



# Heart

Spring 2004

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



# ...to Heart

*It began with an embrace after the exclamation of wonder and "How could this be?"*

*When women meet there is always a wonder of how could this be? How had you the time?*

*How did you travel the distance? How have you carved out the leisure to stay, to linger and listen to the stories of unanticipated life?*

*When women meet, there are always these three:*

*The stories, the wonder, the embrace*

*Whenever visitation takes place.*

Visitation is on my mind. As you read these words, the United States Province of the Society of the Sacred Heart has just completed a visitation – five weeks during which three members of our General Council from Rome – Son In Sook, Jane Maltby and Marisa Sacerdote – have traveled the length and breadth of the country, sharing the life of this Province and meeting so many of us, religious and lay alike, who call ourselves part of the family of God's Heart.

As I write these words, my mind wanders to that great encounter between Mary and Elizabeth in the hill country, the Visitation as described by Luke. It is a story of two women, Mary and Elizabeth, both carrying babies in their wombs, both experiencing the wonder and the fear of first pregnancy, the rhythms and changes of their bodies, the surge of hormones, the natural anxieties and elations of this privileged time. It is a story of two women who search out each other, two women who, in what some might think of as a supremely private, inner journey, want and need to share this time of labor and birthing.

The Visitation is a moment of Christian experience sometimes reduced to sentimental artistic images; for example, two women kneeling before each other – but this by artists, surely male, for Elizabeth was well along in her pregnancy and unlikely to do such gymnastics. These are women who simply knew their need of one another and who went in haste to be with each other, to embrace, to talk of the daily monotonies as well as the great hopes and expectations that pregnancy inspires.

Cherishing and nourishing life were what Mary and Elizabeth were about, not individually but together. These women sought each other out and spent time with each other. They shared their hopes and fears, their anxieties and elations, their loves and longings. Their great hymn of praise was sung together, not after each had delivered her child but prior to that time, while they were still in the process of a great gestation.

In many ways, this Society visitation by our sisters from Rome was the same for us. Jane Maltby of the Province of England and Wales, Son In Sook of the Province of Korea, and Marisa Sacerdote of the Province of Argentina and Uruguay carved out time to linger and listen to the new life springing up within us and around us. Their timing was perfect. The Province of the United States is in the midst of a long-range planning process, examining our lives and ministries, dreaming and designing new ways of governance and participation, collaboration with others and visibility in our corporate works.

For six weeks our visitors from across the globe delighted with us in this process of gestation. They shared our hopes and fears, our anxieties and elations, our loves and longings, our new insights and the questions that these pose.

Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat believed that relationships were at the very heart of our charism as the family of the Sacred Heart. A visitation by members of the General Council is a graced moment for us, a time to deepen communion among ourselves and those we serve, a time to stretch our



hearts to the realities of the Society of the Sacred Heart across the globe, a time to explore the needs of our world for today and tomorrow and plan for our ministries accordingly. And throughout the visit there were warm embraces, wonder and stories, new life anticipated and relationships cemented by their presence and love. ✦

*Kathleen Hughes RSCJ*

Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ  
Provincial

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Photo by Georgie Blaeser, RSCJ

**Correction:** Mary Robinson resigned in 2002 as United Nations high commissioner of human rights. An article in the Winter 2003 issue of *Heart* said she currently holds that post.

# Heart

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ON THE COVER:

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## *Barge bound for Haiti meets obstacles*

Political conflict in Haiti collided with an effort by students at Academy of the Sacred Heart, New Orleans, to ship supplies to four RSCJ who live in Haiti and operate educational programs in Verrettes. (See story, page 12.)

The effort began when Kelsea Renton, an eighth-grader at the New Orleans school, mentioned to her father, businessman Ed Renton, that the Society of the Sacred Heart operated a mission in Haiti.

Weeks later, that information took root as Ed Renton prepared to ship a barge loaded with heavy construction equipment to Haiti. There would be extra room on the barge, he said, and he invited students and RSCJ at the school to collect supplies for free shipping.

After a flurry of begging and buying, gathering and packing, the students loaded up a truck with three tons of goods: educational and art supplies, desks and easels, tents for use as temporary classrooms, mattresses,



Liz Manthey

*Sacred Heart students in New Orleans load supplies bound for Haiti on truck donated by Office Depot.*

clothing, tools, sewing machines, sporting goods and medical supplies.

Sacred Heart schools in the St. Louis area – Villa Duchesne and Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Charles – collected materials too. Sisters Diana Wall and Lillian Conaghan drove a van from New Orleans to pick them up.

Frischhertz Electric Company in New Orleans donated a generator and spare parts. Office Depot provided school supplies at a discount and a truck for transporting supplies to the barge.



Liz Manthey

*Students take a break from their work.*

Meanwhile, the project was delayed by a seemingly endless chain of troubles. First, two more barges were needed for the construction equipment. Then the barges broke from the dock and had to be recovered as they floated on the Mississippi. Next, ports in Haiti were closed as political tensions erupted in chaos.

For RSCJ, the only possible response was trust and hope. Sister Wall asked another RSCJ, and by extension the entire Sacred Heart family, "Please keep our little community in Haiti in your prayers, especially at this time." ❖

## *General Council Tours United States*

Three members of the General Council, or Central Team, of the Society of the Sacred Heart, spent five weeks in late February and March visiting RSCJ communities and ministries throughout the United States. The three sisters, Son In Sook, Jane Maltby and Marisa Sacerdote, traveled in the company of members of the U.S. Provincial Team.

"It's been a journey of discovery," said Sister Maltby, of England, who is visiting many of the areas for the first time. I'm impressed with the energy and commitment the RSCJ put into their work and by the trust and openness of the people I have met."

Formally visiting each of the Society's thirty-three provinces is among duties of the General Council, which governs the Society between General Chapters. The General Chapter, the Society's representative assembly, meets every eight years.

General Council members, based in Rome, are appointed by the superior



Three Central Team members visiting the United States in March are, from left, Sisters Son In Sook, Jane Maltby and Marisa Sacerdote.

general, currently Sister Clare Pratt of the United States.

Jane Maltby is from England; Son In Sook is from Korea; Marisa Sacerdote is from Argentina. A fifth General Council member, Maria Dolores Górriz, is from Spain.

More information about the General Council is available at [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org), Province News. ✦

*Network office up and running in St. Charles*

In mid-March, the staff of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools was at work in the Network's new office in St. Charles, Missouri, completing arrangements for 2004 summer service programs. The programs will involve 135 students from eleven Network schools.

The Network, previously based in Newton, Massachusetts, moved into its new home in St. Charles in January. The office is across the street from sacred space for the Society: the Academy of the Sacred Heart, which owns the Network's new building, and the Shrine of Saint Philippine Duchesne. Philippine established the school in St. Charles in 1818 and lived there until her death in 1852.

A new administrative assistant, Dawn Stewart, works with Madeleine Ortman, executive director of the Network (see *Heart*, Winter 2003),

and Sister Carol Haggarty, assistant executive director. Stewart comes with twenty years of experience in office management.

Network summer service programs this year will take students to Mexico to work with children in a *barrio* in Guadalajara and to Miami for an up-close look at obstacles faced by Haitian immigrants.

The Network's new address is 700 North Third Street, St. Charles, Missouri, 63301. Photos of the exterior and interior of the building can be viewed at [www.sofie.org](http://www.sofie.org). ✦

*Shirley Miller, RSCJ, heads mission advancement office of U.S. Province*

Sister Shirley Miller, formerly head of schools in Omaha and New Orleans, began working January 5 as the first director of mission advancement for

the United States Province. Sister Miller brings a wealth of experience in development and fund raising to her new role. She also brings a deep love for the Society's mission of discovering and revealing God's love through the service of education.

"People often ask me, 'What is mission advancement,'" Sister Miller said. "To me, it means making the mission of the Society better known to a wider public and enlisting support – personal and financial – to further our

*continued*



From left, Carol Haggarty, RSCJ, and Madeleine Ortman present a rent check for the new Network office building (in background) to John McClure, chairman of the board at Academy of the Sacred Heart, St. Charles, and Margaret Caire, headmistress.



