

# CARLOW ROUNDTABLE 2007 PROCEEDINGS



THE CARLOW UNIVERSITY PRESS





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# Contents

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- 4** Introduction  
*Sheila Carney, RSM, Carlow University*

## Water as an Element

- 7** The Life and Vision of Catherine McAuley  
*Brenda Dolphin, RSM, Postulator for the Cause of Catherine McAuley*
- 13** The Mercy Mission Reflected in Our Pedagogy and Curriculum  
Mercy and Justice: The Humanities  
*Mary L. Hermann, EdD, Gwynedd-Mercy College*
- 17** Render unto Caesar: Maintaining Mercy Values amid the Pressures to Conform to State and National Teacher Education Regulations  
*Brian M. McCadden, PhD, Salve Regina University*
- 28** Salve Regina University: Charting Its Course by Mission Integration and Planning  
*Leona Misto, RSM, EdD, Salve Regina University*

## The Flow of Water

- 34** Toward the Transformative Wisdom of Mercy:  
Living in-between the Gift of Mercy and the Task of Protest  
White Privilege  
*Alex Mikulich, PhD, St. Joseph College*
- 40** Salve Regina University: A Legacy of Mercy  
*Lois Eveleth, PhD, Salve Regina University*
- 54** Caught in the Current of the Technology Tidal Wave  
*Mary Onufer, MS, Carlow University*
- 58** A Study of Worldview: Mission, Catholic Identity, and Academic Freedom in Colleges and Universities Sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas  
*Martha Howland Ezzell, PhD, Carlow University*



- 
- 70** Changing Structures . . . Learning Through Doing  
*Mary Montminy-Danna, PhD, Salve Regina University*
- 75** To Do the Work of God: Catholic Colleges in the Mercy Tradition  
*Daniel P. Sheridan, PhD, Saint Joseph's College of Maine*

### **Making Connections**

- 83** Connecting to the Community at Its Doors: The Mercy Neighborhood Ministries  
*Emma T. Lucas-Darby, PhD, LSW, Carlow University*
- 91** Service Learning: The Power of University-Community Connections  
*Chrys Gabrich, PhD, Carlow University*
- 96** Mercy Works: Building Bridges One Heart at a Time  
*Christine Eberle, MA, and Betsy Stone Plummer, MS, Gwynedd-Mercy College*
- 99** LIFE: Literacy Influences Future Experiences  
*Deanna Acklie, PhD, College of Saint Mary*
- 108** Steering Committee – Carlow Roundtable

## Introduction

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SHEILA CARNEY, RSM, CARLOW UNIVERSITY

In an essay titled “The Spirit of the Institute” Catherine McAuley articulated for her followers the essential integration of prayer and service at the heart of any Mercy-inspired endeavor. **“We must try to be like those rivers,” she wrote, “which enter into the sea, without losing any of the sweetness of the water.”** With this quotation as inspiration, participants in the Carlow Roundtable crossed rivers and lakes and oceans to gather at Carlow College in Carlow, Ireland to immerse themselves in a process and dialogue leading to a deeper understanding of the implications of this quotation for Mercy institutions of higher learning.

All the colleges and universities represented trace their foundations to the Mercy community in Carlow which sent the first seven Sisters of Mercy to the United States in 1843. Thus the visit to Saint Leo’s Convent and the warm hospitality and storytelling which accompanied the visit, created a firm basis on which to embark on the journey of highlighting and strengthening the common heritage shared by all.

The experience of hospitality continued into the first evening of the roundtable as all were welcomed to the opening dinner hosted by Father Kevin O’Neil, president of Carlow College. In his remarks to the group, Father Kevin invoked the story of the Salmon of Knowledge. This myth tells of a great fish which swam in the River Boyne, sought by all seeking wisdom. The one who first ate of its flesh, it was believed, would be infused with knowledge of all things. It was the great Irish hero, Finn mac Cumhail, who tasted of the salmon and received the gifts of magic, insight, and the power of words. Further reflecting on the theme of the roundtable, Father Kevin noted that the place where the river meets the sea is where the salmon feed, as it is rich with life and nutrients. These comments served as inklings of what was to come – the atmosphere of the roundtable rich and nourishing, the presentations and dialogue marked by insight, and the power of words.

Each day of the roundtable, the theme was broken open through ritual and through presentations and conversations. The hope was to provide a number of approaches to exploring the mission of Mercy education. The first day’s focus on the element of water invited reflection on how the Mercy mission is reflected in our pedagogy and curriculum. The flow of water was interpreted, on the second day, as valuing identity and agility in responding to student diversity. The ability of flowing water to change structures provided the third day’s perspective on developing a commitment to service and social transformation, a hallmark of Mercy education. Finally, the necessity of building bridges for the sake of connection led to a focus on hoped for collaborations.

Two visitors to the Roundtable centered our experience in the Mercy story and situated our conversations within the international reality that is Mercy educational ministry. Sister Brenda Dolphin, RSM, Postulator for the Cause of Catherine McAuley, spoke to the group of Catherine’s life and vision, of the “heroism of [her] struggle under grace to live the Gospel.”

Sister Thomasina Finn, RSM, a member of the leadership team of the South Central Province of Sisters of Mercy, called upon her own long history in the field of education to provide an Irish perspective on Mercy Education. Reaching back as far as the monastic schools, her account provided a context for current educational endeavors of the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland.

In addition to the purpose of offering a forum for the exploration of the richness of the Mercy educational ministries, the roundtable sought to provide glimpses of Irish history and culture, and of Celtic spirituality. A visit to the town of Kilkenny and its castle, a tour of the medieval monastic settlement at Glendalough, and the opportunity to see the Book of Kells at Trinity College in Dublin, were enticements to planning a return trip. At the center of these excursions was the pilgrimage to Mercy International Centre where Catherine McAuley created the first Mercy school. The River Nore flowing through Kilkenny, the twin lakes of Glendalough, the River Liffey and the Grand Canal of Dublin, and the alchemy of rain and sun creating the rainbow which welcomed us back to Carlow – all helped participants to connect the various experiences of the roundtable to our central theme.

The final day of the roundtable brought participants together to share ideas about possible collaborative ventures. Among the ideas generated were:

- The possibility of creating an institute for justice and social ministry
- Working together around service learning
- Global programming
- Cross registration for students at Mercy colleges and universities
- Faculty exchanges
- Shared service learning trips
- A forum for minority faculty
- Collaboration on core curricula revision and assessment

Participants also suggested a listserv that would enable the group to remain in contact and to work on the development of some of the collaborative initiatives.

Sister Thomasina Finn, in her address to the group, quoted the Irish poet Patrick Kavanaugh: “On the stem of memory, imaginations flourish.” The common memory created by this first Mercy Roundtable, like the lush and nourishing place where the river meets the sea, will, we trust, flow forth in imaginative common endeavors among us in the future. For the present, we offer these papers, the rich substrate of the Roundtable, for your stimulation and reflection.

**“We must try to be like those rivers which enter the sea,  
without losing any of the sweetness of the water.”** —Catherine McAuley



## Water as an Element

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Water is the only substance that is found naturally on earth in three forms: liquid, gas, and solid.

- 75 percent of the earth is covered with water.
- 97 percent of earth's water is in the oceans.
- Only 3 percent of the earth's water can be used as drinking water.
- 75 percent of the world's fresh water is frozen in the polar ice caps.

The elemental nature of water—essential to life and nourishment and to almost every process that occurs in plants, animals, and humans—found interpretation on this day's consideration of the essential inclusion of the evidence of our Mercy mission in our pedagogy and curriculum.

Papers offered by *Brenda Dolphin, RSM*, *Mary L. Hermann, EdD*, *Brian M. McCadden, PhD*, and *Leona Misto, RSM, EdD* addressed mercy and justice reflected in the humanities curriculum, the challenge of remaining faithful to the mission while meeting regulatory expectations and the necessary integration of mission into our planning processes.

# The Life and Vision of Catherine McAuley

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BRENDA DOLPHIN, RSM, POSTULATOR FOR THE CAUSE OF CATHERINE MCAULEY

## INTRODUCTION

Frances Warde, in a letter to M. Gonzaga O'Brien in 1879, said of Catherine, her good friend, colleague, and sister in religion;

*You never knew her, I knew her, better than I have known anybody in my life.*

*She was a woman of God and God made her a woman of vision.*

*She showed what it meant to be a Sister of Mercy, to see the world and its people in terms of God's love, to love everyone who needed love, to care for everyone who needed care.*

*Now her vision is driving me on. It is a glorious thing to be a Sister of Mercy.*

And I might add that it is “a glorious thing” to be connected in whatever way we are connected with Catherine McAuley and her lived expression of the mercy and compassion of God.

In this presentation I would like to explore with you something of the life and vision of this great woman who in her own time and even to this day continues to be a power for good in the Church and in the world.

## DISCIPLESHIP OF JESUS—THE ROAD TO SAINTHOOD

Catherine McAuley was declared Venerable by the Church on April 9, 1990. Such a declaration is made after a long process that looks at all aspects of the life of the Servant of God and concludes with moral certainty that this person lived the virtues of the Christian life to a heroic degree. The Church canonises human beings. A false idea is prevalent that canonised sainthood somehow implies a human nature that is devoid of its imperfections and free of the heartache and the thousand natural shocks to which humanity is heir. True, there have been saints of undoubted innocence, but it is not their innocence that brings them to the honours of the altar. The essential element is the heroism of their struggle under grace to follow gospel imperatives and to live their lives in close imitation of Jesus Christ. The intensity of their struggle is determined by the obstacles they face and overcome.

Catherine McAuley richly deserves to be called Venerable. She was human; she struggled; she faced many obstacles. Like all of us, she has her story, and in that story we see the interweaving of light and darkness, of pain and joy as she tried to follow the love of her life, Jesus Christ.

Jesus offers us a way of life that provides freedom from self-absorption for the fullness of life with others and, ultimately, with the Divine Other. The essence of true discipleship<sup>1</sup> is the surrender of oneself unreservedly and unconditionally. In surrendering we are drawn to the joy of union with God, and at the same time, we fear the pain that this self-giving will involve.

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<sup>1</sup> “True discipleship consists in effective listening to the One who calls and growth in freedom for the expected response.” Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *My Life in Retrospect*, Ignatius Press

Paradoxically there is something mysterious about the joy of Christ; but then the whole Christian message is a paradox and Christ himself is **the** paradox par excellence. Chesterton in his powerful book, *Orthodoxy*, gets to the kernel of the paradoxical quality of Christianity when he describes Christianity's refusal to compromise, to dilute the intensity of differences by merging them into something nondescript. Chesterton holds that down through the ages Christianity has succeeded in overcoming the difficulty of "furious opposites by keeping them both and keeping both of them furious"<sup>2</sup>. If Christianity is a paradox, then its founder is an even greater enigma.<sup>3</sup> Within the law of the Christian paradox, openness to the joy inherent in responding to God means also facing suffering which like joy is equally the expression and the demand of love.

As with Jesus so with Catherine, surrender to the love of the Father inevitably meant surrender to the Cross.<sup>4</sup> Catherine was no stranger to the Cross as she said herself "we were founded on Calvary there to serve a crucified Redeemer." When we look at her, however, we see a woman who through all she suffered learned that she could not be her own saviour. She did not take herself too seriously, and her "mirth," her irrepressible joy was constantly in evidence in her fun poems, her good humour in defusing tense community situations, and her capacity to make fun and to laugh especially at herself.

As she matured this weaving of joy and pain was expressed through a profound trust in the Providence of God.

## BUILDING BLOCKS OF A VISION—A LIFE UNFOLDING

### From Childhood to Adolescence

In Catherine's early childhood, her father James provided love and an enduring example of Christian generosity. He was materially well off and belonged to a wealthy middle class of merchants who were emerging in Ireland at the time.<sup>5</sup> While the fatherly love and protection James provided physically lasted only five years for Catherine, the spirit of Christian love that he communicated, however, seemed to imprint itself indelibly on her soul and form the basis of the developing vision that guided her whole life.

During her adolescent years she knew what it was like to live in a house of plenty; equally she experienced the humbling reality of having to depend on the good will of relatives for basic sustenance. Although she was with her own family, the atmosphere in which they lived was not favourable to the Catholic religion which for Catherine at that time was a source of joy and strength.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Orthodoxy*, 1959, p.59.

<sup>3</sup> *Orthodoxy*, 1959, p.160. In the words of Chesterton which defy paraphrasing: "The tremendous figure which fills the gospels towers in this respect, as in every other over all the thinkers who ever thought themselves tall, His pathos was natural, almost casual. The Stoics ancient and modern were proud of concealing their tears. He never concealed his tears. He showed them plainly on his open face at any daily sight such as the far sight of his native city. Yet, he concealed something. Solemn men and imperial diplomats are proud of restraining their anger. He never restrained his anger. He flung furniture down the front steps of the temple and he asked men how they hoped to escape damnation. Yet, he restrained something. I say it with reverence; there was in that shattering personality a thread that must be called shyness. There was something that he hid from all people when he went up the mountain to pray. There was something that he covered constantly by an abrupt silence or impetuous isolation. There was something too great for God to show us while he walked on the earth and I have sometimes fancied that it was his mirth."

<sup>4</sup> Kollasch E.C., *The Idea of Surrender to God in the Spirituality of John Henry Cardinal Newman*. 1966, p.47.

<sup>5</sup> In 1770 in Dublin, Ireland, a strong urban middle class had grown from dispossessed gentry who did not scorn earning their living by trading or entrepreneurial apprentices who were architects of their own fortune. Catherine McAuley's father was one of the latter.

<sup>6</sup> In June 1791, the McAuley family moved into Queen Street in the city of Dublin. Catherine received her First Holy Communion between the ages of 15 and 18 (1793 – 1796) from Dr. Daniel Murray, later Archbishop of Dublin. She was confirmed in 1796 by Archbishop John Troy in Arran Quay Chapel.



When Catherine was on the threshold of her twenties she lost her mother, a loss compounded by the breakup of her family. Her brother, James, and sister, Mary, went to live with William Armstrong who was a confirmed Protestant, and she went to live for a short period with the Conways<sup>8</sup> who were Catholics. At this time she related spiritually with the humbled, abandoned Christ whom she called “my Christ.” Just a few short months after her arrival in the Conway household, the family fortunes took a downward turn and Catherine was constrained to join her sister and brother in the Armstrong home which was very hostile to Catholicism. This was her “dark night,” the time of a deep faith crisis for Catherine as she was subjected to constant harassment in relation to her firmly held religious beliefs. Her common sense and strength of character came to the fore in the situation. Instead of bowing under the onslaught she consistently sought advice from priests in the Confessional and in the Presbytery. She studied Scripture and the fathers of the Church. She prayed the Psalter and the Universal prayer. In short, adversity fueled a steely resolve to prepare herself to the best of her ability to find answers in defense of her faith.<sup>9</sup>

Through her twenties and her thirties, Catherine lived in the Callaghan household in Coolock House. When she first went there no Catholic emblems were permitted and Catherine had only Protestant books to read. William Callaghan was a lapsed Anglican and his wife, Catherine, a practising Quaker. She found ingenious and creative ways around these obstacles which enabled her to continue practising her Catholic faith (such as the cross beams of doors or windows which reminded her of the Crucifix).

As the years passed and mutual love and respect between the Callaghan couple and Catherine deepened, she gradually began to practice her Catholic faith openly under the guidance of Dr. Daniel Murray. She attended Mass and the sacraments, and she gathered the Catholics among the domestic staff for prayer. This is the beginning of Catherine’s outreach to the poor; the seedling expression of her growing vision.

Starting with William and Catherine Callaghan, the people around her were in awe of what she did for the poor. She worked as a teacher in a school in Middle Abbey Street and she opened a craft shop to sell articles made by the girls of the school. In addition, she visited the sick, taught catechism to children and adults, and planned a shelter for young unemployed women.

It is helpful for us to look at this burgeoning expression of Catherine’s love—love of God that overflowed so richly into love of neighbour. She opened her heart to God and she opened her hands to all around her. As Catherine matured into adulthood, she presented herself as a person who quietly, steadily with imagination, initiative, and resilience did what she knew she must do. She

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<sup>7</sup> In October 1798, Elinor McAuley died.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine lived with the Conways until 1799 when she had to move to the Armstrong household where her brother and sister were. She lived with the Armstrongs from 1799 – 1802.

<sup>9</sup> The mature fruit of this preparedness is evident in the ‘Cottage Controversy.’

was unselfconsciously focused on alleviating the needs of the poor around her. This became her all-consuming passion. If Catherine's dream or vision was instinctive in the beginning, it grew in depth and radicality as she allowed herself to be led step-by-step to where God wanted her to be. Her unwavering response to God allows us to glimpse her holiness. These years in the Callaghan household could be termed the "hidden years," during which, like Jesus, she grew in wisdom, age, and stature before God and those around her.

How did Catherine succeed in bringing her sister and the Callaghan couple to the Catholic Church at the time of their deaths, if her rootedness in God and openness to being God's instrument were not well founded? She lived the gifts of Christian baptism—faith, hope and love—consistently and steadfastly, and when the time was right, she knew instinctively the next step that had to be taken. We see it in the way she was able to discern the right moment to start the open practice of her faith in the Callaghan household. It was also evident in her clear articulation to William Callaghan of how she saw her life unfolding and what she needed see it through.

## CATHERINE MCAULEY—A WOMAN OF THE CHURCH

The process of canonization is not an act of ecclesial narcissism. The role the Servant of God plays in the life of the Church is also something that is looked for in the person who is raised to the honours of the altar.

From her earliest days, especially the time she spent in the Armstrong household which was strongly Protestant, Catherine's good sense and unerring spiritual 'radar' sent her looking for help from the ministers of her own Church. She worked closely with the clergy and built lasting friendships from among them. This can be seen from that fact that *Dr. Daniel Murray*, who gave her first communion, was still very much part of her life when she was living with the Callaghans, and the relationship continued on into the years when she was foundress of the Sisters of Mercy and he was Archbishop of Dublin. *Father Nugent* received William Callaghan into the Church and he invited Catherine to teach in the parochial school for the poor on Middle Abbey Street in Dublin (1823).

This is where her vision began to really take shape. Hers was a vision of a laywoman with a small band of helpers doing good work for others less fortunate than themselves. At this stage Catherine had no idea of being a religious or of founding a congregation.

In 1824, Catherine, on the advice of her friend and advisor *Father Edward Armstrong*, with the concurrence of *Archbishop Murray* and the support of *Dr. Blake*, purchased a plot of ground on Baggot Street. She intended to erect a new house "for the glory of God and dedicated to him from its very foundations" (echoing the words of Hannah as she presented her boy child to the Lord in the Temple 1Samuel 2.). *Dr. Blake* laid the foundation stone of this house before he left Ireland to reopen the Irish College in Rome as the penal laws in Ireland began to abate.

