



Heart

Winter 2003

A Journal of the Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province



...to Heart

The Journey Is Always Home

*The sound of home is a heartbeat,
Or so we're told by those who listen
through the walls of watery wombs
with stethoscopes to hear the mother rhythm
Echo. Woosh, a -Woosh, a-Woosh.
And then, first journey. Birth.*

*First fussiness is calmed and soothed
by heartbeat sound. A promise or a memory?
"You are held safe, secure. You need not fear
to sleep, or wake, or grow. I love you so."*

*A second journey? Off to school
by bike or yellow bus or sneakered feet
that carry one to learning, not just alphabet and books
but language of the heart, beating fast with playground joy
of friendship, pledging allegiance to peanut butter and jelly
conversations, laughter, shared secrets, and no longer timid tears.*

*And then there comes the journey for which grown-up dreams
require shared heartbeats. We search and then are found by love.
Each yields to an embrace of "we," a family... community.
Shared Life and living, seeding, tending vision of the future,
Held fast. Responsibility. Holding steadfast, possibility.*

*At last, the journey home. A final journey in which
The pulse of life once regular is slowed
And ears start straining, eagerly awaiting the return
of memory and promise. The sound of home is a heartbeat.
Within the arms of God, held gently heart to heart,
We hear the Word speak truth, "You are held safe, secure.
You need not fear to sleep or wake to Life. Let go.
I love you so."*

And between these major life passages come other journeys and other resting places, and sometimes miracles of grace when the journey itself is what deepens the heartbeat sound.

That is my experience, writing from Paju, Korea, 40 minutes outside of Seoul, where all 33 Provincials of the Society of the Sacred Heart are gathered in Assembly with the members of our General Council and staff from Rome. We represent 45 countries and as many cultures. We speak in three "official" languages, which

means that many cannot use their own first language. We are tethered to one another by earphones but united truly at the deeper level of the heart as we focus on both memory and promise for the future of the Society worldwide.

It is a miracle that we can meet at all; a deeper miracle that ancient animosities among our cultures are not our burdens, that the mission of a woman whose founding vision was making God's love known is claimed by all of us. Because of Sophie, we are equal members of the family of God's Heart. Her claim on us has helped us break down the walls that history and contemporary events have forced upon our countries.

On this journey I have conversed about God with Muslim students in Jakarta and heard one after another name God as I do: my deepest longing, my dearest friend. I have discovered new meaning in the Society's symbol of the world surrounded by the Heart as reinterpreted by a lay Korean Catholic scholar – the Heart cherishing, protecting, and shielding the world as it also forms God's windpipe, breathing new life into all the world's peoples.

I have listened to a Buddhist monk talk of wisdom and loving kindness and have engaged in a Buddhist retreat practice of quiet sitting while using as mantra a phrase from the Litany of the Sacred Heart. I have found myself bound deeply and permanently to my sisters sitting silently for hours beside me in prayer. I have discovered in Korea a Church founded by lay people – Confucian scholars so profoundly moved by Christian texts that they asked for baptism and then faced martyrdom for their beliefs.

I have stood at the center of the Demilitarized Zone in Panmunjom, between North Korea and South Korea, where peace remains elusive after 50 years, and prayed for the reconciliation of all peoples.

And in the midst of it all, I have known the embrace of "we" among my sisters who share responsibility and cherish possibility for what Sophie called "this little Society," all of us truly at home here at Jesu-maum Baeumto, a retreat center named for Jesus' Heart.

I pray that each of you will one day experience such a miracle of grace where the journey itself is what deepens the heartbeat sound. ✦



Kathleen Hughes RSCJ

Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ
Provincial

CONTENTS

Heartlines:

- 4 **Network's New Director Brings Heritage, Expertise**
Madeleine Ortman hopes to increase diversity in Network schools.
- 5 **Resolutions with Heart**
Start off the New Year by sharing more deeply in the Society's mission.
- 6 **Ministry Fund Matches Money to Mission**
Committee chair describes decisions as "heart-wrenching."

Features

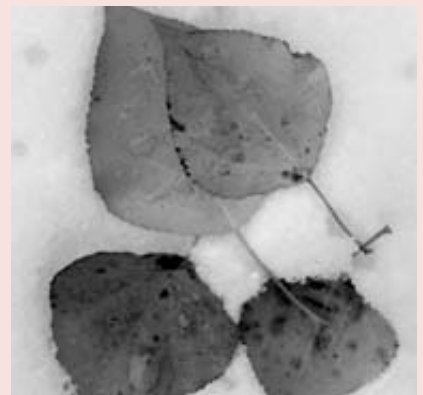
- 7 **Society's Internationality Poses Challenge to Network Schools**
Network schools find ways to bridge boundaries around the globe.
By Pamela Schaeffer
- 10 **"Wordless Preaching" of Icons Builds the Faith**
Sisters Patricia Tighe Reid and Anne Davidson spread God's love with paint and prayer. By Pamela Schaeffer
- 13 **Flicka von Stade: Going Where the Music Leads**
Opera star who finds singing "the highest form of prayer" explores new roles for life's next stage. By Pamela Schaeffer

Departments

- 17 **Spirituality: A Life of Prayer and Presence**
Experiencing the "Is-ness of the Now" at Kenwood.
By Carolyn Curtin, RSCJ
- 19 **Essay: The God Who Blesses, The God Who Saves**
In this excerpt from her new book, Barbara Bowe, RSCJ, explores two biblical images of God: liberator and nurturing friend.
- 23 **From the Archives**
The chapel at Kenwood
- In Memoriam**
- 24 **The Journey Continues**
Photo by Irma Dillard, RSCJ

Heart

WINTER '03 • Vol. 1, No. 3



ON THE COVER:

Photo: © Raymond Gehman/CORBIS

Society of the Sacred Heart

Editor: Pamela Schaeffer

Consulting Editors: Claire Kondolf, RSCJ
Trudy Patch, RSCJ

Designer: Peggy Nehmen

Copy Editor: Frances Gimber, RSCJ

HEART is published three times a year by the Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province. Please send address changes and requests for additional copies to Editor, HEART, at the address below or to editor@rscj.org. Article ideas, letters and unsolicited manuscripts are welcome. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for materials that are to be returned. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit submitted materials.

U.S. Provincial Team:

Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ, Provincial
Ellen Collesano, RSCJ
Joan Gannon, RSCJ
Sheila Hammond, RSCJ
Paula Toner, RSCJ

For more information about the mission and ministries of the Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province, please visit www.rscj.org.

Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province
4389 West Pine Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63108-2205
314-652-1500
Fax: 314-534-6800

New Network Head Brings Heritage and Experience to Her Role

It wasn't just a sense of destiny that made Madeleine Sophie Ortman decide to accept an offer to become executive director of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools, a role she assumed in September.

In her new post, Ortman will set the agenda for the Network, the umbrella organization over 21 Network schools in the United States and two affiliated schools.

Named Madeleine at birth, Ortman took Sophie as her middle name when she was confirmed in the Catholic faith. Given her heritage and the date of her confirmation, May 25, the Feast of Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat, Ortman thought Sophie to be the right choice. Her heritage includes a mother who was a graduate of Convent of the Sacred Heart in New York City – 91st Street – and of Manhattanville College; a sister who is an alumna of Stone Ridge in Bethesda, Maryland; and her aunt, the late Florence Weston, who was an RSCJ. Madeleine herself is a graduate of Stone Ridge and Barat College.

But there was more than destiny behind Ortman's decision. Both she and the Network board recognized that her experience made her a great match with the Network's needs. (See box at right.)

There is no question, Ortman said, that the Network is a uniquely successful organization, one that sets Sacred Heart schools apart. By way of illustration, she noted that after she was hired she learned that some of her colleagues at Independent School Management, where she previously worked, were envious. When Ortman asked why, a colleague responded, "Because you will be working with the best."

"The Network has established the Goals and Criteria so strongly in all the schools, assuring that the Sacred Heart mission will be alive and well in the future," Ortman said. "Our schools have a reputation for academic excellence, and for creating independent women – and, increasingly, independent men – who make a difference in the world."

Further, she said, "Graduates of Sacred Heart schools have a deep understanding of faith in God and what it means, and that faith dimension is a driving force in their lives."

During her first year, Ortman hopes to visit every Network school at least once. She will also oversee moving the Network office from Boston to the St. Louis region. That move, to a building across from the Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Charles, and the Shrine of Saint Philippine Duchesne, is scheduled for mid-January. Carol Haggarty, RSCJ, will move to St. Louis to continue in her role as assistant executive director.