Shirley Miller, RSCJ

Joan Runge

mission and ministries. Already, she said, people have asked to meet with her or invited her to speak about the resources the Society needs to carry on its work.

“This is a great time for all of us who love the Society to come together to clarify the mission of the Society in today’s post 9/11 world, to become better aware of the ways in which the ministries of RSCJ are responding to the needs of the world according to the vision of Saint Madeleine Sophie,” Sister Miller said.

She noted that her understanding of the spiritual dimension of fund raising has grown over time. “It is really about building relationships and bringing people together who share a common vision. I am excited about what people can do together when they really believe in something.”

Sister Miller is based at the Society’s Provincial House in St. Louis. ✦

*RSCJ recipients of honors, awards, new posts*

♥ Sister Kathleen Hughes has been named the 2004 recipient of the Frederick R. McManus Award, a national award given annually to a person who has made a significant contribution to liturgical renewal in the United States. Previous recipients include Benedictine Fathers Godfrey Diekmann and Aidan Kavanaugh, Adé Bethune, Bishop Donald Trautman and Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk. Bethune is the only other woman to receive the award, which was established in 1995 by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions.

♥ Sister Carolyn Osiek, Charles Fischer Catholic Professor at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas,



*Sister Osiek addresses alumnae at Academy of the Sacred Heart, St. Charles.*

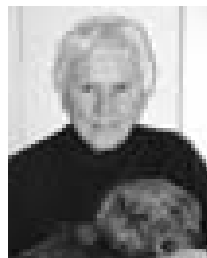
is the new vice-president, president-elect of the Society of Biblical Literature. Sister Osiek, a specialist in New Testament, is the fourth woman and the eighth Catholic

to be elected to that post in the biblical society’s 123-year history. The international scholarly organization, which promotes critical investigation of the Bible, has 6,000 members.

♥ Sisters Eileen O’Gorman and Ruth Dowd will receive honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees at Manhattanville College commencement on May 13, 2004. The two RSCJ have a long association with Manhattanville. Sister O’Gorman taught English at the college from 1946 to 1982. Sister Dowd most recently served as dean of special programs. Last year, the college honored the pair by establishing the Dowd/O’Gorman Writing Center. The center will serve as the home of literary events and programs for the Manhattanville community and the public.



*Eileen O’Gorman, RSCJ*



*Ruth Dowd, RSCJ*

♥ Sister Lucie Nordmann has received one of twelve Catholic Women Awards for 2004. The awards are given by the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of St. Louis and presented in an annual ceremony in spring. Sister Nordmann, patient/family advocate at St. Luke’s Hospital, Chesterfield, Missouri, since 1996, was selected in the category of “Peacemaker,” a woman who brings “harmony out of conflict and who guides opposing people to reconcile.”

♥ Sister Jean Bartunek, professor in the Carroll School of Management at Boston College, has been selected as the first holder of an endowed chair established by Robert and Evelyn Ferris of Atherton, California. Her appointment is effective June 1.

♥ Sister Maureen Glavin will succeed Sister Margaret Caire as head of school at the Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Charles, Missouri. Sister Caire, who



*Maureen Glavin, RSCJ*

has served for twenty years in the post, is retiring. Sister Glavin is director of the junior high school at Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart

in Miami. She previously taught math and science at the academy in St. Charles and at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Houston.

*For more information on these awards and their recipients, please visit [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org) ✦*

# *Sister Carey is most in her element when out of it*

## **Student athletes designate her an all-star**

**By Pamela Schaeffer**

**B**ecause Hilda Carey, RSCJ, loves baseball, she won't forget the year she began teaching at Boston College. It was 1986, the year the New York Mets beat the Boston Red Sox in the World Series. It was a spectacular series for the Mets, who went down in history for their dramatic comeback in Game Six, when Boston was just a pitch away from winning its first title since 1918.

"I was a closet Mets fan," she said. "Don't think that wasn't hard!"

Though Sister Carey may have felt out of her element rooting for the Mets in Boston, her passion for America's national pastime has surely helped her cultivate strong relationships with student athletes. Those relationships were a major factor in her receiving an Outstanding Faculty Award for her work with student athletes last year.

Then, too, there is a tinge of metaphor to her experience of being a Mets fan in Boston, which for much of her life has been home. Starting with her birth in the "wrong place" – her family of Bostonians was summering in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, when she made her entrance – Sister Carey's life story reveals a woman who has often been out of her element and watched it turn to her advantage.

For example, during her noviceship in the Society of the Sacred Heart during the 1950s, she was put in charge of music at the girls' boarding school at Kenwood. "I had a disastrous year trying to teach singing to the whole school," she said. "I had no idea how to do it. Everything went wrong."

Disaster turned to serendipity. She was assigned to teach English, history and psychology to older students, and there she found her niche. Eventually she supplemented her English degrees from two Sacred Heart Schools – bachelor's from Newton College, master's from Manhattanville – with graduate study in literature at Princeton. Today, she teaches English literature and writing to freshmen at Boston College.

Following final vows in Rome, Sister Carey was sent to teach at the Society's international school in Tokyo for six months. She loved the experience but found it all too short. After returning to the States, she taught at Sacred Heart schools in the Northeast until 1972, when, to her delight, she was sent overseas again, this time for a much longer stay. After a year in Japan, she went to Korea until 1981, first teaching in the Sacred Heart college in Chun Cheon and later, after it merged with the Catholic University of Korea, in Pucheon. Happily out of her element again, she worried during visits



Suzanne Camarata

*Sister Carey discusses a piece of writing with student Jennifer Gropp.*

home that something would prevent her going back.

"There's a piece of me that's still there," she said. Though she's been home for two decades, some of her former Korean students still keep in touch. Her e-mail brings other reminders of her stay in Korea, too. "Most of my spam is in Korean," she said.

### **Around the world in fiction**

Ironically, it was while Sister Carey was in Korea that she grew to love the American poet Emily Dickinson, checking out volumes of her work at the American army base. She gravitated to Dickinson as a fellow New Englander. "Dickinson even wrote, 'I see New Englandly,'" Sister Carey said. She found that Korean students resonated with Dickinson's imagery. "They seem to understand her on a deeper level than Westerners," she said. "I think Asians have a deeper sense of metaphor."

Despite Sister Carey's strong attachment to Dickinson's work, she doesn't assign it to her students in Boston. "If you can't do a whole course on Dickinson, you run the risk of oversimplification," she said. Instead, she gives students a dose of what she's used to: being out of their element, if only vicariously. She has two requirements for the fiction she chooses for her students: it must be of high quality, and it

*continued*

must offer students experiences of cultures different from their own. Sister Carey finds that contemporary fiction does this best.

Novels she has assigned recently include Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues*, a story demonstrating the frustrations of Native American life through the experiences of Thomas Builds-the-Fire, a musician, and his friends; Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*, a novel about a black woman with mystical powers and their effect on a young couple visiting a fictional island in the South; Isabelle Allende's *House of Spirits*, the epic of the Trueba family, whose destinies are shaped by a tragic series of events in an unnamed South American country; Brian Moore's *Magician's Wife*, the saga of a woman who comes to resist her husband's efforts to further French imperialism in North Africa by overcoming rebellious Arab tribes, and Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup*, the story of the marriage of a young woman from a wealthy family to an illegal Arab immigrant, set in the new South Africa and an impoverished Arab village.

What gives Sister Carey the mark of a teacher in the international tradition of the Society of the Sacred Heart, though, isn't her love of sports or poetry, nor even her affinity for stories that unfold in different cultures. It is, as she puts it, her "love of kids."

The writing program at Boston College requires students to meet weekly, one on one, with their professor, in addition to class time. Currently Sister Carey meets weekly with fifteen students.

"A lot of the freshmen are lost in a huge world," she said. Their classes are often held in lecture halls, and professors don't know their names. For many students, the writing professor becomes their only adult friend.