In 1825 *Father Nugent* died of typhus, and Catherine nursed him in his last illness. This same year Catherine went to France with Fanny Tighe (who later became a Presentation Sister in Galway) in search of pedagogical expertise. She also learned the methods used by the Kildare Society Proselytising Schools. In this action we see a pioneering woman who prepared herself very effectively and efficiently in order to realise her vision for the education of women—especially poor women and girls.

In 1827, after many ups and downs with the builders, the house on Baggot Street was opened as a House of Mercy on September 24 by Anna Maria Doyle and Catherine Byrn. Catherine visited every day from her brother-in-law's home, where she was still caring for the children of her deceased sister Mary.

## THE FINAL YEARS

In the making of a saint a lot of attention is paid to the last 10 years of a person's life. From the opening of the House of Mercy on Baggot Street to Catherine's death on November 11, 1842, the consolidation of virtue in her life and its heroic expression in her living becomes more and more obvious.

Catherine initially understood "giving all to God" in terms of working as a laywoman, doing good among the poor in her city of Dublin. Like Mary of Nazareth before her, whose understanding of giving all to God was disturbed by the message of the angel, so Catherine's understanding of the direction her life would take was disturbed, enlarged, opened to the 'more' of God's will for her by the request/directive of the Archbishop of Dublin that she give canonical status to her charitable undertaking or hand it over to another canonically established congregation. Catherine, like Mary, was not found wanting when God's call came. Her whole life to this moment was steeped in prayer and lived in an attitude of loving discernment of God's will in her regard. She had been faithful in the smaller choices; she did not fail when the 'crunch' came.

Added to her obedience to God, the manner in which she surrendered the deeds of the Baggot Street house, into which she sank all her inheritance, to the Archbishop of Dublin before she went to make a novitiate in George's Hill (aged 52, September 8, 1830) is nothing short of an act of heroic trust in the Providence of God. Catherine's focus obviously was on doing the very best she could for the poor of Dublin, putting flesh on the vision with no thought of her own security in any of the transactions she entered into. This is just one example of what was clearly her way of living in relation to God.

Her humility, seen in many and varied ways all through her life is epitomised in her submission at 52 years of age to the rigours of an intensive novitiate. In the time when it took place, this act of humble submission was in itself nothing short of heroic. It is rendered even more significant by the fact that at one stage there was a question of the validity of her novitiate, which threatened to prolong her absence from Baggot Street. We can only imagine the inner experience of anguish and the trust and surrender to God she needed in order to contain it. She was anxious to return to Baggot Street, where she had learned that, in her absence, misplaced zeal and excessive penances had undermined health and even caused death among her small band of companions.

In the last 10 to 12 years of her life, the paradox of joy and pain is a constant theme in the life of Catherine. Whether it was to do with her family where the joy of seeing her sister return to the Catholic Church before she died or that of having her nieces join her in the House of Mercy commingled with the pain of losing to death so many of her loved ones. Or whether it was the joy of a burgeoning congregation, which under her careful direction spread with astonishing rapidity, mingled with the pain of the chaplaincy dispute or the worry of financial difficulties. In and through it all, we see Catherine consistent in her dependence on God and her willingness to stay at the foot of the Cross. She acted prudently, seen in the way she handled conflict with dignity and wisely kept out of what did not affect her directly. She was just, in that she gave to God and to others what was their due. She said, "Every place has its own particular ideas and feelings which must be yielded to when possible."



In relation to her own health, we also have the example of a very ill woman who did not complain and who went whenever necessary on journeys that would have been majorly difficult for someone in the whole of her health. She was consumed with love and love consumed her.

Catherine's last days, her terminal illness and death, are an example par excellence of a heroically virtuous woman. Her delicate courtesy and kind thoughtfulness even when she was in extremis herself are inspirational and challenging. Catherine is certainly the epitome of "as you live, so shall you die." Her own lived witness to charity was the companion volume to the Scripture in the study of which she found the secret of life and love.

## **A PIONEER OF MERCY—ONE FINAL WORD**

For Catherine, Mercy in the form of a compassionate practical response to need was where she believed she was called by God. This was her vision which she communicated to Frances Warde and the other women who were her companions. She saw the Mercy response as multi-dimensional and in her singleness of purpose she turned out to be a pioneer in many areas. The following is just a short, inadequate list of some of Catherine's "firsts:"

- A shelter for unemployed women
- Travelling to France to learn educational systems before she opened her schools
- Opening outlets to sell the work done in schools by the poor women and children
- Bringing education for poor girls and women to the forefront in the Ireland of her day
- On July 13, 1834, Catherine applied for affiliation with the National Board of Education in Ireland. She was the first contemporary founder/superior to do so.
- In 1835, two years before the Government opened the Marlborough Street Training School in 1838, she was supplying trained monitoresses to other schools on request.
- Catherine favoured the practice of holding receptions and professions of new members in the Parish Church where new foundations were made. The profession of Mary Teresa Purcell in 1836 in Tullamore started a trend.
- In 1837, the first nonresidential Pension School was established in Carlow, shortly after its foundation, for middle class parents who found the fees of boarding schools prohibitive at the time.

## **CONCLUSION**

The above is a very cursory, inconclusive account of the life and vision of a woman who is a very real example of what it means to be a conduit of God's loving and compassionate mercy in the world. She understood and lived the conviction that Christ has no body now but ours, and exemplifies that each one of us brings our own unique gift to living that vision in the place and time in which we find ourselves. Heidegger tells us that our future comes to meet us out of our past. So, even in this post modern and technological age, a study of the life, spirituality, and vision of Catherine McAuley in its transparent simplicity is as apt to inspire and challenge today as it was in her lifetime.

I would conclude by asking you to pray that one day she will be finally raised to the honour of the altar so that all the people of God will have the chance to know her and to give glory to God through devotion to her.

# The Mercy Mission Reflected in Our Pedagogy and Curriculum

## Mercy and Justice: The Humanities

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MARY L. HERMANN, EdD, GWYNEDD-MERCY COLLEGE

Just as water is essential to our biological well-being, the soul of the Mercy student is enlivened when “bathed” in the values of mercy and justice applied to the self and real world complexities.

This course, entitled *Mercy and Justice: The Humanities*, focused on the integration of the Mercy mission, through an engagement with the human condition approach to learning. The historical context of this pilot course evolved from a desire to construct a general education curriculum that incorporated educational experiences that would prepare distinctive Gwynedd-Mercy graduates. The overarching goal of the curriculum was to develop students as informed, responsible, caring citizens of a global world who have internalized the human values of integrity, compassion, mercy, and justice.

*Mercy and Justice: The Humanities* was piloted over two years and was taught by faculty from various disciplines to foster an interdisciplinary approach. The course description was as follows: *This course serves the mission of the college to create a learning community “rooted in the Gospels and rich in the liberal arts.” To that end, the course will introduce students to great ideas of Western and Eastern cultures in the humanities. Students and instructor will examine together how these issues interface with the values of mercy, peace, and justice, thus reflecting the mission and values of the college and the college’s founding sponsors, the Sisters of Mercy.* The course objectives were: (1) Describe how the concepts of mercy, peace, and justice are reflected in the life of Catherine McAuley, the charism of the Sisters of Mercy, and the Gwynedd-Mercy College community. (2) Think critically about the concepts of mercy, peace, and justice by reflecting upon selected readings and examining their personal values. (3) Analyze current issues and events from the perspectives of mercy, peace, and justice. (4) Reflect on the necessity of social action through service to society in order to facilitate mercy, peace, and justice.

The required texts for the course were *Tender Courage* by Sister Joanna Regan and Sister Isabella Keiss (1988) and *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers*, L.A. Jacobus (Ed) (2006), in addition to selected readings. The theoretical foundations of this course are grounded in the scholarship of Perry’s work (1970) on the intellectual and ethical development of the student, Kolb’s Experiential Model of Learning (1984) and the educational philosophy of Freire (2003) known as Critical Pedagogy. Freire’s philosophy supports the role of instructor to engage the student in active dialogue to achieve understanding of real societal problems including discussion of possible strategies to overcome injustices.

The beginning weeks of the course included a discussion and reflection on the specific values of Catholic/Mercy Education such as the regard for the dignity of each person, compassion, integrity, service, and social responsibility that this course would strive to further nurture within the students. Students were asked to reflect on the meaning of mercy as experienced in their lives. Additionally, the purpose of a college education at Gwynedd-Mercy College which is grounded in the liberal arts entailed a discussion of the meaning of the term liberal education. The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU)’s perspectives from the *Greater Expectations Report* (2002) were shared with the students, which describe liberal education as a philosophy of education that liberates the mind from ignorance, empowers individuals, and cultivates social responsibility. The goals of liberal education to cultivate

independent thought, informed appreciation, and critical judgment, as opposed to simplistic observation and dependent opinion, were reviewed. Additionally, this education fosters the application of critical thinking to real life problems which often causes individuals to question prior assumptions and biases. Furthermore, the view that liberal education deals with relevant and important issues of society and the workplace and is practical and necessary for our modern world knowledge economy was emphasized.

An understanding of liberal education created a link to the examination of the life of Catherine McAuley, who lived the values of a liberally educated person. The reading of *Tender Courage* enabled the students to gain an appreciation of the magnitude of the triumph of goodness into action as illustrated in Catherine McAuley's life. As the course progressed, readings were assigned to inform students on selected significant societal issues such as valuing diversity and working against racism, education, and citizenship, issues surrounding women and children, solidarity with the materially poor, just government, and acting in harmony with all creation. Readings from Martin Luther King Jr., Howard Zinn, Lao Tzu, John Dewey, Paulo Freire, James Baldwin, Robert Reich, Rachel Carson, Carol Gilligan, Virginia Woolf, and the Dali Lama are some examples. Discussion of these issues which are embedded in complex social, cultural, and civic factors aimed to foster critical thinking skills within the student. These themes were further examined through the lens of mercy and justice and linked to the legacy of Catherine McAuley and the present day work of the Sisters of Mercy, with the goal that students could recognize real world application of social responsibility guided by mercy and justice values.

Pedagogies were designed to stimulate students' ongoing active engagement. The role of instructor reflected a journey-synergistic guide model (Bowen, 2005). Just as water is flexible and yielding, a learning environment that promoted openness to sharing ideas was created. According to Perry (1970), beginning college students generally manifest an either/or thinking pattern. This thinking maybe likened to an "ice cube," that is, some students hold a "frozen" view regarding a societal issue absent of careful scrutiny. Therefore, students are encouraged to question their thought processes and hopefully initiate the melting of the "ice cube thinking" and arrive at a more informed view of an issue with its complexity. A variety of active learning strategies such as reflective journaling and technological based methods were utilized. Learning was approached holistically, challenging students and the instructor to connect ideas with self and across disciplines. In addition to selected readings, films including the viewing of documentaries, as well as guest speakers, were employed to support connection to real life. The work of well known individuals such as Bill Gates in striving to overcome injustices in global health and education reform were included to connect to today's world. Additionally, the unsung heroes of the students' and instructors' daily lives were also identified for their highly significant contributions in connecting goodness with action and the role model enrichment that these individuals provided.

Upon gaining an understanding of the connection between spirituality and social action reflective of the life of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy, the students participated in two service activities. Students completed reflective papers describing the personal impact of these activities. The students' reflective papers supported the Experiential Learning Model of David Kolb (1984) in that the actual, providing of the service by the student achieved the transformative educational effect enhancing personal growth and heightening the value of social responsibility for these particular students. These service activities, in particular, served to inform students that they, too, had the capacity to impact a life in a positive way, i.e., the course was not just about learning about others' good actions, but realizing their own capabilities to do good, as well.

Some of the challenges that were identified in some students while teaching the course included varied student abilities related to reading and writing skills, lack of awareness of personal biases and uninformed opinions, competition with course work in major, lack of openness to new ways of thinking, and deficits in self-confidence. To address these challenges, besides initial and ongoing work to create a safe and trusting educational atmosphere, a range of learning strategies were utilized in an attempt to engage the student and support differences in learning styles. Students who displayed limited writing skills were encouraged to make an appointment with the instructor for extra coaching and/or seek assistance at the college writing center to improve written communication skills. To encourage informed opinion writing, students were reminded to include the source from their readings that supported their views. If the reading was considered more difficult, students were requested to seek clarification on the more difficult areas. Stereotype and bias exercises were included to foster awareness and confront assumptions among students. Efforts to develop the self-confidence of some of the students entailed small group discussions to build confidence before contributing to the larger group. Furthermore, as the course unfolded, it was realized by the instructor that explicit effort in assisting the students to make the connections with the classroom learning to the mercy and justice current issues of the larger world was needed. For example, what do you think Catherine McAuley would have to say about this theme, about this person's work? How does the work of the Sisters of Mercy align with this issue or this person's work? Furthermore, the importance of authentic engagement by the instructor as to the value of this course is another insight that was gained by the instructor.

Quantitative overall evaluation of the value of the course has been excellent. On a scale from "1 to 5" with "1" being the highest and "5" the lowest, the results have been consistently at the "1" level. Sample qualitative comments included *...the class helped me see the other side of stories I never took the time to care about, mostly I think it will change the way I act in certain situations. ...I enjoyed learning about poverty and women's issues/feminism....not only were my original ideas about feminism distorted, they were wrong... see now how some feminist work to raise awareness of women's issues...The class helped me see the other side of stories I never took the time to care about, mostly, I think it will change the way I act in certain situations. The class assisted me in understanding difference among people and societies...it also taught me a lot about myself. Through the class discussions and reflections, I have noticed how often I generalize and use labels...the course has given me a new outlook on life... I want to do the right thing. We talked about major issues of the day....it has been very helpful and useful....there will be times in the future where we are going to think back to something that we talked about in class.*

Examples of themes that emerged from this class were the transformative effect of education, appreciation of diverse viewpoints, the altruistic benefit of participating in a service activity, and personal development for these Gwynedd-Mercy College students. The specific college outcomes that were met in this course were communication skills, moral and ethical judgment, problem solving, critical thinking, and leadership in society.

In conclusion, some of the students arrive as "ice cube thinkers," manifested by frozen, unchallenged beliefs. As the course evolves, the engaged students experience a melting of the "ice cube," stirred to examine their thought processes. Furthermore, in examining their thinking through the lens of mercy and justice, their views are transformed into a new and informed understanding of a particular issue. Looking into the future, the substantive effect of the curricula will be realized when these Mercy graduates influenced by the Mercy charism become "rivers" of service and contribute to the larger "ocean of our world" in promoting mercy and justice for all.

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# Render unto Caesar: Maintaining Mercy Values amid the Pressures to Conform to State and National Teacher Education Regulations

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## INTRODUCTION: THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT TENSIONS

The contemporary emphasis in public education in America on accountability has its roots in the reform efforts of the Ronald Reagan administration of 1980-88. This was an ironic, contradictory time in the field of education, as the administration on the one hand called for smaller government and the abolition of the federal Department of Education, and on the other hand launched a policy effort that would ultimately federalize control of public education through George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act.

The Reagan administration's federalizing efforts can be considered radical because, constitutionally, public education is a state responsibility rather than a federal responsibility. Until recently, states delegated that responsibility to local cities and towns. This tradition goes back to colonial times, when the Massachusetts colony determined that each village or township must create and maintain a system of public education (called the Old Deluder Satan Act, which was intended to promote an educated populace as a way to outsmart that old deluder, Satan). The Reagan administration, again amid its public efforts to shrink federal government and its influence over people's lives, actually increased dramatically the federal and state role in public education.

The Reagan Administration's vehicle for this increased involvement was the landmark policy document, "A Nation At Risk" (NCEE, 1983), which decried the state of America's schools at the time, denouncing the lack of rigor in schools, the lack of a focused curriculum, and the lack of quality teachers in the profession. This document was seized upon by education reformers of the new social conservatism, who used it as a rallying point and battle cry. Their efforts led directly to the adoption of the current standards-based approaches to curriculum and instructional design, the proliferation of endless sets of standards, the narrowed and focused "back to basics" curriculum, the obsession with accountability and measurability, and the obsession with efficiency-based uniformity in educational endeavors. This policy approach was extended stridently into the field of teacher preparation with the publication of a second document, "A Nation Prepared" (Task Force, 1986), which specifically targeted perceived deficiencies in the quality of public teachers in America.

Major revisions to the field of teaching were recommended by this report. Among them were: raising the standards for teachers and teacher certification, requiring a bachelor's degree in the arts and sciences as a prerequisite for the professional study of teaching; revamping the teacher compensation system to make teacher salaries and career opportunities competitive with other professions; permitting teachers to decide how best to meet state and local goals for children while holding them accountable for student progress; introducing a new category of Lead Teacher to provide active leadership in the redesign of schools and in helping their peers uphold high standards of learning and teaching; and actively working to increase the number of minority teachers (A Nation Prepared, 1986).

Many of these recommendations have become reality in the intervening years, while some have been less successful. On the success side, the standards movement spawned the creation of multiple sets of teaching standards to coincide with the multiple sets of content and pedagogical standards. Students in university teacher education programs are expected to take more content area courses in arts and sciences fields or to major in arts and sciences fields as either a prerequisite or corequisite with their teaching programs. Also, teachers and schools are held publicly accountable for the performance of their students on federally mandated state exams. On the failure side, while career ladders of sorts were developed through such positions as Lead Teacher or Literacy/Math Coach, the ability of teachers to determine the redesign of schools, curriculum, or instruction has never materialized in any meaningful way. In fact, these functions have become more centralized at the state level in the years since “A Nation Prepared” was published. And while teacher salaries did rise, we are now at the point in public perception where teachers are deemed to be making too much money, and ways are being sought to reduce their salaries and benefits. Finally, and unfortunately, the number of minority teachers in the profession has not increased in any meaningful way in the past 25 years.

In the intervening 20 years between “A Nation at Risk” and the No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA, 2002), private policy institutes, state departments of education, national content area organizations (such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics), and special interest groups set about the business of writing content area standards, teaching standards, student performance standards, and program approval standards. Assessments also proliferated, created by state departments of education as well as private, for profit, companies. Policy makers, lobbyists, and interest groups created legislation mandating accountability as well as the public perception that such accountability was indeed necessary. The various states took back their constitutionally provided control over public education from local communities during this time through the process of standardizing curriculum, assessment, and accountability. The No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law in January 2002, brought the varied state reform efforts under a single federal umbrella, using the threat of withholding of federal funds for disadvantaged students as the motivation for states to comply.

