The Spirit of our God is upon me. God has anointed me to bring good news to those who are poor, to proclaim liberty to those who are captives, to give recovery of sight to those who are blind, to release those in prison . . . (Luke 4, 18).” We too are anointed. We are baptized and confirmed. To be anointed is to be reminded of our sacredness. To be anointed carries obligations.

Challenges and Questions

How do we challenge our consumer culture? How do we challenge structural injustices such as colonialism, sexism, militarism, racism, dualism? How do we live as earthlings when

How we live our values shapes the quality of our lives with one another.

biosystems are on the brink of collapse, global warming is happening at an alarming pace, and many life species are facing extermination? How we live these questions depends on our values.

Jesus called us the “light of the world.” What a challenge for us! Do we really value that designation? Do we really believe that we are home to Divinity, that we are called to let that Divine light shine forth in our heart-head actions?

How do we incorporate contemplation into our lives? A Ziggy cartoon once showed an “in box” stacked with papers an inch high, an “out box” filled with papers approximately a quarter of an inch high, and a “beyond in or out” box filled with papers three inches high. To lead a contemplative life allows us to approach the content of those boxes with an Incarnational understanding, where the ordinary is the extraordinary.

Less Becomes More

Kay Derner Brown, BVM associate, reflects on her need to downsize contents in her family home to fit into a condo. She found creative, meaningful ways of sharing her possessions but admits the hardest part was deciding which books to keep. Her values led her to conclude that “getting rid of so much has been a freeing experience for me.”

Laurene Brady, BVM feels that her parents taught her values more by example than by words. Their lives reflected simple living as well as living for others, including folks from various

cultures and ethnic groups. She tries to model her life on these values.

Sue Wedekind, BVM associate, speaks of a daily routine that now reflects earth consciousness. She recalls changes in her values from years ago when, for example, children ran from one room to the next, flipping on light switches. Now Sue fills her coffee pot over a dish pan in case precious water goes astray. At twilight she treads carefully through dark rooms; an energy saving light bulb is on in the room she inhabits for the evening. She reflects that her values have created a sort of game for her to play to see how much she can save and recycle.

If one’s value is to live with “less,” what does that mean? Pat Thalhuber, BVM (Herbert Mary) explains that in many native cultures “less” implies being without relatives. One of the phrases used by Lakota people is *mitakuye*, meaning “all my relatives.” We are all related.

How we live our values shapes the quality of our lives with one another. Values mold the quality of relationships among interactions with all species. Pat comments, “. . . exploring my values resets my compass and gives me greater access to my deepest sources of energy, vision and hope. Working with values becomes a force for personal as well as collective change.”

In the Gospel of Mark, we read that a person pleaded with Jesus, “I want clarity of sight.” That request is also ours. May we experience a gospel-graced existence of living our values with hope, gratitude and interdependence among all in God’s creation. That’s living on the margins!

About the author: Rose Mary Meyer, BVM (Sebastian) is director of Project IRENE in Berwyn, Ill.



Vicki Smurlo, BVM (l.) works with Stephanie Ticas, Tatiana Juarez and Luz Ticas as they collect and recycle—one bag, one box, *one bite* at a time.

Consuming Simply: *One Bite at a Time*

by Vicki Smurlo, BVM

“We did not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors; we are borrowing it from our Children.”

This ancient Indian proverb taken from an Indigenous Rights quotation, can be a profound and significant mantra as we think about ecological practices that benefit the common good and enable us to be just stewards of the earth. The daily challenge for each of us is to consistently respond with a conversion from *simply consuming* to *consuming simply*.

Our country has enormous access to natural resources, but have we gone to the extreme by simply consuming what God intended for the common good? In Genesis, God created humans and put them in charge of all living things. Now and every day hereafter is our time to be in charge, and we know full well that everything God created is for the common good. What is our commitment to a consumption conversion lived out as God intended?

Call to mind the phenomena that even a tiny pebble thrown into a lake stirs movement across the entire lake, and the flapping of a butterfly’s wings affects the air for miles beyond. Likewise, the choices we make have ripple effects that cause global warming.

Many of us have already experienced this in changes to our local climates as well as in other parts of the world. Our commitment to *consuming simply* can help slow down the continuation of global warming that has already caused such dire effects.

Mindfulness, Commitment, Action

What might *consuming simply* entail? First, it requires a consistent mindfulness of our actions; second, a commitment

to make changes reflecting honorable stewardship of our natural resources; and third, a belief that each action, like the pebble and the butterfly’s wings, makes a difference. It is a daunting challenge.

Consider the wisdom of an old sage’s answer when questioned about how to eat an elephant. The sage’s reply: “One bite at a time.” In saving for the common good, this applies to us. One bite at a time might be using energy efficient light bulbs or using “elbow grease” in lieu of running water to clean driveways or even dirty dishes. It also might be keeping our vehicles in good condition to improve fuel efficiency, minimizing water used for lawns and turning off lights in areas when not needed.

Our conscious and honorable stewardship might be reflected in the temperature and duration of the air conditioning or heat that we use. Even eliminating our use of bottled water (that consumes petroleum and energy in making the plastic containers and takes water from others), might be an area to consume simply. If bottled water is used, is all the water consumed and not wasted before the bottle goes into a landfill? Hopefully, there is a concurrent, consistent recycling effort to help this earth that we are borrowing from our children.

We share our earth with countless other living species. An attitude of consuming simply with mindfulness, a commitment to good stewardship and a belief that each daily effort can make a difference will affect the common good. Therefore, whether ours is access to gallons of gas, watts of electricity or gallons of water, let us unceasingly address the elephant of global warming and live by an ecology that saves for the common good.

About the author: Vicki Smurlo, BVM is a social worker at the Kaiser Hospice in Los Angeles.



Emphasis is placed on simpler, less costly and homemade menu items.

MOUNT CARMEL CAMPUS

Back to the 'Simple Life'

If nothing else, the year 2009 will long be remembered as the time when Americans finally realized the necessity for downsizing. This year, with the financial heartaches of the stock market, mortgage and credit crises, most individuals and families met head-on with the reality of having to live with less in terms of household budgets and true needs versus costs.

Residents and staff at the Mount Carmel campus in Dubuque, Iowa, felt the same crunch and heard the familiar requests to reduce at all levels. Everyone was asked to consider personally what they could do to reduce and to offer suggestions for ways to cut back, to live and work more simply.

Upfront and honest communication between leadership and the residents and employees has resulted in a number of great ideas to reduce, reuse and recycle—three very important Rs for responding to the crises of our time.

Employee Actions

Many of the 300 Mount Carmel employees were invited to reduce working hours if they so desired, and their response was overwhelming. The downsizing process saw significant changes through attrition and modified staff hours, but no employee layoffs or total reductions. Employees worked hand-in-hand

with administrators, displaying a true commitment to make the changes viable.

The Process to Simplify

Administrators, with staff and residents, engaged in a parallel process to simplify, including the way sisters live and the services provided. The administrators continue to work to align staffing with essential services—an ongoing process into the future.