"They come in shyly at first. We talk about how to improve their writing, and before long, they come to you with all kinds of things," she said. She loves both parts of it: watching her students gain insight into the process of writing, and walking with them a bit as their adult lives begin to unfold.

Inevitably, some of those students are among the school's 700 varsity athletes.

Once something of a student athlete herself – she has a photograph of herself playing baseball in the religious habit she wore in the 1950s – Sister Carey is sensitive to the pressures that young athletes face.



*Sister Carey strikes a reflective pose in her office at Boston College.*

Suzanne Camarata

"Boston College, unlike many universities, insists that student athletes pass their courses," she said. "If they don't, they can't be on the team." To help ensure their success, they are required to participate in a tutoring program sponsored by Learning Resources for Student Athletes.

Although Sister Carey isn't formally a part of that program, she was the recipient of its Outstanding Faculty Award for 2003.

"A number of the students assigned to my classes are athletes," she said. "I follow up on them the way I follow up on every student. I keep in touch with them throughout their whole time at Boston College. I'm always asking about them.

They appreciate that.

"I do more hugging on this campus than I have done at any other time in my life," she added.

Ferna Phillips, director of Learning Resources for Student Athletes, said Sister Carey had been designated by her staff and student athletes as "the faculty member who best typifies the support they need."

Athletes know Sister Carey as "tough, but fair," she said. "She holds them to high standards. She does not give in to them. But she is extremely caring about them both as individuals and in her efforts to help them develop the skills they need."

Given Sister Carey's propensity for being out of her element and turning it to gold, it is not too surprising that her life away from school, what little there is of it, is lived in a mixed community – a community whose members come from different religious orders. She lives with three other sisters, two Religious of the Sacred Heart; one a Sister of Saint Joseph.

The refrain by now is familiar.

"I think it's tremendously valuable to live with people of other traditions. You see both the similarities and the dissimilarities" among religious congregations, "and both enrich you," she said. ❖

*Sister Carey is a faculty member in the English department at Boston College. She is one of several RSCJ who have taught at the Jesuit school since 1974, when Boston College merged with Newton College of the Sacred Heart, one of six U.S. colleges founded by the Society of the Sacred Heart.*



# LaBelle: A Mission as Fruitful as the Surrounding Fields

Join RSCJ this summer  
in southwest Florida

By Pamela Schaeffer

In her sixth year in southwest Florida, Sister Marie-Louise Wolfington surveys the good work completed by Habitat for Humanity of Hendry County and, in the next breath, laments all that is yet to be done.

“We are proud of what we have accomplished. We can stand tall,” she said. “But dreaming keeps me alive.”

Sister Wolfington came to LaBelle in 1998, one of many RSCJ who had stopped in at the Society’s mission here to bolster the spirits of two grieving sisters and to help carry on the work. It wasn’t hard to see that, like the sugar cane plants and citrus trees that grow abundantly in the region, the mission had brought nourishment and sweetness to many lives, and Sister Wolfington decided to stay.

The fruit of the work in LaBelle includes education, housing, parish work and, above all, friendships. It was those friendships that helped to sustain bereaved RSCJ following the sudden deaths of two members of their religious community in 1995. Sisters Mercedes Posada and Rosa Maria Orjuela, two of four RSCJ then working in LaBelle, were killed in a highway accident on the morning of November 16 while transporting a young woman to a job interview.

Left behind were Sisters Madeleine Desloge and Bienvenida Velez, both deeply committed to the local people who had poured out their love and shared so deeply in their grief.



When the accident happened, Sister Velez lost not only a good friend. She lost a companion in ministry and community of forty-three years. Beginning in the early 1950s, she, a native of Puerto Rico, and Sister Orjuela, a native of Colombia, had lived together in Cuba until they were expelled by the Castro regime in 1961. From there, they had gone to Miami, where they were “foundation stones,” members of the RSCJ community that helped establish Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart. Their role was to oversee El Jardín, the



*Above, Sister Wolfington points proudly to a sign showing Habitat for Humanity’s progress. Below, Sister Wolfington enjoys a visit with Maria Pequeño, who recently moved with her husband and three children into a new Habitat home.*

graceful mansion that serves as the architectural landmark of the school.

Then in 1972, in faithfulness to the Society’s commitment to solidarity with the poor, they began working with migrant farm workers in Naranja, a town south of Miami.

The commitment to serve the poor and to work for a just society, though strongly articulated at the General Chapter of 1970, springs from the Society’s roots in the determination of Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat to provide quality education to those who were educationally deprived.

Five years later, in 1977, Sisters Velez and Orjuela responded to an invitation from Father Frank Guinan, pastor of Our Lady Queen of Heaven Church in LaBelle, to move north and work with a growing number of migrants in the area. LaBelle is in Hendry County, one of two poorest among the sixty-seven counties in the state. The two nuns went to the migrant camps and invited the workers to join them on Sunday at Mass.

At first, the migrant workers resisted opening their doors to sisters in secular dress. “They were used to seeing nuns in

*continued*



*Above, Sister Wolfington and Demesha Giles, program coordinator for Habitat for Humanity of Hendry County. Below, graves of Sisters Mercedes Posada and Rosa Maria Orjuela.*

habits,” Sister Velez said. “They thought we might be Jehovah’s Witnesses, and they would refuse to let us in.” When the Spanish-speaking residents did speak to the sisters, they often declined their invitations, pointing out that Masses at the local parish were celebrated only in English.

“Just come. Come this Sunday,” the sisters urged them. Meanwhile, Sister Velez bought some fabric and stitched up some simple habits. The migrants obliged. “They packed the church,” Sister Velez said. “We were taking chairs from everywhere.” The pastor soon agreed to offer a Spanish Mass, with Sister Orjuela doing the readings and delivering the homilies.

The Spanish Mass flourished, and the people helped raise funds to expand the church. Relationships between the migrants and the sisters flourished too. The sisters often provided transportation for people who had no car. They loaned money, using donations as a source of funds, and they opened their home to those who needed a phone to call families in Mexico. The workers came on payday with reimbursements.

In 1981, Sister Mercedes Posada, like Sister Orjuela, a native of Colombia, came from Boston. She taught religion to young children and helped to maintain the parish hall.

The three sisters in LaBelle kept in close touch with RSCJ working with migrants in southern Florida: Sisters Carol Putnam, Joan Gannon, Esperanza Jasso and others in Indiantown, about twenty miles from Florida’s eastern coast. Looking for a way to serve “the poorest of the poor,” Sisters Putnam, Gannon and Connie Dryden had gone there in 1978 to respond to the needs they would discover. In time, they founded Hope Rural School and a parish social service center.

Meanwhile, Sister Velez saw the need for a native English-speaking RSCJ to assist with religious education for a growing number of Anglos in LaBelle. Sister Madeleine Desloge, then working in St. Charles, Missouri, was longing for a simpler lifestyle. For years, she had hoped to work in missions overseas. She had asked to go to Japan, then Africa, but was told her skills were needed at home.

Then in the early 1980s, an era when RSCJ in their sixties were unlikely to get new assignments overseas, Sister Barbara Dawson, then director of ministry for the U.S. Province, proposed, “Why not work in a mission in this country?”

“I didn’t know there were any,” Sister Desloge recalls replying. Before long, she was on her way to LaBelle. In addition to overseeing religious education for children, she took charge of RCIA, the program for adult converts.

By 1995, the four sisters had been working together for twelve years, living in a home provided by the diocese – first the Archdiocese of Miami, and later, when the archdiocese was subdivided, by the Diocese of Venice, Florida.

As a sign of how their ministries were valued, Bishop John J. Nevins and thirty-three priests concelebrated the Mass for Sisters Orjuela and Posada. They had been killed instantly when a van suddenly crossed the road in front of them to get to a convenience store on the other side. The others involved in the accident survived: the driver of the van, the woman the sisters had been transporting, and the woman’s young child.