Among her goals, Ortman hopes to strengthen diversity in Network schools: racial, religious, economic and gender diversity. "One of the misconceptions of Sacred Heart education is that it's for the elite," she said. "I'd like to help schools identify what diversity is and discover how to make it happen."

Building strong relationships with the U.S. Provincial Team of the Society will also be key, she said, because the Sacred Heart mission is anything but static. Sacred Heart educators "need to understand the way the mission is evolving today," she said.

Madeleine Ortman's Background

At the time of her appointment to head the Network office, Madeleine Ortman was a consultant with Independent School Management in Wilmington, Delaware, a research-based firm that provides resources and consulting to administrators of independent schools. Her duties included providing professional development opportunities for faculty members of private schools, a role that put her in close touch with many Sacred Heart educators.

Before joining Independent School Management, Ortman was an educational administrator for more than 20 years. Among her posts, she served for more than a decade as head of The Woods Academy, an independent Catholic co-educational day school in Bethesda, Maryland.

Ortman has also filled a variety of elected and appointed posts in educational organizations. Among them, she served as executive consultant for the Middle States Association of College and Schools in Philadelphia, overseeing a self-study of elementary schools and involved in accrediting supplementary learning centers.

She participated in the National Catholic Education Association's first Principals' Academy, an honor that went to only 30 outstanding principals nationwide.

Ortman, a native of Xenia, Ohio, holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Barat College and a master's degree in educational administration from Catholic University of America. ❖

More information on the Network of Sacred Heart Schools is available at www.sofie.org.

Madeleine Ortman



New Year's Resolutions with Heart

When it's time for New Years resolutions, here are some suggestions to share with alumnae or alumni, friends and colleagues of the Sacred Heart who would like to become more involved with the mission and ministries of the Society in the coming year.

- ♥ Do a favor for someone interested in the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart – a friend, family member, colleague or alumna/us of a Sacred Heart School – by adding their name to the mailing list for Heart. You may do this by sending an e-mail to editor@rscj.org or by mailing in the form in the back of this issue. (If the name you send is already on our list, we will not send a duplicate copy.)
- ♥ Go online today and often to visit the Web site of the Society's U.S. Province, www.rscj.org. There you will find a wealth of information and inspiration, including regularly updated and archived news items about Religious of the Sacred Heart and monthly messages from members of the U.S. Provincial Team. You will have an opportunity to join an online book discussion led by Sister Trudy Patch, RSCJ, of San Francisco. If you would like to support the mission and ministries of the Society, you may do so by clicking on Supporting our Mission on the home page.
- ♥ While you're online, visit www.SproutCreekFarm.org, where you can buy for yourself or a friend

a sampling of the delicious artisan cheeses made at Sprout Creek Farm, a sponsored ministry of the U.S. Province, just outside Poughkeepsie, New York. The farm's cheeses (Ouray, Toussaint, Barat and Ricotta) have been featured in *Gourmet* magazine, *The New York Times* and on television's Food Network. Four RSCJ, Sisters Georgie Blaeser, Jean Ford, Margo Morris and Karen Olson, live in community at the 200-acre working farm and oversee a variety of educational and ecological programs. Other good sites to visit: www.sofie.org, the Web site of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools, and www.justicenet.org, an online social justice group.

- ♥ If you're an alum of a Network summer service program, renew your experience by joining other alums and Religious of the Sacred Heart for a July 13-18 program in La Belle, Florida. To indicate your interest for this year or the future, get in touch with Sister Marie-Louise Wolfington, RSCJ: mwolfington@rscj.org or 863-675-3724.
- ♥ Sign up for a week-long icon retreat at Kenwood Convent of the Sacred Heart with three iconographers, including Sister Patricia Tighe Reid, RSCJ. The August 7-13 retreat will emphasize praying with icons, as well as the spirituality, history and theology of this form of religious art. For more information, e-mail or phone Sister Reid: ptighe@rscj.org; 518-465-3341 or 518-489-9174. (See pages 10-12 to learn more about Sister Reid's icon ministry.)
- ♥ Consider joining the Sacred Heart Associates program in order to share



Sister Margo Morris displays a wheel of cheese at Sprout Creek Farm.

- more deeply in the active and contemplative spirituality of Religious of the Sacred Heart. For the name of the Associate Coordinator closest to you, send your request to editor@rscj.org.
- ♥ Consider sending the new vocation brochure produced by the U.S. Province to a young woman who might be interested in membership in the Society of the Sacred Heart. Sister Nancy Koke, RSCJ, Director of Vocation Ministry, will be happy to provide more information: vocations@rscj.org, or (toll free) 1-888-844-7725. Information about becoming an RSCJ is also available at www.rscj.org. ✦

Ministry Fund Allocated \$170,000 This Year

Decisions Were "Heart Wrenching"

The Fund for Ministry, an outreach of the Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province, gave \$170,000 to 52 social service programs around the country for the 2003-2004 funding year. Sixty-one programs had requested a total of \$293,800 in assistance from the fund.

The Fund for Ministry was established to support ministries and projects with connections to the U.S. Province. In most cases, Religious of the Sacred Heart are directly involved with the projects. In other cases, funding up to \$3000 a year may be allocated to a program endorsed by an RSCJ.

Sister Mary Jo McFayden, RSCJ, outgoing Chair of the Fund for Ministry Committee, said decisions about which organizations to fund and how much to give are heart-wrenching for committee members. "There are so many needs, and so many good programs. We wish we had enough to fund all the requests," she said. "At the same time, it is a great privilege to be on that committee. It's a way of getting to know what so many of our sisters are doing across the country."

In keeping with the Society's historic role in promoting leadership, projects requesting assistance are expected to promote self-determination for economically poor persons, especially women and children.

Additionally, programs receiving money are required to have an educational dimension aimed at promoting social responsibility. They are also expected to challenge public policies, social attitudes, economic structures and institutions that make it difficult for economically

deprived people to achieve those aims.

In making funding decisions the committee gives priority to programs that address the needs of women, children, migrants and refugees, and homeless persons. Also favored are programs sponsored by schools in the Network of Sacred Heart schools that involve students, teachers, administrators and families in seeking social and economic justice for people at the margins of U.S. society.

The Fund for Ministry Committee meets annually to determine how the budgeted funds will be divided among the projects that apply. Sister Marie-Louise Wolfington is the new committee chair.

A full list of projects approved for funding this year can be viewed at www.rscj.org.

A sampling follows, including the name of the RSCJ or Sacred Heart Associate involved in the project, where applicable:

- Casa Esperanza Project in Chicago for a G.E.D. tutoring program (Sally Brennan, RSCJ);
- Catholic Charities of San Jose, California, for housing, reemployment, financial education (Rosie Statt, RSCJ);
- Coconut Grove Cares in Miami, for parenting classes (Rosemary Bearss, RSCJ);
- Convent of the Sacred Heart in Greenwich, Connecticut, for a summer humanities program for low-income, minority girls;



Sister Rosie Statt at work in her office at Catholic Charities, San Jose, California.

- Josephinum, an inner city girls' high school in Chicago for an extended day program (Martha Roughan, RSCJ, new principal; Donna Collins, RSCJ, former principal, made funding request);
- Life Skills Workshop of Kensington, Maryland, for workshops in job readiness and life skills;
- Lydia's House in St. Louis, provider of transitional housing for abused women and their children, for outreach and education (Dawn Stringfield, Sacred Heart Associate);
- National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice in Chicago for a living wage campaign for caregivers;
- St. Stephen of Hungary Parish in New York City for a hospitality center for the homeless (Dorothy Murray, RSCJ, Natalie Runfola, RSCJ);
- Sofia Immigration Services in San Diego for outreach and education (Mary Dutcher, Sacred Heart Associate);
- Thensted Center in Grand Coteau, Louisiana, a community outreach center, for leadership programs (Betty Renard, RSCJ).

For more information on the Fund for Ministry and the funding allocations for 2003-2004, see www.rscj.org. ✦

Society's Internationality Poses Challenge to Network Schools

Goal Now, Some Say, Is to Use it for Change

By Pamela Schaeffer

In the lifetime of Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat, founder of the Society of the Sacred Heart, the burgeoning congregation spread from France to 14 countries on three continents. Sophie's international vision continued to drive expansion long after her death in 1865. Today, the Society is rooted in 45 countries, 35 of them the collective home of nearly 150 Sacred Heart schools worldwide.

