



# Heart

Spring 2013

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

# ...to Heart

## Dear Friends,

This greeting brings to you our deep thanks for being friend and family to all of us who connect our lives with the spirit of Sophie and Philippine and the Society of the Sacred Heart here in North America and beyond. Thank you for the many ways that you enrich the life and mission of the Society – your prayer, companionship, collaboration in mission, the sharing of your time, treasure and talent! We are particularly grateful for our friends who were able to contribute to our *In Mission for Life* campaign. The spirit and the action of your generosity give strength to the future of the Society’s mission and life.

This *Heart* focuses on the most essential element of St. Madeleine Sophie’s gift to our world, our church and to us who are connected because of her. This gift is the **Call To Contemplation**.

I reflected on what I might write by praying with the rich stories you will find here. Reading each person’s experience of contemplation reminded me of the many letters Sophie wrote to her sisters about their relationship with God and how they were called to live their lives and make choices out of this relationship. Each one of the articles you read here reveals a 21<sup>st</sup> century expression of Sophie’s initial vision, which she shared with the members of the Society in 1815 ... *that we become holy ourselves by taking the divine heart of Jesus as our model, trying as far as we are able to unite ourselves to his innermost feelings and the innermost dispositions of his Heart; and at the same time we dedicate ourselves to extending and promoting the knowledge and the love of this divine Heart by working for the sanctification of souls*. What else is contemplation than entering into this two-pronged call to discover and make known the love of the Heart of Christ?

When I read these articles I was reminded again (as I often am when I re-read Sophie’s letters) that each person’s journey with, to and from the heart of Christ is beautifully and blessedly personal. In my mind I juxtaposed the experience of five young girls at Carrollton who are learning *espacio* in hopes that it becomes a *habit of life*, with the picture of our sister,

Bea Brennan, who has learned through years of experience to *follow the dance and find that it leads to some corner of the real world where God is waiting ... with the busy life of Bridget Berris, RSCJ, a head of school, who says I know for me it is about being the heart of an educator ... being willing to sit in the middle of the mess and say “thank you” and “help” to Paul Parker (Carrollton) and Cristina Hiddleston (Duchesne, Omaha) who as Sacred Heart educators are living this mission of showing forth God’s love as one movement of contemplation and action* (Susan Maxwell).

I hope this issue of *Heart* calls you, as it did me, to touch into the place of contemplation in your own life, in your own way of being connected to the Heart of the God. For myself, the longer I live, the more I know experientially that I cannot live and breathe and find my being without times during my day and week when I consciously let God take charge and lead me into a place of being one. Whether you call it *pondering, contemplating, breathing, sitting, being, or entering into*, we all need to tend that space where we discover that love which is God. It’s both the beginning and the end of discovering and making known in very concrete ways the love of the Heart of Christ. It is the continued life spiral of contemplation and God-centered action. And that, of course, is what we are all invited to do.

Know that you can count on the prayer of the Religious of the Sacred Heart and we count on your prayer for us as we continue forward on this journey. May the spirit of the Risen Christ bring you and our world peace.



In One Heart,

*Barbara Dawson RSCJ*

Barbara Dawson, RSCJ  
Provincial

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**Correction:** In the winter issue of *Heart*, Mary Roe, RSCJ, on the right, was misidentified. We apologize for the confusion.

# Heart

*Heart* is published two times a year to highlight the mission and ministries of the Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province, for a wide circle of friends. The covers, photographs of hearts in nature, symbolic of Christ's presence at the heart of the universe, bear witness to the contemplative dimension of the Society's "wholly contemplative, wholly apostolic" mission: To discover and reveal God's love through the service of education.



"Coisas da natureza" Marinha Beach, Allgarve, Portugal. © Paulo Nogueira

The Society of the Sacred Heart was founded by Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat in post-revolutionary France and brought to the United States by Saint Philippine Duchesne in 1818. For more information about the mission and ministries of the U.S. Province, please visit [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org).

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## Two become one:

### U.S. and Canadian provinces to unite in July

The members of the Canadian and United States Provinces of the Society of the Sacred Heart have been making important decisions regarding their future together as one. In February, the Canadian Province held an assembly at which the members affirmed a plan to unite with the United States Province. About one month later, members of the U.S. Province affirmed the same plan, which is now with the Society's general council for approval. Pending this approval, the two provinces will become one July 8, 2013.

Many of the details for the new province remain to be determined, including the name, but this much is known:

- U.S. Provincial Barbara Dawson, RSCJ, and her team will continue their leadership roles in the new province.
- A Canadian RSCJ will join the provincial team, which the Canadians call the provincial council. We may be using both terms in the future! The Canadian RSCJ gathered in assembly began deliberating which of their number would best represent them in the coming years.
- A detailed plan of action has been submitted to the Society's general council. Once approved, the unification process will begin.
- At a ceremony at an assembly in Canada in July, Sister Dawson and the provincial council, including the new Canadian member, will assume responsibility for the religious in Canada and all that has been the Canadian Province.
- The Canadian Province includes two Sacred Heart schools, one in Halifax and one in Montreal. Both schools are expected to begin the Sacred Heart Commission on Goals process to join the Network of Sacred Heart Schools. ✦



Canadian Religious of the Sacred Heart met in assembly in February. On July 8, they will unite with the United States Province.

## New provincial website ready for your visit

As this issue of *Heart* was heading to the printer, the province was putting finishing touches on a new website. It's been years since [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org) had a makeover, and it was time. One of the foremost considerations during the time of planning this new site was to find ways to share our mission and Sacred Heart spirituality through our online home. In addition to news about our ministries, you will find quotes from the *Constitutions* and from Religious of the



Sacred Heart right on the homepage as well as prayers, reflections and essays appropriate to the liturgical calendar and our own Sacred Heart feasts.

The new site also features opportunities for you to stay in touch. You can submit stories and prayer requests, search for an RSCJ and even upload your own heart image! Our

vocations pages are full of videos and stories. Overall, we have tried to capture online just a portion of the vibrancy of this province. We hope you'll visit soon and often. If you have suggestions for the site, please contact [editor@rscj.org](mailto:editor@rscj.org).