On the day of the funeral, migrant workers carried the two caskets on their shoulders for eight blocks, leading a procession of hundreds of mourners to the civic center for the Mass. Buses normally used to take migrant workers to the fields were dispatched that day to take worshipers to the cemetery, where the sisters – one known as *madrecita*, “little mother,” the other as “Mercy” – were buried side by side.

The headstone marking the sisters’ graves, donated by Cecil Akin of Akin-Davis funeral home and Owen Luckey, a local lawyer, is a large replica of the Society’s profession cross. The Society’s mission – “dedicated to spreading the love of Jesus through the work of education and the service of the poor” – is inscribed across the bottom of the cross. Carved in granite ledgers, one placed over each grave, is a synopsis of the life story of each of the two nuns.



In 1998, Sister Wolfington came to visit Sisters Velez and Desloge in LaBelle. She recognized a need for better housing in the area, where substandard housing abounds. Before long, she had established a Hendry County chapter of Habitat for Humanity International, the Christian, nonprofit organization that provides homes for low-income people around the world.

The Habitat program in Hendry County has steadily grown. It has a full-time director, Sara Townsend; a program coordinator, Demesha Giles; a full-time Vista volunteer, and a pool of part-time volunteers that includes an annual stream of “snowbirds” from the North in winter. Local supporters include K.C. Stanley-Lynn and her husband, Richard Lynn, both former riverboat captains from Kansas City, Missouri, who moved to LaBelle in 1998 and built a house overlooking the Caloosa River, which flows across the state.

So far, Hendry County’s Habitat program has provided eleven houses for families who have met Habitat for Humanity’s eligibility requirements, which include making a

\$1,200 down payment and putting in 500 hours of “sweat equity.” During the next year, Sister Wolfington expects the number of Habitat houses in Henry County to nearly double.

Sister Wolfington keeps in touch with several Sacred Heart alumnae in the area and was inspired when one said last year, “Wouldn’t it be great if alumnae could help build a ‘Sacred Heart house’ for Habitat.” Soon Sister Wolfington was organizing the first Network summer program for Sacred Heart alumnae, to be held this summer in LaBelle.

She has sent information to every alumna who, as a student, participated in a Network summer service project. But any alumna of a Network school is welcome in LaBelle this summer, she said. Participants will help to build a Habitat house and reflect together on their life experiences in light of their religious beliefs. Special events will include a barbecue and swim at the home of K.C. and Richard Lynn.

Sister Gannon, who went on from Indiantown to work in New York with people suffering from AIDS, and is now a member of the U.S. Provincial Team in St. Louis, said the choice of LaBelle for the first program for Network alumnae is significant in many ways.

“For the same reason that the U.S. Province wants to remain closely linked with the Society’s Mexican Province – because they have such a strong commitment to being with the poor – LaBelle is an important symbol for us,” she said. “The ministries in Florida have blazed a trail for us. They represent for our Province one of the first steps of our living out that 1970 call to work for justice and be in solidarity with the poor.” ❖

*Top, Sister Bienvenida Velez sits astride a tricycle she uses for errands. Bottom, Madeleine Desloge, RSCJ*



**Sacred Heart alumnae are invited to LaBelle, Florida, July 13-18 to help build a Habitat for Humanity house and to reflect on spiritual and social realities they have experienced. Participants will have opportunities for recreation, including swimming and kayaking, and for spiritual direction. Participating RSCJ will include Sisters Marie-Louise Wolfington of LaBelle; Nancy Koke of Chicago; Diane Roche of Verrettes, Haiti, and Maureen Glavin of St. Charles, Missouri. Fee for the six-day program, which includes room and board at a retreat center overlooking the Caloosa River, is \$200. Alumnae wishing more information are invited to contact Sister Wolfington at [mwolfington@rscj.org](mailto:mwolfington@rscj.org), or by phone at 863-675-3724. Registration forms are available at [www.aash.org](http://www.aash.org). Deadline for registration is May 31.**

# RSCJ in Haiti Stay the Course

## Amid conflict, people grateful for their presence

By Pamela Schaeffer

In early February, RSCJ across the United States watched and worried as political tensions in Haiti, simmering for at least two years, erupted into violence. RSCJ in Mexico, Canada, Puerto Rico and Cuba were no less concerned. These are the five provinces that sponsor a four-year-old foundation in Verrettes, Haiti, where four RSCJ – Judy Vollbrecht and Diane Roche from the United States, Josefa Corrada from Puerto Rico and Matilde Moreno from Spain – live among the people and offer programs for children. Verrettes is a small town in the Artibonite Valley, an agricultural region in west-central Haiti.

The governments of the United States, Canada, Mexico and France were among those urging citizens to leave. RSCJ in Haiti, though, were opposed to abandoning Haitian neighbors and friends and educational programs so hopefully begun. Further, Verrettes, apparently of minimal strategic importance in the conflict, remained relatively calm. Evacuation would have required traveling through areas in the forefront of international news, where the conflict had erupted into chaos and violence. Though supplies were short, and many businesses and schools were closed, to stay seemed safer than to leave.

Sister Vollbrecht, who has lived in Haiti from the beginning of the mission, noted that their Haitian

**Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, is just 600 miles off U.S. shores.**

*Sister Judy Vollbrecht, left, on a visit to New Orleans in 2002. She has been in Verrettes since the beginning of the RSCJ foundation in 2000.*

*Sister Josefa Corrada, center, reads with students.*

*Right, a Haitian child in Verrettes.*

Photo of Sister Judy Vollbrecht: by Jennifer Zdon © 2003 The Times-Picayune Publishing Co., all rights reserved. Used with permission of The Times-Picayune.



**Only 65 percent of children are enrolled in primary schools.**

friends had responded favorably to their decision. She has become all too aware of Haiti's history: relentless poverty and political instability – thirty violent coups since Haiti became the world's first black republic in 1804. "When we bring communion to the sick, as we do every Sunday, people are so grateful," she wrote in an e-mail in mid-March. "They need a chance to pray for the country ... to experience that God has not abandoned them in spite of all that is happening. They continually pray in thanksgiving for us because we left our countries to come to Haiti."

Still, conditions were unusually harsh. An e-mail from Sister Diane Roche, who had decided to join the group in Verrettes and had arrived just three weeks earlier, described the effect of the conflict on supplies. "The four of us are sitting in our dining room after our evening meal of cereal and the homemade cottage cheese Matilde has learned to make with powdered milk," she wrote. "Not a day has gone by that some person with whom we have worked over the past three years hasn't shared a story of lost work, sickness, hunger or death. The children who come to our gate often make up stories about dead mothers or other tragedies in the hope that we will soften our 'no giving out food at the gate' rule. But their hunger is not fabricated. ... Occasionally (as in the case of two severely malnourished children who have the characteristic reddish tinge to their hair that indicates 'kwashiorkor' – protein malnutrition – and are about a third the size and weight they ought to be at their age) we break our own rule.

“I feel as if I am on a powerful sailboat with full sails, leaning backward to keep the boat from tipping over,” Sister Roche wrote. She said she was worried that the effort in Verrettes would be uprooted “in the whirlwind.”



The RSCJ presence in Haiti goes back nearly two decades. First, Puerto Rican sisters went to give theological workshops to religious women in Haiti and to acquire grant money for poor schools in the mountains near Verrettes. Two RSCJ from the United States also became deeply involved – Anita Von Wellsheim, who helped a grassroots group called Fonkoze with their small loan program for the poor, and Virginia McMonagle, who spent years working with orphans and a hospital for infants, *Nos Petits Frères et Soeurs*. As these religious returned home and talked about the needs, the idea of a foundation in Haiti began to take root. After several visits to Haiti, the provincials of the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and Mexico (with Cuba joining later) decided such a mission would be a fitting gift for Saints Madeleine Sophie Barat and Philippine Duchesne to mark the bicentennial of the Society in 2000.

Recently, Sister Roche, perhaps in an effort to put the reality she was facing in perspective, wrote a brief history of the mission's early days.