Here are some of the ways residents have agreed to conserve:

- Simplified meals, with fewer high-end menu items and additional homemade entrees.
- More laundry done in-house.
- Lessened security coverage without jeopardizing safety.
- Enrollment in Medicaid, reducing costs for medical supplies and services, and participation in the Elderly Waiver Program.



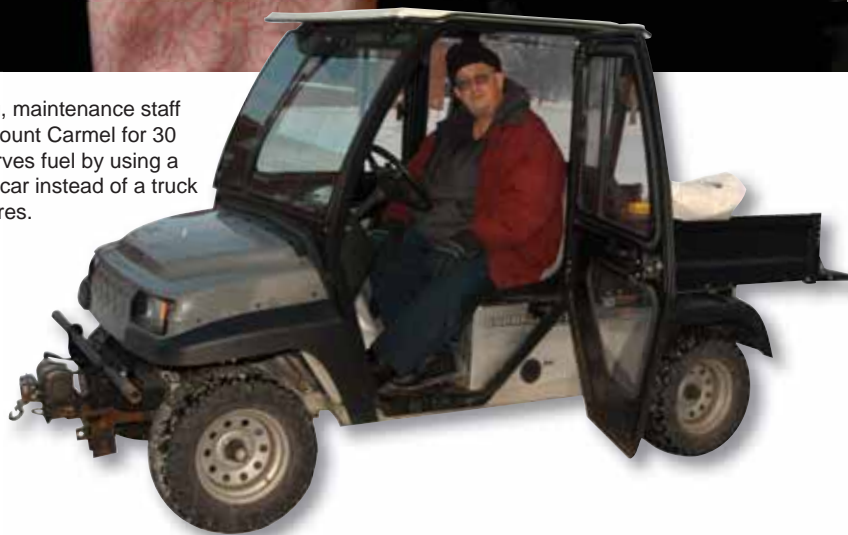
Noella Cavallero, BVM (I.) and Frances Schaeffer, BVM (Louis) sort and arrange clothes as the distributors of Mount Carmel's swap shop—the Mall in the Hall—where one person's castoff is another's treasure.

- Keeping visits to medical and dental professionals to a minimum, meaning as needed or yearly check-ups, when possible, or combining appointments with other residents.
- Becoming more aware of the costs of items requested, such as computer supplies, travel and clothing.
- Reduced newspaper and magazine subscriptions in the house.
- Discontinuation of personalized stationery.
- More frequent visits to the "Mall in the Hall," an in-house swap shop of clothing and other personal items.

Mount Carmel Administrator Joyce Cravens has been a part of these reduction processes from the beginning. She shares, "Through this process, our main focus is one of caution in downsizing. The top priority on campus is always safety. We simply work to create an awareness of the situation; and being aware is the first step in reducing costs."



Denny Young, maintenance staff member at Mount Carmel for 30 years, conserves fuel by using a campus club car instead of a truck for many chores.



Diane Brondyke and the BVM Development staff continue to work hard to find additional grant monies to support operations and equipment purchases. This income will offset costs, and serve as another proactive measure taken on campus to meet expenses.

Communication Is Key

Communication has been an important factor as well. During these months of transition, Joyce and other staff ask

one thing from the residents: patience. The staff is diligent about meeting sisters' basic needs, but they ask the sisters to be patient as they may have to wait a bit longer for reasonable and essential services, which remain timely but not instantaneous.

When sharing about the downsizing efforts, Mary Ellen Caldwell, BVM (Eugenio) comments, "The quality of care is so good here that the quantity can go down. The care remains superb."

Changes on Campus

In terms of the physical campus, administrators have taken steps to reduce in several areas. They have lessened outsourced services, such as doing fewer window and floor cleanings per year. Offices are now cleaned on a biweekly basis, versus nightly, with modifications to scheduling and other services provided by housekeeping. These measures and others have all occurred without compromising cleanliness of the house. Additional landscaped areas mean less lawn to mow, again reducing expenditures for outsourced lawn care services.

Maintenance personnel use the club car more frequently instead of the campus truck to reduce gas consumption. They utilize two-way radios now, not cell phones.

Employees campus-wide realize several changes as well, but not without an understanding of the need to live more responsibly and respectfully. Discontinued are the employee "Lunch on Us" events, nursing staff and dining services' meal privileges, food supplies in the employee break areas and gifts for volunteers. These extras, although appreciated, were unnecessary.

Permanent Measures for the Right Reasons

Changes and reductions taking place on the Mount Carmel campus are definitely here to stay. It appears, however, that this renewed way of living is far from new. In the spirit of Mary Frances Clarke: "By committing ourselves to consecrated poverty we choose to live a simple life, accepting privation, if necessary, in the spirit of the Gospel" (*BVM Constitutions*, 43).

"This is our call to be who we are as BVMs," says Gertrude Ann Sullivan, BVM. "We are summoned back to our roots."

About the authors: This article is a compilation of many: Joyce Cravens, Mount Carmel Administrator; Alice Caulfield, BVM (Alissio), Community Representative; Gertrude Ann Sullivan, BVM; Florence Heflin, BVM (Floretta), Community Representative; Martha Ryder, BVM (Briant); Mary Ellen Caldwell, BVM (Eugenio); Carey Lange, former Communications Specialist.

The Inner Freedom of Letting Go

by Bertha Fox, BVM

Simplify! Downsize! Rightsize! Dejunk!

Such buzzwords assure us that living with less is the right thing to do in our contemporary society; most of us have too much. If we decide to embrace discardia—after determining our joy-to-stuff ratio¹—should we slim down our living space too? Or share it instead? Then what becomes of our privacy? Our possessions? One question leads to another . . .

Simplifying is not simple. Many who have tried already know this. Four BVMs engaged in personal journeys of simplification reflect on what happened to them and to their space, privacy and possessions.

An Ongoing and Spiritual Process



Mary Gene Kinney, BVM (Antonilla), currently based in Chicago, counsels persons with addictions. In this brief essay she shows how our BVM Mission relates to the

topic of “space, privacy and possessions” and the overall theme of “letting go.”

As I thought about this topic I was reminded of our BVM Mission—“being freed and helping others enjoy freedom in God’s steadfast love (BVM Constitutions, 10).” It seems to me that becoming free is a lifelong spiritual process that requires space, both physical and mental.

I need the physical space to be able to have privacy and the independence to discover the areas of myself that keep me from being free. It is the mental space—the way I think about life—that is most challenging. When my

mental space is filled with fear, negativity, resentment or selfishness, I do not have room for kindness, tolerance, generosity, humor and peacefulness.

All of these have to do with my relationships with others. When I have peacefulness, I can more easily let go of hurt, anger and distrust and more readily divest myself of physical possessions I no longer need.



Janita Curoe, BVM, ministered in Tennessee and Mississippi for nearly 30 years in schools and adult education centers, in jails and prison work-release programs. Janita’s

move to Mount Carmel in 2009 has left her in a quandary: “Am I living with more, or living with less?”