Another new site you might enjoy is dedicated to the Shrine of St. Philippine: [www.duchesneshrine.org](http://www.duchesneshrine.org). The Shrine is located at the Academy of the Sacred Heart, St. Charles, the school founded by Philippine when she came to the United States in 1818. Thanks go out to Head of School Maureen Glavin, RSCJ, and the staff at the Academy for creating this new site. ❖

## Habemus Papam and he is a Jesuit!



Photo by Rebecca Sepepka, SUSC

The bonds between Jesuits and Religious of the Sacred Heart go back to the very beginnings of the Society. Phil Kilroy, RSCJ, recently published *The Society of the Sacred Heart in Nineteenth Century France, 1800-1865*, in which she devotes a whole chapter to “The Society of the Sacred Heart and the Jesuits in the Lifetime of Madeleine Sophie Barat.”

In Argentina, the bonds between the two religious congregations have been strong over many years. Marisa Sacerdote, RSCJ, who served on the general council from 2000-2008, had Padre Jorge Bergoglio, SJ, as her spiritual director and made several retreats with him. Alicia Hughes, RSCJ, who did not live to see him elected pope, had a very close relationship with him, always making sure that he was given a copy of our superior general's annual letter for the feast of the Sacred Heart. In 2002, when visiting our sisters in Argentina, I accompanied Marisa on a visit to Cardinal Bergoglio. To my great surprise he had my recent letter in his hands and commented on it!

Besides being grateful that we have a pope who is humble, simple, spontaneous and a lover of the poor, we can rejoice that as a Jesuit he understands and lives “wholly contemplative, wholly apostolic” religious life. ❖

—Clare Pratt, RSCJ

## The Stuart Center: Mission, vision, passion

The Stuart Center for Mission, Educational Leadership and Technology is driven by three little words that together yield a significant impact: mission, vision and passion.

**Mission** gives an organization purpose. The Washington DC-based Stuart Center, previously known as the Center for Educational Design and Communications (CEDC), was announced last summer by Provincial Barbara Dawson, RSCJ. This “christening” is more than a name change; it is the articulation of a new, broad-based way of ministering and living the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart in the U.S. The Center is named for Janet Erskine Stuart, RSCJ (1857-1914), a preeminent educator and leader whose writings reveal to us a woman who was deeply spiritual, intellectual *and* a realist. She serves as model and inspiration in the Center’s work with justice groups, collaborators and RSCJ to live our mission, which is

“to strategically respond to the educational and justice needs of our country and world” through the work of its five offices:

- *Office of CEDC*, which provides a host of communication and technology services. (Director, Laryn Bakker and his staff, Will Simpson and Beth Ponticello)
- *Office of Conference Facilities*, which provides meeting and conference space. (Director, Vicky Rajca, RSCJ)
- *Office of JPIC*, which serves as a resource to RSCJ and colleagues in their work for “Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation” (Director, Diane Roche, RSCJ)
- *Office of Educational Initiatives & Leadership*, working with a focus on meeting the needs of nonprofits and schools through workshops, conferences, consulting services and youth-centered programs. (Director, Imma De Stefanis, RSCJ)

- *Office of Ministry*, which serves RSCJ in the U.S. Province who are in ministry transition. (Director, Fran de la Chapelle, RSCJ)

**Vision** gives an organization direction. It holds the image of a desired future state. We see around us the call of God to “right the wrongs.” We are aware of a world that is out of balance. We are pained by the injustices toward groups pushed to the margins of society by economic and social inequities. We seek *to foster a more just society through educational initiatives, technology and leadership development in collaboration with groups whose mission is aligned with that of the Society.*

Finally, a word about **passion**. Passion makes the seemingly impossible, possible. It is the synergy among deeply committed individuals and groups that lifts, carries and pushes us all from idea to implementation; from current state (injustice and degradation) to future state (balance and dignity). Passion reminds us that, however large the problems or needs of the world may seem, our collective human capacity is still greater if we are driven by passion. Janet Stuart, perhaps puts it best, “*The way to do much in a short time is to love much. People will do great things if they are stirred with enthusiasm and love.*” ❖

By Imma De Stefanis, RSCJ  
Executive Director, Stuart Center for Mission Educational Leadership & Technology • Director, *Office of Educational Initiatives & Leadership*



The various offices of the Stuart Center for Mission, Educational Leadership and Technology are overseen by (left to right): Will Simpson, Vicky Rajca, RSCJ, Imma De Stefanis, RSCJ, Laryn Kragt Bakker, Fran de la Chapelle, RSCJ and Diane Roche, RSCJ.

## Final professions celebrated in Rome

**I**t was raining in Rome on Sunday, January 20, but that could not dampen the excitement in the Villa Lante chapel as the guests arrived from around the globe for the final professions of ten Religious of the Sacred Heart. Elisabeth Brinkmann, RSCJ, and Lisa Buscher, RSCJ, were part of a probation group of eleven women from six provinces. (Probation is the term the Society uses for the months of preparation immediately preceding final vows.) One of the eleven, Silvana Ferez, RSCJ, will make her profession separately in April in her home province of Argentina.

Two new members of the general council, Kim Sook Hee, RSCJ, of Korea, and Maria del Socorro Rubio, RSCJ, from Mexico, warmly welcomed the congregation, and Council Member Catherine Lloyd, RSCJ, from the England and Wales Province, gave a powerful homily. Those present in the chapel were particularly moved when Sun June Yue, the first RSCJ from China in recent years, pronounced her final vows before Superior General Kathleen Conan.

Sister Brinkmann, 52, worked as an electrical engineer, a parish youth minister and a hospital chaplain before entering the Society of the Sacred Heart in 2000. She holds a Ph.D. in



Superior General Kathleen Conan, RSCJ (right) celebrated with Lisa Buscher, RSCJ (left) and Elisabeth Brinkmann, RSCJ, at their final profession in Rome in January.