## **TEACHER EDUCATION IN RHODE ISLAND: EXTERNAL PRESSURE TO CONFORM**

Rhode Island was actually slow to engage in the standards and accountability era, preferring, from a policy standpoint, to take a “wait and see” approach to education reform. State testing of public school students and the public accountability of teachers and schools based on those test results did not actually take hold in Rhode Island until the mid 1990s. Regarding teacher preparation, Rhode Island created a set of teaching standards called the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards (RIBTS) in 1993. These standards were modeled after the 10 INTASC teaching standards developed by the national organization of state departments of education in response to “A Nation Prepared” and are 11 in number (see Table 1 for their enumeration). The RIBTS were initially intended to be used by local schools as a means of evaluating new teachers during their probationary period prior to earning tenure (first three years). However, fierce union resistance compelled the state to apply the RIBTS to teacher preparation instead of the early career of a new teacher.

RIBTS	Topical Area
1	General Liberal Arts Education
2	Specific Pedagogical Content Area Preparation
3	Child/Adolescent Development
4	Learner Diversity/Special Needs
5	Critical Thinking Skills
6	Classroom Management
7	Working with Families, Colleagues, and State Data
8	Communication and Instructional Skills
9	Assessment Skills
10	Lifelong Learning and Professional Development
11	Standards for Professionalism and Ethics

**Table 1: Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards**

Beginning in 2001, each teacher preparation program in the state was required to demonstrate that its graduates met each of the 11 Beginning Teacher Standards. The total number of teaching standards in Rhode Island is actually not 11, however. Each RIBTS has what are known as “indicators,” which are descriptors of how each standard should be met. In effect, these indicators have become separate standards themselves over time. Each teacher preparation program, therefore, is required to demonstrate that its graduates meet 61 separate teaching standards prior to graduation. Additionally, since the second RIBTS is concerned with preparation in a content area (History, for example) students are also required to be prepared to meet a completely separate set of content area standards, depending on their certification area.

The vehicle for the state to measure that teaching and content standards are being met is the revised Rhode Island Program Approval Process (RIPA, 2006), which at first consisted of four standards of its own, but which has now grown to six standards (33 standards when one includes six standards plus 27 indicators). Through this process, a team of external evaluators visits a teacher preparation school to review the program in light of the six standards (see Table 2).

RIPA	Topical Area
1	Assessment System
2	Curriculum and Standards
3	Field Placements
4	Diversity
5	Resources
6	Commitment to Program Improvement

**Table 2: Rhode Island Program Approval Standards**

RIPA Standard One measures how well a program assesses student performance on the RIBTS at three different points: admission to the program, prior to student teaching, and after student teaching. A rigorous approach to counseling low performers out of the program needs to be evident. Standard Two measures how well the RIBTS have been integrated into the curriculum in education courses and content area courses. This is also where separate content area standards must be addressed as well as curricular responses to state policies. Regarding the latter, teacher preparation programs are required to integrate all state education policies into the curriculum as soon as these policies are approved at the state level. Standard Three measures how field sites (schools) are selected for student placements, how they are evaluated, how cooperating teachers in schools are selected and evaluated, and the quality of partnerships that have been established with schools. Standard Four measures the diversity of the student body and faculty across the university as well as in field placement sites and across the curriculum. Standard Five measures the quality of the faculty and the resources the university puts into the preparation of teachers. Standard Six is particularly interesting in that it measures how firmly the teacher preparation program is committed to the process of reform and the concept of continuous program improvement. Basically, this standard measures how thoroughly a program embraces state regulations and external control.

As stated earlier, in the current climate of accountability, states have retaken control of public education and teacher preparation, under a larger umbrella of federal control. After years of passing control of education to the local level, states seem to be over-reacting to the newfound realization that they are, indeed, in control, and are laying a rather heavy hand on public schools and institutions of higher education that prepare teachers. Rhode Island is no exception. All programs must comply with all demands made by the state and must meet any and all standards approved by the state in order to be allowed to continue to admit and graduate new teachers. The penalty for noncompliance ranges from increased oversight (meaning an increased number of accreditation visits to a university by the state) to the shutting down of programs (which has happened in Rhode Island).

Salve Regina University was first visited under the revised program approval process in 2001, and then again in 2004. The third visit was scheduled for late February 2007. This third, most recent, visit will be the focus of the remainder of this essay.

## **PREPARE TO BE VISITED: ENTERING THE SEA**

Prior to moving to Salve Regina I worked at two large state universities, first in Illinois and then in Rhode Island. In Illinois, I was not really affected by teacher certification and state regulation as I worked primarily with graduate students, teaching research methodology courses and supervising dissertations. When I moved to Rhode Island, I quickly became enmeshed with issues of teacher preparation and found that the pressures on a state institution to conform to state regulations are enormous. The demands of the state seemed to dictate the culture of the state higher education institution, to the point where the mission of the institution seemed to be driven by, or established by, the state. By that I mean that the University seemed to have no mission of its own – its mission was to respond to state edicts about what its mission should be, and these edicts often changed with each election cycle. On the teacher education side, the state department of education had broken the University down through the program approval process by holding it accountable for things it could not control and demoralizing the faculty by painting them as incompetent for not being able to meet impossible, and at times whimsical, demands.

I moved to Salve Regina University for many reasons, two that pertain to this essay are the strength of the mission in the University's culture and the hope that I could escape the regulatory tentacles of the state department of education at a small, private university. The former reason was quickly and happily confirmed as soon as I started working at Salve Regina, while the latter was just as quickly demonstrated to be a bit of naiveté on my part. My first year at Salve Regina was spent coming to the slow realization that there is no escaping state regulation when it comes to teacher preparation in contemporary political society. I became aware of the fact that the state expects all teacher education programs to conform to its conceptualization of what teacher preparation should look like – the state has a desire for all of us (there are eight teacher education programs in RI) to shape our programs to follow a singular model, one determined by them to be the best approach to meeting the RIBTS. Individual institutional identity is not an important thing to maintain, according to the state's view of teacher preparation.

This realization turned to dismay as I further came to understand that it appears to be the desire of the state that the RIBTS form the mission of each university in terms of their teacher education programming. The dismay led, in turn, to my asking myself and my colleagues in education at Salve Regina, "How does a teacher preparation program maintain its sense of mission, its institutional identity, amid the pressures to conform to external demands?" My fear was that the answer would be, "It can't." My colleagues and I set about over the past several years trying to arrive at a different answer.

## **PREPARE TO BE VISITED: RENDER UNTO CAESAR**

The mission of Salve Regina University speaks of cultivating enduring values, which include respecting the human dignity of each person, being of service to others, acting with kindness, and working toward a world that is harmonious, just, and merciful. The Mission Committee at Salve, of which I am a member, has been engaging in an extended reflective discussion of what mercy is, how it differs from justice, and how it can be embodied in our everyday work lives. Trying to articulate the difference between justice and mercy can be, at times, particularly difficult, as our American culture is permeated with references to justice, but not as much to references to mercy: it is easier or more 'natural' for us to talk about justice and to assume that all moral discussions ultimately lead to discussions of justice (for example, that you can't have mercy without justice).

As an educator, I draw an analogy between the justice/mercy debate and the justice/caring debate. Nel Noddings (1992), an educational philosopher and former math teacher, developed the conceptualization of an ethic of care, extending the prior work of Carol Gilligan (1982) and others. Caring is an ethic that is separate from justice, not subordinate to it. Where justice is a *procedural* ethic concerned with identifying rules and making sure they are evenly applied, and in policy situations is often characterized as having the ability to be distanced or dispassionate in the application of those rules, caring is a *relational* ethic concerned with our being connected to each other, concerned for each other, and actively seeking to enter into the lives of each other as a means of mutual support and resolution. In the world of policy, the caring ethic would have us be more concerned with the person with whom we are in relation at the moment than to distanced procedural rule-following. To me this is much like the concept of mercy as we have been discussing it on the Salve Mission Committee. Both caring and mercy require an emphasis on relationships, close contact, and the willingness to enter nonjudgmentally into the chaotic life of another.



To me, the conflict between a distanced, procedural ethic and a connected, relational ethic is a fundamental underlying source of the conflict I felt upon arriving at Salve and being asked to lead the preparations for our next program approval visit. Where Salve's faculty wanted to act from a position of caring or mercy (whether it was overtly articulated or not), the state wanted to see us develop a justice-based system of teacher preparation. For example, the desire to enter into deep relationships with students is contradictory to the bureaucratic ideal of distanced and dispassionate measurement. Further, the desire to see the perspective of the student, to understand his or her chaos, and to help that student pull themselves out of that chaos is contradictory to the bureaucratic ideal of judging students' "worthiness" by means of an externally developed, one-size-fits-all, evaluation model that focuses on producing solid reliability and validity data.

Below are just a few examples of the philosophical differences between Salve Regina and the state in regards to teacher preparation.

The state demands that universities develop a three-tiered gatekeeping system of portfolios to be used as a weeding out process. We are supposed to have a rigorous system in place that, if working properly, will guarantee that we have fewer graduates finishing the program than enter the program (what is the point of having gates if everyone can get through?). Salve, on the other hand, has always worked from the position that students should be given every opportunity to pursue their dreams, that we are willing to work with them to achieve these dreams, and that students can grow over time, overcoming by senior year deficiencies that show themselves during sophomore year.

The state demands that students be prevented from moving from gate to gate without passing certain tests, whereas Salve has been willing to allow students who show great promise or classroom skill to keep moving forward as they prepare for and retake the tests. One test alone should not stop a student's progress or wash a student out of a program.

The state demands that we gather numeric data about student and cooperating teacher performance that can be aggregated and analyzed to find out which parts of the program are working well and which are not. Salve's is a small program that knows its students and cooperating teachers (both their flaws and skills) well, and we have always relied on evidence collected via our strong relationships in making decisions about where to place students and whether students should progress through the program. The state discounts this relational data as not distanced or objective enough.

In trying to reconcile differences such as these, the solution the education faculty arrived at, over time and much hard work, was to return to universal wisdom, as expressed by Luke (20:25), and "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." This may sound simple and obvious, but it is not the stance commonly taken by teacher education institutions toward external state and federal accreditation processes. The wisdom voiced in this section of Luke is about appropriate and proportional valuing – having the wisdom and reflective awareness to place value on the things we should value and not be distracted into overvaluing that which should not be valued.

By this I mean that, generally, teacher education programs place an enormous value on the regulatory mandates of state and federal agencies. There is a battle for control that is taking place in teacher preparation, where teacher education programs resist state pressures, believing that the state has nothing to tell them about how to prepare teachers, while the state demonizes the teacher education programs, believing they are out of touch with the reality of schools. Both groups view the program approval

process as the nexus of the battle – on the one hand (state’s view) review is the tool for forcing change, and on the other hand (university’s view) review is an oppressive affront to academic freedom. In both cases, the program approval process has an overly strong value attached to it, and professionals on both sides act in irrational ways in reaction to that perceived value. There is programmatic identity wrapped up in the approval (or, more commonly, disapproval) bestowed on the program by the review process. Morale is currently very low among teacher preparation institutions. When they are not able to meet state accreditation demands, their identity and professional self esteem is diminished because of the overvaluing of the process. The practical belief is that the judgment of the state is actually meaningful, when indeed, that does not need to be the case. Understandably, the contemporary external pressure of accountability makes it difficult for any institution not to overvalue the process, Salve Regina included.

I must admit that when I arrived at Salve, I brought with me the prior socialization to that overvaluation of program approval. It was only with time, the patience of my colleagues, and our seemingly continuous dialogue through departmental meetings that we came to realize the value of “rendering unto Caesar” or striking an internal compromise with the program approval process. Sociologically speaking, we decided to take a value-rational or technical-rational approach to the process (Habermas, 1984, 1987) in how we presented ourselves to the outside world, while taking a caring or mercy approach in our internal preparations. The application of this concept is that we realized we must concede to some of the state’s mandates in order to continue offering an education major at Salve Regina, after all the state does have the right to grant or not grant teaching certificates and does have the legal right to dictate the terms of issuing those certificates. But we also decided that there were limits to what the state could ask us to do – that we would draw a line when we saw fit, protecting the core of what we felt constituted “a Salve education,” while at the same time not being adversarial in our relations with the state. Our decision carried a serious risk, since in the current national accountability climate states are not very interested in being told that there are boundaries to their power. But we decided that we had to defend our approach to teaching and teacher preparation, deciding that there would be no point to continuing if we were compelled to forfeit our mission-related identity.

So what would this “rendering unto Caesar” look like? Below, I will provide some examples to illustrate:

Rendering unto Caesar: The state demands that education graduates master the RIBTS and expects that these standards should determine the shape of all programs.

Rendering unto God: The education faculty decided to subsume those standards to our own framework of what we wanted Salve graduates to be able to do and the characteristics we wanted them to possess: Citizenship, Professionalism, and Leadership. Here, we placed our own values above the state’s values.

Rendering unto Caesar: Knowing that the state wanted to see a three-tiered portfolio system that would generate hard data to make admissions and retention systems, we set about the laborious task of modifying our portfolio process to do just that. It required a great deal of effort to implement these changes in “real time” during the academic semesters.

Rendering unto God: Salve’s approach, as a relational approach, demanded that we emphasize deep reflection, narrative reporting, and a more qualitative analysis, which we implemented, running counter to the desire for more simple numeric data. We also overlaid each of the three tiers with one of our own concepts, thereby co-opting their process (see Table 3 below).

<i>State Assessment Tier</i>	<i>Salve Program Characteristic</i>
Admissions	Citizenship
Prior to Student Teaching	Professionalism
Prior to Licensure	Leadership

**Table 3: Relationship of State Requirement to Salve Framework**

Rendering unto Caesar: The RIBTS are performance-oriented standards that give no value to foundational preparation. They are focused on “outputs,” not the act of becoming. The expectation was that our portfolios would measure those outputs, and we provided that in our portfolio redesign.

Rendering unto God: We also insisted on taking a developmental approach, showing growth over time. The faculty reviewed and realigned the standards to developmentally appropriate subsets, and we addressed each subset at an appropriate time in the program. We also emphasized that while we would address all the standards throughout the program, we were choosing to assess the standards only at developmentally appropriate times.

Rendering unto Caesar: The state mandates that students have field experiences in a variety of settings, particularly in urban settings. We had been providing such experiences for years, but saw room for improvement.

Rendering unto God: We designed a year-long sophomore level service learning project for every Salve education major that would be relational and would help schools achieve their academic goals. The service experience is relational in that it is fundamentally about getting to know kids through close, sustained interaction and thereby bursting preconceived notions related to demographics. It is academic in that it helps specific children who have fallen behind catch up with their peers.

As a departmental faculty, we also decided to make some strategic moves in how we interacted with the state that we did not realize until later were made from a position of relationship, of caring and mercy. By this I mean that we did not overtly decide to interact with the state from a position of mercy; instead we simply made intuitive decisions during the course of preparing for program approval that, in retrospect, reflected the culture of the institution. As a reflection of the institutional culture, these strategic decisions simply showed themselves to be “the right thing to do.” They felt like the right thing to do at Salve Regina because they flow from the ethos of the University; they would not have felt like the right thing to do at my prior institutions.

First, we decided to be honest in writing our Institutional Report, which is the self-study a program must submit to the state to lay the framework for the program review visit. Honesty sounds simple and obvious, but so often teacher preparation programs feel so much pressure to show compliance to state mandates (by overvaluing the process, as noted above) that writers will try too hard to tease out links between what faculty are doing and what the state wants to see. If the connections are not truly there, then the process can become more adversarial, where the state sees the university as trying to hide things and sets about the process of ferreting out the “lies.” We decided instead to acknowledge any gaps we found between what we were doing and what the state expected. In places where we felt we should be “rendering unto Caesar” we articulated plans for getting there, and in places where we felt we should be “rendering unto God” we provided rationales for why we chose a certain approach.

Second, we decided to take a relational, merciful approach to our guests from the state and from the visiting team. By this I mean that we decided to approach them with kindness and hospitality and a sense of respectfulness. These were people who had good intentions – they were trying to help us become better, and while we might have different ideas about what “becoming better” means, we felt we should respect and dignify their presence. Again, this may sound simple and obvious, but given the accountability pressures, the more common approach is one of animosity, combativeness, and active resistance. This antagonistic approach usually results in a political game of winners and losers, to the point where people lose track of what a program is actually doing and focus only on being proven right (or wrong). We decided instead to seek the more harmonious and hospitable way of the Mercy tradition.

Third, we decided to let our students and our partners in the schools do our talking for us. We realized that we could say anything we wanted, but in a performance-based, outcomes- or outputs-driven model, we had to rely on others to demonstrate our effectiveness. When the stakes are high, letting go of control is not so easy. But we had confidence in our students and our field partners. Salve recruits a strong student body, and in the Education Department we like to think that we draw some of the best of that student body into our programs. We prepare them well with an experientially-oriented and practical program. Students spend a great deal of time in schools working with teachers and students, and we prepare them very well through our portfolio and interview process for entering the job market. We cultivate in students a strong sense of professionalism, along with their skill as teachers and sense of the value of service. Similarly we have strong relationships with the local schools. We did not have to go out to introduce ourselves to people and ask for their help, we simply had to ask long-time partners if they wanted to meet with the visiting team. They did the rest, indicating that it is easier to rely on others when you are in the habit of cultivating strong relationships with others and attach value to the need for strong relationships.

Fourth, and finally, we realized another piece of wisdom: That we can’t do it all, but that we can do something. At an opening meeting of the 2006-2007 academic year, Sister Therese Antone, Salve’s president, read a reflection, a prayer, underscoring this thought, and it stayed with me throughout our planning and preparing for the accreditation visit. With 11 RIBTS that in application turned into 61 standards, with countless options for content-area standards to employ, with a never ending stream of specific program mandates, and with six program approval standards (33, including indicators), there is no way to effectively do it all. We had to slow ourselves down (while still meeting deadlines), focus in on who we were and what our strengths and limitations were, accentuate the strengths and provide plans for addressing the limitations, and remember that who we really were, as a small Mercy university, was more important than what the state thought about us or judged us to be. In short, we needed to respect but not to overvalue the process.

## CONCLUSION

Some think that education is an easy major, that teacher education students don’t have to do much except cut out shapes for children to paste or learn how to plan a lesson on penguins. The fact is that becoming a teacher in the early part of the 21st century is incredibly difficult, and education can be one of the more challenging majors on any campus. Becoming a teacher requires tremendous skill, commitment, maturity, comportment, dedication, motivation, responsibility, and professionalism. Education majors have to be completely committed to their major. They have to be willing to take the usual course work and write the usual research papers, but they also have to be willing to go out into

the schools and work with students and teachers outside of regular college class time, respond to the demands of public school teachers and parents, do the extra work that the three-tiered portfolio review system requires, pass state mandated tests to be allowed to progress through their program, commit to a full semester of daily, unpaid teaching as a form of internship, be thick-skinned enough to withstand a very strong public “bashing and belittling” of their profession, and be flexible enough to turn 180 degrees when the state decides to change its rules and thereby parts of our programs (which will happen three to four times during their college career). Yes, becoming a teacher is very difficult, and state departments of education are proud of the bureaucratic rigor that they are applying to entry into the profession. They take pride in being tough on teacher education programs.