Mary Blake, headmistress at Convent of the Sacred Heart in New York City - 91st Street - is keenly sensitive to problems of injustice and violence around the world. A former administrator at United Nations International School, she is determined that Sacred Heart schools become catalysts for social change. As a start, 91st Street inaugurated in mid-November the Institute for Peace and Justice, a think tank on international issues. Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland, United Nations high commissioner for human rights, and a Sacred Heart alumna, delivered the keynote address on "Bridging the Divide."



*Mary Blake, 91st
Street headmistress*

Blake's dream is to secure funding so that every upper school student at 91st Street can engage in a month of service and study abroad involving another Sacred Heart school. She is also pushing for more international experiences across the Network.

Presently, students at 91st Street have participated in visits involving Sacred Heart schools in Canada, England, Ireland, France and Spain.

The SARS scare sidetracked a plan last year to send students to the Sacred Heart school in Taipei, Taiwan, but 91st Street will host students from Taipei this year.

Across the country, Forest Ridge School in Bellevue, Washington, is well known among Sacred Heart educators and others for its exceptional exchange programs. Just on November 24, the E.E. Ford Foundation announced that it had fully funded a \$50,000 request for global programs at Forest Ridge. The school agreed to contribute an equal amount to its recently-established endowment fund for global programs.

"In the Northwest, everybody looks beyond the edge of the continent. It's part of the mentality," said Audrey Threlkeld, longtime exchange coordinator at Forest Ridge. Internationally, the school has sponsored exchanges with Sacred Heart schools in New Zealand, Australia, Scotland and England, as well as in Latin America and Japan. Then, last year, Forest Ridge students, in collaboration with other groups, built 70 computers and installed them in four schools in Uganda.

Headmistress Mary Smith has lived abroad, Threlkeld said, and understands "how much there is to gain by the elimination of artificial borders."

Students from Convent of the Sacred Heart, Greenwich, Connecticut, another school with an active exchange program, have gone to Australia, England, Scotland, Spain and Chile, as well as to Network schools in the United

continued

*Lindsey Morgan, a student at the Rosary, holds a child
in Chinandega, Nicaragua.*



Meg Grogan, right, of Convent of the Sacred Heart, Greenwich, Connecticut, stands with a friend in front of Woldingham School, Surrey, England.



States, according to Ann Hitchings, exchange coordinator there. At Stone Ridge, exchanges have been arranged with Sacred Heart schools in England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia and, less often, with France and Spain.

Hitchings and other coordinators note a variety of obstacles to getting and keeping programs going. Impediments can include cost, language, variations in academic calendars and programs, difficulties finding host families, and personnel changes at host schools. Exchange coordinators invariably are teachers or administrators at their schools, and setting up visits, even domestically, can be extremely demanding of energy and time. And since September 11, safety concerns have been heightened.

"I would say that some parents are still afraid to send their students abroad in the present political climate," said Cheryl VanBuskirk, exchange coordinator at Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

Hitchings said technology and increased flexibility had eased some of the academic rough spots. "The upper school faculty has been great about adapting assignments and communicating with students and host schools." It helps, too, that Joan Magnetti, RSCJ, headmistress, "is very positive about the experience and what it does for students," she said.

Meg Grogan, a senior at Greenwich, visited Woldingham School, a Sacred Heart school in Surrey, England, two years ago and found her three-month visit to be invaluable. "It builds your character as a Sacred Heart student," she said. "I saw that the philosophy, the goals and the values of Sacred Heart can happen anywhere in the world."

Two other northeastern schools, Stuart Country Day in Princeton, New Jersey, and Newton Country Day in Newton, Massachusetts, sponsor lively programs.

At Newton, cultural exchanges, often involving Sacred Heart schools in France and Spain, have been going on for about 12 years, according to Sara Bellini, who heads the Foreign Language Department, and in 2000, a group visited the Trinità dei Monti

during a trip to Rome. "The girls live oceans apart, but they discover they share traditions, goals and history," Bellini said.

Stuart has students going and coming from other countries. Exchanges do not always involve other Sacred Heart schools, but this February, Stuart will host 15 girls from the Colegio Sophianum del Sagrado Corazón in Lima, Peru. The visit will repay the Sophianum for hosting 14 students from Stuart last year, according to Elizabeth Simpson, dean of students.

When Stuart girls go abroad, "they learn to look at America with new insights, they learn how much they take for granted, and they return to us more confident, happier to learn, and with an enthusiasm that is contagious," Simpson said. "What blessings."

At many Network schools, exchanges most often are domestic, with other U.S. Network schools. But nearly every school has sponsored some international experience or exchange. For instance, Lynne Neitzschman, exchange coordinator at Academy of the Sacred Heart, New Orleans, Louisiana – the Rosary – said the school had hosted a group of students from the Sacred Heart school in Bregenz, Austria, for three weeks last year. In June, the Austrian school will reciprocate.

Meg Jones, exchange coordinator at Duchesne Academy in Omaha, Nebraska, said the school is branching out from its



These four Japanese students from a Sacred Heart School in Sapporo, Japan, visited Forest Ridge in early 2003. Clockwise from left, they are Megumi Takabashi, Noriko Ishikawa, Yuri Yamamoto, and Kana Seki.

frequent domestic exchanges to programs involving Sacred Heart schools in Canada and Australia. Last January, eight students from a Sacred Heart school in Chile spent three weeks in Omaha, according to Jones. "We are talking now about sending students to Chile," she said.

Schools that formerly served boarders from other countries – Atherton, from Mexico and Japan; Doane Stuart from Latin American nations – maintain those ties through alums. At Woodlands Academy, Lake Forest, Illinois, students from diverse cultures – Korea, China, Japan, Russia, Ireland, the Philippines and India – have enrolled as boarders in recent years. Last spring, Mary Crook, exchange coordinator at Woodlands, queried Sacred Heart schools worldwide. Of 18 schools that have responded, several expressed interest in international exchange, she said.

In one of the most symbolic and hopeful recent endeavors, Doane Stuart, the Network's only merged Catholic-Protestant school, has enrolled two young men from Lagan College in religiously-torn Belfast, Northern Ireland, this year. One is Catholic; the other Protestant. "If anything speaks to the heart of what makes us special as a school, it is things like this," said Richard Enemark, headmaster.

At several schools, students have participated in service projects in other countries. Last summer, students from the Rosary, accompanied by Lynne Lieux, RSCJ, and other faculty members, went on a mission trip to Chinandega, Nicaragua, with Amigos for Christ, an Atlanta-based relief group. Students participated in a variety of building projects.

In St. Louis and nearby St. Charles, Missouri, schools have been profoundly affected by annual service projects in a poor area of Mexico. For more than a decade, Mary Pat Rives, RSCJ, and her friend Mary West have accompanied students on the trip, which often includes a visit to Colegio de San Juan de Dios, the Sacred Heart school in San Luis Potosi. Sister Rives has also arranged for dozens of young Mexicans to spend a year at Villa Duchesne/Oak Hill in St. Louis or Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Charles.

Sacred Heart Schools in Chicago – Sheridan Road – has also accepted Mexican students for an entire academic year. "It's a beautiful experience when it works," said Margaret Caire, RSCJ, who has welcomed numerous Mexican students during her 20 years as headmistress in St. Charles. "Mexican families benefit because they are terribly concerned that their children know two languages, and we gain better knowledge of the Mexican culture."

Then, in recent summers, Japanese students from Fuji Seishin Joshi Gakuin, the Sacred Heart School in Susono City, Japan, have visited St. Charles, Sister Caire said.

Schools of the Sacred Heart in San Francisco have hosted Sacred Heart students from Nova Scotia and Sapporo, Japan, and next year may send students to Japan, according to Celine Curran, exchange coordinator. "We know they are welcome," she said.