*The first group of three RSCJ – Inés Calderón of the Puerto Rican province, Josefa Corrada, and Judy Vollbrecht – arrived in Verrettes in 2000 and set up residence in a simple little house on one of the central streets of the town. The plan was to live in the midst of the people... I have seen the house and can understand why people were so sad to have to move. The neighbors were our lifeline, helping us learn Kreyol and*



*The average per capita income is \$425 a year.*



*Far left, Sister Matilde Moreno displays art work from a project with Haitian children.*



*Left, a Haitian man rides his bicycle in the Artibonite region of Haiti while carrying a basket of rice on his head.*

Photo: Thony Belizaire/Agence France Presse.

*understand the customs of the country. They still greet us like family whenever we walk down our old street.*

*We moved into our present house last March. By this time Matilde Moreno had arrived from Spain, and her homemaking instincts helped convert the weary little building into a decent and attractive home for us. It was no small task because, although the house had been well designed and constructed, it had been used as a rooming house for four families, who cooked in their rooms. ...*

*Today the house is as attractive as any RSCJ community. The walls are cinderblock finished in stucco and painted yellow. The floors are smooth cement ... We have great windows that have screens in them so we get to take advantage of every little breeze... .*

*We cook, using two solar ovens when it is sunny or on an indoor stove in our little cook house in the back yard, which is powered by bottled gas. We have a fridge that operates on both gas and electricity, depending on what we have available. Occasionally we do have Haitian electricity, but it is poorly regulated and sometimes causes damage to bulbs and appliances, so we haven't been using it lately. Instead, we have been living 'off the grid,' using the six solar panels installed on our roof. We also have running cold water most of the time and a septic tank of sorts in the back yard.*

*And of course we have a satellite antenna that allows us to receive and send e-mail.*

*All these things mean that our standard of living is much higher than the average in Verrettes ... [though]*

*continued*

*Only a quarter of the population has access to safe drinking water.*

a few homes are even more comfortable than ours (with air conditioning and generators, for example).

When we need bread, we walk to the local bakery, which produces simple white rolls every morning. Everyone in town eats them, and they are sold at other markets for miles around. For fruits, vegetables, eggs and some staples, like sugar, rice and flour, we go to the local open air market where we bargain like everyone else with the women selling wares. For other things, we go to St. Marc or Port-au-Prince. In a pinch, we can get almost anything we need at one of the little stores in town. But since everything has to be transported by truck to Verrettes, it costs more here.

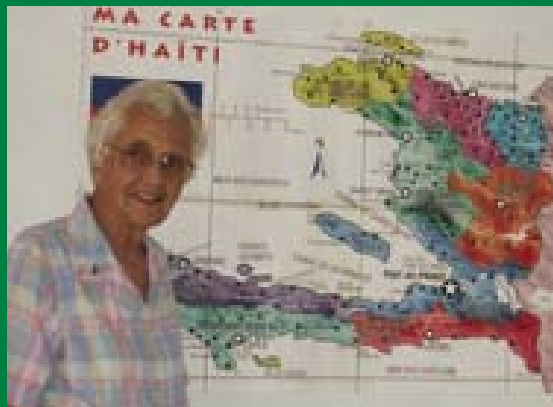
At first glance, the town looks pretty worn down. There is political graffiti on most of the walls. The little town square is nothing but dust. ... Most buildings have cracks in them or are in need of paint or are half finished. Only two roads are paved. But after a week or so, you begin to notice how much actually works here. The Catholic church is in great shape, and several Protestant churches have attractive buildings. A system of canals brings water into the town for drinking and irrigation. There are two huge Catholic schools, one run by sisters, the other by brothers. These are state schools, so the kids who get in don't have to pay much. In addition there must be at least fifty other private schools, which range from lean-tos with benches to real buildings with playing fields and computers. There are two radio stations, an internet café, a gas station, a simple movie theater, a trade school, a residence for poor kids from the mountains ... a factory that makes ice, a place that sells tanks of propane, and a host of other small businesses.

And of course there is our Choukon, an open-air pavilion we began building two years ago on a piece of land owned by the church. It has four latrines, two showers, a kitchen, storage space and a guardian's room. Since it is halfway up a small hill, it gets a nice breeze all day long, which makes it possible to run our summer program when the temperatures are often in the high 90s all day long. ...

**Approximately  
65 percent of  
Haitians  
cannot read.**

Left, Sister Anita Von Wellsheim stands in front of a map of Haiti. From her home at Kenwood Convent of the Sacred Heart in Albany, she works with Fonkoze, a program that supports grassroots economic development in Haiti. Right, map of Haiti. Verrettes is north of Port-au-Prince. Inset shows Haiti's location in relation to the United States.

Map: AFP Spanish Graphics Service



**Average life  
expectancy is 49  
years for men, 54  
years for women.**



By March 10, though the political situation remained unsettled, life was improving in Verrettes. "Some of the people who left are beginning to come back," Sister Vollbrecht wrote. "Schools opened this week. So did the bank. The telephone company, the cyber café and the gas stations are still down, but the word is that they have gas now in Port-au-Prince, so we should be getting it soon." Meanwhile, Sister Roche had given two workshops in conflict resolution to the young men and women who assist the RSCJ in their programs and had met with young women exploring potential vocations to religious life.



In normal times, as normal as it gets in the poorest country in the western hemisphere, the RSCJ operate an after-school program for children three days a week, helping them with homework and providing informal tutoring. The sisters also operate a summer camp for young children and help older children develop leadership skills by using them as assistants.

Responding to questions about the RSCJ presence in Haiti, Sister Vollbrecht reflected in a recent e-mail on changes in people over time.

*[Soon after we arrived] we noticed children passing by our house every day carrying buckets of water on their heads, and we began inviting them into our chapel to say hello to Jesus. They were dirty, ragged, often barefoot, and enchanting. They carefully put down their buckets, slipped off their sandals if they had them, and came in. We taught them songs; we prayed; they left. They returned with friends and started knocking on the door and calling for us. Our neighbors told them to go away, and sometimes beat them, saying they were dirty and should know better than to disturb the sisters like that. Little by little they began to understand that we didn't want the kids to go away, that Jesus loved them just as they were, and we would welcome them even if they hadn't bathed and put on clean clothes. Gradually they accepted that and wanted their own children to come too. Now, three years later, we see the changes in the children, some of whom are now adolescents.*

Among them are Tigana, a boy of twelve or thirteen when he first met the RSCJ. He was a slow learner who was often getting into fights.

*But when we asked him to do something, he was pleased and proud, and began coming regularly to check the water tank on top of the house and clean it out, or go to the market with us, or help carry propane gas cylinders for our stove and refrigerator. Sometimes we had to send him away for a week or two when he would not behave. ... Today he is a young man of sixteen ... and is back in school. He has a positive sense of himself and tries to tell the younger children how to do things. ... He still has trouble reading and writing, but is good with mechanical things. He comes to us when he is in trouble, and we help him sort things out.*

*Another is Oudi. He must have been nine when we first met him, but he looked about five. He was a tiny child, obviously malnourished, with big eyes filled with fear and emptiness. ... We went into the chapel, and*



**Women die in childbirth at 70 times the rate in the United States.**



*Far left, Haitian children are fed as part of the sisters' program in Verrettes.*

*Left, the sisters' new home made of cinderblock finished in stucco and painted yellow.*

*we asked him what things he wanted to thank God for in his life. He said only, "Mwen grangou" – I'm hungry.*

*After all the advice we had received about not giving food or money, we had a big struggle. How could we send a kid like that away with nothing? We left him in the chapel and had a community meeting. Finally, we gave him some rice and onions and oil to take home and cook.*

*It's been a long journey for Oudi, but he's getting there. His eyes are no longer fearful or blank. He is at the head of his class in second grade, and our twin parish in Michigan has agreed to pay for him to attend a more challenging school.*

*There are changes in the adults too, and in ourselves.*

*The Haitians have changed most notably in the domain of discipline. It is a time-honored custom here to beat children who misbehave. ... We pointed to the example of Jesus ... and said that if they were to help us with the children, they must live by that principle. It was a big struggle for most of them ... but they are learning to listen to the children and encourage them. One man who has three children told us he used to beat them all the time, but he doesn't anymore.*

*As for ourselves ... little by little we are able to enter into the structures of life here. We still have much to learn, but we pray that our lives and work here will help change attitudes of fear and mistrust to attitudes of cooperation and hope. ❖*

**About 12 percent of children die before age 5.**

# Temple of Understanding offers path to world peace

By Joan Kirby, RSCJ

Nearly a half century ago, Juliet Hollister, founder of the Temple of Understanding, was saddened by the fact of religious wars and conflicts in many parts of the world. If we knew more about our neighbors, she felt, we would be less likely to criticize, diminish or destroy them.