Salve’s education programs passed their five-year review in February 2007 with flying colors. We received the highest approval rating of any program in the state in recent memory and are the talk of the state, at least in teacher preparation circles. Despite our fears and worries, the education programs at Salve Regina were enthusiastically received. The question is “why?” To be honest, it really shouldn’t have happened, based on the tenets of the accountability process. Our programs should have been marked down for non-compliance, but they weren’t. The risks we took should have resulted in less than full approval. In fact, the opposite occurred. Each program approval visit ends with what is known as an Exit Meeting. All “stakeholders” are gathered together to listen to the chair of the visiting team read the verdict for each program on each of the six standards. As our particular chair worked through her opening remarks we were (pleasantly) surprised to hear her talk of the team’s appreciation for the honesty with which we approached the visit, the hospitality we showed the visiting team, the openness of the institutional report, the willingness of the faculty to embrace change, and perhaps most touching of all, the level to which our students embodied the mission of the institution.

Further, in the written report from the state, the visiting team went out of its way to note that we “went beyond the specific recommendations and effectively used [our] self-study and the program approval process as a vehicle for revisiting [our] programs, collecting and analyzing data, experimenting thoughtfully with new ideas, and instituting changes that demonstrate the Education Department’s commitment to program improvement” (RIDE Visiting Team Report, 2007, p. 35).

The risk we took had paid off, and we demonstrated, I believe, that a small, mission-driven university can stay true to itself and retain its identity amid the pressures to conform in a heavy accountability environment. In fact, from reading the above quote closely, one can interpret that rather than being “punished” for not complying completely with external mandates, our programs were “rewarded” for staying true to our mission and embodying that mission. What we did as our internal compromise, namely “render unto God” was not seen as insubordination, but as “experimenting thoughtfully with new ideas.” I believe our actions and decisions were interpreted this way because we approached our visitors from a position of mercy – of honesty, hospitality, and respectful dignity.

The visiting team was comprised of teachers from local public schools and professors from large state teacher education universities. After their first day here it was clear that they did not approve of what we were doing because we did not fit into the standard distanced, procedural justice model of state universities. What we did was unfamiliar to their prior notions of what a procedural justice based system should be doing. By the time they left, three days later, not only had they come to understand the wisdom and value of our approach, but many on the team had the appearance of wanting to stay with us instead of returning to their home institutions.



I believe that this, more than anything else, bears witness to the ideals of enduring values and to the power of a shared institutional culture and identity. Staying focused on that identity amid the swirl of external pressures can, indeed, help an institution enter the sea without losing the sweetness of its water.

*“The simplest and most practical lesson I know...is to resolve to be good today, but better tomorrow. Let us take one day only in hand, at a time, merely making a resolve for tomorrow, thus we may hope to get on taking short, careful steps, not great strides.”* —Catherine McAuley

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# Salve Regina University: Charting Its Course by Mission Integration and Planning

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**Mission, mission integration, and planning** are words that have been in the working vocabulary of institutions of higher education for several decades, but only recently have they been recognized as highly significant factors in the successful day to day operation of an institution. Salve Regina University in Rhode Island has created a working model for institution-wide mission awareness through coordinated planning and integration into the academic curriculum and student life. The University has established a well developed dynamic mission integration plan. This paper presents a viable model of the mercy mission as it is reflected in our pedagogy and curriculum.

I think it is helpful to have a visual image of how the model works, and I have chosen to focus on the concept of a sailboat. I'm not an expert on sailing, but since our University is situated on the Atlantic Ocean and has a first class sailing team, and since this paper addresses the concept of water as element, I think a sailboat is an appropriate image. The basic components of a sailboat are the hull, the sails, and the lines or ropes. And in order to sail you need a competent crew.

By analogy, the University mission is the hull, the foundation that lends stability to the process. The goals and initiatives of the strategic plan are the sails and lines that direct the boat and keep it on course. The competent crew is the faculty, staff, and administrators.

I will begin my presentation with the mission, then describe how the strategic plan flows from the mission and charts the direction of the University.

## THE MISSION:

The carrying on and reinforcement of our individual institutional missions is of vital concern. *Mission* cannot be just the latest buzz word, it must be the basis of purpose and motivation. Clearly, it is not enough to only articulate the mission; the sense of mission must be vibrantly alive and lived with conviction and sincerity throughout the institution. In other words, mission must be the driving force of the institution.

Salve Regina is a Catholic liberal arts university numbering approximately 2,500 students; it is a young university founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1947. Its 65-acre campus is located on rugged cliffs overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, and many of its buildings are restored or preserved mansions or outbuildings; however, the beauty of the campus, although outstanding, does not surpass the spirit of mercy that pervades the University community.

During the early years of the institution, Sisters of Mercy were administrators, faculty members, and staff, and their presence on campus emphatically personified the aims and mission of the institution. They were the role models and mentors for the practice of mercy, compassion, and justice. As the University grew, student population increased, the curriculum underwent many changes, and the physical campus expanded. During this period of institutional growth, the number of religious on campus began to decline due to diminished vocations. This situation reinforced the need for intense,

focused education for lay faculty and staff regarding the University mission and it became one of the first undertakings of the current president.

A Mission Committee was formed to assess the mission effectiveness of the academic and co-curricular programs. For a period of two years, the committee conducted workshops and focus groups that engaged all faculty, staff, and board members in examining how their specific goals and objectives should relate to the mission. At the culmination of this period, the University community made a conscious decision to reframe the mission statement, which reads as follows:

***As an academic community that welcomes people of all beliefs Salve Regina University, a Catholic institution founded by the Sisters of Mercy, seeks wisdom and promotes universal justice. The University, through teaching and research, prepares men and women for responsible lives by imparting and expanding knowledge, developing skills and cultivating enduring values. Through liberal arts and professional programs, students develop their abilities for thinking clearly and creatively, enhance their capacity for sound judgment, and prepare for the challenge of learning throughout their lives. In keeping with the traditions of the Sisters of Mercy, and recognizing that all people are stewards of God's creation, the University encourages students to work for a world that is harmonious, just and merciful.***

The challenge of transcending the printed page and making the mission statement a vital part of the University was addressed in several ways. Faculty, students, and staff would have to make the words of the mission part of their daily thinking so that the action required by the mission could become a vibrant part of their lives. To encourage this, the President commissioned an artist to design a calligraphic manuscript of the mission statement which, when framed, was prominently displayed in the Gilded Age administrative building, Ochre Court. Smaller copies of the manuscript were framed and hung in each of the University buildings, and desk sized manuscript copies were distributed to faculty and staff. To encourage ongoing dialogue regarding the mission, these small copies of the mission are distributed regularly to all new members of the University community during their initial Mission Orientation program.

The Mission Committee then worked with faculty, staff, students, and board members to develop a mission integration statement for each group. These statements represented practical ways in which the respective groups could integrate the mission in their area. Both the mission and the mission integration statements are assessed annually.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING:**

Integrating the mission with institutional planning, academic curriculum, and student life is not easy, and it is far from a quick fix. Integration evolves through time, cooperation, and hard work. It takes faith in the process and faith in the result. Above all, it takes the willingness to accept change. The best way to bring about change is by consensus, which is often painfully slow but it engenders commitment and ownership. Consensus is facilitated by process and through institutional-wide involvement. Process demands trust. Trusting the wisdom of all brings out the energies of all.

Planning would not be a new endeavor at the University. Since its founding, the Sisters of Mercy had chartered the University's course in a careful, thoughtful way, but during the recent decade, issues related to higher education have increased in complexity and gravity. The University undertook the development of a longer-term plan for its future with a worldview in mind. In 1998, a planning consultant was retained to coordinate the initial strategic planning process. I served as the internal planning coordinator.

During this time, administrators and faculty participated in planning workshops to develop short-term institutional goals and strategies. Throughout these planning sessions, the mission of the University served as the frame of reference and would continue to do so as the planning process evolved.

The first University-wide planning document contained seven institutional goals and over 40 strategic initiatives. This was too much, even for administrators. We had to work more collaboratively on goals and strategic initiatives.

During this time I was appointed to the newly created administrative position of Vice President for Mission Integration and Planning. One of my duties is to assure that planning initiatives are consistent with the mission.

To this end, I assisted all departments of the University as they worked on the strategic planning process. By 2002, the University had a far more integrated three-year plan with three goals and 11 strategic initiatives. The goals are:

- **Create a vibrant learning community that generates new standards of academic excellence and is charged with intellectual challenge, diversity of thought and centrality of purpose.**
- **Witness the core value of mercy through an institutional commitment to the service of others.**
- **Maintain a program of effective stewardship and enhancement of institutional resources.**

To return to our image of the sailboat, these three goals can be compared to the mainsail, the headsail, and the spinnaker. The crew uses each of these sails to propel the boat and keep it on course. In a similar manner, the University community sets its direction for the future under these three goals.

The alignment of the goals with the mission reinforces that, in strategic planning, which is the process by which we envision our future and develop operations to achieve the future, we are perpetuating the mission, the central purpose for the existence of the institution.

I've selected one or two strategic initiatives for each goal to give you an idea of how the plan works. The strategic initiatives are the lines or ropes that are used to operate the sails or, in our case, the goals. One initiative supporting the first goal of the vibrant learning community, our mainsail, was to design a new four-year core curriculum that would put a distinctive stamp on each student's educational experience. Faculty created a core curriculum centered on goals that establish a deliberate and thorough integration of the University mission throughout many academic disciplines. The global scale of the core curriculum is centered in the mission injunction to "... work for a world that is harmonious, just and merciful." Assessment of the learning goals and objectives is a culminating component of each of the core curriculum courses.

As a result of this innovation, the University was selected as one of ten universities nationwide to participate in the Integrative Learning Project, sponsored jointly by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the Carnegie Foundation. Through this project, the University developed an e-portfolio writing assessment tool that students use to assess the goals of the core curriculum. In the development of the goals and objectives of the core curriculum a concerted effort was made to integrate the values of the mission statement. This deliberate integration of mission is reflected in many different ways throughout the University.

As the final year of phase I of the strategic plan approached, it was evident that the University would achieve most of the objectives set through the strategic initiatives. The President and members of the University took pride in acknowledging this initial success.

The next phase of the planning process, which is in effect from 2005 to 2010, was undertaken with even greater enthusiasm and expectation. Many of the strategic initiatives in this phase were derived from the completion of previous initiatives. For example, a logical follow up to the electronic portfolio assessment was a strategy to create a wireless campus which led to having all incoming students purchase a prescribed laptop to use for enhancing their learning process. Workshops from basic training through advanced techniques were offered to faculty and students to ensure optimal use of technology in learning and assessment. Mission effectiveness is measured through the achievement of the core curriculum goals.

I compare the second goal of witnessing the core value of Mercy to the spinnaker sail. This sail, which is a balloon shape, is often very decorative and distinguishes one boat from another. It also maintains direction and grabs the wind, allowing the boat to be faster and surer. In a similar manner, our goal of Mercy not only ensures our direction but it sets us apart from most other Catholic liberal arts colleges.

Pope John Paul II states in his encyclical, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, that an essential characteristic of a Catholic university is that there must be “*Christian inspiration not only of individuals but also of the university community.*” The document continues, “*This Christian inspiration of the whole requires a community life on campus that is marked by mutual courtesy, respect and caring for one another.*” These directives mirror the goal and spirit of Mercy promoted on the University campus.

One of the planning initiatives addressing this goal is the Salve Regina University Collegium, a 24-hour retreat designed by faculty for faculty to discuss topics such as Catholic identity, Mercy spirituality, Catholic social teaching, and community building. The Collegium is modeled on the national Collegium program which fosters lay leadership and responsibility for the religious mission and identity of Catholic colleges and universities.” Approximately 40 percent of full-time faculty members have participated in the SRU Collegium. There is also a one-day condensed version of the Collegium for staff. Collegium events are followed by regular luncheon gatherings where staff and faculty strengthen their understanding of Catholic social teaching and share with one another their success in promoting the mission.

Another strategy supporting the Mercy goal was initiated by the Mission Committee. For several years committee members have invited faculty from various academic disciplines to discern how the respective disciplines enable students to work toward the goal of a merciful world. Cognizant that each discipline makes specific contributions to the life of the University and the larger world, faculty reflected on how Mercy is understood and realized in different disciplines. By appreciating that each discipline offers a unique way of perceiving the world, analyzing problems, and developing solutions, faculty undertook the challenge to examine the practical impact the disciplines can make in addressing the need for Mercy in the world. During the 60th anniversary of the University next year, faculty will host and participate in a University-wide symposium that focuses on Mercy.

The third and final goal of the strategic plan addresses effective stewardship and enhancement of institutional resources. I think of it as the headsail. This goal guides fiscal responsibility and provides enrichment opportunities for faculty, staff, and students. One of the strategic initiatives for this goal calls for increased funding for faculty who are actively engaged in personal and professional



development. Toward this end the University allocates funding annually for all faculty members seeking funds to attend conferences or seminars and for other professional needs. Faculty may also apply for a Presidential Award which results in one to three course reductions for a semester to develop an academic project.

The Sister M. Therese Antone Fund for Academic Excellence encourages the development of new teaching techniques, community service projects, innovative curriculum development, and activities that encourage student scholarship. Several grants ranging from \$3,000 to \$5,000 are awarded each year to recognize faculty achievement in these areas. Two sabbaticals are also offered each year.

There are numerous enrichment opportunities provided for students through student life initiatives. The Student Activities Funding Board for club activities and special events is maintained and coordinated by students. Student life has created an integrated four-year co-curricular program that enables students to develop intellectually, spiritually, physically and socially. Each area in student life has developed a three-year plan with initiatives that support the University mission.

A human resource initiative supporting stewardship focuses on maintaining and actively promoting an integrated wellness program for the University community. Following the guidelines set forth by the Well Workplace Council of America, the University was named a Bronze Well Workplace in 2005. The human resource office provides programming that addresses work-life balance and health concerns as well as spiritual opportunities. They are going for silver next year!

Effective stewardship demands fiscal responsibility and the University has made great strides in that direction. For the past 10 years there has been a balanced budget and the endowment has increased 40 times over.

In summary, then, over a period of 10 years the University sharpened its focus by examining and reframing its mission statement through dialogue among the entire University community. A position was created to address mission, mission integration, and planning. A process was defined and implemented, with the mission as guide that enabled faculty, staff, and administrators to design evolving plans for the future of the University.

Each January a mid-year assessment of the strategic plan is sent to every department. Persons responsible for the plan indicate whether the action steps are completed, in progress, or if other considerations have evolved. In addition, each year in April, an updated three-year plan is submitted to the President.

This is, in essence, the place where our competent crew, faculty, staff, and administrators, review and assess the current direction of the University. Their task is to continue on course or to make corrections depending on the circumstances. This is strategic planning, a dynamic, living, evolving process that has breathed new life into Salve Regina University. We have set our sails in a direction that will help us chart our future.

Through this process we not only consider what we hope to be for the future but also how best to insure that our mission and vision continue to be effective for all future students. Lay faculty and administrators have gleaned new insights regarding the mission and are more committed to its values and ideals. Mission integration is part of every discussion relating to the advancement of institutional goals. In this way the traditions of the Sisters of Mercy and the mission of the University should live on for many years to come.

## The Flow of Water

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In a 100-year period, a water molecule spends 98 years in the ocean, 20 months as ice, about two weeks in lakes and rivers, and less than a week in the atmosphere.

The flowing, transforming nature of water evoked reflections on valuing identity and agility responding to student diversity. How are we spending our time? How is the Mercy mission reflected in what we do as educators?

In this section, *Alex Mikulich, PhD, Lois Eveleth, PhD, Mary Onufer, MS, Martha Howland Ezzell, PhD, Mary Montminy-Danna, PhD, and Daniel P. Sheridan, PhD*, bring a variety of approaches to the discussion of how the Catholic/Mercy tradition flows through, refreshes, and transforms our daily endeavors to honor this heritage.

## Toward the Transformative Wisdom of Mercy: Living in-between the Gift of Mercy and the Task of Protest White Privilege

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ALEX MIKULICH, PhD, ST. JOSEPH COLLEGE

*“God’s gracious and compassionate Mercy is the wellspring, the source of never failing supply, for all those who cherish and seek to live out the gift of Mercy.”<sup>1</sup>*

How should white theologians and scholars located at U.S. Mercy institutions relate the gift of mercy to the task of addressing white privilege and racism? The question poses a thorny problem for white theologians and scholars at U.S. Mercy institutions. If white scholars evade white privilege we perpetuate the dynamics of racial oppression that deny God’s mercy at the heart of the Gospel. Yet acknowledging the reality of our complicity in white privilege will be no easy task, for it entails unmasking our own bias, facing the terror that people of color experience in whites, and dismantling our white privilege. I argue that the condition of the possibility of white theologians and scholars addressing our privilege authentically will entail living a tension between passionate contemplation of God’s gift of mercy, on one hand, and practical protest of white privilege on the other.

Living the gift of transformative mercy, I argue, entails seeing ourselves as people of color see us, and drawing upon this tensive, transforming consciousness to protest the oppression of white privilege. The need for white scholars to enter a journey fraught with tension between the gift of mercy and the task of protesting our privilege, may be more necessary today because the evil of our racial ignorance and arrogance continue to terrorize and kill people of color.

As one who systematically benefits from white male privilege and racism, I wonder, deep within my soul, how we white Americans gathered at this Mercy conference can even attempt to live the subversive mercy of Jesus at the heart of the Gospel.<sup>2</sup> Yet, given the contemporary social, moral, psychological, and spiritual deformity described by M. Shawn Copeland, Robert Doran, Morris Berman, and Cornel West, among others, how can we *not* humbly cry out for God’s mercy to rain upon us?<sup>3</sup>

In this societal context of moral and spiritual decline, M. Shawn Copeland insists with Gustavo Gutierrez that theology is always a second step to the life of faith. As theologians, we must plant ourselves “in the terrain of spirituality and practice.”<sup>4</sup> The theologian’s ultimate commitment can never be to any institution or structure, person, or group, “but only to the God of Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup> The prophetic praxis of Jesus “demonstrates the risk and meaning of a life lived in prayerful hope.”<sup>6</sup> Prayer that directs us to the prophetic praxis of Jesus passionately reaches for, risks, and launches us into a lifelong journey where we may discover and yet be transformed into the Divine Unknown—“the only future worth hoping for and having.”<sup>7</sup>

This spirituality reorients us to a transformative way of being in the world. It nurtures us in prayerful “silence, stillness, attention, [and] reverence” before God as it interrupts all forms of pettiness, selfishness, smug knowledge, and illegitimate power. Our present crossroads of social decline demands nurturing ourselves in silent, still, attentive, and reverent love of God. Copeland calls us in this wellspring of loving prayer to respond to Jesus’ invitation to “come and see,”<sup>8</sup> to listen to others in their

particularity, to learn from others in their wisdom, to live authentically in the graced presence of all others where we may yet glimpse the fullness of life God intends for all. This passionate way of prayer and being in the world reveals the love of Jesus, of self, others, and the whole of God's creation in the praxis of mercy.