For 19 years I lived in a one-bedroom apartment in Canton, Miss. My neighbors moved in and out. We got along fine, helped each other, shared our goodies. My apartment had four



BVMs Maureen Patrice Fury (above) and Jean Beste (r.) unpack and decorate in their new roles as Mount Carmel apartment roommates.

windows and faced a large grassy area with two lovely oak trees. I enjoyed watching the squirrels and birds and treasured my privacy.

In March 2009, I left my hermitage and my inner-city students for a one-window room at Mount Carmel. I downsized from three large closets to one small closet. I brought too many clothes! Many items I hauled to Dubuque I have given away. I am still downsizing, living with less but not needing a thing.

I live with nearly 200 BVMs in the newly remodeled building in which I began my BVM life. Although the dining



SPACE PRIVACY POSSESSIONS

room can be overwhelming, the meals are delicious and varied. But I still miss my hermitage.



Mary DeCock, BVM (Donatus) taught journalism, English and social studies for 40 years at Mundelein College, Chicago. In 2009 she moved from an apartment to

Mount Carmel. Mary reminisces about how various living situations affected her space, privacy and possessions.

In college I had a roommate (we had clutter problems), few possessions (we wore uniforms!) and little privacy (our lives were pretty much common knowledge). As a novice at Mount Carmel I had an alcove, a laundry bag, a 14-inch metal locker and no clutter problems. When I taught at St. Joseph Academy (Des Moines) I had a bed, a chest of three drawers in a student dorm, and privacy and sleep problems.

In the Mundelein Skyscraper I had a private room with bed, closet, desk and sink. At our five-person apartment, four shared one bathroom and I discovered a real need for bookshelves, desk and privacy. At my next apartment—three persons and two baths—we had a cat that didn't know about privacy. My last apartment for three persons had two baths, sizeable rooms, lots of bookshelves and required more possessions. We all respected privacy.

At Mount Carmel my space has been greatly downsized, but it's adequate for personal needs and comfort. My possessions are also greatly downsized, but adequate for personal needs and interests. Privacy? Our lives are pretty much common knowledge again.

Mary's Observations:

- Privacy in any situation requires a certain amount of physical and psychological space.
- One irony of the Space Age: millions are without adequate space or possessions for health and livelihood. I imagine they haven't much time to worry about privacy.
- Downsizing space and possessions for us BVMs may have as much to do with the vow of poverty as with the green revolution.

Maureen Patrice Fury, BVM, is a chaplain at Mercy Hospital, Dubuque. In late 2009 she moved from a single apartment to a Mount Carmel apartment with Jean Beste, BVM, former regional representative. During her interview Maureen described some challenges presented by the move.

When the congregation asked us to look seriously at ways to save money, Jean and I decided living together could be our way. This was like God saying to me: "It's time, Maureen, to let go of things. Look at the broader community, the common good, not just yourself."

I thought I lived a simple life until I started to pack. I knew I had to down-

size a lot even after we decided to keep some of my things for our new apartment. But it was very hard, all that letting go. There's still more letting go, and it's not just things. We have less space and changes in privacy. After eight years by myself, this is challenging. But it stretches me to "get freed up." That brings me closer to God, and everyone.

Things I thought were essential don't seem so important now. I wonder whether I needed them at all. Maybe I ought to go back to the "one trunk, one suitcase" BVM tradition. There are so many people who don't have anything or anyone. That bothers me. In my work I see lots of trauma, death and grief—hard things. But these help me to figure out what really matters.

A Way to Live the BVM Mission

The reflections by Mary Gene, Janita, Mary and Maureen Patrice tell us that downsizing is not easy and seems unending. Some degree of inner freedom is a prerequisite, but even then one must cope with the human desire to accumulate things. Perhaps most important, these four sisters show a way to live the BVM mission (and everyone's mission) of becoming free in order to help others enjoy freedom in God's steadfast love.

These are not world-shaking actions. And yet they are, because what one person does affects everyone, everywhere. Our whole world is changed because these BVMs are giving things away. Pollution is prevented; energy is saved; God's love is made touchable.

Dr. Seuss said this in another way. In *The Lorax*, his 1971 children's book about the gradual environmental destruction of a lovely fictitious country, the narrator concludes:

Unless someone like you
cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better.
It's not.

Footnote:

1 For information about recent buzzwords check: www.wordspy.com or www.google.com. It's fun!

About the author: Bertha Fox, BVM (Dolorose) taught in the Clarke College Music Department for many years. She now lives at Mount Carmel and is a volunteer teacher at the Roberta Kuhn Center. She also recycles books for re-use.

There is an appointed time

for everything, according to the Book of Ecclesiastes. Although its author's oft-quoted list does not specifically mention "a time to work and a time to retire," it's worth reflecting on the transition that occurs between the two. As the average lifespan has increased significantly during the twentieth century, more Americans are spending a longer time in retirement. This is not to say, however, that "retirement" is to be equated with "not working."

Perhaps no one knows this better than the BVMs who live in the Mount Carmel Continuing Care Retirement Community. There, a small group recently shared their experiences of making the transition from active ministries to retirement ministries in a new setting. Like so many others who find themselves facing a choice or situation that indicates the time to make such a change, their conversation centered at first around shifting gears, downsizing and experiencing losses.

There is an attitudinal shift required at the outset. We live in a culture that equates one's importance with what one does, with how well or how much one produces. Working and earning are valued. When one retires, even after a long and successful work life, the congratulations and good wishes of co-workers and colleagues soon fade. There is no longer a workplace waiting. So it's important to recognize and to believe that personal dignity and worth transcend being employed, and that retirement can be a blessing.



Mary Ellen Caldwell, BVM (Eugenio) looks on as Ann Regina Dobel, BVM begins her volunteer receptionist duties in the Caritas Center.

A Time to Every Purpose

by Mary Martens, BVM



A Difficult Transition

BVMs who have moved to Mount Carmel admitted their mixed feelings about making the transition. Some decided it was time to move where they could continue living independently in the Mount Carmel setting. Others recognized that they needed aspects of assisted living or skilled care because of health issues and increasing frailty. Still others had been encouraged to make the move even though it was not their choice. In any event, everyone had anticipated facing the need to downsize when moving to a smaller physical space, and the feelings of loss which invariably accompany age and diminishment. Some could let go easily, while others struggled.

The downsizing part was not without its humorous moments. Whether moving from Chicago by car or from San Francisco by plane, getting rid of furnishings and packing up clothing and personal belongings was a major effort. And getting everything to fit inside one room was even more challenging, whether moving from a small apartment or a local community. "I thought I was already living simply," one person remarked, as she faced a bedroom floor stacked high and deep with her mailed boxes.

With the paring down process, there's an end in sight. With the sense of loss, it's a little less predictable. "In our U.S. culture your sense of identity is attached to your job," stated one BVM. "I remember the first time I saw my name in the BVM directory, with

nothing after it indicating a ministry!" Another commented, "You lose the ministry, the place and the people you loved. If you've lived in a different geographic location, there is a climate and a culture change. You move away from the desert heat and architecture and Hispanic culture to a completely different environment. Yet I appreciate the beauty here as well."