The international dimension is what sets Sacred Heart schools apart, said Marta Kelly, communications director at Academy of

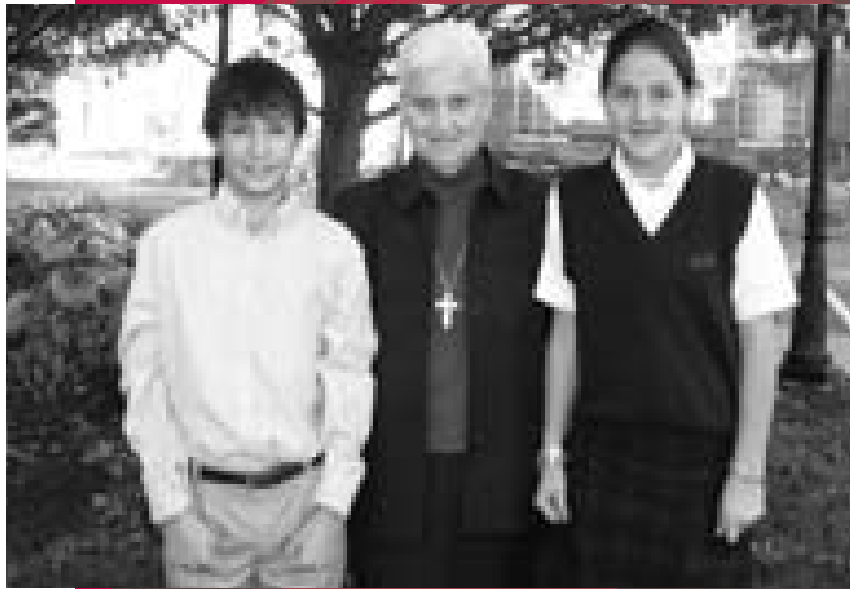


Photo by Joan Runge

Sister Margaret Caire is flanked by two Mexican students attending Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Charles this year: Jesus Martinez of Guanajuato, and Isabel Gutierrez of San Luis Potosi.

the Sacred Heart, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Although recent international exchanges have been rare at Bloomfield Hills, Kelly is capitalizing on the potential. She has constructed a large map showing Sacred Heart schools around the world.

Another growing edge for Network schools is Network-sponsored summer service programs with an international dimension. Last summer at Duchesne Academy in Houston, under the direction of Sharon Karam, RSCJ, six students from Sacred Heart schools in Mexico joined 11 from U.S. Network schools, including six from Duchesne, in tutoring programs for children. Previously, Janet Graeber of Seattle oversaw summer projects that brought together students from Network schools and Japan.

"We should be doing more of this," said Maureen Glavin, RSCJ, a member of the Network Social Justice Committee. The committee "has clearly verbalized a desire" for international service involving other Sacred Heart schools. As for her own school, Carrollton, Sister Glavin said "internationality is palpable" in diverse Miami. Carrollton has deep ties with Latin America, particularly Cuba, and has its sights on a service program in Haiti, she said.

Mary Blake of 91st Street firmly believes the international programs will grow. "The Network is ripe for this," she said, and the results can be transformative. "Imagine the power of the RSCJ, the alums, the parents, students and faculty of Sacred Heart schools."

Barbara Rogers, RSCJ, headmistress at Newton, concurs. "We haven't begun to tap the Network's potential. How do we take the gifts of different cultures and bring them to one another? That's the task for the next 40 years." ❖

“Wordless Preaching” of Icons Builds the Faith

By Pamela Schaeffer



Let your favor rest on us, Lord, and give success to the work of our hands.

— Psalm 90:17

With that prayer of the psalmist, or a similar prayer, in her heart, another period of icon painting begins for Patricia Tighe Reid, RSCJ, the work of replicating “the holy ones of God.”

Settled comfortably in a small studio at Kenwood, the convent in Albany, New York, that she entered as a novice, and where she recently returned to live, Sister Reid dips a small brush of sable hair in the traditional egg-tempera mixture and applies it painstakingly to gesso-layered wood, the ground on which an authentic icon is made.

Sister Reid is one of two Religious of the Sacred Heart in the U. S. Province for whom iconography – the painting or, literally, the “writing” of icons –

has become both ministry and prayer. She has served as mentor to Anne Davidson, RSCJ, who is a relative newcomer to iconography at age 82.

Sister Reid began painting icons in the mid-1980s. She studied with Father Andrew Tregubov, a Russian

Orthodox priest, and has filled a steady

stream of commissions ever since.

Among the icons she has painted, well over 100 in all, she has been especially pleased, she said, to have received commissions with an ecumenical dimension. There was a triptych commissioned by the Franciscan Sisters and Friars of the Atonement in Garrison, New York, a religious order that specializes in ecumenism. The icon, to commemorate the centenary of their foundation, was presented to Pope John Paul II in 1998.

She painted a set of 14 Stations of the Cross for the Episcopal Cathedral of Albany, New York.

And, basing her work on news accounts of the event, she painted the embrace between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople in 1964 for St. Mary Magdalene Church, a mission church in Rincon, Georgia. The historic meeting of the two religious leaders was a watershed in improved relations between Catholic and Orthodox leaders.

“Strictly speaking, that one is not an icon, because neither Patriarch Athenagoras nor Pope Paul VI has been canonized,” she said. “But I am happy to know I did it because of the ecumenical importance of that meeting.”

Sister Davidson was introduced to iconography in the summer of 2000 at a workshop in San Francisco, her former home. She learned to work from artists’ cartoons, drawings used by artists as models. Last fall, in three months of work with Sister Reid in Albany, she developed the confidence to develop her own compositions. She has already sold at least 20 of her works, she said.

Among her recent creations is an icon of Saints Madeleine Sophie Barat and Rose Philippine

Sister Reid sketches Christ the Teacher for the Trappist Monks of St. Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts.



Duchesne at the inception of their lifelong friendship in 1804. Sister Davidson's stylized depiction of the setting, the stairway leading up to Sainte Marie d'en Haut in Grenoble, France, reflects the personalities of the two saints, she said. Philippine's side, "is more rugged," while Madeleine Sophie's side is "softer, more refined."

Sister Davidson has conscientiously studied the rubrics of iconography, which include a requirement that only natural materials be used, and the iconographer's language of symbols and colors. She noted that the blue and green in her depiction of the Society's two saints symbolizes their spirituality, while the red represents the fire of their devotion.

Although technique is important, Sister Davidson said art training is not the key to iconography. "If you lack the prayer, you can have all the art training in the world, but you are not going to get it."

Sister Reid took four art courses during her student days at Manhattanville College. Then, during the novitiate, her artistic skills were put to use doing spiritual bouquets, lettering – "lots of lettering," she said – "and feast day cards and visiting cards for the nuns."

In the years leading up to her final vows in the Society, Sister Reid set art aside. Then, assigned to teach religion, she picked it up again. "I had read someplace that if you make a portrait of anything, you make a connection with that subject, whether it's a tree or a person. So I made some pictures of my students and had them make pictures of each other." They were icons of a sort.

Sister Reid left the Society of the Sacred Heart in 1969 and took a job teaching English in a public school. During those years, she sketched a few portraits for extra income. She married Edmond Reid, a teaching colleague, and a decade later, in 1982, the couple helped start a monastic community for married couples at New Skete Monastery in Cambridge, New York. In 1985, the abbot asked Sister Reid if she'd be willing to serve as the monastery's iconographer.

Sister Reid brought the ministry with her when she received permission to return to the Society, "the home of her heart," last year, five years after Edmond Reid's death.

Sister Davidson has worked over the years as a teacher, nurse, sacristan in Sacred Heart convents before the Second Vatican Council and, more recently, as a hospital chaplain for 15 years. She has taught art at the college level and used her artistic

continued



Above, Sister Anne Davidson holds her icon of Saint Michael the Archangel. Below, Madeleine Sophie Barat (left) and Rose Philippine Duchesne embrace in an icon by Sister Davidson.



Above, These icons by Sister Reid depict Mary and the Christ Child, from a 16th-century icon in Crete, and Christ the Teacher. Below right, Sister Reid displays her icon of the Dormition of Mary, which hangs in St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

talents in various ways. “I’ve done art all my life, but spasmodically,” she said. She has recently taken workshops in iconography with Dominican Father Brendan McAnerney and Master Iconographer Vladislav Andrejev.

Although she is a third-generation Californian, Sister Davidson recently moved from San Francisco to St. Charles, Missouri, setting up her studio in a building on the grounds of the Shrine of Philippine Duchesne.

Sister Reid is now working on icons for St. John-St. Ann Catholic Church, Kenwood’s parish church. On separate six-foot-long panels, she will paint Saint John the Baptist and Saint Ann. She has seven smaller commissions waiting.

Sister Reid juggles iconography with a ministry of assistance to Sister Martha Curry, who oversees pastoral care for the Religious of the Sacred Heart who live at Kenwood.