Roman Catholic Theological Ethics from Boston College and served as an assistant professor of religious studies at The College of New Rochelle in New Rochelle, New York. She now serves at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Ninety-First Street, in New York City.

Sister Buscher, 44, entered the Society of the Sacred Heart in 2001 in San Diego. With two Master's degrees in Theology from the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, she has served as coordinator of formation to mission and coordinator of campus ministry for Schools of the Sacred Heart in San Francisco and as a teacher at Josephinum Academy in Chicago. ✚

### *In Memoriam*

*Please see [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org) for profiles of RSCJ who have died.*

**May they rejoice in  
the company of the Saints.**

***Maxine Kraemer, RSCJ***

*November 28, 2012*

***Grail McMullen, RSCJ***

*December 20, 2012*

***Helen Costello, RSCJ***

*January 24, 2013*

***Rose Guidroz, RSCJ***

*February 25, 2013*

***Virginia McMonagle, RSCJ***

*March 31, 2013*

*In Mission for Life*  
**Casting our nets**

By Shirley Miller, RSCJ



Nine years ago when Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ, provincial at the time, along with her team, began the mission advancement program, they gave me a small icon depicting the miraculous catch of fish (John 21). The disciples were weary after fishing all night and catching nothing. Jesus appeared on the shore and suggested that they cast their nets on the other side of the boat. They did as they were told, “And there were so many fish they could not haul it in.” The moral of this story, like so many other stories of faith: when Jesus speaks, listen!

This icon became a perfect image as we began our mission advancement office – throwing our nets to the other side, launching out into the deep and doing something we had not done before. We cast our net out to the wider Sacred Heart family, shared the financial challenges we were facing, and invited participation in planning for the future of the Society and caring for our eldest members. There has been an outpouring of friendship and support that has astonished and humbled the Religious of the Sacred Heart, and we are grateful to each of you.

As a small way of saying thank you, we have launched a *Year of Thanksgiving*, with each RSCJ praying personally for 15 to 20 benefactors, volunteers, cheerleaders, consultants, staff, leaders, friends and families who have been involved in our five-year \$40,000,000 *In Mission for Life* campaign.

One of our alumnae called to say how thrilled she was that we not only achieved our goal of \$40,000,000 but exceeded it by \$6,400,000, thanks to an anonymous major bequest of \$8,000,000 in the final days of the campaign. She said, “This campaign has had a fairy tale ending.” Indeed, as she said those words, I saw star dust being sprinkled all over the great family of the Sacred Heart.



Mary Carroll Armstrong, Marcie Amory and Joanne Gormley enjoy a mini-reunion at the annual alumnae meeting and luncheon in Phoenix.





Julianne Mattimore (left) and Mimi Morgan Welsh, organizers of the annual alumnae luncheon in Palm Beach, Florida, celebrated the 25th anniversary of the event.



At the Arizona Alumnae/i Association gathering in January, left to right: Mary Maloney, chapter president-elect, Esther Kmetty, president, Pat Fullmer, treasurer, Maureen Elliott, AMASC secretary-general, Gina Rodee, RSCJ, Pam Synder, AMASC president, Barbara Loppiccolo, AMASC vice-president. AMASC, the international association of Sacred Heart alumnae/i, will hold its 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress in Phoenix in the fall of 2014.



Maureen Walsh (left) and Mary Kay Farley at the Palm Beach Alumnae Association gathering. Mary Kay was honored for her long-term and generous commitment.

In the many notes, emails and phone calls we have received about the conclusion of the campaign, from RSCJ, Associates, alumnae/i, Network schools, families, friends, ministry colleagues, all have spoken of OUR campaign, all of ours; there is a sense that this campaign is not just for the Society, but for all of our mutual relationships, our commitment to the mission of the Society, to the future, to the many ways in which all of us together will continue to *discover and make known the love of the Heart of Jesus*.

When we announced our campaign plans in the fall 2007 issue of *Heart*, we quoted Sister Helen McLaughlin, former superior general of the international Society, “To hope is to believe in the future. Hope is always founded on the strength of conviction which makes change and transformation possible. To hope is to be turned toward the future.” With the exceptional guidance of our consultants from Dini Partners,

Houston, Deacon Larry Vaclavik, Kelli Fondren and Jessica Johnson, we turned toward the future.

Thank you for all the ways you have rekindled hope within the Society and renewed all of us in the fiery determination of Philippine and Sophie. Thank you for the three most far-reaching outcomes of the campaign:

- The rekindling and deepening of relationships;
- The strengthening of the Society’s spiritual and educational mission;
- The assurance that our elderly sisters will be cared for in a manner that acknowledges their lives given in love.

Yes, we began in faith, and we continue in hope. The long-range financial plan for the Society projects the need to raise \$1,500,000 a year in the foreseeable future in annual giving, planned giving and major gifts. So, yes, we will continue fundraising, and we hope that you will continue to support the ongoing mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

This fairy tale has had a happy ending; dreams have become reality, and our nets are being mended for the next launch into the deep.

*Now to him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21) ✦*

## Contemplative action:

### The Goals and Criteria for Sacred Heart Schools in the United States

By Susan Maxwell, RSCJ



Susan Maxwell, RSCJ, at Villa Duchesne/Oak Hill School, presenting on the Goals and Criteria.

My three years serving on the provincial team of Paula Toner, RSCJ, from 2009 to 2012, was the first opportunity I had had since 1975 to step back from the Goals and Criteria as my daily guide in living our mission of showing forth the love of the Heart of Jesus. As time went by, I was particularly impressed by the reflections we received from each Sacred Heart school as they shared with us during the Sacred Heart Commission on Goals (SHCOG) process their living of the Goals and Criteria. Generation after generation of Sacred Heart educators have prayed and reflected and passed on this living of our mission in such a way that roots could grow deep, and visible expressions of those Goals and Criteria could be manifested in many different ways in our very diverse country.