The group agreed that "it's true there was something special to us that we no longer have, but there is indeed all this beauty around us." At first, the losses were acute, remembered one BVM. "But gradually you get used to living with less. Actually there is a transformative effect with diminishment." And from another, "My initial reaction was that everything diminished...then it became clear that I had everything!"

Time becomes a Gift

Everything . . . With that thought, the group's focus shifted from past losses to present gifts, especially the gift of time. The BVM Philosophy of Retirement contains the statement, "We believe retirement can be a time of blessing and opportunity for the entire BVM community and for each individual sister." (See sidebar.) One participant suggested, "Time had been a base for many aspects of giving; now, time has become a gift, the gift of receiving."

There were reflective comments about "time to be, to find out who you are; time to deepen spirituality." The retired live each day as it comes. Now, with fewer distractions, they take seri-

BVM Philosophy of Retirement

(excerpt)

We believe retirement can be a time of blessing and opportunity for the entire BVM community and for each individual sister:

- A time to deepen and grow spiritually through prayer and reflection.
- A time to continue making visible to others the presence of God.
- A time to develop and deepen relationships.
- A time to explore new learnings, skills and opportunities.
- A time to accept suffering, diminishment and loss, participating in their transformative power.
- A time to enjoy leisure.
- A time to do justice.
- A time to integrate life's experiences in preparation for eternal life.

We believe retirement is a sacred time, a holy time, a blessing.

ously the ministry to "pray for people; union with God becomes a source of energy for the world of ministry." And there is freedom, one of our BVM core values, "to be and to love and to continue to commit totally." Often the love is shown in service to others or to the BVM community.

Volunteers are always needed to help out in an office, to take a turn at the reception desk, to visit, read to or write notes for bedridden sisters. There are many things to do in a place as large and busy with activities, events and hospitality needs as is Mount Carmel. Visitors frequently remark on the beauty of Mount Carmel and on the level of energy that is palpable, especially in the Caritas dining room during mealtimes. Physical health and mental acuity will diminish, and there are losses that come with the death of family members and friends. But everyone continues to do what she can to be helpful for as long as she can. "I feel gifted and graced" was the way one retired sister put it.

About the author: Mary Martens, BVM (Loras) is administrative assistant at the BVM Center at Mount Carmel.



BVM volunteers Regina Megivern (Verna) (l.) and Veronica 'Jackie' Burke (Timothena) help serve breakfast in the Memory Care Unit of the Caritas Center, freeing up staff to complete other needed tasks.

Surviving the Great Depression

by Sara McAlpin, BVM

For many Americans, recent news reports of recession, unemployment, hunger, foreclosures, homelessness and widespread economic insecurity have painted a new and unfamiliar picture of the country. For others, however, a hint of déjà vu accompanies these contemporary realities. Many BVMs, for example, remember vividly their experiences during the Great Depression of the 1930s—a time which one author notes still has the “power to haunt the national memory.”

Generosity in Hard Times

A thread of generosity, even in the midst of impoverishment, winds through many BVM memories of the 1930s. Born in 1923, Vivina Bly, BVM not only grew up in the Depression but also lost her father in 1929. Her mother received a monthly government check for herself and her three children but it “was never enough for a month’s expenses,” so she borrowed regularly from a generous neighbor.

Vivina still remembers, too, the compassionate generosity of the owner of nearby Eddy’s Market. Standing in line one day, she wondered why he waited on everyone else first. As the single remaining customer, she asked for the usual order: four hot dogs. Eddy wrapped up four pork chops instead, saying, “You’ve had enough hot dogs this week.” “My mother actually cried,” recalls Vivina.

Similarly, Virginia Hughes, BVM (Flocella) remembers “making clothes out of drapery samples” from the furniture store where her father worked and relying on a “shoe repair kit” from the dime store instead of buying new shoes. “But we always had enough to eat,” she adds, even though her family was well aware of others who were without food. Born in 1919, she grew up with four siblings in the railroad town of Burlington, Iowa. Virginia was familiar with the “Knights of the Road” who regularly begged for food in the local area. “My mother never turned any of them away,” says Virginia.

No Sense of Deprivation—Parents Protected Children

Born in 1920 and the oldest of eight children, Mary Ellen Caldwell, BVM (Eugenio) recalls that her family grew up in Milwaukee with “economic tightness.” She adds, “And yet we didn’t have a sense of deprivation, mostly because we never did have anything lavish.” This truth was echoed by many others.

While Vivina Bly shopped at the local market in Clinton, Iowa, Gabrielle Hagerty, BVM, who was born in 1919, grew up with her four siblings on a farm near Tama, Iowa. They “knew it was hard times” but had enough to eat because they raised it. Her father sold oats to a neighboring cattle farmer. His earnings bought only flour, sugar and other staples which the family couldn’t produce themselves.

Associate Mary Schmidt, born in 1920, also grew up on a farm near DeWitt, Iowa, where her father fed cattle. “I think that gave us a better living,” she says. While her family was able to produce most of what they ate, they knew that “people were begging for food,” especially at the local rectory. Although she occasionally heard her parents talk about poverty, she feels that they “protected” the family from some of the severe realities they were facing.

Echoing Mary’s conviction, Virginia comments, “Parents protected children from knowing about the depression.”



Children line up outside the soup kitchen at the Dubuque Rescue Mission in 1940. Insert: Hungry men wait in the same line for their turn to eat.

Mary Ellen adds, “Children didn’t know what parents were suffering.” She and her siblings, she feels, were “insulated” because their lives were relatively simple to begin with: their mother made many of their clothes; they could walk to the park to play tennis, skate and perform plays; the local parish was the center of social activity; and the city library provided books, opera scores and other entertainment. It was, as Mary Ellen notes, “a different world” from today’s world.

After graduation she entered Mount Carmel and still marvels that her parents did not discourage that decision even though they might have needed her help at home.

On the other hand, when Jocile Valliere, BVM graduated, her parents asked her to delay entrance into the congregation until her younger sister



Courtesy of the John Vachon Collection, Center for Dubuque History, Loras College. Originals in the Library of Congress Photograph Division.

graduated. Born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1910, Jocile experienced the depression years as a young adult and joined her six older siblings in "helping out" by working for two years as a secretary for an insurance company before entering the congregation.

Though many more experiences fill the memory banks of these and other BVMs who lived through the Great Depression, one common truth emerges: their families managed to survive. Unlike many of their contemporaries, they were not hungry and they knew well a lesson worth learning today: it is possible to live with less when needs and wants are limited.

About the author: Sara McAlpin, BVM (Philip Mary) was part of the English faculty for many years at Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa, where she now works part-time in the Archives.

Briefs



Saskia Alquinga, BVM recently participated in a leadership course as part of a Jesuit initiative called "Fe y Alegria (Faith and Joy)." Class groups created various leadership projects, with the best project to be financed. Saskia's group project, "Cultura de Paz y no Violencia (Culture of Peace and Nonviolence)" won.