Sister Reid said she had been “deeply affected by the hours of quiet work,” particularly those spent working on the face of Christ. “I recollect myself in God’s presence before I begin,” she said, “often reciting words from Psalms. At times, she said, “especially when I am painting the face of Christ and trying to capture a strong and tender expression, I experience a sense of presence.” At those times she is often moved to pray from the Psalms, “Do not turn your face from your servant,” or “Your face, O Lord, do I seek.”

Both Sister Reid and Sister Davidson often play CDs of liturgical music, Gregorian or Russian chant, making the words of the chant their prayer as they paint.

Sister Davidson keeps a copy of “Rules for the Icon Painter” in her studio. One rule counsels, “Before starting to work, make the sign of the cross, pray in silence and pardon your enemies.” Another admonishes, “Work with care on every detail of your icon, as if you were working in front of the Lord himself.”

“As I work, I get more and more engrossed in the spirit,” Sister Davidson said. “I start with prayer, and I never know exactly how it is going to turn out.”

The icon, always a symbolic rendering of the subject rather than a true portrait, “is a visible entranceway to an intimate relationship with the person represented and with God,” said Sister Reid. “It’s profoundly based on belief in incarnation and the Incarnation. It’s not just that Christ is incarnate God, but that the saints are too, and so are we.”

In addition to participating in the ecumenical ministry of the Christian churches, Sister Reid regards the “wordless preaching” of icons as a significant contribution to the faith of the church. “Every time a viewer looks at the image with faith, the good news is received,” she said.

“My reason for painting icons is to spread the love of God,” Sister Davidson said. ✦



Frederica von Stade appears in her signature trouser role, Cherubino, in *The Marriage of Figaro*.



Flicka von Stade: Going Where the Music Leads

**Opera star explores new roles
for life's next stage**

By Pamela Schaeffer



*"My life goes on in endless song,
above earth's lamentations.*

*I hear the real, though far-off hymn
that hails a new creation."*

For many people who find comfort in that traditional Quaker hymn, the words offer metaphorical assurance of redemption. Applied to the life of mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade, they suggest something more. The metaphor is reality, a portrait of a life in which joys have been expressed and deepest sorrows transformed through song.

Von Stade, who goes by her childhood nickname "Flicka," after one of her father's polo ponies, is quick to say that the joys of her long career in music – she is regarded as one of the world's great lyric mezzo-sopranos – have been immeasurable.

In many ways, hers has been a fairy-tale existence: the privileged growing-up years in Washington, D.C., with stints in Italy and Greece; the idyllic summers with her grandmother in Far Hills, New Jersey; the fondly-remembered formative years in Sacred Heart schools; the just-out-of-music-school contract with the Metropolitan Opera that projected her onto opera stages and recital halls around the world.

continued

There is her warm relationship with her daughters, Jenny, 25, and Lisa, 23; her comfortable home in Alameda, California, with her husband, banker Michael Gorman; her strong Catholic faith.

Nearly as well known, today, though, by von Stade's many fans, are the complexities and profound sorrows intertwined with her success.

As a young singer, she struggled to reconcile her ambition with the "nice girl" culture that formed her in the 1950s. Her Catholic upbringing, though she regards it as a treasure, made the painful divorce from her first husband, bass-baritone Peter Elkus, particularly hard. Then, from her earliest days, there was the vital thread she couldn't connect, the missing relationship with her father, First Lieutenant Charles von Stade, killed on a reconnaissance mission in Germany's Ruhr Valley at the end of World War II. His death, when his jeep hit a land mine, came weeks before she was born.

Until 1998, when von Stade lifted her mourning into a song cycle in tribute to the absent hero, bringing a resolution of sorts, their relationship was a dark hole in her heart, illuminated only by the letters he wrote her mother from abroad and information gleaned from those who knew him as a very young man.



Von Stade is noted for her girl-next-door manner – she flies coach to save host orchestras money and presses her own clothes before performances – and for her ability to connect with audiences, in the manner of a fine actress. At a recent concert in Evansville, Indiana, she alternately expressed passion, yearning, playfulness and come-hither coyness in

songs of Rossini, Offenbach, Mahler and Ravel. Afterward, she chatted happily with fans.

She gives much of the credit for both her sense of theater and her humble philosophy of celebrity to her Sacred Heart education: three years of primary school at Stone Ridge in Bethesda, Maryland; her last three years of high school as a boarding student at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Noroton, Connecticut.

She recalls the processions and singing the Mass at Stone Ridge with Mother Jan McNabb. "I remember my first communion at Stone Ridge, the light flooding in through the windows, the girls in lovely dresses," she told a reporter for the *Washington Post* in 1988. "I can remember my mother giving me red roses when I was in a play, and I remember the encouragement of my family and the nuns."

"My life at the Sacred Heart was magic," she said in a telephone interview. "We were very beloved children. The manner of operating, the courtesy, the atmosphere of respect... There were times I thought it was too strict, but now I feel the structure and the discipline were invaluable. As a child, it allows your mind to be free to do a lot of other things."

Von Stade (pronounced von *Stah*-deh) gives credit to the Sacred Heart for another often-remarked-upon characteristic of her career, her affinity for French language and music. After high school, she worked for a year in Paris and attributed the success of that



© Winnie Klotz / Metropolitan Opera



© Winnie Klotz / Metropolitan Opera

Above, von Stade stars as Vilja, with Plácido Domingo as Count Danilo, in Lehár's The Merry Widow. The Metropolitan Opera produced the opera in English to mark von Stade's 30th anniversary with the company. At right, she appears as Mélisande, with Dwayne Croft as Pelléas, in Debussy's Pelléas et Mélisande.



© Winnie Klotz / Metropolitan Opera

experience to the rigor of the French classes at Noroton. She recalls the nightly homework, 50 to 60 pages of Voltaire or Saint-Exupéry, the plays in French, the requirement that only French be spoken in class.

After high school, it never occurred to her to apply to a renowned music school like Julliard because she had no formal training in music. Instead, after France, she enrolled in a music reading course at Mannes College of Music in Manhattan. She stayed around for more and succumbed to the urging of her singing teacher, Sebastian Engelberg, to compete in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

No wonder one of her favorite opera roles would later be Cinderella. She won a contract from Sir Rudolf Bing during those auditions in 1970, allowing her, at age 23, to start her career at the top. International recognition came just three years later, when she sang what would become another of her favorite roles, Cherubino, in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, with the Paris Opera at the court theater of Versailles.

At the Met, von Stade became known for her "trouser roles" – Octavian in Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, Hansel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, and Cherubino, which she last played in 1991. But she has loved the dress-up girls' roles too: Mélisande in Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and especially Cinderella, in Rossini's *La Cenerentola*; and in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, which she has sung dozens of times.

Her repertoire is hardly limited to those roles. Her more than three dozen recordings, on every major label, range from complete operas to arias, art songs and jazz, such as the 1996 Telarc CD, "Frederica von Stade Sings Brubeck." Her regular television appearances have included a Live from Lincoln Center program, "Christmas with Flicka," shot on location in Salzburg; "A Carnegie Hall Christmas" with Kathleen Battle, and "Flicka and Friends," a program of operatic and musical theater selections with Samuel Ramey and Jerry Hadley.

Among numerous awards and honors (see www.fredericavonstade.com), von Stade received France's highest artistic honor in 1998, when she was appointed to *l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*.

From Her Heart

From her teacher Sebastian Engelberg, von Stade got not only encouragement to compete. She learned from him to deliver music with passion, to "sing with the velvet," to sing "from the bottom of your heart."

She did that most convincingly, perhaps, in 1998, when she sang Richard Danielpour's *Elegies*, a song cycle he wrote in tribute to her father. In the work for orchestra, mezzo and baritone, daughter and father, trapped in different realms and separated by darkness, reach out for one another through their sorrow. The lyrics, poetic renderings by Kim Vaeth of the letters Charles von Stade wrote to his wife, Sara, during the war, culminate in a final song in which the aging daughter, speaking now as parent to a young man deprived of life, transcends her suffering with a lyrical promise: "And I will sing to you in paradise."

continued



© George Landis / The Dallas Opera

Above left, von Stade appears as Mélisande in another scene from the Debussy opera. Above right, von Stade plays the role of Sesto the would-be assassin in Mozart's La Clemenza di Tito.