This year as I undertake remembering and researching the early years of the development of our Network, I grow more and more convinced that the life we are experiencing in our Network schools is not simply the result of the wonderful programs and projects to develop the lives of our students and entire school communities, but the union of those outward signs with the profound inner lives that living the Goals and Criteria produces. I am reminded of Rosemary Bearss, RSCJ, saying to us so often in the early days of the Network “What is the next best step for living the Goals and Criteria in this institution or in your own life?” Obviously this question could not be answered without serious contemplation and reflection, as well as sharing those reflections with one another.

Now in this early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century I believe many Sacred Heart educators are living this mission of showing forth God’s love as one movement of contemplation and action. Many present day theologians such as Ilia Delio, Ken Wilbur and Richard Rohr help us to understand the reality of this life of deep union. As our lives increasingly become one movement of prayer and action, we offer our students models of living the values of the five goals in an integrated, profound and truly loving manner. Catherine (Kit) Collins, RSCJ, wrote a paper in 1974 about the importance of founding the Network. She wrote, “The chief strength, greatest asset and strongest bond of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools derives from the common heritage and common purpose which those schools together hold.” Today, perhaps more than ever, that common heritage calls us to live lives that give evidence of the very real union of all aspects of life within each of us and among all of us. ❖

## Dreaming Sophie's dreams at Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart

By Paul Parker, Director of Goal I at Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart



Students at Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart in the early stage of a lifelong habit.

There was a point in Carrollton's history, in the 1960's, when there were close to thirty Religious of the Sacred Heart in residence, praying and working; and that's when we were a much smaller school.

I often think about what the experience of an education in that setting would have been like. Thirty semi-cloistered 'contemplatives in action' being the core of the faculty and staff, who spent their days with the girls and young women who were enrolled at the School of Christ's Heart in Miami. Without seeking to be nostalgic or to create an idealized past, we can say there's something in this memory to help guide the evolving way that Sophie's vision is incarnated now.

When Bishop John Noonan, then an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Miami, and a longtime friend of Carrollton, came to bless the new high school Science and Technology Building and Founders Library, he said in his homily that he always senses he's on "holy ground" as soon as he enters the campus. I can't help but think of those founding religious and their successors and the growing number of women and men who joined them as educators of the Sacred Heart over the years, as the vessels of that divine energy and contemplative presence.

I imagine that Sophie would rejoice as so many lay colleagues have joined her family in the mission of making God's love known, and how many

of them are seeking to integrate their experience of married love and a prayer practice shaped by the realities of life in the world, with the rich gift of the Society's consecrated religious life. It is through this tradition and witness of the Society of the Sacred Heart, especially through offerings like the Busy Person's Retreat and the Spirituality Forums, and the presence and witness of extraordinary, gifted and holy Religious of the Sacred Heart on campus and in Miami, that we continue to hear the invitation of Jesus in Mathew 6:6 "to enter your inner room, to close the door, and pray to your Father in secret." This journey to the heart expands our capacity for silence and leads us to the God within who awaits us in love.

The simple act of pausing school-wide each class day for five minutes of *espacio*, of silence, is meant to become a habit for life, as natural as breathing and as necessary as eating. For the older girls and the adult community, the hope is that the five minutes of *espacio* becomes a daily period of centering prayer [[www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org)]. In the midst of a challenging educational setting and a fast-paced world around us, this sacred space helps us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, open to mystery, and attentive to others, especially the poor. It opens the possibility for God's healing and grace to be received. It gives us the courage and confidence to make our own the attributes of Christ's heart. It holds us open to the divine energy of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps Sophie and Philippine's spirit, the spirit of the mystic and the missionary, is the 'holy ground' that becomes the stuff of our lives: wholly contemplative; wholly apostolic. ✦

# Contemplating Sacred Heart: Relationships that transform

By Cristina Hiddleston

Sacred Heart educators are called to be “wholly contemplative and wholly apostolic.” In our busy lives, it is difficult to know where the wholly contemplative piece might fit. When the Formation to Mission committee at Duchesne (Omaha) chose the theme for this year, we desired a theme that would allow for more contemplation and lead to more intentional relationship building. Thus: *Contemplating Sacred Heart: Relationships that Transform*.

We opted to focus our formation to mission as a more internal process rather than a list of events on the calendar. We came up with ideas for each of our constituency groups to have more opportunities for contemplation and reflection. We asked all adult members of our community to commit to a Little Club, a small group of adults who meet monthly or quarterly to reflect on what it means to contemplate Sacred Heart, and what it means to build transformative relationships. We distributed journals to the faculty, staff and board of trustees as an opportunity for personal reflection and contemplation. We issued “Life at the Sacred Heart” to our students and invited them to reflect on their experiences as children of the Sacred Heart within their advisory groups. We provided “A Reflection on Being a Sacred Heart



Journals distributed to the faculty, staff and board at Duchesne (Omaha) for personal reflection and contemplation.

Parent” at back to school night, and invited parents to join with us in prayer and contemplation throughout the year about what it means to be part of a Sacred Heart family. The aim of each of these opportunities is to invite community members into the process of contemplation throughout the school year and, we hope, beyond.

At the faculty and staff retreat in January, which featured time for silent contemplation of beautiful iconography provided by Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ, and a keynote speaker about the nature of transformative relationships, we had time to build relationships with other members of our adult community and we gathered in Little Clubs to talk about our Sacred Heart experience so far this year and to make a plan for the remainder. Little Clubs have engaged

with *Journey to the Heart*, watched films related to the charism of St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, reflected on quotes of our founding mothers, and found many opportunities to share meals or other activities.

We feel these opportunities are not only important, but essential, because our mission is to make known the love of the Heart of Christ to all. The only way to make known that love is to contemplate God’s love and will in our own lives and utilize the blessing of that knowledge in every relationship we build. Opportunities for contemplation are opportunities for rejuvenation, growing awareness, and increased openness to the will of God in our hearts and on our paths as educators of the Sacred Heart.