The project involves the mediation of agreements and solving conflicts and is directed toward students of a Jesuit grade school and high school called "Escuela/Colegio Ruminahui." Saskia, who lives and teaches in Quito, Ecuador, says, "Ours is a project of peace within a world which needs more love. We encounter new paths and alternative solutions with joint agreements."



The recent canonization of Father Damien de Veuster on Oct. 11, 2009, held special meaning for **Ann Credidio, BVM** in Ecuador. As a founder of Damien House in Guayaquil and the U.S.-based Damien House charitable organization, Ann plays an integral role in the lives of patients with Hansen's disease.

Rather than attend the canonization ceremony in Rome, Ann chose instead to take some Damien House patients to Sunday Mass at the Guayaquil Cathedral. There, a spokesperson for the residents gave a testimonial to her ministry as Damien House celebrated its 15th anniversary. Ann commented in her fall newsletter, "Our patients rejoice knowing that their saint is responsible for keeping the doors open. They truly know that God provides!"



Charmaine LeMaire, BVM has won the Rozie Schermerhorn Award, presented by the Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP) in Hiawatha, Iowa, to an individual who has provided exemplary service to and acts as an advocate for low-income people within the local communities.

Charmaine's commitment to assisting homeless families and children was instrumental in creating the Inn Circle project which converted a hotel into transitional housing units. The BVMs adopted several rooms to renovate for this project.

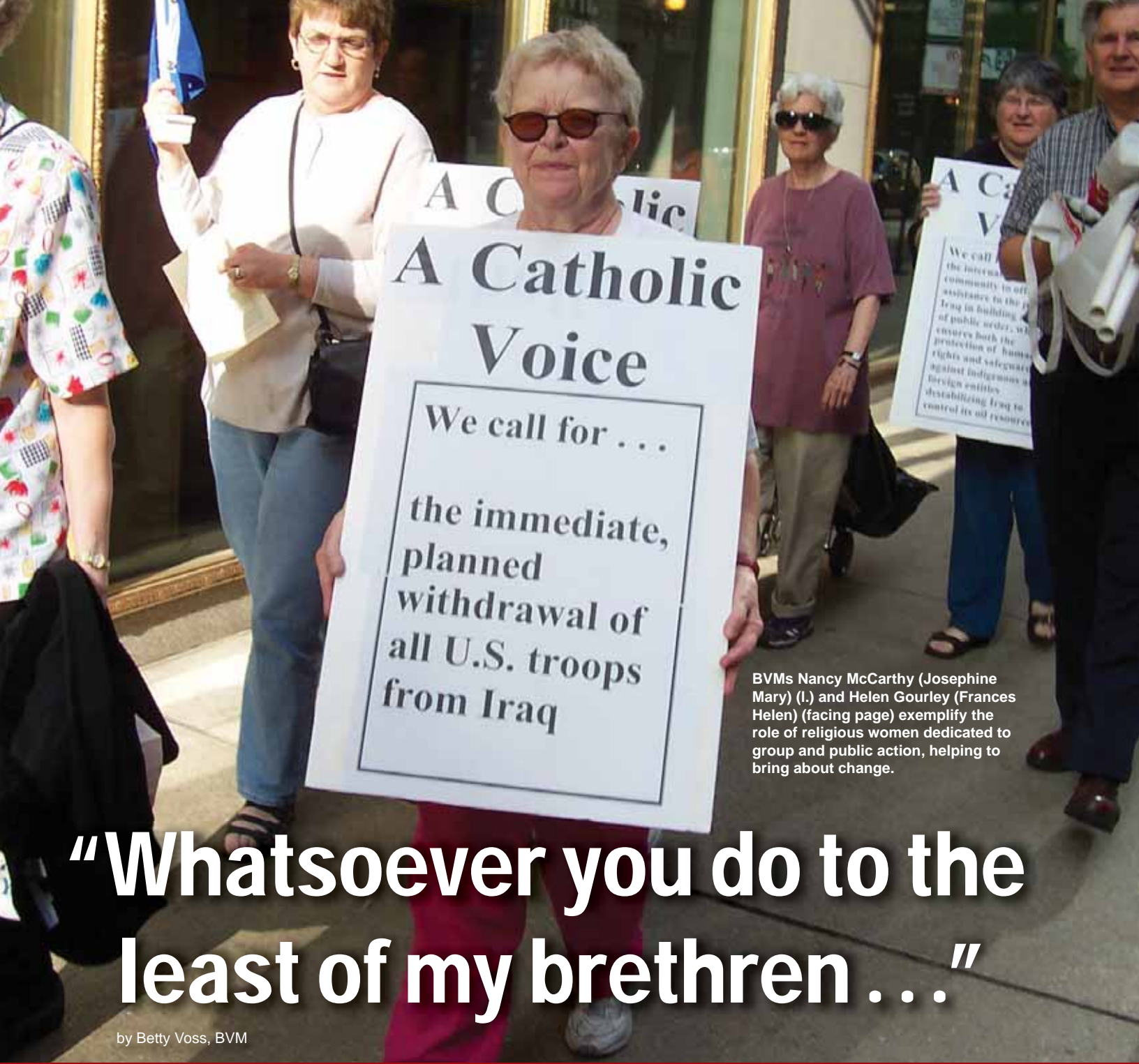
Her passion and ministry have been key elements in the success of the Homeless Children's Trust as well, fostering community events to provide school supplies and necessities to homeless children. As recognition for her selfless efforts, the Trust has established a special "Sr. Charmaine" fund, helping to ensure that these necessities will continue to be provided to homeless children.

Associate Celebrates Silver Jubilee



Helen Acorne became a BVM associate on Feb. 8, 1985. She met the Sisters of Charity, BVM when her son attended St. Vincent grammar and high schools in Petaluma, Calif. At that time, Helen's companion, Teresita Poulin, BVM was working at the Vigil Lights Apartments (VLA) in Santa Rosa. After Helen became an associate, she volunteered at Vigil Lights with Teresita and other BVMs. A nurse, Helen provided blood pressure screenings for VLA residents.

Helen was born in Iowa and became a nurse at Mercy hospital in Fort Dodge. She served as a navy nurse in World War II and then moved to California after her marriage. Helen returned to Carroll, Iowa, seven years ago to care for her sister. With no BVMs in that area, she missed the sisters and associates very much. Helen was happy to move back to Santa Rosa in October 2009 and was delighted to have a visit from her companion, Teresita, who has now moved to Mount Carmel. Helen hopes to meet more BVMs and associates in California.



BVMs Nancy McCarthy (Josephine Mary) (l.) and Helen Gourley (Frances Helen) (facing page) exemplify the role of religious women dedicated to group and public action, helping to bring about change.

“Whatever you do to the least of my brethren...”

by Betty Voss, BVM

Public Action for the Common Good

We know that there are those who have always lived with less, who are truly “the least” of our brothers and sisters. Yet, at the same time, society is blessed with many who heed Christ’s call to serve these least ones and band together to bring about change.