If we dare seek authentic human liberation from white privilege and oppression, white Americans of faith need to enact collectively a tension between a deeply contemplative orientation to God's mercy and radical protest against white racism. By contemplative orientation, I suggest Constance Fitzgerald's faithful, humble cry of the mystic who, in the midst of societal-spiritual decline and emptiness, is

*Everywhere crying out to God...a great cry of desire for life, freedom, resurrection, a cry to the God of life who brings liberation out of every type of death, a cry for new vision, a cry for contemplative vision.*<sup>9</sup>

Fitzgerald's practice of contemplation invites people of faith to open ourselves to our vulnerability, to our loss of meaning and empty imagination in the midst of societal moral and spiritual decline. The child who dies of HIV/AIDS in Uganda, the child who is murdered on the streets in the North End of Hartford, the mothers and children who are murdered in Darfur, and people who die everywhere because of poverty reveal to affluent American whites our own violence and how our desires daily deny the mercy of Jesus. Our—North American whites—unlimited desire for more comfort and pleasure, our insatiable desire to possess the world's wealth and natural resources as our own, reveal our deadly combination of privileged arrogance and ignorance. Those who die before their time due to war, genocide, starvation, AIDS, drugs, and U.S. urban violence reveal our loss of humanity and mercy.

In a context in which whites systematically benefit from a U.S. enforced, global, capitalist order that kills disproportionately people of colors here and throughout the world, do we count our success as a "blessing" from God? Fitzgerald's contemplative practice invites whites to acknowledge how our way of living is idolatrous, as we set our self-reliant humanity as an alternative to God. Wondrous technological achievements fail to assuage our possessive individualism, fail to end extreme poverty, fail to cultivate life-giving connections between over-affluent and poor peoples of the earth, and fail to nurture our universal rootedness in the earth's ecosystems. Technological prowess and competition in nuclear weaponry, and multiple capitalist practices that wreak ecological devastation threaten the very existence of the planet. Left to our own idolatry, the result is more of the same—insatiable consumer desire, increasing cynicism, and the "presumptive" resort to violence as the solution to conflict.

Precisely at this point of "deadendedness," abandonment, and emptiness, Constance Fitzgerald wonders if God might be preparing us to experience transformed desire, personally and collectively, for new vision, mercy, courage, and hope that renews life across the face of the earth. The miracle in the midst of this emptiness, writes Fitzgerald, is that contemplative cries from people and the earth itself are "no longer silent and invisible, but rather prophetic and revolutionary."<sup>10</sup> If we attend and listen to the groans of mercy within ourselves, from peoples everywhere, and the earth, we may yet hear the cry of new life and creation. When will we groan with all peoples and the earth for God?

A contemplative cry for mercy invites transformative, divine Wisdom and protest. By protest I mean that whites collectively embody a lifelong baptism to exorcise white racism in the academy, church, and society. Such a baptism, Jim Perkinson explains, would entail whites experiencing the "terror and loss—of position, of privilege, of power, of identity—as precursor to a new identity, new position, new vulnerability." In short, embodying lifelong baptism will entail a reverse minoritization which

*Can only be accomplished as a “grace from without,” undertaken as a process of initiation (“baptism”)—economically, politically, socially, culturally, spiritually—back into communion with the other whose economic exploitation and social rejection constituted the consolidation of white identity in the first place. That passage can only be accomplished through “passing through” the “black” experience of the other—yes, through study and meditation and self-examination, but even more importantly, through encounter in situations where those others have majority power and whiteness can thus begin to be experienced as the minority identity it really is globally and owned as the mythology of supremacy that the majority has rightly grown to hate.<sup>11</sup>*

However, any summons to practice subversive mercy, including Perkinson’s call for baptism, presents whites with a problem. I find it curious that whites have failed to respond to Dr. Martin Luther King’s call “to re-educate themselves out of their racial ignorance. It is an aspect of their sense of superiority that the white people of America believe that they have so little to learn.”<sup>12</sup> While multicultural programs abound, how many Mercy institutions have made a major effort to address white ignorance? Whites are the only racial group who, if we wonder about race at all, “spend more time wondering about the implications of race for other groups than [we do] for [ourselves].”<sup>13</sup>

Whites tend to embody an epistemology—a hermetically sealed way of knowing and being in the world—that consciously and unconsciously ignores, evades, or rationalizes our perverse “psycho-social-spiritual-political pathology” of white racism. The “gratuitous inheritance” of white privilege is our presumed innocence, our smug bodily passivity that “bears no demand” to right the violence we perpetuate.<sup>14</sup> Our way of living, even our worship<sup>15</sup> within the U.S. empire, bespeaks an ignorance of our need for baptism into the terror that peoples of colors endure everyday.

In other words, if we whites live in the United States without radical protest of our privilege, we stand as bystanders, complicit in what Jim Perkinson describes as:

*a globalizing regime that continues to mobilize and impose markers of darkness for the sake of an accumulation of resources and rights on the lighter side of the racial divide. But that divide is largely invisible today from inside the institutional domains of white pleasantness.... On the other side the invisibility casts a shadow that is irreducibly physical[—]all the indices of the continuing difference darkness “makes” have their real purchase on the body, not the imagination.<sup>16</sup>*

Consider how these indices physically mark racial inequality:

- The average black male dies in the United States at the age of 64.3 years old, often of stress related diseases—before receiving a single dollar in social security. By contrast, white males generally live beyond age 74. The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies finds that racial and ethnic minority patients receive a lower quality and intensity of health care and diagnostic services across a wide range of procedures and disease areas. [Minority patients] procure the worse outcomes in many cases.<sup>17</sup>
- Poverty rates for blacks and Latinos are almost three times the poverty rate of whites (7.8 percent white; 22.7 percent African American; 21.4 percent Latino).
- Long-term poverty is rare for whites—fewer than 1 percent are poor for 10 years or more, but common among black children, 29 percent of whom are poor for 10 years or more.
- One in three poor black children are still poor at age 25 to 27 compared to one in 14 for whites.



- The incarceration rate for blacks is nearly seven times higher than for whites. The United States has an overall incarceration rate of 715 prisoners per 100,000 civilians. Whereas 990 white males are incarcerated per 100,000 civilians, 4,834 black men are incarcerated per 100,000 civilians. In the last year of apartheid, South Africa imprisoned 851 black males per 100,000 civilians.<sup>18</sup>
- Blacks constitute only 14 percent of all drug users nationally, but they account for 35 percent of all drug arrests, 55 percent of all drug convictions, and 75 percent of all prison admissions for drug offenses.<sup>19</sup>
- The racial proportions for people under some kind of correctional supervision, including parole and probation, are one in 15 for young white males, one in 10 for young Latino males, and one in three for young black males.
- Blacks make 75 cents on the dollar on average for the same work as whites.
- White median wealth is 10 times greater than for blacks.
- Mortgage lending practices reward white bodies with twice the credit tab on average as for blacks.
- The “shadow banking” credit industry steers more than \$300 billion per year out of impoverished neighborhoods of color up into Fortune 500 companies (if we follow the paper trail).<sup>20</sup>

“My white wherewithal,” writes Jim Perkinson, “is constituted in Afro- (as indeed Latino- and Filipino-, and aboriginal-, etc.) American impoverishment. Their loss is my gain. The relationship is utterly asymmetrical and the asymmetry is utterly relational.”

Why does this massive social suffering elicit no collective cry to God from whites? Why no collective mourning with peoples of colors? Why no collective white protest against these pervasive injustices?

Our white silence, our white bodily pleasantness in the face of social suffering, our complicity finds its roots in the very founding of the nation. Whites need to remember that our wherewithal stands the fact of the contradiction between the claim to equality in the Declaration of Independence and the practices of slavery and the genocide of the First Peoples of the Americas, the terrorism upon which this nation was built. As James Baldwin puts in *The Fire Next Time*, “White Americans are trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, [they] cannot be released from it.”<sup>22</sup>

How could an insouciant whiteness reverse the modern gaze of supremacy?<sup>23</sup> The question of a reverse minoritization is ludicrous unless whites view ourselves from the perspective of black “double-consciousness.” W.E.B. DuBois describes the experience of black double-consciousness as always feeling

*his two-ness, an—American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.*<sup>24</sup>

This “doubling,” this war, reverts back to its source: whiteness. Perkinson argues that whites must look into the mirror of black double-consciousness and see the “ugly human” experienced by DuBois.<sup>25</sup> For DuBois, the gaze of white supremacy is an affliction that leaves the Negro with no “self-consciousness”—only an experience of having to see oneself in the mirror of white seeing. DuBois describes this white way of looking at the Negro as a seeing that enjoys amusement, contempt, and perhaps pity, but it is always a *looking down* that leaves Negroes with a bodily experience and feeling of

“agonizing—and competing—intensities.”<sup>26</sup> White voyeurism is not merely a gaze—if it were only that!—it is a perpetual discovery that white bodies, powers, and eyes “cannot be kept entirely outside one’s flesh.”<sup>27</sup>

DuBois writes a history of how this war has left Negroes with “powers wasted” and “genius dispersed.” Whites need to see Malcolm X’s insight that whiteness is demonic as a system, or as DuBois put it, “‘*whiteness is the ownership of the earth* forever and ever, Amen!’”<sup>28</sup> Looking into the mirror of double-consciousness demands an “encounter [by whites] with *whiteness as terror* in the mirror of blackface” that “sets the necessary tone for all the necessary work that must be done in exorcising supremacy, confessing history, and remaking community.”<sup>29</sup>

A reverse minoritization means facing whiteness as the “demon in the eye of theology, what looks out from that eye, as it devours the world in its rapacious organizing gaze.”<sup>30</sup> White practices in which we see ourselves as peoples of color see us constitutes a condition of the possibility of practicing the depth of Jesus’ mercy—a compassionate way of feeling and being with another in suffering. Ultimately, a merciful path of whiteness into black double-consciousness is redemptive, because “white anxiety will find its release only in facing the terror from which “whiteness” itself has arisen in the first place.”<sup>31</sup> In M. Shawn Copeland’s words, white privilege is the “beam in the eye of our global village” that “poses a most dangerous threat to [the] realization of the body of Christ, to the reign of God.”<sup>32</sup>

I believe an authentic white practice of Jesus’ mercy requires four intersecting spiritual and political practices: (1) obtain some form of bodily baptism and reverse minoritization into the reality of terror that peoples of colors face daily; (2) practice economic fasting, “real material contraction” that “pursues equal circulation of assets, opportunities, and power that will simultaneously be experienced as real loss”<sup>33</sup>; (3) mourn communally, in the way M. Shawn Copeland and Emilie Townes invite as a form of passionate prayer and justice for what is “unjust in the here and now.”<sup>34</sup> And (4) enact imaginative forms of solidarity and political community that prioritize the voices and perspectives of peoples of colors and that “cannot be birthed without [whites] experiencing real loss in relationship to the status quo.”<sup>35</sup>

How will we resist the evil of white privilege that lures us each day to deny Christ’s merciful presence in our black, brown, yellow, and red brothers and sisters? When will we take up the mystical and prophetic cry of mercy? When will we whites ache for repentance from God and our brothers and sisters of color? When will we protest for deliverance from our evil? When will we learn from our African American brothers and sisters to live with “subversive joy and patience”?<sup>36</sup>

In all humility, prayer, and fasting may we discern God’s abundant mercy for all creation and humanity. May we become vulnerable and recognize our need for all others. May we learn new ways to practice our fundamental humanity in mercy, our shared vulnerability and sociality, in cooperation with all peoples and forms of life throughout the global biosphere. May we beg God to hunger, thirst, and entrust ourselves to the mercy and well-being of all others.

Dare we enact, personally and collectively, a way of contemplative mercy and protest of our white racism? Do we dare to hear the groans of God’s mercy within us and all around us? Do we dare practice Jesus’ subversive mercy “on earth as it is in heaven”?<sup>37</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Mercy International Association, "Visioning Statement 2006" retrieved November 14, 2006; available from <http://www.mercyworld.org/projects/index.asp>.
- <sup>2</sup> Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), pp. 48–62. Borg explains that Jesus' Hebrew word for mercy evokes the vision of a mother's womb that conveys both the feeling of compassion and a way of acting compassionate with others in the world. Jesus' practice of mercy subverts the oppressive, dominant system.
- <sup>3</sup> M. Shawn Copeland, "Presidential Address: Political Theology as Interruptive," *The Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings of the Fifty-Ninth Annual Convention*, Vol. 59, 2004. p. 71–82; Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Morris Berman, *Dark Ages America: The Final Phase of Empire*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006); and Cornel West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*. (New York: Penguin, 2005).
- <sup>4</sup> M. Shawn Copeland, "Racism and the Vocation of the Christian Theologian," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* Vol. 2, No. 1: 26. She quotes Gustavo Gutierrez, *On Job: God-talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* trans. Matthew O'Connell (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), p. xiii.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid. Copeland cites John 1:39.
- <sup>9</sup> Constance Fitzgerald, OCD, "The Desire for God and the Transformative Power of Contemplation," in Mary Heather MacKinnon, Moni McIntyre, and Mary Ellen Sheehan, ed., *Light Burdens, Heavy Blessings: Challenges of Church and Culture in a Post Vatican II Era*. (Quincy, Illinois: Franciscan Press, 2000): pp. 203–222, here 208.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., Fitzgerald, "The Desire for God," p.208.
- <sup>11</sup> James W. Perkinson, *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity*. (New York: Palgrave, 2004), p.215.
- <sup>12</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?," in James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1986), p.561.
- <sup>13</sup> Janet Helms, *A Race is a Nice Thing to Have: A Guide to Being a White Person or Understanding the White Persons in Your Life*. (Framingham, MA: Content Communications, 1992), i.
- <sup>14</sup> Jim Perkinson, *Shamanism, Racism, and Hip Hop Culture: Essays on White Supremacy and Black Subversion*. (New York: Palgrave, 2005), p.194.
- <sup>15</sup> Bruce T. Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000), pp. 5–16.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., Perkinson, *White Theology*, p.14.
- <sup>17</sup> Brian D. Smedley, Adrienne Y. Stith, and Alan R. Nelson, ed., *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*. (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2003), pp.5–6 and 77–79.
- <sup>18</sup> Jens Soering, *The Convict Christ: What the Gospel Says About Criminal Justice*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), pp.12 and 92.
- <sup>19</sup> Joe Pettit, "The Persistence of Injustice" *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*: Vol. 25, No. 1: p.201.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., Pettit, p.201.
- <sup>21</sup> Perkinson, *White Theology*, p.15.
- <sup>22</sup> James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*. (New York: Vintage International 1993), p.8.
- <sup>23</sup> This question and the discussion of double-consciousness is drawn from my "(Un)Learning White Male Ignorance," in Laurie M. Cassidy and Alex Mikulich, ed., *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2007), p.170. I am indebted to James W. Perkinson's shamanic rendering of DuBois' "double-seeing."
- <sup>24</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*. (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003), p 9.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., DuBois' phrase in *Darkwater*, quoted by Perkinson, *White Theology*, p. 97.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., Perkinson, *White Theology*, p.96.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid, Perkinson, *Shamanism*, p. 192.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., DuBois' *Darkwater* quoted by Perkinson, *White Theology*, p.97 and 192.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., Perkinson, *White Theology*, p.117–118.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., Perkinson, *White Theology*, p.193.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., Perkinson, *White Theology*, p.75.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., Copeland, "Racism and the Vocation," p.21.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., Perkinson, *White Theology*, p. 234.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., M. Shawn Copeland, "Presidential Address: Political Theology as Interruptive," p.82.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., Perkinson, *White Theology*, p.234.
- <sup>36</sup> Cornel West describes African America subversive joy: "The radically comic character of Afro-American life—the pervasive sense of play, laughter and ingenious humor of blacks—flows primarily from the profound Afro-American preoccupation in the struggle for freedom and the freedom in tragic predicament. This comic release is the black groan made gay. Yet this release is neither escapist nor quietistic. Rather, it is *engaged gaiety, subversive joy and revolutionary patience*, which works for and looks to the kingdom to come. It is utopian in that it breeds defiant dissatisfaction with the present and encourages action. It is tragic in that it tempers exorbitant expectations. This perspective precludes political disillusionment and its product, misanthropic nihilism." "Subversive Joy and Revolutionary Patience in Black Christianity," in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), p.439.
- <sup>37</sup> This paragraph is adapted from my editor's notes, *Religious Socialism: The Journal for People of Faith and Socialism*, Vol 26, Issue 4, pp.2–3.

## Salve Regina University: A Legacy of Mercy

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*What we have loved,  
Others will love,  
And we will teach them how.*

—William Wordsworth, “The Prelude”

According to some early accounts, the emperor Justinian, sometime between 527 and 529, shut down Plato’s Academy, the first university in Western civilization. Justinian was a Christian emperor, so we read, and he closed down the Academy in a general climate of paranoia and fear of ‘pagan’ teachings. Since the Academy had been in existence for about nine hundred years, it had already had ample time to corrupt Western civilization, had corruption been its purpose. But Justinian seems not to have cottoned on to that fact, or to the ample use of Platonic thought by Church fathers. This was not Christianity’s finest hour, nor Justinian’s. This blow to higher education and to the pursuit of wisdom and virtue was an inauspicious beginning to a history of higher education. Moreover, it was a blow to any Christian optimism that faith and reason should enhance each other; it was a sad and embarrassing precedent. But, part of the reason that we are gathered here now is due, in part, to the historical fact that Christianity more than made up for Justinian’s tragic mistake. The great medieval universities are living tribute to the commitment of Christianity to higher education, a commitment that emerged, as Pope John Paul II would write centuries later, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and abides even now.

Standing in that tradition, Salve Regina University is located in Newport, Rhode Island, about 3,000 miles and 165 years from Catherine McAuley. Any innocent bystander might well wonder how and why a philosophy professor from Salve Regina should be speaking about the Mercy tradition. The short answer is ‘legacy;’ the ideas and values of Catherine McAuley make up a goodly portion of our legacy, one that still inspires, motivates, and is essential to our identity and mission. In a large nation that has more colleges and universities than anyone cares to count, and where approximately 235 of them are self-declared Catholic institutions, her worldview, especially her heartfelt concern for those in need, distinguishes any institution that shares that concern.