Today, when preemptive war and fear of terrorism have only increased the misery of human beings who struggle for essential resources, her vision is perhaps even more critical. With increasing urgency, we are challenged to grow from a global society based largely on political and economic values to a world community characterized by justice and peace. Educating people to understand and respect different religious traditions is the Temple of Understanding's way of participating in this transformation.

The Temple's mission is to evoke acknowledgement that God can be found in many guises. Its educational programs are aimed at this, for only such an acknowledgement can bring about true respect for religious traditions different from one's own.

Since 1994, I have had numberless experiences that have brought about such an acknowledgment in myself. These experiences, of which I share three, have made me realize the role of interfaith dialogue in building a just and peaceful world community. They have also deepened my appreciation of the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart: to discover and make known God's love in the heart of the world.

❖ *In 1996, I went with some skepticism to an ashram in a poor section of Delhi, India, where I had been invited to speak at an international gathering. I was concerned that my limited perspective might prevent me from entering fully into the ceremonies, which included thousands of people in procession behind sacred ornamented elephants. One evening the guru of the ashram, Sant Rajinder Singh, emerged onto a terrace overlooking a vast field. As he appeared, I heard a wave of hundreds of poor people washing in closer to the fence. They had been waiting to receive the Darshan – the guru's blessing that acknowledges the God within each of us. These people had already been fed rice and lentils. What fed their souls that evening were the words of this unassuming computer engineer, successor at the ashram to his father, Sant*

*Kirpal Singh. My skepticism fell away as I witnessed the simple, strong, unquestioning faith of these people.*

❖ *The next image is of a rinpoche, a reincarnation of a great lama in the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism and the most humble person I know. I have spent a good bit of time with him since we partnered in a program called Five Meditation Masters. Exiled from Tibet in 1959, Rinpoche Khyongla came to America to share Buddhism in the West. At first alone in New York, he took a job at B. Altman & Co., the New York retailer, until he was able to open the Tibet Center on the fifth floor of an old building on 31st Street. Difficulty with the language and a natural reticence make him a listener beyond compare. Rinpoche Khyongla speaks only when asked to teach. But it is the humor and joy that surround him and those who work with him that make me think he is a true Buddha.*

❖ *A third revealing experience has been my deepening friendships with Muslims that began with visits to Sufi mosques: one in India and two in New York – the Al Jarrahi Mosque in Chestnut Ridge and the International Sufi Order in New Lebanon. In the chant at Zikr, the Sufi ceremony meant to open the hearts of seekers, I have sensed the mysticism that permeates the poetry of Rumi, the thirteenth-century Sufi mystic. I have been moved by the way that prayer and fidelity to Muhammad's teaching motivate dedication to the poor and oppressed in every society where Islam is practiced. (As in other religious traditions, the extremists in Islam make full acceptance of that religion difficult. Are we ever going to attend to the root causes of the desperation that leads to suicide bombings in key parts of the world?)*

These experiences have shown me that at the heart of cultural diversity, so respected by the international Society of the Sacred Heart, are religious traditions offering authentic spirituality. A process of "appreciative inquiry" in relation to other religions has given me privileged insights into their inner lives. We need these insights in order to grow spiritually. We need them in order to become peacemakers and to bring





*Juliet Hollister and Mother Theresa*

about justice in our world.

Scientists remind us that everything is radically interconnected. Constantly changing relationships among the world's religions involve both the incorporation of insights, images and practices from other traditions and the maintenance of identity through defining and defending boundaries. Too much openness risks a loss of one's own religious identity. Boundaries too rigidly closed endanger the continued existence of a religious tradition and too often lead to war. Balance between the two poles provides stability.

I think Juliet Hollister understood this delicate balance when she founded the Temple of Understanding in 1960. A housewife having lunch with a friend, she shared her vision of a world community in which many religions would come together in dialogue rather than in conflict. But how was a housewife with no degree in comparative religions going to promote such an idea?

"Have you prayed about it?" asked her husband, a New York attorney. She hadn't, but she did. Her idea, though simple, was so powerful that humanitarian Albert Schweitzer and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt soon became her advocates.

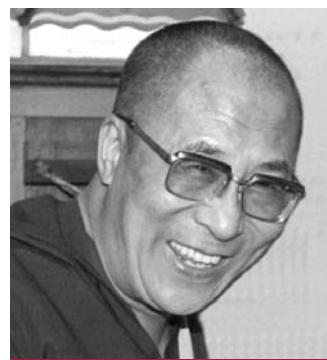
"You must meet religious and political leaders around the world and I will write letters of introduction for you," Mrs. Roosevelt told her. That year, Juliet and her youngest son Dickerman, age 11, set out to enlist support from such leaders as President Nasser, Anwar-el Sadat, President Nehru, Pope John XXIII and Albert Schweitzer.

The response was overwhelming. Schweitzer wrote to her, "Come at once and I will send a canoe." The Dalai Lama named the work of the Temple "a very sacred and important work." Thomas Merton clarified her spiritual perspective. "My dear, we are already one," he told her. "What we have to discover is what we already are."

The idea of working to achieve understanding and harmony among the people of the world's religions and to recognize the oneness of the human family held universal appeal. The fear of losing the integrity of religious traditions

gave way to the realization that a "spiritual United Nations" – global, multi-religious, interracial, gender-inclusive and independent – held up a promise of international peace.

At present, the Temple of Understanding has non-governmental status at the United Nations. Temple programs emphasize the transformative power of interfaith education. Regional conferences have encouraged respect for religious diversity in the university environment. A project in collaboration with Auburn Theological Seminary, "Spirituality and Different Religious Traditions," has become a well-attended annual course. Consultations bring together educators from the United States and abroad to cultivate a vision of what interfaith education might accomplish for a culture of peace. Hosted at the United Nations, in March of 2003, the most recent consultation featured the Muslim delegate from Pakistan whose resolution on religious and cultural tolerance has been adopted by the General Assembly.



*The Dalai Lama*

In July of 2004, in Barcelona, the Parliament of the World's Religions will host a symposium on interfaith education sponsored by the Temple of Understanding and its partners, Auburn Theological Seminary, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, and the International Mahavir Jain Mission. The Dalai Lama and Raimon Panikkar, a

Catholic theologian who has devoted his life to inter-religious understanding, have agreed to participate. Religious educators from around the world will join us to spread the word that peace is the fruit of understanding and respect.

Much is at stake in a world gripped by fear. The future adequacy of individual religions, as well as the emergence of global harmony, depends on our ability to communicate and respect one another at the level of deep interiority where we experience the numinous. In this new kind of religious world, survival depends on opening, not closing, our borders to other traditions. We who are affiliated with the Temple of Understanding believe this is our challenge: to act peacefully and justly as we work and pray a world community into existence. ✦




*Sister Kirby represents the Temple of Understanding at the United Nations, where she is also active on the NGO Committee for Human Rights. She is a member of the Assembly of the Parliament of World's Religions and the Monastic Inter-religious Dialogue.*

# *Gateways To Reality*

## Science and the Spiritual Quest

By Barbara Carey, RSCJ



**I**n recent years a wave of books has dealt with the relationship between science and religion or between the new physics and theology. A few of these that I especially like connect marvelous recent discoveries in cosmology and physics to that part of religion and theology that connects us personally to God: our spirituality.