Legislative Action

NETWORK

A Catholic Social Justice lobby founded by women religious over 35 years ago, NETWORK struggles to wean the attention of legislators away from the special interest groups and to focus its attention on the real needs of people.

As an example of the complexity of its work, I quote from an e-mail from Marge Clark, BVM, lobbyist for NET-

WORK: “The National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) was authorized in July 2008. It is dedicated to increasing the housing stock available to very low and extremely low-income households. These are the poorest of the poor.” With the recession, the funding source dried up. “The NHTF has worked on the issue for ten years. For the last 14 months we have been working to establish funding sources . . . The funding of \$1.2 billion would fund acquisition, rehabilitation

and construction of mostly rental units and additional housing vouchers would make the units available . . . A piece of legislation to do this may be attached to tax credit extension legislation due to be negotiated in December." Tireless persistence is needed for this work!

8th Day Center for Justice

Also working tirelessly for change within the system is the 8th Day Center for Justice in Chicago, Ill. Staffed primarily by members of religious congregations, 8th Day Center has played a part in bringing about changes to immigration policies. As a member of the New Sanctuary Coalition, 8th Day Center participates in the Court Watch program and collaborates locally with other groups, as well as in Washington, D.C., to advocate for just and comprehensive immigration reform.

Project IRENE

One group effective in influencing legislation in Illinois is Project IRENE (Illinois Religious Engaged in Nonviolent Endeavors), an initiative of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Networking with multiple organizations, Project IRENE is under the direction of Rose Mary Meyer, BVM (Sebastian). It has successfully advocated for the following steps toward justice for women and the poor: An increase of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grants, mandated equal pay for equal work and an increase in the minimum wage. Eligible employees are now allowed unpaid leave to address dating and domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Victims of trafficking and the sex trade are allowed to sue brothels, customers, pimps and traffickers in civil court.

Group Action/ Demonstrations

Street Theatre

Demonstrations, vigils, and "street theatre" are also public actions of the 8th Day Center for Justice. The Good Friday Walk for Justice has become a Chicago tradition. Each year, the 8th Day Center invites various justice groups in the Chicago area to participate in this contemporary Stations of the Cross. Beginning at the Congress Plaza, the participants proceed to four

other "Stations" in the Loop: the Board of Trade, the Federal Plaza, the Daley Plaza (representing city issues) and the Thompson Center (addressing state issues). Two issues of injustice are discussed at each Station, ending with a hopeful theme. Three BVMs are on the staff of the 8th Day Center: Gwen Farry (Leontia), Helen Gourlay (Frances Helen) and Joellen McCarthy.

Support of workers

Many of you will remember the role that citizens' actions played in the hotel workers' struggle over unionization at the Hilton Hotel in Glendale, Calif., which is now a union hotel. Most of the hotels along the Los Angeles International Airport corridor are now unionized as well, except the Los Angeles Hilton.

The 8th Day Center has joined the national campaign initiated by Hyatt hotel workers, Hope for Housekeepers. As I write this, the group is staging a rally to seek justice for these workers. Hotel housekeeping employees are primarily immigrant women. The injury and abuse they are subjected to is often unseen by society, and they suffer injury rates higher than coal miners. In a UNITE HERE labor union survey, 90% of these workers reported taking pain medicine to make it through their room quota each day.

While injustice, poverty and violence catch the headlines, we rejoice in all those who speak out, publicly



responding to the invitation of Christ: "Whatsoever you do to the least . . . you do to me."

Local Action

A Hunger and Poverty Partnership

The work of the Portage County Hunger and Poverty Partnership in Wisconsin combines creative and fun group projects with wide public participation. BVM associate Mary Ann Krems, chair of the Awareness and Education Team, participates in a fundraiser called Empty Bowls. Professional and amateur potters and artists create beautiful bowls, while over 30 local restaurants contribute soups, bread and beverages. Local churches also donate "literally thousands" of delicious cookies. At their 8th annual Empty Bowl event this year, the group raised over \$20,000 for hunger and poverty prevention programs in Portage County.

A Woman's Place

A Woman's Place, a nonprofit agency in Greeley, Colo., is a shelter for abused women and children that has served this population for over 16 years. During the past nine months, A Woman's Place has met the needs of 307 women and children, providing 1,969 nights of safety. It has responded to 2,136 crisis calls and made 3,321 referral or information calls on behalf of clients.

A Woman's Place receives funding from the city of Greeley and the United Way, but its principal source is the fund-raising arm, Friends of a Women's Place. BVM associate Tess Malumphy is a founding member of "Friends." Both she and BVM associate Nancy Van Anne contribute to the organization in many ways and serve on its board of directors.

Friends of a Woman's Place raises money through its membership drive and a successful annual Women's Gala. During this popular evening of entertainment, five women are honored as Outstanding Women of Weld County, reflected by their lives, skills and service. Over the past 16 years, the work of Friends has contributed over a half million dollars to support the work of A Woman's Place.

About the author: Betty Voss, BVM (Leonice) is a part-time in-home caregiver at the Seniors' Resource Center in Denver.

Twelve Years and Counting ...

BVM presence at the School of the Americas Vigils

by Pat Nolan, BVM

It's been years since Florence Heflin, BVM (Floretta) read an article about the School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning, Columbus, Ga. Along with the purpose and goals of the school and the decision of many people to work to close it, Flo also learned that the school is funded by the U.S. government to train Latin American soldiers in the ways of war. Flo learned those "ways" include "torture, rape, kidnapping and murder."

Flo was angered and saddened by reports of the thousands of victims—men, women and children who had suffered violence at the hands of their own countrymen, some of whom were soldiers trained at the SOA. In November 1998 she joined a group of BVMs planning to attend what had by then become an annual prayer vigil to close the school. The vigil is sponsored by a not-for-profit group known as the SOA WATCH.

The SOA was recently renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC). Its graduates have been linked to the murders of Archbishop Oscar Romero and four American women missionaries in El Salvador in 1980, as well as the 1989 murders of six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter, also in El Salvador.

The SOA Organizer

Flo, who serves as one of two full-time Community Representatives for Dubuque's Mount Carmel complex, has been organizing BVM SOA presence for the past several years.

Each September, BVMs and associates receive an e-mail from her requesting that anyone wishing to attend the SOA vigil in November indicate their need for accommodations in the "BVM Motel" near Columbus, Ga. It's a reminder for frequent attendees to sign up and a wake-up call for others who "might go someday." Flo makes the reservations, notifies the folks and keeps and generates the lists of names within the community; she also serves as a resource person for those who want information about the SOA.

This November marked Flo's 12th year in attendance at the SOA Vigil. "I continue to go," she reflects, "so that I will not forget and become passive about the horrible things that have occurred, and continue to occur among the poor in Latin American countries. Being present there helps me to remember that these are God's people, my brothers and sisters, deserving of my care and involvement."

"Going to SOA" usually means flying or driving to Columbus, Ga., on



Flo Heflin, BVM (above) organizes and attends the SOA vigils "so that I will not forget and become passive . . ."