Having a legacy is having a past that matters to you. If this past has emerged from the heart of the Church, it has emerged also from the heart of Catherine McAuley. That we should be able to comprehend all at once and clearly the past that we have inherited, the past that has shaped us, is, however, doubtful. Rather, our understanding and insight come gradually, not only because we are human and often distracted and forgetful of the past, but also because the heritage itself undergoes some changes. All human and living entities must change. So it is with a legacy. It is contextually defined, in that it must derive some of its traits from the time, place, and circumstances of each embodiment, even while the cultural landscape keeps changing.<sup>1</sup> In reflecting on this legacy, I have two points to offer. First, I identify several key factors in American society, in the Church, and in higher education that influenced the translation of the ideals of the Sisters of Mercy. Then, I identify the newly established Core Curriculum at Salve Regina as one example of how the question of institutional mission and identity has been addressed in that translation.

To say that American Catholic colleges and universities were born of an immigrant church is to say that most Catholics were a subclass not yet integrated into the American mainstream and that they were objects of discrimination by a Protestant majority. This was true for the fairly small number of Catholic Americans in the colonial period, while the 13 colonies were part of the British realm. The anti-Catholicism of many of America's founding fathers is well known, despite their revolutionary stand of human rights. Even after the Revolution was won and some civil disabilities had been lifted from Catholics and other minorities, anti-Catholicism remained an impediment. Bishop John Carroll saw clearly the irony that liberty might coexist with prejudice, and his remedy, Georgetown College, established a precedent. Georgetown was the first Catholic institution of higher education in the United States, opened in 1789 for fostering an education that is both Catholic and American.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, American bishops took up and expanded the Georgetown precedent, for there was a clear need to serve both the intellectual and spiritual needs of American Catholics in the difficult American milieu. By 1850, 42 Catholic colleges had been founded, e.g. Fordham (1841), Notre Dame (1842), Villanova (1842).<sup>3</sup> Even while Catholics might matriculate at state or at protestant colleges, admission was generally considered undesirable to those unwilling to jeopardize their faith in a nativist climate.<sup>4</sup> A Catholic college could not be confused with a private Protestant college, one whose original intent was to train ministers and clergymen for its churches. Neither were Catholic colleges at all like public institutions, since the latter not only relied on tax support, but also were pervaded by the various protestantisms that dominated the American mainstream. In their early history, then, Catholic colleges were easily definable; they had no identity problem because they were defined by what they were *not*.

Having thus emerged as a separate presence, American Catholic colleges enjoyed an easy identity and cohesion, a unique condition whereby a persecuted minority was pressured into an inevitable unity. Virtually all students, faculty, administration, and staff in these institutions were Catholics. Catholic theology and Thomistic philosophy provided conceptual frameworks and vocabulary whose goal was an organic Catholic culture and whose quixotic task was a synthesis of all natural and supernatural truths. There was no discernible doubt that all truths, from whatever areas of expertise, would always be synthesized with revealed truth as found in Scripture and the magisterium. The full diversity of American life in general, and American intellectual life in particular, had not yet been grappled with, in this garden set apart from the hurly-burly that was America. Roman Catholic colleges were in good shape; there was no angst, no identity problem. Salve Regina University's early history is one instance of this first phase of the history of American Catholic higher education in these salad days of the preconiliar Church. I graduated from that early Salve Regina, and, in my present position on the faculty these many years later, am in a unique position to view the changes that have brought us to the present time and its questions.

The 1960s were the watershed. In increasing numbers American Catholics had become less distinguishable from their fellow Americans in the mainstream. Economic progress became social mobility, which, in turn, produced greater political influence. While earlier Catholics might have been content with the safety of self-imposed ghettos, an anti-ghetto sentiment was on the rise. Those who remember the presidential campaign of 1960 can recall the amazement felt by Catholics that fellow Americans might use John Kennedy's religion against him. This social assimilation assured Catholics that they were real Americans too, but the double edge to the sword was a new question, i.e., identity. As is true of any subgroup, how does a group assimilate fully and still retain its distinctiveness? If



Catholics were beginning a soul searching, they weren't alone. A national crisis of confidence erupted in the protests against the Vietnam War and on behalf of civil rights, protests that generated levels of public violence that most twentieth-century Americans had not experienced on home ground. This national scene was a backdrop to the self-questioning of Catholics. Even the official Catholic Church seemed to contribute to the soul searching. As far back as 1959, Pope John XXIII had called for an *aggiornamento*, and, by 1965, when Vatican II adjourned, documents such as *The Church in the Modern World* were disseminated. Nearly everything was being scrutinized, even at the doctrinal level, and much that formerly might have seemed fixed was modified or even rejected. The Church was being summoned out of whatever ghettos it enjoyed, out from the margins of life, and mandated to engage the modern world. Catholic colleges were now modernized, in institutional terms, but, as one historian writes, "...the ideological challenge presents itself more imperiously than ever. The task facing Catholic academics today is to forge...a theoretical rationale for the existence of Catholic colleges and universities as a distinctive element in American higher education."<sup>5</sup>

If Catholics were no longer a marginalized presence, neither could their colleges be. If such colleges, though, had formerly been identifiable by what they were *not*, how would they now be understood? How does a college assimilate with the broad swirl that is America and still maintain its identity?

In many important ways, Catholic colleges adjusted to standards that were dominant in the mainstream of higher education. They, too, had to receive a public charter. They, too, sought separate incorporation from founding orders and congregations. Accepting federal and state loans imposed obligations with which the first generation of Catholic colleges had not been burdened. One such obligation, a significant one, was acceptance of Affirmative Action. One of the by-products of the civil rights movement, this was a legal requirement whose practical outcome was its encouragement of diversity across the board, i.e., faculty, student body, staff, and administration. Faculty members were not hired because they were Catholic but because their graduate school education served the perceived needs of the institution. Hiring procedures and application forms might not even ask the religion of the applicant. The curricula were immediately affected. Thomistic and scholastic philosophy and theology had once been central, even exclusively dominant as the reigning conceptual framework of curriculum design. However, a new generation of faculty members, educated in graduate schools that did not even teach scholasticism, presaged a major overhaul not only of curriculum but also of any understanding of what actually constituted *Catholic thought or the Catholic intellectual tradition*. Furthermore, even if we could identify such a tradition, how could it permeate an institution? Coincidentally, as membership in religious congregations and orders declined at this time, fewer religious would be part of any college's administration, faculty, or staff; maintaining a Catholic identity would fall increasingly more to laymen, whether or not the latter were even Catholic.

It was at this juncture in time that Salve Regina returned metaphorically to Baggott Street, almost as if she were heeding the observation of T.S. Eliot in *Four Quartets*:

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

We faced the challenges of these years by returning to our spiritual origins. Neither the state university system nor the now-secularized Protestant universities were models. Where else was there to turn,

after all, in those unprecedented times? It meant a re-visiting and rearticulation of the values, style, and asceticism of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy. While these had always been present in a taken-for-granted way, they would have to be taken up in a more deliberate, self-conscious way.

This legacy does not mimic the past, not even if nostalgia presents it as a comfortable and triumphalist past. The structures of the past must not be embalmed, any more than Catherine McAuley was willing to embalm cloistered forms of religious life, or accept British educational traditions and British definitions of social justice. We do not embrace this legacy by restoring practices and strategies of former years, whether of nineteenth-century Ireland or early twentieth-century America, even if this were possible. Rather a postconciliar Catholic university, now in the mainstream, must adapt the principles or ideals of its past to present needs and circumstances. The colleges of the preconciliar Church are gone now, or should be.

Salve Regina began this work in a most deliberate way 12 years ago, under the leadership of our present president, Sister Therese Antone. Sister created a Mission Committee whose task was to compose a Mission Statement that reflects the various constituencies of the university. After two long years, after many meetings and discussions, and after, admittedly, a healthy level of debate, we had a Mission Statement. Discussed and disseminated consistently and vigorously, it serves us well.

It served especially in the preparation, design, and implementation of our new Core Curriculum. By “Core Curriculum” we mean a range of courses required of all undergraduates, regardless of their major fields. Long a staple in traditional education, general education requirements have been understood as a set of required courses whose purpose was the encouragement of a broad, liberal arts background. Seven years ago preparations for a new Core were underway, elaborate and intense efforts led by our Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Stephen Trainor. What was entirely new was the direct connection between the University’s Mission Statement and the Core. The Core has four goals that are derived directly from the Mission Statement. From these four goals are derived objectives for the courses that are offered in the Core. (Appendix) On-going assessment of all Core courses monitors the coherence between course objectives, Core goals, and University mission. The freshman class that entered in September 2003 and graduated on May 13, 2007 was the first class to complete the new Core. Dr. Trainor identifies four characteristics that typify a Catholic university and that are exemplified in our new Core Curriculum. These are: integration of faith and learning; a focus on teaching; a consistent attention to moral questions; and a thrust toward integrative learning and learning in community.<sup>6</sup>

I submit that these four characteristics are a twenty-first-century translation of the Mercy legacy. They are four ways of embodying this all-encompassing faith. I survey them here.

## **FAITH AND LEARNING**

A faith in Christ and His church is not confined to Christ and His church but is even more generic; it will also be a faith in larger realities, such as the perfectibility of a human being, a faith in the possibility of transforming both persons and nature, and a faith, especially, in justice. Who told us, after all, to have faith in justice? To be hopeful that humans can achieve justice? Where are there societies in history that achieved justice for all their citizens? Dreams of justice are a matter of faith. We must have faith not only in, for instance, the Trinity, but also in our visions of justice, whether for the workingwomen of nineteenth-century Dublin or the poor of the West Broadway area in Newport.

(Yes, there is poverty in Newport, in stark contrast to Newport's Gilded Age mansions.) Such faith will hold that humans themselves are a work in progress; it will be an optimism that people can be liberated from whatever chains, real or metaphorical, hold them back.

A Catholic intellectual tradition may or may not have any one trait that is absolutely distinctive and unprecedented. Nonsectarian colleges, after all, also urge their students to work for social justice; they too offer courses and establish internships in community agencies. We have no monopoly on social justice. With us, however, such commitments are not recent or trendy or politically correct. What is different, I suggest, is the willingness and determination to see every task, every subject, and every discipline through the lens of faith. Faith is not merely an assent to creedal statements; it is, rather a deliberate stand, a permeating optimism, an embrace of every iota of creation as God's own work. And we too say, with the Creator in *Genesis 1*, "It is good." We engage and apprehend this creation. We create knowledge of it—creating knowledge is surely part of our cosmic homework—and will someday, each in his or her own appointed time, bring this knowledge of creation with us when we return at last, citing Eliot again, to the point where we started and know the place for the first time.

## FOCUS ON TEACHING

If our faith has no influence on what goes on in university classrooms, laboratories, and studios, the university is not Catholic. The teaching is, or should be, pre-eminent, i.e., it should not only enjoy priority over research, without of course excluding it, but also be as excellent as the nobility of the university mission requires. The teachers are well named; they are *professors*. Professors are those who profess; they stand for something. They are not neutral disseminators of nothing in particular. A piece of great advice attributed to St. Francis of Assisi says in this regard, "Preach the Gospel always. If necessary, use words." If we take his advice, our teaching cannot be restricted to our words.

If we were to imitate the large, well-respected, well-endowed universities, especially those in the Ivy League, research would be more important than teaching is. We have not imitated them. Clearly, research is necessary. It both informs our teaching and follows from our teaching; classrooms filled with bright, wholesome young men and women are bound to be inspiring places. Our promotion and tenure criteria clearly require evidence of research. The research, though, is broadly defined and is respected most when it has some value and relevance to the classroom.

## MORAL QUESTIONS

Those who are part of a Catholic university will recognize moral questions and moral dimensions within complex issues. There is nothing neutral or one-dimensional about Catholic education. Nothing is really ever value free. On the contrary, everything that is important in human life is morally significant. For instance, an education in a Catholic university should lead the student to see the moral significance of social realities. We would like to think that graduates of a Catholic university know that realities like poverty, ignorance, lack of opportunity, maldistribution of resources, and powerlessness do have moral relevance. Such realities are not morally neutral; they are not inevitable and unavoidable by-products of social evolution. We would like to think that our graduates realize that people are responsible for their inaction as well as their action. If there are human causes to a problem, there will be human solutions. We hope that our graduates know all this.

## INTEGRATIVE LEARNING AND LEARNING IN COMMUNITY

A thrust toward integrative learning and learning in community is arguably the most countercultural characteristic of our Core Curriculum. Graduate schools sometimes seem to urge graduate students to know more and more about less and less. Increasing specialization within academic disciplines and in knowledge generally, though academically unavoidable and professionally inevitable, discourages both the ability to integrate one's insights and even the awareness that this integration is highly desirable. Given, too, the university's emphasis on an awareness of moral issues, any willingness and accomplishments in integration is a necessary condition of accomplishing such moral insight. Moral awareness itself requires integration. Traditionally, integrative learning was an optimism, most of the time, which resided only in the mind of faculty members, assisted occasionally by a coordinating seminar. Integration can no longer be left so casually to chance; the possibility of its accomplishment should be more deliberately maximized. Salve Regina organizes first-year students into what we call *learning communities*. Each group of 15 freshmen takes three of their freshman courses together: English 150 (*What It Means to Be Human*); GST 150 (*Seeking Wisdom*); and *Freshman Seminar*. A fairly small number of large themes overlap the GST 150 and English 150. GST 150 (*Seeking Wisdom*) uses texts in philosophy, religion and literature, thus deliberately encouraging integration. The *Freshman Seminar* has a substantial reading list; it is here that first-year students meet people like Catherine McAuley, Dorothy Day, and Pope Leo XIII. A senior seminar is also in place, called the *Capstone Experience*. Here, seniors are challenged to integrate their major field and their Core courses in an exploration of several large issues in the contemporary world. We have returned to the classical seminar tradition in a very deliberate way. We hope that each individual will achieve a personal integration of his/her experience at Salve Regina. Concurrently there should be a sense of cooperation in learning and in problem solving. Our hope is that we can offer a corrective to the exaggerated individualism outlined by observers like the sociologist Robert Bellah. Our optimism is that we are encouraging an ongoing conversation, even a dialectic, with the great ideas of our culture, history, and faith, as well as skills in listening, speaking, and community-building.

It has, of course, long been a pedagogical goal to encourage an integration or synthesis of knowledge. We do indeed foster an integrative learning, especially in the interdisciplinary courses in the Core, but there is a larger, even more urgent dimension to this task now. We seek to build bridges between academic discourse within the modern university, on the one hand, and Catholic or Christian intellectual traditions, on the other. A Catholic university cannot accept a ghetto existence but must take up seriously this task of bridge building, the work of integration. As our first-year students are grouped in small learning communities, they just may learn to place cooperation over competition. Of course this is one example of countercultural optimism; we're good at that. The vocabulary and ideals of individualism are a bit threadbare in our age, and a challenge is facing us all to don the garments of community and cooperation, both in academe and on Main Street.

Catherine McAuley represents, to us, optimism that education is a great liberating force in human experience. We share in her Catholic faith in the life of the mind and its congruence with the life of the spirit. We are unlike our colleagues in public institutions, where such questions as are raised here have seldom if ever been asked. Or, when they were asked, have been given trivial answers. If we have learned anything, though, from valiant women like Catherine McAuley and Frances Warde, we cannot take this route. Preserving the past is not the point so much as preparing to serve an expanding, diversifying future. We shall look back at the past carefully, thoughtfully, so as to re-appropriate and revitalize its soul. We do not embrace our legacy by a restoration of practices and

strategies from the first half of the twentieth century but by adapting the principles and ideals of that legacy. Mercy colleges and universities, I believe, have a mission to serve, to preserve. The vision embodied in its Catholic and Mercy character is the university's element of continuity, a vision that survives any of its long gone embodiments. The future is more important than the structures of the past, more interesting, and more amenable to the intervention, interest, service, love, and care of the community of Mercy colleges and universities.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> According to one recent study of Catholic higher education, "Culture in general, and organizational culture in particular, results from the interaction of actions and inheritance. Actions are the present choices people within a culture make...Inheritance is the operative context for actions that resulted from previous choices made." Melanie M. Morey and John J. Piderit, S.J., *Catholic Higher Education, A Culture in Crisis*, p.21.
- <sup>2</sup> There is some debate whether to consider Georgetown the first Catholic university in the United States, and a case may be made for giving Saint Mary's, Baltimore, that rank. Historical preference goes to Georgetown because Saint Mary's remained a seminary for the education of priests. For this discussion see Edward J. Power, *A History of Catholic Higher Education in the United States*, Ch. II.
- <sup>3</sup> Patricia Hutchison, "The Purposes of American Catholic Higher Education: Changes and Challenges," retrieved March 28, 2007; available from <http://home.comcast.net/~erozycki/Hutchison 708F01.html>.
- <sup>4</sup> The nativist climate is well documented in American history. See Gleason for a survey of the topic of assimilation of Roman Catholics.
- <sup>5</sup> Philip Gleason, *Contending with Modernity, Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.322.
- <sup>6</sup> Stephen Trainor, "A Delicate Balance: The Catholic College in America," *Change*, Vol.38, No.2: 14-21.

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## APPENDIX

### THE SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM:

#### A Program Designed for Developing Lifelong Learners and Responsible Citizens of the World

### STRUCTURE OF THE SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM

The Core Curriculum is comprised of the Common Core and the Core Complement. The Common Core is comprised of four common courses and the Capstone Experience that are to be taken by all undergraduate students. The remaining courses constitute the Core Complement, that is, elective options which are designed to supplement and support the Common Core while responding to the curricular needs and interests of the individual student.

#### The Common Core:

Portal Course	GST150: Portal: Seeking Wisdom
Literature	ENG150: What It Means to Be Human
Religious Studies	RST210: Christianity in Dialogue with World Religions
Philosophy	PHL220: Philosophy and Responsibility
Capstone Course	GST450: The Capstone Experience

#### The Core Complement:

Foreign Languages	6 Credits
Literature	3 Credits
Religious Studies	3 Credits
Mathematics	3 Credits
Natural Sciences	6 Credits
Social Sciences	9 Credits
Visual and Performing Arts	3 Credits

### PHILOSOPHY OF THE CORE CURRICULUM

Salve Regina University is committed to preparing our students for the future; that is, for a world that will continually change and yet remain constant in many ways. A crucially important way to prepare students for this changing world is by helping them discover that they can overcome these future challenges with a lifetime of learning and curiosity about the world.

The Salve Regina University Core Curriculum promotes a passion for lifelong learning through enthusiastic educational exchanges between learners and teachers, through a commitment to teaching, scholarship, and research, and through an insistence on high standards. The Core Curriculum provides readings and experiences designed to provoke the interest of students and to address large, general ideas and issues. The University itself provides a model for lifelong learning by being a vibrant learning community, a place where students and faculty engage in collaborative exchanges, the discussion of common texts and readings, and debates about the issues of our times.