*“In the midst of exterior work we ought to preserve that interior attraction that unites us to God, so that we act only under the influence of His grace.”*

– St. Madeleine Sophie Barat ❖



*Cristina Hiddleston graduated from Duchesne Academy, Omaha in 1993. She currently teaches AP and Honors literature to seniors at Duchesne and serves as the director of Formation to Mission.*

# Contemplation as daily practice



*As a friend of the Society of the Sacred Heart, you've no doubt seen the phrase "wholly contemplative and wholly apostolic." Have you ever wondered, "How do they do that?" Just how is it possible to be fully engaged in the world, in a ministry, and remain wholly contemplative? In fact, Religious of the Sacred Heart bring a contemplative dimension to everything they do; their prayer and their ministry are intertwined to the point of being one.*

Living a wholly contemplative, wholly apostolic life means something a little different to each RSCJ. As Mary Lyman, RSCJ, puts it, "We grow into being wholly contemplative and wholly apostolic. We learn to find God in whatever we do and whatever happens. Each of us lives into it as we are; there is no model." No model, perhaps, but leading a contemplative life is something that can be learned. In fact, fostering contemplation in the lives of busy people is one of the aims of the Society, and has been since the days of St. Madeleine Sophie Barat who named the work of retreats as one of the means of glorifying the Heart of Jesus. Today, members of the province have ministries working with lay people as spiritual

Joanne Fitzpatrick, RSCJ, spent many hours deep in prayer at Duchesne Chapel during her years at Duchesne Academy, Omaha.

*Duchesne House welcomes high school and college-aged volunteers while they work on service projects in New Orleans. What sets it apart from other residences is the emphasis on reflection.*

directors, campus and pastoral ministers and retreat directors.

The Spiritual Ministry Center in San Diego is a place of refuge for people leading busy, overloaded lives. Sisters Marie-Louise (Bunny) Flick, Anne Wentz and Stephany Veluz offer spiritual direction and low-key hospitality. The goal is to create a profound, contemplative space, a place where guests can encounter God. "It is part of the Sacred Heart tradition to welcome with compassion and warmth," said Sister Flick. Each of the three RSCJ provides spiritual direction to individuals and groups. They offer attentive, contemplative listening and create a spirit of reverence for the spiritual journey of their clients.

Spiritual direction can begin very simply – by exploring types of prayer, for instance, to find the style that fits your lifestyle. Sister Flick says that as people get in the practice of spending time in prayer, they want to make more time for their relationship with God. "As their relationship deepens, so does their thirst for God,"



Shelley Lawrence, RSCJ, guides her students spiritually and occasionally, physically, as when she escorts them on mission trips.

she says. "They learn to discern the Spirit in their life and how to follow it."

Outside of the Spiritual Ministry Center, more than two dozen members of this province are involved in retreats, spiritual direction and pastoral work. In New Orleans, for instance, several RSCJ work with lay people to create ever deeper relationships with God. One community, Sophie Barat House, is host to meetings with individuals and groups, Bible study, and days of recollection. "People who come to Sophie Barat House gradually find their lives to be more contemplative, as grace-filled patterns take root and bring a certain steadiness, giving them inner resources for meeting situations at home and in the community," said Jane McKinlay, RSCJ. Creating time for prayer and contemplation is counter-cultural, she says, an antidote to the over-stimulation and busy-ness of the world, a chance to "take in something of the extent to which God's love can penetrate the shadows." The other residents of Sophie Barat House also work in spiritual ministries: Mary Blish, RSCJ, leads Bible study classes, Annice Callahan, RSCJ, is a spiritual director, and Anne Sturges, RSCJ, is in pastoral care at a hospice, meeting the spiritual needs of people at a time when they most need to feel the love of God.

The religious who staff Duchesne House work with people at the other end of the spectrum: young people just starting their spiritual journey. Established after Hurricane Katrina as a ministry of service, Duchesne House welcomes high school and college-aged volunteers while they work on service projects in New Orleans. What sets it apart from other residences is the emphasis on reflection. One student volunteer commented, "I now understand the purpose of prayer more."

As with everything the Society does, there is an educational dimension to these spiritual ministries. "Helping people discover God in the heart of the world

## Busy Person's Retreats

A Busy Person's Retreat is an on-campus, week-long, guided prayer retreat made within the daily schedule at Sacred Heart schools. The retreat provides an opportunity for prayer and reflection in the midst of busy school activities. Participants commit to setting aside one hour a day for prayer and a meeting with their spiritual companion for support, encouragement and practical guidance. Rooted in St. Madeleine Sophie Barat's ideal of *saintes savantes* (learned saints, or, perhaps, holy educators),



Photo: Kathryn Banks, Carrollton Faculty

Mary Lyman, RSCJ, and Debbie Rollheiser (Carrollton staff member) in the El Jardin chapel during the closing ceremony of a Busy Person's Retreat at Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart.

this retreat provides an opportunity to reflect deeply on the challenge to Sacred Heart educators to foster in themselves a delicate attentiveness to the presence of God in order to cultivate transformation in the lives of their students.

Lisa Buscher, RSCJ, introduced the Busy Person's Retreat in the Schools of the Sacred Heart, San Francisco, in 2007, adapting a format used elsewhere. More than two dozen Religious of the Sacred Heart are trained to work in this ministry and travel to schools to guide

the retreats. Busy Person's Retreats are ecumenical and open to all staff and faculty. They work around the faculty/staff member's free time.

Mary Pat White, RSCJ, has coordinated Busy Person's Retreats for the past several years. "Providing spiritual direction on an intimate level is one of the best ways we have to share our charism," she said. "People are searching for ways to develop their spirituality, to learn how to pray. As their spiritual guides, we are instruments in God's hands."

Victoria Allen, archivist at Convent of the Sacred Heart, Greenwich, recently participated in a Busy Person's Retreat. She calls it "a respite. For one week, it allows us to develop our own spiritual thinking, to express our own spirituality in a private setting. It allows us to open new avenues of thought on the path to God. The experience is very powerful." ❖

For more information on Busy Person's Retreats, contact Jane O'Shaughnessy, RSCJ, at [joshaughnessy@rscj.org](mailto:joshaughnessy@rscj.org).