BVMs attending the SOA rally in November 2009 (l. to r.): Diane Rapozo (Malia), Carolyn Farrell (Lester), Lou Anglin, Pat Nolan (Frederick Mary), Marlene McDonnell (friend of Jane Rogers), Peggy Nolan (Timothy Maura), Jane Rogers (Jananne), Mary Nolan (Patricia Mary), Carol Marie Baum (Joseph Louis), Flo Heflin (Floretta), Sara McAlpin (Phillip Mary) and Gwen Farry (Leontia).



the Friday before Thanksgiving, finding lodging and spending the weekend attending various events sponsored by the SOA Watch, Pax Christi and other peace and justice groups.

The major event, a solemn prayer vigil, occurs on Sunday morning. Protestors walk quietly and in peaceful procession to the gate of Fort Benning, where they attach crosses, flowers or other mementos to the fence at the entrance, in remembrance of the dead.

As they march, speakers read the names of the known dead and protestors raise their crosses or arms and chant "Presente." "I've been affected by hearing the names read," Flo muses. "We [U.S.] train people to torture and to kill others and then to ignore that it happens . . ." Memorable among the protestors are the puppetistas—life-size puppets representing actual people who have been murdered in Latin America, allegedly by those trained at the SOA.

A concern always is to keep the SOA Vigil alive, to swell the crowd of protestors at Fort Benning. Peak crowds have been upwards of 8,500 people. This year's total numbered approximately 6,500 and included 12 BVMs and one BVM associate.

Hundreds of young people also came, many from Catholic high schools, colleges and universities. "I was impressed," Flo states, "by the many

young people this year . . . kids with pink hair and yellow hair and shaved heads, with knee boots and bare feet . . . dressed in baggy clothes and wild colors. They were . . . respectful, polite and gentle with each other . . . reverent, sincere and wholly involved in the peaceful prayer and march. As I watched them . . . I wondered, 'Why do they come?' Surely there are more fun-filled, carefree ways to spend this weekend."

And why might anyone spend a weekend at SOA? Perhaps the "Community Blessing" offered for all and printed in the *SOA Watch 2009 Program of Events* indicates a reason:

May love and mercy go with you as you speak in solidarity with those who have been silenced by death and repression.

Through your witness, may their voices be heard here . . .

and in the hearts of people across the Americas

so that the School of the Americas will be closed forever.

About the author: Pat Nolan, BVM (Frederick Mary) was previously a member of the English faculty at Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa. Pat retired from teaching in May and is currently enjoying the luxury of "unscheduled time!"



"Live simply and justly in solidarity with the poor and marginalized, and be a good neighbor. Make no war on them, rather, be one with them in spirit, truth and love . . . Hear the truth when it is spoken to you . . . and speak truth to power."

Archbishop Oscar A. Romero



Helen Maher Garvey, BVM Response to Leadership Award

In her acceptance of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious

(LCWR) Outstanding Leadership Award in August 2009, BVM Helen Maher Garvey presented a synthesis of the vitality and mission of religious life today. We believe it will resonate with you, our SALT readers.

In September 1952, a few days after I had entered the Sisters of Charity, BVM in Dubuque, Iowa, my father rang the doorbell of the BVM Convent in Hempstead, New York. He presented a bushel of fresh peaches to the sister who answered the door. The sister smiled at my father and questioned: "All this and Helen too?"

As I review my life as a BVM with its communal riches and diminishment, its joys and sorrows, its achievements and failures, I ponder, "All this and LCWR too?" Thank you, LCWR, for our common riches and diminishment, for our joys and sorrows, for our achievements and failures, for our life together. As I think about our life together at this moment in the history of the Conference, I am reminded of an address by President John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

On June 26, 1963, President Kennedy delivered a memorable speech in Berlin, Germany. At the height of the Cold War, he contrasted life in the American-governed sector of Berlin with life in a Communist country. President Kennedy declared: "There are some who say that Communism is the wave of the future. Let them come to Berlin."

Tonight as we gather in historic New Orleans, there are some who say that apostolic religious life renewed in the spirit of Vatican II is dead.

To those who doubt the vitality of religious life in the United States, let them come to the GED programs; let them come to the leadership of healthcare systems; let them come to NETWORK; let them come to the 110 colleges founded and now sponsored by women religious; let them come to the hills of Kentucky where two Franciscan sisters built and stocked the only library in Carter County. Let them come to Newark, Minneapolis and Seattle. Let them come to the mission.

To those who critique us and our response to Vatican II, let them attend one of our chapters. Let them witness our

relentless self-evaluation, our exhausting analysis and our challenging assessment. Let them leave, like us, weary, chastened and renewed. Let them come to Mobile, Columbus, and Wilmington. Let them come to the mission.

To those who lament the few new members in religious congregations, let them understand our profound desire for the future of religious life. Let them walk with our faithful formation teams. Let them imagine the hearts of some young women who ponder religious life and expect the fullness of the life of the church. Let them come to San Francisco, Philadelphia and San Antonio. Let them come to the mission.

To those who question our corporate witness, our invisibility, our public face, let them know that we search these concerns with humility and integrity; let them realize our grief and our joy as we ponder the challenge posed by Mary Whited: "Can you, too, sense the Mysterious Presence who invites us to take another step? Do you, too sense that we are being led?" Let them come to Butte, Santa Fe and Hartford. Let them come to the mission.

To those who would discount us because of our seeming diminishment, let them read history and know that though the ages, God has raised up the lowly. Let them come to New Orleans, Chicago and Milwaukee. Let them come to the mission.

To those who have supported us over the years through their participation in pantry showers; through the collection for religious; through their presence on our boards; through their partnership in ministry and through their response to our pleas about leaky faucets, stuck windows and stalled cars; let them understand our deep gratitude. Let them come to Bismarck, St. Louis and Phoenix. Let them come to the mission.

To those who think that sisters in the United States are divided from sisters throughout the world, let them

listen to the ringing endorsement from the members of the International Union of Superiors General (May 27, 2007). "We affirm unequivocally our support for our sisters in the United States . . . The way religious sisters in the United States responded to the mandates of the Second Vatican Council has been a great gift not only to the pluralistic society in which they live, but also to the universal church." Let them listen to the sisters throughout the world. Let them come to Rome, Dublin and Tokyo. Let them come to the mission.

To those who wonder about our appreciation of tradition, let them travel to the exhibit: *Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America* (schedule below). Let them come to Cincinnati, Dallas, Ellis Island, Washington, D.C. and Dubuque. Let them come to the mission.

To all who praise God, let them know our deep desire for God. Let them realize that, in the words of Joan Keleher Doyle, BVM, "We weep, not because we have lost something, but because we have been given so much." Let them come to Miami, Boston and Indianapolis. Let them come to the United States of America. Let them come to the mission.