The term responsible World Citizenship attempts to express, in three words, ideals found in the University's Mission Statement and in the heritage of the Sisters of Mercy: (1) the acquisition of wisdom and learning that leads to a better understanding of the world and its people and (2) the promotion of a universal justice that is inspired by Catholic values.

A responsible World Citizen is someone who understands and appreciates the diversity of the one human family that extends across the globe. A responsible World Citizen is concerned about the major issues, whether local, regional, national, or global, and keeps informed about them in order to debate them intelligently.

Every student will be encouraged to be a responsible World Citizen who is ready to take concrete action that will promote human dignity, social justice, and sustainable global development and is also ready to assume the responsibilities of a citizen in his or her nation.

## **PROGRAM GOALS FOR THE CORE CURRICULUM**

### **Goal 1– An Education with a Catholic Identity**

To encourage our students to seek wisdom and prudence and to promote mercy and universal justice by offering them a curriculum with a Catholic identity.

*Objectives: In order to reach this goal, students will be expected to:*

- understand the teachings of Jesus that give this University its compelling vision of a realm of peace and justice.
- demonstrate an awareness of the Catholic intellectual tradition and its distinctive contribution to liberal education at this University.
- know the life of Catherine McAuley and the Mercy mission as a prototype of world citizenship and Catholic identity.
- understand the enduring influence of the Bible and Jewish, Christian, and specifically Catholic symbols, stories, ideas, values, and practices.
- engage the Catholic religious tradition with other religious perspectives.
- evaluate their learning and actions from the perspective of Christian ethics.
- understand how to integrate faith, learning, and service as a means to enrich personal and community life.
- recognize the essential unity of all knowledge as both an intellectual and a religious principle through interdisciplinary study and thematic connections among discipline-based courses.
- cultivate attitudes and practices that reflect an abiding respect for the dignity of all persons and a commitment to social justice.

### **Goal 2 – Liberal Education**

To provide students with the kind of broad and broadening Liberal Arts education that will prepare them for a lifetime of developing their intellectual abilities, give them a moral foundation on which to build their learning, challenge them to strengthen their mental flexibility, introduce them to different

ways of encountering the realities in the world, and help them to advance in their careers or change their careers by giving them the confidence of knowing that they can learn new things.

*Objectives: In order to reach this goal, students will be expected to*

- engage in critical self-inquiry that promotes self-knowledge in order to develop (1) the ability to evaluate different opinions and beliefs, (2) a willingness to test one's point of view against others, (3) a willingness to recognize faulty thinking and seek other rational alternatives, and (4) a sense of collaboration by learning in community.
- examine enduring insights, values, and principles, starting with the Bible and Socrates, that have helped people to discern the truth.
- develop an awareness of the complexity of other cultural traditions as well as their own in debating urgent contemporary issues within the context of faith and reason.
- develop a knowledge and understanding of religious studies, the humanities, mathematics, science, and the social sciences and an awareness of the interconnectedness of the various disciplines in the Liberal Arts and Sciences curriculum.
- apply their studies in the Liberal Arts and Sciences to contemporary issues and situations.

### **Goal 3 – “Responsible Citizens of the World”**

To help our students become responsible Citizens of the World.

*Objectives: In order to reach this goal, students will be expected to*

- develop an understanding of their own culture, since this culture will be the base for cross-cultural reference.
- develop, through critical analysis, a knowledge and an understanding of Western Civilization and the relationship of the United States to it.
- develop a knowledge and understanding of cultures throughout the world.
- gain awareness of cultural differences in order to promote the respect and empathy for one another that is essential for dialogue.
- transcend the inclination to define themselves primarily in terms of group loyalties and identities.

### **Goal 4 – Lifelong Learning**

To help students utilize skills that are essential for lifelong learning by giving them opportunities to practice these skills across the curriculum.

*Objectives: In order to reach this goal, students will be expected to*

- acquire the necessary foundation for the further development and refinement of their communication skills.
- demonstrate the ability to persuade through the organization of ideas (in writing, speaking, and discussion) and through the art of rhetoric.
- use research as a means of finding and communicating the truth.
- analyze and solve both quantitative and qualitative problems.

- use technology to communicate and acquire information.
- apply skills related to critical reading, critical thinking, and problem solving.
- integrate and synthesize information and ideas.
- develop the creative, critical, and imaginative skills needed to recognize the beauty, the Goodness, and the breadth of human experience.
- learn to work cooperatively while becoming ever more independent learners.

## OPTIONS FOR THE CORE COMPLEMENT

### Foreign Languages

Students at the elementary level will complete two sequential courses in the same language according to individual interests and placement guidelines. Students interested in French or Spanish at the intermediate level will take two sequential 200- level courses in the same language. Students whose first language is not English complete ESL courses through ESL104 to complete this requirement.

SPA101-102:	Practical Spanish I & II, Total Immersion
SPA111-112:	Elementary Spanish I & II
FRN111-112:	Elementary French I & II
ITL111-112:	Elementary Italian I & II
PTG111-112:	Elementary (Brazilian) Portuguese I & II
GRM111-112:	Elementary German I & II
CHN111-112:	Elementary Chinese I & II
LAT101-102:	Elementary Latin I & II
FRN200:	Intermediate French
FRN201:	French Conversation
FRN203:	French Grammar and Composition
SPA203-204:	Intermediate Spanish I & II
SPA207:	Spanish for Business and Finance
SPA213:	Advanced Spanish Grammar
SPA241-242:	Spanish Conversation, Composition, and Reading I & II
ESL101-104:	English as a Second Language

### Literature

In addition to the Common Core Literature Course, students will select one course from the following list:

ENG201:	Literary Masterpieces
ENG205:	Contemporary Global Literature
ENG210:	Myth and Symbol
ENG215:	American Literature from 1915 to the End of the Twentieth Century
ENG228:	British Romantic Literature from 1784 to 1832
ENG229:	British Victorian Literature from 1837 to 1900
ENG247:	Introduction to Literary Theory and Criticism
ENG335:	Comparative Literature II

## Religious Studies

In addition to the Common Core Religious Studies Course, students will select one course from the following list:

RST250:	Introduction to the Bible: “Take a Look at the Good Book”
RST330:	Understanding the Old Testament
RST333:	Symbol and Sacrament
RST335:	Christian Ethics and Social Issues
RST336:	Christian Marriage and Family Life
RST340:	The Church in the New Millennium
RST350:	Jesus and the Gospels: “Who do you say I am?”
RST360:	Christianity, Ethics, and the Environment
RST370:	Women and the Christian Traditions
RST375:	Women of the Bible
RST380:	Mercy as the Art of Remembering
RST410:	Contemporary Christian Spirituality
RST420:	Introduction to the Pauline Epistles: “Blinded by the Light”
RST430:	Emerging Theologies
RST440:	Jesus Christ through History
RST450:	Christian Ethics and Biomedical Issues
RST460:	Christian Ethics and Leadership
RST485:	The Catholic Experience
RST490:	The Jewish Experience

## Mathematics

Students will select one course from the following list:

MTH170:	Concepts in Mathematics
MTH191:	Applied Calculus I
MTH200:	Discrete Mathematics
MTH201:	Calculus I
MTH202:	Calculus II
MTH203:	Calculus III

## Natural Sciences

Students may fulfill the Natural Sciences Core Curriculum course area by taking any two of the following 3- or 4-credit courses in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, or Science.

BIO110:	Human Biology
BIO111-112:	General Biology I & II
BIO140:	Humans and Their Environment



BIO/ISM150:	Bioinformatics
BIO190:	Nutrition
BIO205–206:	Human Anatomy and Physiology I & II
BIO210:	Microbiology
BIO220:	Cell Biology and Chemistry
BIO245:	The Biology of Women in Health and Disease
CHM113–114:	General Chemistry I & II
CHM121:	Chemistry of Human Health
CHM130:	Chemistry in Society
PHY201–202:	Workshop Physics I & II
SCI103:	Physical Science
SCI104:	Earth Science
SCI105:	Integrated Science with Computers

## Social Sciences

One course from Economics or Politics

ECN100:	Introduction to Cultural Economics
ECN101:	Economic Principles I
ECN105:	Basic Economics
POL115:	The American Political System: Its Institution and Its Struggles
POL120:	Introduction to World Politics

One course from Anthropology or History

APG110:	Human Diversity – An Introduction to Anthropology
APG335:	Cultural Dynamics and Globalization
CHP/APG251:	The African-American Diaspora
HIS103–104:	Western Civilization I and II
HIS110:	Survey of American History
HIS111:	Interpretations of American History to 1877
HIS112:	Interpretations of American History 1877–Present

One course from Psychology or Sociology

PSY100:	Introduction to Psychology
PSY255:	Psychology of Prejudice
PSY290:	Cross-Cultural Psychology
SOC110:	The Sociological Perspective
SOC/SWK120:	Social Problems: Analysis by Race, Class & Gender
SOC272:	The Sociology of Immigration

## Visual and Performing Arts

Students will select one course from the following list:

ART101:	Art in Society
ART102:	Film Appreciation
ART106:	Introduction to Art: Masterpieces
ART131:	Drawing I
ART205:	Art History Survey I: Prehistoric through Gothic Art
ART206:	Art History Survey II: Renaissance through Early 20th Century Art
ART231:	Ceramics I: Clay, Culture, and Creativity
MSC100:	Introduction to Music: Masterpieces
MSC111:	Essentials of Music Theory
MSC215:	American Music
MSC221:	Bach to Rock: Music from 1750 – Present
THE101:	Introduction to Theatre Arts
THE211:	Theatre History I
THE212:	Theatre History II

## Caught in the Current of the Technology Tidal Wave

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MARY ONUFER, MS, CARLOW UNIVERSITY

The Internet is now considered to be one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. From bits and bytes to blogs and e-mail, technology has pervaded our everyday life and made change a constant. As individuals, we are bombarded with a steady stream of new technologies that have affected the very essence of daily life. In the realm of higher education, trickles of new technologies into the educational landscape proliferated into a flash flood of technology reshaping everything in its path. Previously, plans for the future were painstakingly plotted out based upon what happened in the past, but now there is a demand for a new paradigm. Educators have found themselves adrift in a sea of new technologies and applications, while administrators and instructors search for new models and ways to evaluate what is important to education and what is not. The force of this wave was released by students from Generation X (Gen X), their comfort with all things “E” and the Internet, and increasing amounts of emerging technologies.

In response to the change, some academics cautiously dipped their toes in the shallow edge while others chose to brave the high paced rapids and embrace the power of the Internet; some reluctant instructors were unwillingly tossed overboard by administrations that provided little, if any, support. Regardless of how one entered the current, most realize that the course persistently changes so swiftly that it is impossible to map the direction, but only guess where it might be leading. Sadly, some professors feel as if they will never touch solid ground again and have chosen to get out of the water. Those who have given themselves over to the current feel as though they have come ashore in a strange land where the natives use little black boxes with flying thumbs and who speak in a language of acronyms. This new group of technologically savvy students have been dubbed “Generation Net” or the “Millennial Generation.”

Many years ago Catherine McAuley wrote, “We must try to be like those rivers that enter the sea without losing any sweetness of the water.” Faced with the current demands, Mercy higher education administrators and instructors alike may find themselves asking the very same question today. While it is difficult to make generalizations about how to face the dilemma, one may begin understanding the challenge by looking at who the student of today is, the decisions facing school administrators, the changes in pedagogy that challenge instructors, and how all these factors are influenced by the mission of Mercy.

In the late 1990s, the Kaiser Family Foundation began tracking what became commonly known as the “digital divide.” In the early days the term referred to the gap between those with regular, effective access to digital and information technology, and those without access. The last study completed in 2004 clearly showed that more young people than ever before had access to or were using the Internet ([www.jff.org](http://www.jff.org)). Today the Pew Internet and American Life Project study tracks Internet usage and reports that in 2006, in the 18-26 age group, 84 percent were regular users of Internet (<http://www.pewinternet.org/trends.asp>). While the gap, as originally perceived, is seen as negligible or non-existent, current researchers believe that the new “digital divide” refers to the gap between “those who benefit from digital technology and those who do not” ([www.itu.int/ITU-D/digitaldivide](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/digitaldivide)).

The case could be made that today in the United States there is a new digital divide that exists within institutions of higher learning. There clearly is a divide between students and their instructors and, for the first time in history, the pupil has a deeper and broader knowledge of the teaching tools of

technology than the instructor. In a speech given at the Pittsburgh Blackboard conference in March of 2007, Dr. John F. Moore, Director of Educational Technologies and the Faculty Development Institute at Virginia Tech University, reported that in the last two years, he had no less than 20 colleagues resign from teaching because they no longer felt that they could keep up with the rapid advances in technology (<http://www.ltc.duq.edu/pghbbug>).

Ironically, the most powerful case of the “divide” was demonstrated as the tragedy at Virginia Tech unfolded. That day, every higher education administrator on every campus across the nation quickly gathered their teams together to reflect and discuss on how to respond to the tragedy. At the forefront of every discussion was how to effectively allay student’s fears, and how to best deal with the traumatic events of the day. The students themselves began the grieving and healing process on their own before the meetings were concluded. The CBS evening news reported that My Space, a social networking site, stated that 100,000 new “groups” were created as students across the nation reached out to their peers at Virginia Tech and friends across the country. While the powers that be were searching for answers, students were taking action and using technology to do it. *The Journal of Higher Education* reported that an instructor at Virginia Tech learned the names of the fallen the next day from Wikipedia (*The Journal of Higher Education*, April 2007). The next day, students asked “why?” In a world of instantaneous communication, why didn’t the administration warn them immediately? Perhaps, they wondered, could lives have been saved? The administration felt as if they acted as best they could while the students felt as if a sacred trust had been broken.

In order to understand the dynamics of the changes in relationships between teacher and pupil, one must first understand who these new technology savvy students are. In their book, *Millennials Rising*, (2000) authors Neil Howe and William Strauss tell us that the Millennials were born between the years 1982 to 2002. Unlike their predecessors Gen X, Millennials are optimists who are happy and confident. They are team players who follow the rules and accept authority. Growing up with technology as an integral part of their lives, they communicate, entertain themselves, educate themselves, and exist in complete symbiosis with technology. Millennials are technology natives. John Seely-Brown, former head of research for Xerox and founder of the Institute for Research on Learning, finds the Millennial generation to be rewriting the book on how we learn. Multitasking is their strong suit as they redefine what literacy is. Using the constantly increasingly sources of information available to them, Millennials have become digital bricoleurs. Bricolage, a concept first defined by Claude Levi-Strauss more than a generation ago, speaks to being able to derive knowledge from various sources (<http://www.usdla.org>). Fearless of making mistakes, Millennials have become “tinkerers.” This, Seely-Brown tells us, will define this generation; generations who Howe and William feel have the propensity to be the next “Great Generation.”

Institutions of higher education that previously made reactive decisions are now challenged with making proactive decisions to prepare the Millennial student for the world of tomorrow. In the past, decisions, once made, were implemented slowly and methodically. That paradigm is no longer useful today, and administrators struggle with reinventing the academy for a rapidly changing world. Not only are they faced with asking instructors to build technology into the curriculum and pedagogy, but technology has changed how the institution goes about the “business” of education. Computer systems and networks must be functional 24/7, be fully responsive to customers, be reliable for staff and faculty as they do their jobs, and be completely secure. Information technology departments must educate students about legal usage of the computer and the infringements of copyrights while maintaining a good “customer” relationship with the students. New technologies normally have high price tags and administrators need a crystal ball to determine exactly which tool is mission critical to the business of education. What is

happening in colleges and universities today is not unlike the evolution that took place in business when personal computers and the World Wide Web exploded into the business arena. Business processes, communication, training, and decision making were all reengineered and designed to compete in an ever-changing global market place. Administrators may look to business as models for colleges and universities as they seek the new paradigm for proactive, not reactive decision making.

Whether mandated by their administration or not, educational practitioners can sense that the landscape is changing rapidly and new methods and styles of teaching must be adopted. The days of Plato's Academy are a reality for only a few well established institutions in the United States. In order to remain profitable, the majority of American institutions must be responsive to a diverse group of students that include not only the Millennials, but also the Baby Boomers of the fifties and sixties, and Gen X who have joined the ranks of lifelong learners. The student's demand for the use of multimedia in the presentation of content may leave some professors contemplating leaving the field, as Dr. Moore reports. This in itself would be a huge loss to the academy and may well create another crisis for colleges and universities. What is most important to remember is that technology is a tool to be used for instruction and does not necessarily need to be used in exactly the same way for every course or instructor.

In addressing this need for change, John Seely-Brown (2002) in his article "Growing Up Digital" feels "the web is a medium that "honors" multiple forms of intelligence and has tools that amplify and express content as well as contextual aspects of emotion, passion and feeling" (Seely-Brown, 2002). Seely-Brown assures teachers that if they approach technology with the same wonder that they first approached their given field, they will soon learn what is right for them and their students. In essence, whether supported by their administration or not, professors need to be as fearless as their students and begin to "tinker" with the media and delivery to discover what is right for them.

Mercy institutions are bound by the hallmarks of what a Mercy education means, yet they are faced with the responsibility of preparing individuals to be fully functioning members of a society where technology prevails, techno skills are imperative, and reality is not always what it seems in the cyber-world. Historically, a Mercy education addresses the whole student and one must be careful to address that issue when introducing technology into the curriculum and pedagogy. Harnessing the power of the Internet, instructors may see barriers to classroom learning topple, and become entranced with the possibilities that synchronous and asynchronous learning, podcasts, wikis, and blogs can provide. However, as we integrate technology into our curriculum, we also invite exposure to a myriad of ethical issues. Plagiarism, privacy issues, identity theft, and fraud have become commonplace. As educators in the Mercy tradition, it is essential that we assimilate technology into our curriculum and pedagogy within a framework of ethics. We must provide discourse on the ethical issues our students face as identity becomes blurred in the virtual world, and anonymity provides the opportunity for unethical behavior. Most importantly, as institutions of Mercy we must provide access to technology for those who can not afford it and make sure that the "divide," by any definition, does not exist in our institutions. Finally, it is critical to our mission to create responsible, technologically-savvy graduates who will carry the identity of their Mercy education forward as they face the technological frontier. It is imperative that we allow ourselves to be swept up in the tides of technological change, providing a context for our students within our curriculum and a pedagogy that will allow them to maintain their own identity.



## RESOURCES

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# A Study of Worldview: Mission, Catholic Identity, and Academic Freedom in Colleges and Universities Sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

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## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It is difficult to retain the “sweetness of the water” in a turbulent ocean. Currently, the water is agitated by dissention between progressive and traditional forces in the Church, thus Catholic higher education must navigate through stormy weather. This paper focuses on how the colleges and universities sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas navigate these high seas.