– a God who desires to walk with them every step of the journey – is educative," says Shelley Lawrence, RSCJ, who serves as chaplain at St. Francis Xavier High School in the Ottawa (Canada) Catholic School Board. Sister Lawrence is responsible for developing and sustaining the faith and spiritual life of the school. "Basically, my role is to assist the members of my school community discover and grow in relationship with a God who loves them! Most often this means helping them realize the presence of God in everyday experience."

Sister Lawrence believes her ministry is growing in importance because of the world in which we live. "There is more to life and to our existence than the many things our society tells us are important," she says. "I see the effects of stress and meaninglessness in the lives of young people. We need to be there to lead our students out of the chaos. God is always at the center of all that is most meaningful in our lives!"

"Contemplation with the RSCJ was a wonderful component of the internship program," said Laura Spinelli, a former participant and student leader of the Sacred Heart Internship Program, which has time for reflection built into its structure. "They opened up a safe space for us to discuss issues and feelings that we would not generally discuss in our everyday conversation."

In its simplest understanding, living a wholly contemplative, wholly apostolic life means a life in which ministry and spirituality are inseparable. Each shapes the other. And that understanding – that our prayer life helps to shape our daily life and vice versa – is certainly something that lay people can incorporate into their own lives.

"Helping others take hold of our Sacred Heart spirituality is the best gift we can give them," Sister Flick said. "It transforms life, enabling them to see God in ordinary living." ❖

## The space within

By Mariola López Villanueva, RSCJ, Province of Spain



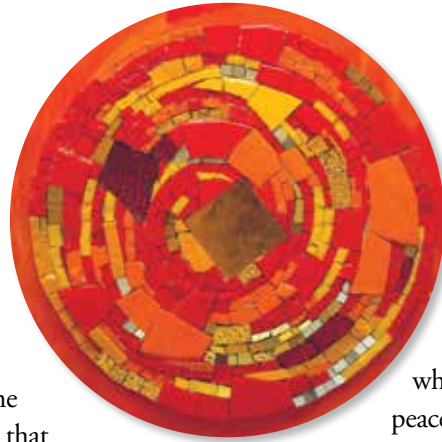
Painting by Marko Rupnik, SJ

**A**t twenty-one, I was a young agnostic who thought that life was only what we experience here, what we can know, and especially what we can see and touch. I was attracted to beauty and the cause of justice. I looked for meaning in life and was something of an adventurer. In the midst of all this searching, one night a tremendous Love erupted in my being, and nothing was the same. All reality, all things, were bathed in light. When I remember that moment many years later, I never cease to wonder and to be grateful. At this time I was finishing my journalism studies and did not yet know the Society of the Sacred Heart. I had my first encounters with other religious, who thought perhaps I had a vocation to the contemplative life in a cloister or monastery. I felt that I loved the world and people, from whom I did not want to separate myself or withdraw, but on the contrary, to enter more deeply. They didn't understand me very well, or perhaps it was I who didn't express myself very well, but I had the feeling of "having arrived" when I read for the first time something of Madeleine Sophie, and I discovered that it is possible to have a profound life rooted in God with great openness to the world and its circumstances, and to have love for all that is human. I then heard that we can be "wholly contemplative and wholly apostolic," completely for God and completely for others.

When I first met the RSCJ, I found women deeply happy, very involved in the world, receptive, with a good perspective, and this made me consider that perhaps there was in me, too, this possibility, the longing to love and be loved, to live intensely. I admit that years have gone by and I find myself more and more impoverished. In the present moment I open myself again to receive this call to contemplation, this invitation to active interior life, and I ask myself and keep searching for how to live this invitation in my daily life, in the circumstances I choose and those that I must accept, and how to be sure that it is manifested in my perspective and my deeds.

I can say from my own experience and from conversations with friends that it is not easy to structure our lives in order to have periods of silence and spiritual presence. There is a Presence that we know within ourselves, as our deepest heartbeat, that surprises us on the





faces of others, that leaps out in the patterns of light and darkness in the fabric of life. To the extent that we withdraw, it is for this Presence that is manifested in solitude, which requires rest and time to quiet so many voices, which happens when we can silence our inner life, to remain doing nothing, without speaking, incapable of anything except waiting in nakedness.

I've rediscovered Etty Hillesum in her *Essential Writings*, that Jewish woman with a magnanimous heart invaded by God: "I always wanted someone to come and take me by the hand," she said, giving voice to the need we all have to be led, to let ourselves be carried, to let go with eyes closed, knowing that the hand that leads us will take us to a secure place in which we have nothing to fear. From her own very human experience, Etty knocks at the door of our heart so that we will not forget the great love that the heart can shelter. Her friends, her reading, the blue sky, the wounds and suffering of her Jewish people, she lived them all revealingly, as opportunity to be grateful for life and to experience in it the goodness of God.

Etty's words are like balm. They have the power to awaken longings and profound searching, as if bringing me back to my own truth, to this house from which I withdraw, to this interior place of calm and quietude that remains intact in the midst of chaos. Madeleine Sophie called it *the place of interior life*, and said it was essential for us: to discover it, to care for it, to feel it growing, to make it available to others. This profound life is our secret, what gives us warmth and beauty, depth and taste ("*calor y color*" as we said in the Chapter of 2008).

How difficult it is to listen to daily demands in the age of distraction, to listen to the many requirements and tasks, increased by the "virtual" world, and to reestablish within ourselves this space in the heart from which we encounter each day and make ourselves available for others. In this space we feel without fear, without threat, safe. Etty's voice invites us in our own time to recover this interior space from

which everything flows, where our reality is at peace and finds its meaning: "The strength comes from within, from a small, enclosed center to which I withdraw sometimes, when the outside world is too noisy." Etty finds in it a silent space from which to welcome receptivity to life. At the same time she tells us of her difficulty: "This half hour of silence is not easy. It must be learned: to dislodge our noisiness, including our emotions and edifying thoughts and to convert the deepest part of ourselves into a vast empty plain into which not even the slightest trace of malice impedes something of God or of love from entering." We need so much this silencing and space for love!