© Ken Friedman / San Francisco Opera

Von Stade, who describes singing as “the art form closest to prayer,” said the work had not only brought closure to the unsettling decades of longing to know her lost father; it also brought what she describes as “a miracle” into her life – a friendship with Victor Milloy of St. Petersburg, Florida. Milloy, who had known von Stade’s father during the war and witnessed the explosion that ended his life, wrote to her after reading a review of the work.

In the booklet that accompanies the Sony CD, von Stade said she hoped the piece would help others to find resolution. In World War II, “we lost a generation of fathers,” she wrote.

In January 2000, von Stade made an unheralded exit from the Metropolitan Opera stage after performing with Plácido Domingo in the title role of Franz Lehár’s *Merry Widow*, a production in honor of her 30th anniversary with the company. Later that year, her career took another turn. She put her political beliefs on the line with a role in Jake Heggie’s *Dead Man Walking*, an opera based on Sister Helen Prejean’s book of the same name about

Above left, von Stade plays the mother of a convicted murder awaiting execution in the world premiere of Jake Heggie’s opera Dead Man Walking. Susan Graham, seated, plays Sister Helen Prejean, a nun with a ministry to men on death row and author of the book on which the opera is based. Above right, von Stade sits for a portrait before a concert in Barcelona, Spain, in 1997.



© Vertical / EFE

her experiences with inmates on death row. The work was commissioned by the San Francisco Opera. Von Stade, who vehemently opposes the death penalty, played the convicted murderer’s mother.

Von Stade has collaborated with composer Heggie on other works. He set to music some of her own poems in *Paper Wings*, dedicated to her daughter Lisa.

A New Creation

Today, at 58, though she has performances scheduled through 2006, von Stade muses about a future offstage. She is actively seeking models of what the French call the *troisième âge*. “We don’t have many people who show us how to get old,” she said.

One of her goals is deeper knowledge of her Catholic faith. As her career slows down, she is devoting time to reading the Bible and she meets regularly with a priest.

“This is a time of life when you’ve pretty well done everything,” she said. “You’ve been a million places, met hundreds of people, been through the big events of life, had children, watched them go away. What do you want for the rest of the time here on the planet?”

Often noted for her charity work – last year, for instance, she organized a benefit by the Oakland East Bay Symphony that netted \$40,000 for music education in area public schools – she is spending more time as a volunteer. She honors a weekly commitment to a day care center in the Oakland ghetto, where she teaches music or does whatever needs to be done.

“I’ll always sing,” she said. “No one says you don’t keep singing. But I also want the bigger commitment. I feel frightened for the world because of what is happening to our children. If parents can’t care for their children, then the community has to do it. I feel I’m in the years when I’m supposed to use all the experience and knowledge I’ve gained and give it back. There’s so much to be handed back.”

“It’s like the Sacred Heart,” she said. “If you can change one life... You can’t be swamped by the enormity of the need.” ❖

Kenwood: A Life of Prayer and Presence

Experiencing the “Is-ness of the Now”

By Carolyn Curtin, RSCJ

My first experience of living at Kenwood, the Sacred Heart convent in Albany, New York, was in 1946, when I entered as a novice. Nearly 40 years later, in 1983, I returned to Kenwood to take up residence with a community that is often referred to as a “powerhouse of prayer.”

Though geographically this community sits near the periphery of Sacred Heart life in the United States, it is, in many ways, a spiritual center. Just 34 years after Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne brought the Society of the Sacred Heart to the United States in 1818, a school was established in Albany. In 1859, the Academy of the Sacred Heart moved to Kenwood. A few years later, using salvaged materials from a former mansion on the property, construction workers built the central portion of the E-shaped building that our retirement community now shares with Doane Stuart School, a member of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools in the United States.

From 1899 until 1969, Kenwood served as the novitiate for the United States and Canada, the place where hundreds of women consecrated their lives to Jesus Christ and our mission of education. Since the convent became an infirmary in the late 1960s, and later a retirement center for the U.S. Province, many have returned to spend their final years here in prayer.

In the contemplative community known as Pax Christi, freed of the many responsibilities that attended our active ministries, we strive to attain total dependence on God. Yet even in this peaceful setting, many are surprised to learn, we experience distractions in prayer. Like the jolting announcement of Jeopardy on TV, these intruders spring out despite our best intentions. They can usurp an entire period of prayer.

Finding a solution to these distractions has led me to a new method of prayer and to a deeper spirituality, one that has helped me adjust to a slower pace. In prayer, I have learned to consider not the whole hour but short spans at a time. In fact, I have come to see that one’s entire life can be lived successfully moment by moment.



The tower on the main building at Kenwood, completed in 1871.

In his 17th-century book *Abandonment to Divine Providence* Jean-Pierre de Caussade called this practice “the sacrament of the present moment.” I have my own name for it. I call it the “is-ness of the now.” Every “now” is a moment in which I can experience God’s presence in my life. Every “now” is a golden opportunity to discipline and deepen my spiritual life in faith.

I first began to plumb the depths of the “is-ness of the now” about two years ago when I experienced a rather sudden diminishment of powers I had taken for granted for 79 years. My work as a piano teacher drew to a halt and I was confined to the infirmary for 13 weeks. Being in such close contact with retired religious was a new experience for me. I was inspired by the uncomplaining way these elderly women suffered physical pain, loss of faculties and loneliness. I noticed that the nurses and aides, too, remarked on the sisters’ humility and holiness, their desire to help others, their positive attitude. Although I would never have asked to be put in this situation, it yanked me from my own agenda and hurled me into the arms of God, where I was forced to succumb in total dependence.

Now I am back on a comparatively normal regime, though one far less arduous than what I previously knew. My goal is to maintain, during this fairly healthy period, that dependence on God that was mine when I was less well. I thank the members of my religious community for enabling me during this time to acquire a deeper, more abiding love of the Sacred Heart.

The following account of how I live out the “is-ness of the now” is derived from the pattern of our days at Kenwood. It is a glimpse into one religious community’s endeavor to cope with aging. My hope is that our experience might benefit other seniors.

The day begins with meditation, the subject of which is optional for each religious. In the silence of early morning, in the privacy of our own rooms, we enter into relationship with Christ and let him share with us his deep desire to be in relationship with us, just as we are.

After meditation, we navigate the halls to breakfast, some with the help of wheelchairs, walkers and canes. At breakfast, individual

continued

desires are honored. Some religious eat alone, continuing the prayerful silence established at meditation. Others socialize at tables with a group.

After breakfast, we assemble upstairs for Mass in the recently renovated chapel. Many must go via the single elevator, a venture that demands patience as we juggle to get as many into each carload as fire laws will allow. (This is a most fitting time to practice the “is-ness of the now.”)

Miraculously, Mass begins on time. We are fortunate to have a resident chaplain. He is assisted by religious who serve as sacristans, Eucharistic ministers, lectors and formulators of intentions, offered from awareness of our own weaknesses as well as of the many needs of the world. Together we give praise to God and God, in response, offers sanctification to the whole human race. A deep silence ushers in the words of consecration. Communion deepens the divine indwelling and our union in the Body of Christ.

Even as our spiritual life is nourished here at Kenwood, our intellectual vision is continually expanded. Weekday mornings we enjoy reunion, or gatherings, where we discuss a wide variety of topics. Some recent topics have included international law and human rights, the U.S. Postal Service and earthquakes. We conduct sessions around music and videos, and we partner with children at Doane Stuart in a program called Reading Buddies, thus continuing Saint Madeleine Sophie’s mission of educating youth.

One special reunion, given by our community director, emphasized the love and courage with which we live our lives, in contradiction to the hatred and violence that affects so much of our world. She explained how the word “courage” is derived from the Latin *cor*, or the French *coeur*, expressed in English as heart.

On our way to the dining room for lunch, where conversation is always lively, we pass through corridors lined with the sisters’ art work. Twice a week they visit the art room to practice drawing and painting to the accompaniment of inspirational music.

Beside the art room is the shop, where the sisters’ knitting, crocheting and other crafts are sold. This self-sufficient enterprise, overseen by Terry Mack, a lay volunteer, and Sister “Andy” Andrzejewska, turns an annual profit of about \$1,000, which goes to the Mary Quinlan Educational Fund for staff and sisters.

Afternoon activities are varied. Some sisters attend a computer class, some play bridge, some listen to spiritual reading, others nap. From 3 to 3:30 p.m., we faithfully observe the French custom of *goûter*, a break comparable to British tea time when everything stops for sociability and light refreshment. This is a favorite time to honor birthdays. Bingo, Scrabble and other board games often follow.