Too often scientific information and spirituality are consigned to separate compartments of our minds. Yet new knowledge about the universe can significantly affect our relationship to God. The way we view the universe, its origin and history and our place in it has a powerful effect on the way we see ourselves and the way we envision God. If we reflect on the connections, we may find our spirituality transformed.

### Reality-changing discoveries

Most of us are now familiar with what Thomas Berry, Catholic priest and cultural historian, and Brian Swimme, mathematical cosmologist, have called “the new universe story,” so I will recapitulate it only briefly here. It is an exciting story of a fifteen-billion-year history that began with a massive burst of energy known to us as the Big Bang. As the universe cooled and expanded over millions of years, helium and hydrogen formed. After more millions of years of cooling, gravity condensed matter into stars and galaxies. Eventually these stars collapsed through a tremendous explosion (a supernova), which spewed out carbon and iron, the essential elements for life. From the debris of the supernovas, about five billion years ago, our sun was formed along with the planets, including Earth.

The result, noted Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, theology professor at Fordham University, in her presidential address to Catholic Theological Society of America in 1996, is a world not only “almost unimaginably *old*, almost incomprehensibly *large* (over one hundred billion galaxies, each comprised of a hundred billion stars), but also unfathomably *organic* (everything is connected to everything else) and mind-numbingly *dynamic*.”

*...out of the Big Bang, the stars; out of the stardust, the earth; out of the earth, single-celled living creatures; out of the evolutionary life and death of these creatures, human beings with a consciousness and freedom that concentrate the self-transcendence of matter itself. (Human beings are the universe become conscious of itself.)*

The view of an evolving creation that Johnson describes is in startling contrast to the mechanistic world of Descartes, where nature was viewed as a machine, and to the Newtonian world, where the laws of nature are fixed, static and inflexible. Though this new view of the universe is dramatically different from the static view of our ancestors, it is those earlier mechanistic and static views that guide most of the theological concepts we have learned. Despite the amazing discoveries of twentieth-century science, most of us still unconsciously operate out of the outdated theological categories.

If we now turn to the new science of quantum physics, we find that it requires a still more radical change in how we see the world. As Nils Bohr, one of the founders of quantum physics says, “Anyone

who is not shocked by quantum theory has not understood it.”

In this short essay I can talk about only a few of the best-known discoveries in this new field of science, ideas that may relate to our view of ourselves and of God. If you find these discoveries totally confusing and difficult to comprehend, you are not alone. Even their discoverers found them so. Try to hold on and stay with the ideas to see where they may lead.

### The universe is relationships

First, there is the notion of relationship. According to quantum theory, a subatomic particle that decays into two particles becomes a set of twins – a single system with two parts spinning in opposite directions. It is impossible to know which one is spinning down and which is spinning up until a measurement is made, but according to the laws of physics, they must always balance each other. Einstein wanted to refute this possibility, to disprove quantum theory, since it violated his own theory of “special relativity.”

Therefore, early in the twentieth century, at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, Albert Einstein and his colleagues, Boris Podolsky and Nathan Rosen, tried to undermine quantum theory with something known as the EPR experiment. (The acronym is based on their initials.) To understand the experiment, try to imagine two of these particles flying apart, one of them heading toward the dark side of the moon while the other lingers in the laboratory above Einstein’s hair. According to quantum theory, if he could nab one of the particles and reverse its spin, the other particle would have to reverse its spin also, even if were light years away. Because the two particles were in a state of “quantum entanglement,” they should behave in complementary ways, no matter how far apart they were. Einstein did not think this would happen. He called it “spooky action at a distance.” Yet, to his chagrin, that is exactly what happened. Unhappily for Einstein, subsequent experiments continued to prove him wrong.

To Einstein’s wonderment, and ours, once two particles have interacted with each other, they remain related, regardless of their physical distance from each other. The even more confounding point



*continued*

seems to be that they do not behave as two separate particles, but as one. In scientific language, they must be considered a single non-separable object. Researchers think it has something to do with “field theory” in which “fields” are invisible, non-material structures that may turn out to be the basic substance of the universe. Just imagine a kind of field, or web, that knits the whole cosmos together so that, faster than the speed of light, a shiver in the Milky Way gives us a shiver right here. In such a universe, there is no such thing as an individual apart from his or her relationships. Every interaction affects not only history; it affects the universe itself.

### Uncertainty – Probability

Another startling discovery that has changed the scientific landscape is Heisenberg’s “uncertainty principle,” the principle that there is no such thing as a substance apart from its motion. Despite the way things look to us, matter is never still, never fixed or solid. Matter is moving energy.

According to the uncertainty principle, it is impossible to know both where a particle *is* and where it *is going*. A thing cannot even be said to be a wave or a particle until someone interferes to find out what it is. If you focus on its location, you move further from determining its momentum. If instead, you focus on its momentum, you can no longer know

where it is. In between your measurements, it exists only as a “probability wave.” When a measurement is taken, the wave collapses and the particle assumes an actual value, but only because the observer asked it to. Surprising? Actually, it has become one of the tenets of the new science that you cannot observe the phenomenon without entering into relationship with it, and the relationship changes the equation.

If you are confused by all this, you are in good company. The scientists themselves were baffled. The discovery of the uncertainty principle led Heisenberg almost to despair. As he remarked to Nils Bohr, “Can nature possibly seem so absurd as it seems to us in these experiments?”

### Stirring a sense of wonder

The quantum world indeed opens us to a whole new world of reality. You may be beginning to see already how some of these ideas can suggest to us new ways of thinking about ourselves and our

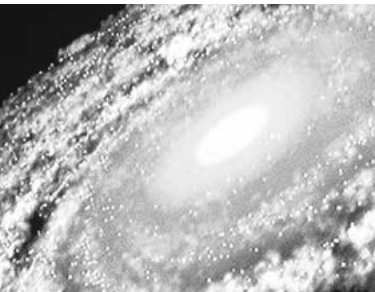
relationships to others and to God. Though it may take a long time to integrate the new insights into our spirituality, something may draw us to pursue the ideas further and see where they might lead.

It cannot help but produce changes in our images of God, of self, of our relation to the world and to God. At the very least, it must start us thinking in new directions and may provide new areas for our meditation and contemplation. Barbara Fiand, SND, Catholic theologian, writes in *Prayer and the Quest for Healing* (Crossroad, 1999), “Contemporary science can be amazingly helpful to those of us who seek after depth – to the soul hungry for a bigger picture and willing to go looking for meaning and questing for revelation beyond the boundaries of [religious perspectives] that quite often are [constricted] by the contexts and worldviews of bygone times.” Truly, there are gold nuggets hidden in these recent discoveries of science that can nourish our spirituality.

To begin with, the very vastness of the cosmos, as we now know it, must give us a fresh image of God’s utter transcendence. Then there is the realization of our unity with all of creation, the fact that “we are made of stardust,” that we share the elements that came from the explosion of a supernova, that the very atoms in our bodies were produced by millions of other creatures. Surely this must make us feel closer to all of creation, to realize that we are part of the “community of all creation,” that the earth is part of us. As Father Berry often says, “We are the universe conscious of itself.”

A closely related idea is that of our interdependence with one another and with every part of creation. We are physically linked to every other creature. At the same time we are creation brought to consciousness. The universe relies on us to think, to thank, to consciously praise. The mystics have always seen this unity of all things, but only in the last half-century has science been able to glimpse it experimentally.

This unifying vision of the world cannot but fill us with wonder and reverence. We experience the world as a sacred community and this provides us with the strongest reason for involvement in environmental issues. It also leads us to see the world as “sacrament” in the broadest meaning of the term, as a reality that reveals, as well as conceals, the divine presence. Saint Thomas Aquinas saw this in the thirteenth century, when he wrote in his *Summa*



*Theologica*, “God produced many and diverse creatures, that what was wanting in one in the representation of divine goodness might be supplied by another . . . thus the whole universe together participates in divine goodness more perfectly, and represents it better, than any single creature whatever.”