To those who honor me tonight I say: You honor my mother and father who brought the bushel of peaches and so much more; you honor the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary who continue to form me; you honor yourselves who nourish me. Thank you, Leadership Conference of Women Religious. For these many years, you let me come to Catholic Sisters in America, you let me come to the mission and I am deeply grateful.

WOMEN & Spirit
CATHOLIC SISTERS IN AMERICA

Exhibit Schedule:

Jan. 15, 2010 – April 25, 2010
S. Dillon Ripley Center
at the Smithsonian
Washington, D.C.

May 9, 2010 – Aug. 28, 2010
Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage
Cleveland, Ohio

Sept. 24, 2010 – Jan. 22, 2011
Statue of Liberty National Monument/
Ellis Island Immigration Museum
Liberty Island, N.Y.

February 2011 – April 2011
Mississippi River Museum
Dubuque, Iowa



Sister on the Hill: **Joan Redden, BVM**

Sixty-two years ago Joan Redden, BVM (James Irene) entered Mount Carmel in Dubuque, hoping to complete her novitiate “by the Grace of God and the Charity of this Congregation.”

“Our Set, as we called ourselves, also numbered 62,” Joan recalls. “Some of us were already professional educators. Some had started college or been working. We hoped that after completion of our novitiate each of us would profess First Vows and be on the way to our first mission assignments.” After five years under temporary vows, Joan and her ‘Set’ would return to Mount Carmel for tertianship, a preparation for final vows.

“We were on the 18-year plan,” she jokes, “or whatever it took for us to get our diplomas, degrees and teaching certificates.” Joan’s teaching assignments gave her experience in primary, intermediate and upper grades in Iowa, Illinois and Washington. Along the way she earned her B.A. and M.A. in English.

Like many BVMs who began their careers teaching in elementary schools, Joan says, “I have many fond memories of the children I was privileged to teach, and for the skills and life values I was empowered to share with them.” Joan is reluctant to focus on herself or her accomplishments. “I am deeply indebted to the BVM community for whatever personal, professional and spiritual growth I have realized as an eager student and dedicated educator.”

Her brown eyes glow as she talks about her new ministry—volunteering at Maria House, a transition shelter for women and children in Dubuque that opened in 2000. Twice a month, Joan works the “graveyard shift” from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. at the shelter.

“My task is to be a helpful presence, companion and care-giver-as-needed to maintain a pleasant and secure environ-

ment,” she explains. “While I’m logging in and checking this and that, the Moms are putting the little ones to bed and finishing up their chores, before they can have some time for themselves.”

On Joan’s watch, Maria House settles down for the night, with everyone safe and secure. “I may read awhile, enter an account of the evening in the log book, check out the kitchen and laundry room downstairs, along with the doors and windows” . . . Joan pauses, then adds with a smile, “and with the Lord’s help, peace and quiet prevail.”

In our eyes the look of loving,
In our smile the warmth of caring,
In our hands the touch of comfort,
In our hearts, the gift of sharing.

—author unknown

This handwritten poem, found in the *Maria House Resident Guide*, could have been written about Joan Redden, BVM, as well as her “Set”—62 young women who entered Mount Carmel 62 years ago to fulfill their hope of “furthering the mission of Jesus through works of education, peace and justice (*BVM Constitution*, 16).”

IN LOVING MEMORY

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

Please pray for the Sisters of Charity, BVM who died between Sept. 1, 2008 and Dec. 31, 2009.

Patricia Boyd, BVM
(Christina)
Jan. 30, 1929 – Sept. 8, 2009

Eleanor Ann Bisenius, BVM
July 17, 1928 – Sept. 14, 2009

Joan Frances Crowley, BVM
April 4, 1919 – Oct. 6, 2009

Kathleen Gilbert, BVM
(Kathleena)
Feb. 11, 1918 – Oct. 6, 2009

Marie Lucette Sterk, BVM
May 28, 1915 – Oct. 13, 2009

Mary Lauranne Lifka, BVM
Oct. 31, 1937 – Oct. 16, 2009

Louise French, BVM (Anne)
June 23, 1918 – Oct. 21, 2009

Leone Cordell, BVM
Jan. 30, 1920 – Oct. 25, 2009

Cecilia Lee, BVM (St. Cecilia)
Feb. 19, 1910 – Oct. 31, 2009

Jean Meyer, BVM (Jeanette)
May 18, 1939 – Nov. 8, 2009

Margaret Keefe, BVM
(Paul Leone)
Sept. 1, 1929 – Nov. 22, 2009

Mary Frances Moore, BVM
(Eugene)
Jan. 12, 1926 – Dec. 4, 2009

Cornelia Harrison
(St. Cornelia)
Jan. 8, 1929 – Dec. 8, 2009

Helen C Flynn, BVM (Alberta)
Sept. 15, 1924 – Dec. 20, 2009

Mary Ellen Dolan, BVM
(Thomaselle)
April 28, 1917 – Dec. 20, 2009

Jeanelle Bergen, BVM
Jan. 12, 1907 – Dec. 26, 2009

Dolores Perry, BVM (Marlene)
March 29, 1914 – Dec. 30, 2009

Rita Benz, BVM (Borgia)
May 11, 1922 – Jan. 10, 2010

BVM Associates

Margaret Hoge
Sept. 4, 2009

A memorial fund has been established for these Sisters and associates. If you would like to add to this memorial, please send your gift to the BVM Development Office. For on-line giving, go to www.bvm-cong.org.

Salt

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A Tribute: Rita Benz, BVM May 11, 1922 – Jan. 10, 2010

by Kathryn Lawlor, BVM (John Laurian)

As an editor of many BVM publications, Rita Benz, BVM (Borgia) advised writers, "Avoid purple prose." To follow her advice and yet describe Rita's many talents during her historic period in the congregation is difficult.

In 1965 Mother Mary Consolatrice Wright asked Rita, who was serving as editor of the congregation's quarterly, *BVM Vista* (*Salt's* predecessor), to circulate a semi-monthly newsletter. Rita wrote to the sisters, saying, "The purposes of the new *BVM Newsletter* are to encourage intra-community openness and trust, and to foster a mentality that encourages truth and discourages rumor."

Rita had described herself in the letter! These were the principles she followed in the publications she edited, in the activities she reported, in her communications with BVM publics, in her mentoring of students, in her lifelong friendships.

During the years after the Vatican Council II, Rita's communication skills provided the glue that held together the many divergent views about renewing the BVM congregation. She thrived on living in what she called "the risky land of renewal," giving voice to the sisters' feelings and concerns, as well as publishing three books on renewal with Rosemary Sage, BVM.

In 1974, the BVM magazine, *Salt*, was launched, with Rita and Teri Hadro, BVM as co-editors. They described the new publication as "a move from a view of the times to a savoring of life."

"Rita Benz was a true student of human nature," Teri says. "In her writing and conversation she found ways to connect with everyone. The 'art of the possible' describes Rita's positive approach to all tasks. She had an endless imagination and a zest for life that didn't quit."



"Photography is one of my greatest pleasures . . ." says Rita. With camera in tow, she covers the 150th anniversary celebration of the BVMs in 1983.