After dinner and discussion of the day’s events, many religious gather around TV to watch the news and other programs.

In addition to these daily events, we are offered an annual retreat, monthly confessions, inter-religious prayer services and socials, opportunities to pray the Rosary and recite the Liturgy of the Hours. The activities department plans outings, and the infirmary oversees our medical needs, both on and off campus. A library is available with a wide selection of books where, on special holidays, we are entertained with soirées.

Some RSCJ at Kenwood continue in a scaled-back version of active ministry. Some do parish work, some make hospital visits, some offer spiritual direction. Other ministries include assisting Spanish-speaking adults by telephone, collecting clothing for a local parish, collecting stamps to benefit a mission, and promoting economic development in Haiti through a grassroots organization called Fonkoze. I give piano lessons to two Doane Stuart students.

Because Kenwood is a spiritual crossroads, we receive a constant flow of guests, both lay and religious. Two or three times a year, usually on Sunday afternoons, we connect with other RSCJ in the United States Province via teleconference. Following a roll call of communities around the country, speakers enlighten us on Society business and other key issues and invite our response. These meetings assure us of our unity.

Besides the religious, the Pax Christi community consists of more than 100 staff members. At intervals, we attend staff appreciation lunches, where employees are recognized for their years of service.

In this community, we live in the presence of sickness and death, and we find that suffering can be a sure guide to life with God. We take opportunities to visit our sisters who are sick. We come to understand more fully the words of Jesus, “And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” (Matthew 28:20). When a religious dies, the Pax Christi community joins family members and friends in the Mass of Resurrection. After burial in the Kenwood cemetery, we gather to exchange fond remembrances.

At a recent “memories” reunion, the following story was told: “Sister loved all God’s creatures, especially the birds. She filled the feeder twice a day. At her burial, as we recited prayers, birds chirped along, a large flock of Canadian geese flew overhead, and a beautiful rainbow appeared in the sky.”

Finally, in God’s good time, the constant living out of the “is-ness of the now” is transformed into the “eternal now” with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As each religious lets go of everything she had on earth, her lifetime becomes a complete “is-ness” with God. ✦



Sister Curtin has been teaching piano in Sacred Heart schools for the past 43 years. She had planned for a concert career, she said, “but God planned a religious vocation for me instead.”

The God Who Blesses, the God Who Saves

Redeemer and liberator? Nurturing friend? Two biblical images of God

By Barbara E. Bowe, RSCJ



whom we desperately cry out for help and comfort. These examples illustrate a basic principle that underlies all our contemporary theology and our attempts to articulate what we believe about God. ...Our beliefs about God ... are the fruit of our ongoing reflection on our experience of the world where we are, and where we believe God is revealed to us.

These daily experiences are the “raw data” of our theology. These data include also the reservoir of wisdom that comes down to us from previous generations, the explicit teachings and sacred texts of our faith. Tradition, our experience of the beauty and power of the natural world around us that speak to us of God, and all the day-to-day interactions of our lives that are revelatory of God to us. ...It was exactly this process of experience and ongoing reflection on experience in the community of faith guided by the Spirit that produced the sacred books we call the Bible.

“In Many and Various Ways God Spoke of Old to Our Ancestors” – Hebrews 1:1

One of the first observations any student of the Bible makes is to recognize the great diversity of theological perspectives contained within this multifaceted text. But among these multiple traditions two principal, over-arching perspectives seem to dominate. Like the harmonic voices of a melody and its counterpoint, they play with – and sometimes against – one another throughout the whole of the biblical story. [And] both are essential, no – indispensable – for an integral and comprehensive understanding of the biblical God. Biblical interpreters have called these two different perspectives and theological tendencies “saving theology” on the one hand, and “blessing theology” on the other. Each conveys essential insights about God and God’s relationship to the world. ...

continued

***“On that very day, they ate of the produce of the land...
And the manna ceased on the morrow.”***

— Joshua 5:11-12

How does God interact with creation? What can the Bible tell us about the character of God’s dealings with the world? In our concrete human lives, where and how is God to be found?

...It is more than a simple and self-evident axiom to say: “Where we stand determines what we see.” ...In the “good times” of our lives, when all seems to be going well, we are likely to experience God as a supportive companion and friend who is the source of life and of all the good gifts that come to us. But in moments of brokenness, in times of sorrow and pain, the only God we know is the One to

Saving Theology

In order to explore the contours of each of these theological approaches it will be necessary to look at them in sequence. ...In fact, they cannot really be separated like that, either in the experiences of our contemporary lives or in the biblical story. Their value rests precisely in their complementarity. But, so that we might understand each perspective better, we will explore their distinctive insights separately, and will begin with the more dominant tradition called “saving theology.”

...When our biblical ancestors set about to tell the story of their faith, they began with some “preliminary” matters that serve as a prelude to their history as a people. These preliminary narratives comprise the book of Genesis and include the creation accounts, the primeval legends of the flood and its aftermath, and the ancestral sagas of the families of Abraham/Sarah, Isaac/Rebecca, Jacob/Rachel and the family of Joseph. But the real “history” (if we may call it that) of this people begins with the Exodus – with the story of their salvation, their dramatic rescue at the sea (which I deal with in greater depth in chapter five). This story depicts Israel’s God as the deity who had rescued them from bondage under Pharaoh in Egypt. They saw their beginnings as a people in their being saved from slavery and oppression, and – from the perspective of saving theology – their understanding of their God originates in that event.

This foundational event, furthermore, shapes in its entirety the great biblical drama we call “salvation history.” This story traces the journey of God’s people from slavery in Egypt under a hostile pharaoh to freedom in the Promised Land (ca. 1250-1100 B.C.E.), from social and political insignificance to their short-lived dominance as a great nation (1050-587 B.C.E.). This salvation story survives through the experience of the Babylonian Exile (587-538 B.C.E.), when many inhabitants of Jerusalem were taken off into exile, and in the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem after they returned to their land (ca. 515 B.C.E.). This same story of salvation history traces the journey of the post-Exilic community of Jews up to the time of Jesus. All through these biblical stories we hear the memory of God’s saving deeds on Israel’s behalf, not once, but again and again. ...God, in this perspective, therefore, is the God who acts, the One who is their savior and redeemer. ...God’s very name and identity are synonymous with these saving deeds, as Joshua will remind the Israelites after they had entered into the land:

“For it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight” (Joshua 24:17).

It is almost as though God’s very name for them is hyphenated as the: “God-who-brought-us-up-from-the-land-of-Egypt.” ...



The power of this image of God rests in its element of surprise and unpredictability. At any moment, this God can break into our lives as our savior. But there is something contrived as well in such an image, making God into a magic miracle worker, not a constant presence in our lives.

The implication for what it means to be human from this perspective of saving theology, therefore, is to know ourselves as impoverished and bereft apart from God’s saving power. ... Once rescued, we desire to spend ourselves in rendering homage and service to this God who saved us. ...In this view, the memory of God’s saving deeds shapes human consciousness and ought to instill in human beings an abiding sense of gratitude and solidarity with others in need of

rescue like themselves. The goal of human existence, in this perspective, is liberation and freedom. It is ultimately to find life – life lived to each one’s full human potential. ...These ways that Israel understood God and the world are the consequence and outgrowth of their dramatic rescue by God in the Exodus event. As we will see in a moment, this theological viewpoint has significant implications for our spirituality today.

Blessing Theology

There are other circumstances in our lives, however, when we experience God primarily as the source of blessing and providential care. These are the times when we see the world as a hospitable place, when our lives are marked by satisfaction and success. ...These experiences open us to know God as constant protector and the provider of all good gifts. ...

In the Bible, this strain of theological reflection envisions God predominantly as a King who governs the world with power and right judgment and who establishes all things in order and harmony. This is the God, for example, of Psalm 96:10: “Say among the nations, ‘The LORD reigns! Yea, the world is established, it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.’”

The God of blessing establishes cosmic order and holds the world in existence at every moment. This is the view of God as Creator and source of all wisdom about the mysteries of life. Through the lens of blessing theology God is not a deity who intervenes only at dramatic moments of crisis and need, but is ever present in the midst of the world creating and sustaining it.