University of New Hampshire Professor Paul T. Brockelman declares in his beautiful book *Cosmology and Creation* (Oxford University Press, 1999) that the very core of the religious experience is the experience of wonder. He believes that “the new cosmology may help us to renew, retouch and relive the spiritual wonder and wisdom that all our religions once embodied.” Sometimes when we look at something with new eyes and a whole new vision, our sense of wonder is stirred.

Again, to quote the late Jesuit David Toolan, author of *At Home in the Cosmos* (Orbis Books, 2001), “Science has contributed mightily to our sense of Wonder – at earth’s bounty, beauty and fragility. . . . Nothing has been too big or too small to escape its scrutiny and understanding. . . . for its own sake, for the sheer wonder of it – simply because it is there.”

Surely the very vastness of the cosmos, as we now know it, must give us a fresh image of God’s utter transcendence.

### Every discovery a “rabbit hole”

Another rich field to explore in our meditation and contemplation is the discovery of new metaphors. Metaphors and symbols are what we humans need to use to lead us deeper into the mysteries of life. Every aspect of the new sciences can give us new metaphors for our lives with one another and with God.

For example, we talked about how two electrons that have once interacted with each other are forever connected, no matter how far apart they may be. Isn’t this a wonderful image of our relationship to one another and to God? It gives new meaning to the often-heard expression, “We are the sum of our relationships.” Every person, every thing that we have ever known or that has touched us is linked to us forever and is a part of who we are now.

As for Heisenberg’s “uncertainty principle,” it seems that the physical world obeys two different sets of rules. At the macro level, the world we normally inhabit and perceive, Newtonian physics

works just fine. Things obey the rules of logic and causality. But at the micro level of quantum particles, these rules no longer apply. A photon may be both particle and wave. Furthermore, we cannot know any of these things without interacting with them; yet by the very fact of that interaction, both we and they are changed. Chet Raymo, astronomist and physicist, puts it this way, “Every action of ours will change the world, whether we want it to or not.”

The new science makes it impossible to see the world as a collection of autonomous parts, as Newton did. The deeper revelation is one of undivided wholeness, in which the observer is not separable from what is observed. Or, as Heisenberg said, the common division of the world into subject and object, inner world and outer world, body and soul, is no longer adequate. Is this physics or theology, science or religion?

Actually, the very existence of the quantum world opens a whole world of mystery, of awe and wonder. I love the description Michael Himes, theology professor at Boston College, offered in a workshop some years ago. “Every new discovery in science becomes a ‘rabbit hole’ opening up to new mysteries.” Or, to quote Chet Raymo again, “Science extends the shore along which we are able to perceive the mystery, but it does not deplete the mystery.” Modern science has opened to us a world full, not only of atoms, but of billions of subatomic particles, of protons, electrons, photons, mesons, quarks and – tiniest of all – neutrinos. To realize that this quantum world is present in every single thing we see, and yet is invisible to us and totally escapes our awareness, must surely convince us that there are many dimensions of reality we do not even suspect, and surely many dimensions that our minds are too small to comprehend. Can we see here a new metaphor for God’s immanence, God’s presence in every part of creation, however minute?

These reflections lead us inevitably to the most fundamental way we can speak of God – as Mystery. Again, from Michael Himes: “God is the word we use for the Holy Mystery that grounds and surrounds all that exists.” He goes on to say, “Every way we speak about God is more wrong than it is right. But the least wrong way to speak about that Mystery, according to the New Testament, is that



*continued*

God is love – love in the sense of *agape*, of self-gift. In other words, in correspondence to the quantum world of electrons, God is least wrongly thought of as a relationship.

If God is essentially love, would God not leave his creatures free, free to develop, to grow, to evolve, even over billions of years, as the process theologians say? Would it not give a whole new slant to our theology to envision God not in the Greek categories of almighty, all knowing, all powerful, but in humbler, more relational language: self-giving, self-emptying, incarnational. Was Jesus not revealing God's own attitude when, as St. Paul describes in Philippians 2, he took the form of a servant in his *kenosis*, freely giving up divine attributes in order to live fully as a human person? For Jesus was, as Paul says, "the image of the unseen God." (Colossians 1:15) Or, to quote Father Toolan, "Christian spirituality in an evolving universe must conceive of God more as a God of 'nondoing' and 'letting be,' who lets creation develop in relative autonomy, who renounces power and empties himself, who hears our cries and suffers with us." This is not to deny that God can respond to creatures; indeed, relationship requires as much.

Another aspect of God has been developed by John Haught, theology professor at Georgetown University, who sees God primarily as the God of Promise, as the One who comes into the world from out of the realm of the future, from "up ahead." Actually, this has been a common theme of both Catholic and Protestant theologians in recent decades. The Jesuit theologian Teilhard de Chardin was famous for claiming that evolution requires us to imagine God drawing the world from up ahead, toward the future, rather than as driving or determining events from behind or from the past. Only a God who functions out of the future can satisfy us in an evolutionary world.

Jesuit Karl Rahner, possibly the most influential theologian of the twentieth century, spoke of God as the "absolute future." Other contemporary theologians, including Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, as well as the contemporary Protestant theologian Ted Peters, all refer to God as "the power of the future."

Actually, this evolutionary perspective corresponds very well to the God of biblical revelation, who is essentially the God of Promise. The God of the Exodus is a God of the future who goes before the people and leads them out of bondage to liberty. Now, in our age, the same promise can be conceived as encompassing the whole of creation. Was this not Teilhard's vision of the cosmic Christ, the Omega Point? Isaiah had a premonition of it:

*Now I am revealing new things to you,  
things hidden and unknown to you,  
created just now, this very moment.  
Of these things you have heard nothing  
until now,  
so that you cannot say,  
"Oh, yes, I know all this."  
You had never heard, you did not know,  
I had not opened your ear beforehand.  
(Isaiah 48: 6-9)*

The poet Rainier Maria Rilke brings all of this together in his *Letters to a Young Poet*, in a beautiful image of God's new birthing in our own times:

*Why do you not think of Him as the coming one,  
imminent from all eternity, the future one, the final  
fruit of a tree, whose leaves we are? What keeps you  
from projecting his birth into times that are in the  
process of becoming, and living your life like a painful  
and beautiful day in the history of a great gestation? ✦*



*Sister Carey's essay is condensed from a two-day workshop she gave in 2002 for retired RSCJ at Kenwood Convent of the Sacred Heart. She holds a bachelor's degree from Marygrove College in Detroit and a master's degree in philosophy from Boston College.*

*Sister Carey has taught in Sacred Heart schools in the East and Northeast and worked for nineteen years as a pastoral associate in two parishes in New Jersey. She now lives in semi-retirement in Washington D.C. and has been engaged in a study of cosmology and theology for nearly a decade.*

## *From the Archives*



### **PLAY BALL**

*Hilda Carey, RSCJ, gears up to hit a home run at Kenwood Convent of the Sacred Heart in this photograph taken by her sister, Joan Cunningham, in the 1950s. Sister Carey and other RSCJ pictured here are dressed for sprinting around the bases in pinned-up habits and tennis shoes. ❖*

## *In Memoriam*

*Please see [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org) for biographical information on RSCJ who have died.*

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

*Mame Derham  
January 3, 2004*

*Frances Cunningham  
January 11, 2004*

*Paulina Xuereb  
January 11, 2004*

*Mary Henry  
February 24, 2004*

*Elizabeth Sowalsky  
March 20, 2004*

# *The Journey Continues*



Georgie Blaeser, RSCJ

*Called to be "women of communion, compassion and reconciliation,"  
it is not enough to appreciate our multiculturalism. We are impelled to enter  
into the reality of the other, to allow our boundaries to be  
expanded in truly reciprocal and hospitable relationships.*

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

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