Without this deepening, without going down to this place in the heart, we cannot keep up hope in a world that is so fragmented and violent, nor can we discover and celebrate how much beauty and goodness lies hidden in it. I have been thinking these days that in the midst of so many coaches who want to teach us how to live, of trainers of soul and body, that we need to return to the interior Master who waits for us



within and allow him each day to train us in silence and simplicity. Exposed to his Presence, we can abandon ourselves to his mystery. (Translated from Spanish by Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ) ❖

*Mariola López Villanueva, RSCJ, is a member of the provincial council of the Southern Spain Province.*

## Living from the inside out

By Bridget Bearss, RSCJ



Artwork by Bridget Bearss, RSCJ



Without the sun, the colors of the stained glass windows are not revealed. The shadow is darkest where the sun shines directly. One thing depends on the other. I have learned to live the contemplative life from the activity of my life, and activity becomes contemplation. For me, activity came first. My first vocation was the call of an educator. Well, actually, my very first vocation was the call of the land.

We are farm people . . . where early lessons are about planting and harvesting and the clear recognition that the outcome does not necessarily match the effort. Famine and feast are equally possible and there are no guarantees. Perhaps that's a good lesson for the life lived in the land of love that I call Detroit. Here, we have learned lessons about vulnerability and knowing that we "reap what we sow," and making every decision the one that makes the Gospel visible.

It is here, in this House Built on Confidence, that I have learned to breathe the lessons of contemplation and action. I entered the Society of the Sacred Heart because I had learned to love in the fields of Nebraska, and that love was translated into a desire to change the world. That desire found form in the work of education. It never occurred to me that I needed to enter the Society of the Sacred Heart to be part of the mission. Like the land of my heritage and my love of the work of education, my family was part of the Society and the Society was part of my family. My heart was formed by the Religious of the Sacred Heart in the life we shared with my two beloved aunts, Eileen and Rosemary Bearss, RSCJ. It was in my relationship to them that the early seeds of contemplation were planted by attraction, not promotion, to a life that was intentional, authentic and fundamentally rooted in love. But it never occurred to me that I needed to enter the Society to belong.

I entered the Society as a passionate teacher – a faculty member at Duchesne Academy in Houston. I wanted to

change the world through the liberation of thought that comes through the work of education. I was swept away with Sophie Barat's vision that resonated with mine: building bridges of relationship between people of difference. I had long known the Jesus of activism and social change, and I had visions of the difference it would make to educate in such a way that God's dream for us became our dream for the world.

My early life in the post-Vatican II and post-Vietnam world taught me much more about political activity, equality and ways to make lasting change than it did about doctrine. To envision a new way of collaboration that creates a world worthy of our children left me with a fire in my heart and a readiness to build a new world. Action was my invitation. Contemplation was the gift that discovered me.

I entered the Society without letters of theological accomplishment, but I was teachable, and my desire was met with love. I was given a new way of living – from the inside out – that transformed the fire I knew for the work of education into the source of that flame. I learned to sit in the stillness and to learn to live what Rosemary taught me about the connection between action and contemplation. She used to tell me to follow my heart and remember that “it is like a single breath ... action and contemplation ... one leads to the other in a single movement, never separate.”

Here in Detroit, where we have watched worlds tumble down and where there is no going back to what was, I have learned the story of the phoenix that rises and the real meaning of resurrection. My time of daily sitting in the stillness of not knowing is my way. It is not remarkable or distinctive or full of spectacular revelations. It is the simple action of sitting still with God and letting God be God. I have learned to live my life of trust in God's grace that shows up at exactly the moment that I need it, not ten seconds before.

Here, I have been taught to love in ways that you don't find in administration manuals, and I have discovered our *Constitutions*. Sitting in bankruptcy court with one who once was a major donor, receiving a voluntary pay cut from a faculty member, looking forward to a new future that we create together, watching the children who will change the world because they know that absolutely everything is a gift ... here I often lose track of which is contemplation and which is action. Sometimes I wonder which is the prayer ... my long hours of doing what I love more than I could have imagined or the hour



Bridget Bears, RSCJ, followed her two aunts, Eileen (left) and Rosemary Bears, RSCJ, into the life of love as a Religious of the Sacred Heart.

a day I spend sitting in silence and being in the presence of my God of love. I can't figure out which is which: is it action that follows contemplation or contemplation that follows action?

And then I remember the Jesus that I first fell in love with when I was sixteen and needed someone to show me the pathway through a perilous time of terror as the whole world seemed to forget the values of integrity, trust and sanity. And I recall the God of the wheat field when my Dad first explained to me how God and the wheat of our harvest were the same: “When we grow wheat, something has to die so that something else can live. If we don't cut the wheat, it can't make the bread of life. Don't worry. We are all like that. We are planted and harvested and then we become something else. It's how God is.”

There are lots of things I don't know. But I know a lot about the difference that education makes in the life of a child and a family and a world. And I know what it means to love from the inside out in a city that some people have given up on ... just because love calls me to it. And even though I regularly feel that absolutely nothing happens when I sit on my cushion every morning and find my own identity in the Eucharist ... I know that for me it's about being the heart of an educator ... and being willing to sit in the middle of the mess and say, “Thank you” and “Help.” ❖

*Bridget Bears, RSCJ, is head of school for the Academy of the Sacred Heart, Bloomfield Hills.*

## Praying at 93

By Bea Brennan, RSCJ

**T**o live this long is an amazing grace. One of its unexpected joys is how alive one can feel spiritually as the slow dismantling of other human processes goes on. The Bible speaks of “laughing in the latter day.” Prayer, for me, is like that at times. And always, a song of gratitude and joy.