From the perspective of blessing theology, to be human means to share kingship and wisdom with God. It means to see oneself not as deprived and needy, but as created fully in “the image and likeness of God.” This insight is perfectly expressed in the words of another psalmist:

***“You have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honor. You
have given them dominion over the works of
your hands; you have put all things under
their feet.”***

— Psalm 8:5-6

And because of this royal status human beings must care for the world and for all creation as God does. They share God’s wisdom and knowledge of the world and exercise their God-given “dominion,” as the psalmist says.

Understood through the lens of blessing theology, therefore, the goal of human striving is also the fullness of life – but life now understood as the rightful exercise of power and the sharing of divine privilege. This perspective breeds an awareness of *noblesse oblige* (literally, “nobility obliges”) which fosters a sense of responsibility for creation in those who share this view. As we continue to listen to the wisdom of the biblical story, we will encounter both these viewpoints in the theological perspectives expressed by the terms “saving and blessing theology.” It remains now to explore their implications for our contemporary spiritual lives.

Implications for Contemporary Spirituality

As people of faith, surely we can identify with both these perspectives outlined above. We can, no doubt, recall moments when we have experienced God as the One who has saved us and as the One who blesses our lives day by day. This is, of course, the point. Both these ways of understanding God capture something essential in our experience of faith. But there are tendencies in each perspective that have both positive as well as negative consequences for our faith lives.

The popular hymn “Amazing Grace” captures at once the power and the danger of saving theology. “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.” The human experience of being “lost” and “blind,” unable to find our way, powerless in the face of forces beyond our control (whether political, economic, physical, or psychological) is a shattering feeling. And when we sense that God has intervened to rescue us, to save us and put us again on the path of life, our lives are radically changed by that encounter. In these moments we know our need for God in the marrow of our bones. And, because of our personal experience of rescue, we trust the God who saves us. Gratitude can be our only response, and our one desire is to place ourselves, in humble obedience, in the hands of a saving God. This is the strength and grace of saving theology.

And yet, a spirituality grounded exclusively in this view of saving theology risks exaggerating the one dramatic moment of God’s saving presence at the exclusion of the constant daily closeness of a God who is always with us. ...An exaggerated focus on the dramatic before and after of the saving event loses sight of

the fact that our lives, and our faith journeys, are lived as the gradual process of coming to greater maturity and wholeness as human beings and as people of faith.

...Armed with this conviction of “having been saved,” we can too easily and falsely divide the world into exclusive categories of the “saved” and the “sinners.” Focusing on the dramatic power of our personal experience of grace we can forget that God saves us together as a people. Through the lens of saving theology, we tend to lean toward others who possess strong authority. ... We look for wisdom more often outside ourselves, and because we distrust our own “truths,” place great confidence in the sure, confident prophetic voices in our midst. ... All these are dangers if the perspective of saving theology is the only attitude we have.

The implications for a spirituality grounded exclusively in blessing are also double-edged. The Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, in his poem entitled “God’s Grandeur,” captures the energy and vigor and grace of a faith that sees God’s splendor everywhere:

***The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness like the ooze of oil
Crushed.***

This optimistic view of the world looks upon all of creation as a sacrament of God’s presence. It recognizes that in God “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28) at every moment each day. When we live in the certainty of God’s blessings, we know that our lives are steeped in a constant flow of divine grace and goodness to us. And even if we fail, it is only a momentary lapse from God’s gracious love. In this view, our fundamental conviction is that we are made in the very image of God. We are, therefore, thoroughly good and the object of God’s creative love. With this God-given dignity we believe that we have been called to be co-creators with God, entrusted by God with the care of the universe and of human society. Things are less black and white. Instead, we are more aware of the mysteries at the heart of the world, mindful that there are ambiguities in life that we can never fully comprehend. Our ministry is, therefore, more tentative and less sure, always open to be corrected by new insights and daily wisdom.

From this blessing perspective, we tend to see the Church as the communal setting where we search together for God’s truth and where we celebrate the presence of God in our midst. From this viewpoint, the Church is not immune to the weakness and sinfulness of life but participates in both the sin and the grace of the world. ...

In discussing these two strands of biblical theology, Michael Guinan poses the question: “Am I blessed or am I saved?” The answer to this question, of course, is “Yes.” In the biblical

continued

tradition, and in our own lives, it is the combination and complementarity of these two insights about God and the world that together lead us to a balanced and fruitful life. If the danger of saving theology is its excessive claims to absolute certainty, the danger of blessing theology is its tentative character, its constant questioning, and its lack of certainty. With respect to their differing sense of what it means to be human, Guinan has again described well the implications of these theological perspectives: “The saving tradition needs a sense of dignity and worth; the blessing tradition, a sense of humility, weakness, and limits. Neither alone adequately represents the biblical tradition.”

The Bread of Deliverance Becomes the Bread of Blessing

While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. On the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

— *Joshua 5:10-12*

It was the Old Testament scholar Claus Westermann who pointed out the perfect biblical text to capture the inter-relationship of these two biblical themes. He noted this text in the book of Joshua that describes the moment at the end of the people’s sojourn through the desert from Egypt to the Promised land. In that journey they had encountered hardship, temptation, hunger and thirst. But always the saving God had rescued them, despite their murmurings and complaints. The manna, the bread from heaven, coming miraculously to sustain them in their journey, was the most dramatic sign of their saving God.

But as this text of Joshua narrates, once in the land, God provided for their needs in a new way. The people received daily sustenance in the fruit of the land. Or, as Westermann put it, “The bread of deliverance becomes the bread of blessing.” For Westermann, this sign, precisely within the story of salvation history, signals the interrelationship of the saving and blessing traditions. ...The movement is not linear but cyclic, moving back and forth between dramatic experiences of salvation and daily encounters with the God of blessing. ...

Conclusion

If this brief survey of these biblical perspectives teaches us anything it should convince us that spiritual growth and maturity rest in the integration of all the insights of both saving and

blessing theology for our lives. It means that we will come to know both the God who, at times, rescues us from danger and sin, and the God who, at other times, walks with us as friend and companion. ...We will be equally suspicious of the easy certainties of “black and white” labels as we are of an excessive tolerance, a moral relativism, or a lack of commitment that takes no sides at all in the life and death questions of our day. And with our ancestor Joshua, we will come to know that, in our lives also again and again, “the bread of deliverance becomes the bread of blessing.” ✦

Editor’s Note: Space limitations prevent publishing the notes at the end of this chapter. However, Sister Bowe requests that credit be given to Michael D. Guinan, *To Be Human before God: Insights from Biblical Spirituality* (Liturgical Press, 1994) for the distinction between the two biblical theologies.

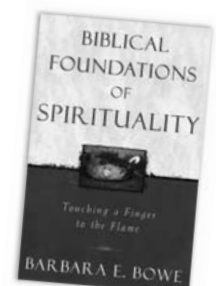


Sister Bowe is professor of New Testament at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where she teaches courses in biblical studies and early Christianity and is director of the Biblical Spirituality Program.

Questions for Reflection

1. Recognizing that “where we stand affects the way we see” the world, God, and ourselves, what factors in your own present setting have especially shaped your ideas and your faith?
2. In this contrast between “saving” and “blessing” theology, which do you experience now most powerfully, and what life experiences have led you to this conviction?
3. In your lifetime, how has God rescued or saved you? What have these experiences taught you?
4. From what do you pray to be saved by God? Why?
5. When you “count your blessings,” what things, people, experiences do you name? Why?

This essay is excerpted from *Biblical Foundations of Spirituality: Touching a Finger to the Flame* by Barbara E. Bowe, RSCJ (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., www.rowmanlittlefield.com)





From the Archives

The cornerstone for the chapel at Kenwood Convent of the Sacred Heart, Albany, New York, was laid on May 19, 1867. Kenwood, now a retirement center for Religious of the Sacred Heart, was formerly the Society's novitiate in the United States and Canada. The chapel has been renovated twice since this photograph was taken, most recently in 2000. ✦

In Memoriam

Please see www.rscj.org for biographical information on RSCJ who have died.

May they live in the fullness of God's love.

Ruth Stanley
September 11, 2003

Anita Richard
September 18, 2003

Hildegarde Hellmuth
October 5, 2003

Marie McHugh
November 11, 2003

The Journey Continues



Irma Dillard, RSCJ

More than ever, the cries and hopes of this world call us as Society to participate in God's work of transformation. We are convinced that only by contemplating Christ's presence and action in the world will we find the strength and generosity to claim these calls and to live them with integrity.

*Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
General Chapter 2000*

Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province
4389 West Pine Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63108-2205



Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Louis, MO
Permit No. 5806