The center of our prayer here at Teresian House, our elder care center in Albany, is the Eucharist. As the wheelchairs and walkers stream into the chapel for Mass, it feels like being in the hungry crowd in Galilee when Jesus fed the multitudes. With them follow all the needy of the world, hungry for bread on every level of human experience.

At other times I pray at my bedroom window, which opens on a tree-rimmed lawn and all of space beyond. When I sit there looking out, I feel at one



with the universe. Crowds join me there from all around the globe. As with Zaccheus in the tree, I strain for a look at Jesus. I am increasingly aware of not being alone as crowds of people press in at my side. Many are in distress, reaching out with me for answers or comfort or courage to wrestle with huge problems. At other times, sheer wonder wells up deep within, and I join the multitudes of Muslims putting down their prayer rugs when the muezzin cries out that God is great. In short, I never pray alone.


In old age, a remembered word from Scripture or poetry or a precious memory arises as it is needed. One of my favorites is Shakespeare's "Haply I think on thee." Also, "I would not change my state with kings."

At other times prayer is an earthy groan – one of those unspeakable groanings Paul wrote about in Romans. It is the Spirit groaning in my consciousness when the news is particularly bloody. Images of violence hurl me into the mystery of evil. That, too, lies deep within God's heart, and I just stand, as Jesus' mother did as her son was crucified.

In both the lights and darks of a psyche prone to alternating (and sometimes simultaneous) highs and lows, I rock with the paradoxes of reality. It is only God who keeps my little skiff afloat.

At a deeper, quieter level of consciousness runs an undefined awareness of God's presence, similar, I think, to that union of old married couples who may rarely or never put love into words. It has become their life.

So prayer becomes a steady underlying trust bearing me along.

 At the heart of our Judeo-Christian heritage is the belief that every human being is uniquely known and loved by God. No two of us commune with God in exactly the same way, even when we pray together. What follows is just a sketch of what prayer is like for me.

It is like breathing – something I do without knowing it, though I know when I stop! I breathe in harmony with God's own breathing over our amazing planet – so lovely we are dumbstruck at times. At other times I assert my creaturehood and use the Psalmist's words to cry "O God, my God, how wonderful is your Name over all the earth." And I know in doing so that God listens to my voice. That sense of God's personal involvement in my prayer is something relatively new. Silent praise wells up without my knowing how, and I get lost in the mystery, like an astronaut in outer space.



Chesterton once said that if a thing is worth doing it is worth doing badly. I often think of that when I sit down to pray. My mind and imagination keep darting about even as I hear the spirit say, "Be still and know that I am God." Of late, instead of trying to center down, I follow the dance and find it always leads me to some corner of the real world where God is waiting: a barracks in Afghanistan where a soldier grapples with a demon saying, "end it all," or a room on my corridor where someone tries to remember the way to the dining room.

At such times I remember Jesus saying to Mary Magdalen in the garden, "Do not cling to me. Go tell my brothers I have risen."

At times, words carry that strong sense of God invading deep caverns in my heart. By now, their number has shrunk down to a handful, loaded with the weight of decades of remembrance. At the end of the noviceship at Kenwood at night adoration: "I to my beloved and my beloved to me."

Prayer was not always as all-inclusive as this. As I look back over many decades I ruefully admit that it was mainly about myself – a cry for love that may have looked to God as very ego-centered, but which patiently turned outward toward the world, and more recently the unknown reaches of a cosmos I don't begin to comprehend.

So in the end I find that prayer in old age is not something I have finally "got right." It is rather "hanging in" and letting God carry on dismantling the castles in the sand I have been building as the tide slides in. "Lord save us, we perish," called Peter in the storm at sea. And the Lord said, "Come," and he walked on water to be near him.

So in my end is my beginning. What lies beyond we know only, "Eye hath not seen..." But after a lifetime built on faith, one can want quite happily to be carried out to sea. ✚

*Sister Bea Brenman entered the Society of the Sacred Heart in 1941. She taught in Sacred Heart schools and served for many years in Egypt. Next year will mark the 70th anniversary of her first vows.*

# Poems

Written by Religious of the Sacred Heart



## The Gift

The flaming maple sang to me  
I AM.  
You are.  
Be.

*Rose Marie Quilter, RSCJ*

## To the Seers

There are graced times,  
Or so it seems,  
When the ancient Gaels' thin veil  
That hides this from the other  
World  
Is drawn aside.  
And some there are who briefly  
Catch a glimpse of the eternal  
NOW.

*Eleanor Carr, RSCJ*

## Psalm

I praise You for  
the poetry of shadows  
dancing in the light.

I thank you for  
the massive weight of mountains,  
for the giddy joy  
of butterflies in flight.

I give you glory  
for all birthing  
and all growing  
and all shining,  
all delight.

And I love you  
in the dying glow  
of day;  
in silence,  
in the night.

*Rose Marie Quilter, RSCJ* ✦



# Follow Your Heart

Today the Society of the Sacred Heart is an international community of women who live a life that is wholly contemplative and wholly apostolic. Our life of prayer and action calls us to listen and respond to the heartbeat of God in our broken and needy world.

▶ **Become an RSCJ.**

CONTACT: Mary Pat White, RSCJ, [vocation@rscj.org](mailto:vocation@rscj.org)

▶ **Become an Associate.**

CONTACT: Sheila Hammond, RSCJ, [shammond@rscj.org](mailto:shammond@rscj.org)

▶ **Support our mission financially.**

CONTACT: Shirley Miller, RSCJ, [smiller@rscj.org](mailto:smiller@rscj.org) or visit [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org)



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With deep gratitude the U.S. Province of the Society of the Sacred Heart commences a *Year of Thanksgiving* for the success of our *In Mission for Life* campaign. We thank all of our benefactors for their generosity and we humbly thank God for being with us during this time of **Casting Our Nets**.

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▲ Bridget Bearss, RSCJ, reflects on her ministry and her prayer and **Living from the inside out.**



▲ Five minutes of *espacio* allows for **Dreaming Sophie's Dreams at Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart.**