This is a preliminary<sup>1</sup> qualitative study of the confluence of mission, Catholic identity, and academic freedom in Mercy colleges and universities at a time of tension in the American Church. I pose three questions to explore how this convergence may roil the seas:

- How do Mercy colleges and universities reflect their Catholic identity?
- How do Mercy colleges or universities negotiate between the institutional and sponsoring community missions?
- How do Mercy institutions of higher education interpret academic freedom?

Through exploring the issues of mission, identity, and academic freedom we encounter the rough waters of how the Church and the university view the purpose of Catholic universities, and how each views authority and truth.

## Methodology

This study consists of participants from eight Mercy colleges or universities. The purpose of the study is to examine the *meaning* of the convergence of mission, Catholic identity, and academic freedom *to those taking part in the study*. The participants were in administrative or board positions. The administrators were presidents, vice presidents of academic affairs, and vice presidents for mission effectiveness. The selection method was purposeful selection. Maxwell describes this process as selecting people and sites because they are uniquely equipped to provide information (2005). Six of the eight were Sisters of Mercy. I was able to speak face-to-face with half of the participants and spoke to the others by phone. Institutions and individuals remain anonymous.

Prior to the interviews, I sent the participants the requisite description of the study, release form, and the questions I wished them to consider. The questions appear in Appendix A. In order to provide a prompt for the Catholic identity question I provided a summary of a “types” of Catholic colleges from Morey and Piderit (2006) which can be found in Appendix B.

Qualitative researchers are interested in perspectives on a particular phenomenon or lived experience of those studied (Morse and Richards, 2002; Locke, Silverman and Spirduso, 2004). In this case, each participant's perspective was captured through interviews or conversations. After transcribing over 18 hours of data, I set out to discover the themes and metaphors found in the conversation by first grouping the responses in like categories or themes. I was then able to uncover the prominent metaphorical concept underlying each of the themes. From tracing the metaphor to its conceptual root, I was able to construct the underlying worldview.

## A Metaphoric Construction of Worldview—Not Your Grandma's Metaphor

A metaphor is constructing, experiencing, understanding, or expressing one thing in terms of another. On the traditional view, when we encounter an abstract concept it can often be understood by mapping a more concrete, already experienced mental model on to it. The metaphor is the mapping from the source domain, the known mental model, to the target domain, the less well understood model. Experts believe the target domain is cognitively changed in some way through the mapping or use of the conceptual metaphor.

Cognitive linguistics, a subfield of the interdisciplinary study of cognitive science, is concerned with the interface of conceptualizing something and the language we use to talk about it. A fundamental finding in cognitive linguistics is that our conceptual systems contain a large number of concepts that are metaphorically understood. Humans store a large number of metaphorical concepts or mental models in the mind. Many of these models are quite elaborate. It is through language that people express and researchers analyze their conceptual metaphors. The process of using a conceptual metaphor is largely unconscious. On this view, metaphor is posited as thought, and conceptual metaphors have become a central focus of the field of cognitive linguistics.

In a poetic example from the hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," the concept of *God* gains power from the conceptual metaphor of FORTRESS AS STRONGHOLD. In the hymn, the metaphor is GOD IS A FORTRESS. *Fortress* is the source domain and *God* is the target domain. There are details called entailments that extend the metaphor, allowing the mapping to go beyond a *fortress* to details about it. *Fortress*, of course is a WAR metaphor indicating the *battle* between *God* and *Satan*. The sense of *battle* pervades the entire hymn. Entailments depend on the concept and details one has about *fortress*. The concept of *fortress* as *protecting* can give the concept of *God* as "*a bulwark never failing*;" *A bulwark is a fortification, a barricade, or a defense*. Other extensions of the metaphor are "*endurance*" and "*amid the flood prevailing*," showing *God* as *eternally holding back evil*. Each of these entailments illuminates *God* as *forever shielding and defending* the people. These meanings are obvious from the hymn and reveal the writer's worldview about *God* as *an almighty warrior, a defense against all evil*.

The above is a brief sketch of the way I analyze and interpret conceptual metaphors. Cognitive linguists have investigated the metaphorical roots of worldview in many areas: worldviews of bodily experience (Johnson, 1987), in understanding literature (Lakoff and Turner, 1989), in ethics (Johnson, 1993), and in politics (Lakoff, 1996, 2004, 2006).

## BACKGROUND AND DATA INTERPRETATION

### Background of Catholic Identity in Colleges and Universities in America

What does it mean to be a Catholic college or university in America in the twenty-first century? Catholic higher education has traveled a rocky road in the heavily Protestant American landscape. Because of anti-Catholic colonial attitudes, Catholic higher education was late in coming to America. By the time Georgetown University was founded, 13 Protestant colleges had been chartered in America (Power, 1972; Annarelli, 1987; Vigilanti, 1992). Until the late nineteenth century, the primary purpose for founding Catholic colleges was to train clergy and protect Catholic students against liberal American Protestant ideas. Colleges were “pastoral instruments at the disposal of their bishops” (Vigilanti, p. 30).

In the 1880s and '90s American Catholicism wrestled with the “Americanism controversy” (Mahoney, 2003; Gleason, 1995). Conservatives warned that American individualism, separation of church and state, and unredeemable Protestants would corrupt Catholic religious and moral values. The liberal wing of the American Church saw interaction with Protestant denominations and adjusting to American society as a positive way to further Catholicism in the United States. Many skirmishes between the conservatives’ fortress stance and the liberals’ evangelical zeal took place at The Catholic University of America. In 1899, Pope Leo XIII transmitted *Testem Nenevolentiae*, condemning the liberal Americanist view (*Testem Nenevolentiae Nostrae*, retrieved 2007). Thus, the ghetto mentality of protecting the faith against American ideas was reinforced. According to Mahoney, while Protestant educators were advancing what they considered the American “Christian empire,” Catholic educators were marshalling a subculture (p.8).

In the early twentieth century, Catholic universities were undoubtedly, totally Catholic. However, in 1955, John Tracy Ellis, made a serious challenge to American Catholic higher education by critiquing the lack of Catholic intellectualism, and especially chiding the authorities for the “overemphasis ... given to the school as an agency for moral development, with an insufficient stress on the role of the school for fostering intellectual excellence” (p. 10).

Only after the Second Vatican Council, 1962–1965, did Catholic colleges in the United States enter into dialogue with “the secular and pluralistic world” (Hutchinson, 2001, p. 6) rather than maintaining a distance from American life. This, of course, raised the question, ‘What, then, is a Catholic University?’ Alice Gallin (2000) considers the 1960s the beginning of the ‘Americanization’ of Catholic colleges and universities. In 1967, the Land O’Lakes Statement: The Nature of the Contemporary Catholic University, asserted that the modern Catholic university must have “strong commitment to and concern for academic excellence ... true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself ... the Catholic university must be an institution, a community of learners or a community of scholars, in which Catholicism is perceptibly present and effectively operative” (Gallin, 1998, p. 7). It seemed Catholic higher education was firmly ensconced in the American educational scene and had worked out the expression of the university’s relationship to the Church.

However, in 1985, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* reinstituted juridical authority and has raised the question once more of what it really means to be a Catholic institution of higher education in America. Morey (Schier and Russet, 2002, pp.284) lists four controversial issues as follows: the majority of the board of Catholic colleges and universities should be Catholic, the university president should be Catholic, a majority of the faculty should be Catholic, and Catholic theologians must have a *mandatum* from their bishop. Two

other issues have been particularly troubling for campuses. The first has to do with activities and inviting speakers. The second is the issue of granting honorary degrees. Dean de la Mott writes of the “lay vigilantes, the Minutemen” of our ideological boarders” who lay in wait for those who “run afoul of the spirit or the letter of the ‘law’ or laws” of a papal document (2005). This particularly applies to campus activities, speakers, and honorary degrees.

So what is a Catholic university? For the traditionalists, Catholic institutions are in danger of losing their religious identity as mainline Protestant colleges have done.<sup>2</sup> This means holding on to orthodoxy. The progressives look for new ways for the university to express its Catholicity.<sup>3</sup>

### Catholic Identity at Mercy Colleges or Universities

It is against this background of ambiguity about what is a Catholic university that participants responded to the Catholic identity question. In discussing this issue, the participants spoke of the Mercys and their relationship to the Church. I did not specifically ask about this relationship, but it was clearly important to them to discuss it. The data, especially from the sisters, are rich and repeatedly express the same definite point of view.

The LINE concept was the most often used concept throughout responses about identity, mission, and academic freedom. While use of the metaphor is not surprising given the topics, the ways it is used to construct the worldview of the interlocutors was notable. Several examples will suffice.

LINE is a concept acquired fairly early in life and is familiar to all of us. It has many different meanings. However, in these interviews, A LINE IS A BOUNDARY was often the underlying conceptual metaphor. The vigor with which the metaphor was applied was unanticipated. In using the *boundary* metaphor, sisters talked about *pushing the boundaries* with the Church. *Pushing the boundaries* is something the Sisters of Mercy have frequently done, beginning with Catherine McAuley’s initial *resistance* to the *enclosure* of contemplative religious orders, thus, to establishing a religious community. Her thoughts about the *enclosure* of religious communities preventing her from serving the poor on the streets of Dublin (Sullivan, 1995) seem to have set the Mercy’s approach for a principled *resisting enclosure* for the order, but *pushing boundaries* of Church authority. In every case in which these concepts were used the participant was clear about the principle involved.

In the early days of the civil rights movement in Selma, Alabama, sisters were told by the Bishop that they could not march. They did the next best thing by feeding the marchers. This was a principled instance of the sisters *pushing the boundaries* of church authority. They did not break through the *boundary*, but sustained their belief in the cause of justice. This is a metaphor formed by action, not by words.

In 1979, Sister Theresa Kane, RSM, the president the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, publicly asked Pope John Paul II to provide “the possibility of women as persons being included in all ministries of the church” (Jones, 2000). This was not well received by the Pope or traditionalists. The Sisters of Mercy have quite a history of *pushing boundaries*. One person said, “Religious orders try to *break out* of the *boundaries*, while the Church tries to *keep the boundaries*.” This is an example of the Mercy - institutional Church RELATIONSHIP AS PUSH-PULL, an alternating current.

Instead of *pushing the boundaries*, a LINE may be *drawn tight*, *stressed* or made *tense*. Several participants spoke of traditional *tension* between the institutional Church and religious orders. The metaphor



here would be RELATIONSHIP AS TENSION. *Tension* is another elaboration of the LINE concept, drawing a *line tight*, making it *taut or straining* it. The *tension* metaphor was extended in RELATIONSHIP AS DIALECTICAL. *Dialectical* is the *tension or pull* between two forces. Most of the participants pointed out that the *tension* was sometimes healthy and sometimes unhealthy. *Tension* can *sustain balance*, as in *walking a tight rope*. A *rope* can not be walked if it is not *tight*. Of course, *boundaries* cannot be viable without *tension*.

The participants described a vital, vigorous *push-pull* relationship between the Sisters of Mercy and the institutional Church. The image was sometimes *stressful*, sometimes challenging, but never dull. The worldview of the Sisters of Mercy concerning identity placed Mercy traditions as central to the identity of their colleges and universities. Some voiced the questions, “Just how Catholic do we want to be?” or “How do we want to be Catholic?” Nonetheless, they claim their rightful place within *boundaries of* Catholic tradition and ask that their colleges and universities have a *seat at the table* when the Church needs to *think through* issues of change. They demonstrated their belief that the complex interaction between the order and the Church was important in terms of the issues of identity, mission, and academic freedom.

## Background on the Meaning of Mission

According to Knoerle and Schier in *Catholic Women’s Colleges in America* (Schier and Russett, 2002, pp. 325–341), all church-related institutions of higher education must interpret and represent the sponsoring body’s traditions and values. This, the mission of religiously affiliated colleges and universities, might seem a fairly straightforward issue, however, there is frequently, if not always, tension.

Sister Sally Furay, RSCJ (Knoerle and Schier in Schier and Russett, 2002, 333–335) argues that significant culture changes have modified the way Catholic colleges and universities approach their mission. Furay speaks of the following: (1) a change in climate from consensus about moral behavior to a lack of consensus; (2) a shift in method from teaching a Catholic audience to a more pluralistic student population with choices; and (3) an alteration of purpose from educating students to become leaders in Catholic circles to preparing them to become leaders in the world.

Whatever the changes, a primary question becomes, “Is the mission of the college the same as the mission of the sponsoring body?” Morey (Schier and Russett, 2002, pp.277–324) suggests a significant separation should be maintained between the purposes of religious communities and their colleges. She contends that congregations have a mission to maintain their vows, while colleges and universities must offer higher education. She goes on to say, “Congregational charisms must be appropriately applied to these two separate organizations with sensitivity to their *unique and primary purposes*” [italics are mine] (Schier and Russet, 295). How those congregational charisms are applied by the university is the focus of the following section.

## The Meaning of Mission in Colleges and Universities Sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy

The Sisters of Mercy “vowed to serve people who suffer from poverty, sickness, and lack of education with a special concern for women and children” (Sisters of Mercy Web site, <http://www.sistersofmercy.org/index.php>). As would be expected, the charism of education is contained in each mission. Most

of the missions reflect the values of service and compassion. A number include the liberal arts tradition and lifelong learning. Some institutions mention justice. A surprisingly few, only four, mention a special concern for women. One of the colleges does not include Catholic in its mission, and one university omits any mention of Sisters of Mercy.

The administrators' dialogue about the mission related to the relationship between the Sisters of Mercy and the college or university and the mission of the institution. While the MISSION AS EDUCATION was the foundational metaphor, it had specific instantiations. Those elaborations used repeatedly in the administrators' conversations were the concepts of LINE/BOUNDARY, SERVE, BALANCE, and OPEN. Each concept and its resulting metaphor had both positive and negative examples.

Administrators spoke of the *lines drawn* in the relationship between the mission of the sisters and of the university. The *lines of separation* were stated clearly, "The community mission is not the college mission!" was voiced firmly and repeatedly. Of course, the colleges were established by the communities and their missions bear more than a slight resemblance to the mission of the order, especially in the vocation to service and to education.

SERVE is a prominent concept in the missions of Mercy schools. Yet, during the interviews some participants, who were Sisters of Mercy, surfaced a concern about the current emphasis on SERVICE AS MISSION in the colleges. Their countervailing idea was that the proper weight should be on *curriculum*, what is taught and the *excellence* of the teaching. Those who held this idea used the metaphor EDUCATION/INSTRUCTION AS MISSION. The concern was not an attempt to construe *service* as unimportant, but rather distress that *service* appears to be presented as the mission. It was stressed that colleges and universities should not be "social service agencies." The issue is whether *service* is more prominent than *curricular* and *instructional excellence*. I was reminded by one participant, that while Catherine McAuley stressed both *education* and *service*, the two were not conflated. The *education* was actual *instruction*. The *service* was tending the ill, giving shelter to the homeless, and feeding the hungry, activities not normally found in classroom activities. This metaphoric conflict is an interesting and important one as it is evidence of different worldviews concerning the prominence of *service/service learning* in our curricula. Perhaps more emphasis and information about what takes place in the classroom relative to learning about *service* prior to and following a *service learning* experience is needed.

The BALANCE concept was invoked frequently. The elaborations on balance are fascinating and varied. BALANCE is a vital concept in *justice* thus the metaphor JUSTICE AS MISSION was a frequent topic of conversation. *Justice* was put forward as a concept of *fairness* and *parity* that must be taught in the classroom, but also must be evident in all practices involving students, faculty, and staff.<sup>4</sup>

Several participants spoke about being sad that the *mission* was sometimes sacrificed to *margin*. In that case, begrudgingly, the metaphor becomes FINANCIAL BALANCE/MARGIN AS MISSION. In explaining how this might happen, participants spoke of promoting ideas that appealed to prospective students rather than presenting the ideas of the mission and trying to make those ideas more appealing.

*Openness*<sup>5</sup> was spoken of often. It was used in relation to *welcoming* or *balancing* the religious views of all students and faculty. *Openness* was seen as a way of accomplishing MISSION. Several participants spoke of *religious and cultural openness*. *Ecumenism* is an important initiative for a number of schools. The participants from several colleges mentioned the fact that Catherine McAuley had been greatly influenced by the Protestant family who became her benefactor. Moreover, the idea of *hospitality*, related to *openness* to others, is a part of several of the colleges' mission statements and was an important value to

Catherine McAuley. One participant spoke of the ways in which religion separated people, but building a culture based on common values united them. Several of the participants discussed the ways in which they *opened* their campus with *hospitality* for all.

While *service*, *education* and *justice* are traditional Catholic values, *openness* in terms of *welcoming* other religious views varies significantly from the orthodox view. For all the reaching out to other religions by Pope John Paul II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* appears to be a reaction against too much openness in the American Church, a *tightening*. The Mercy Sisters once again place themselves on the progressive side of the divide between traditionalists and progressives within the Church.

## Academic Freedom in Sisters of Mercy Colleges and Universities

Certainly, the question of academic freedom cannot be considered separately from the issue of Catholic identity of the university. Much of the identity section bears directly on academic freedom. I will not reiterate those matters except when it is essential for meaning.

The question of academic freedom and Catholic universities did not arise often prior to a large influx of lay faculty by the 1960s. When most of the faculty were sisters, brothers, or priests, complaints and criticism about teaching, curriculum, or student behavior were internal matters handled by the superior (Gallin, 2000). Lay faculty brought different sensibilities.

Academic freedom in Catholic colleges and universities, especially those in the United States, has been a principal focus, especially since *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (Gallin, 1992) was issued August 15, 1990. However, as O'Brien (2002) asserts, *Ex Corde* did not create the difficulties the university is experiencing, but raised anew issues Catholic institutions of higher education thought had been settled by the Land O'Lakes statement in 1967 (Gallin, 1992, pp. 7-12).

The roots of academic freedom come from two inter-reliant nineteenth century German concepts. One was *Lernfreiheit*, or the freedom for students to learn without a prescribed course of study. The other, *Lernfreiheit*, applied to professors and entailed freedom of inquiry and teaching (Annarelli, 1987; Vigilanti, 1992). In the United States little attention has been given to *Lernfreiheit*, except for a brief time at Harvard in the 1800s when Harvard attempted to prescribe only three courses in route to the bachelor degree (Rockwell, 1950). The major consideration in this country has been on professors.

Since its founding in 1915, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has concentrated on academic freedom. Their *Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, in the year of their founding, identified three elements of such freedom for professors: (1) the freedom of inquiry and research; (2) the freedom to teach within the university, and (3) the freedom of extramural utterances (Annarelli, 1987). The *Principles* were restated in 1940, but the elements of academic freedom remained the same (AAUP, 1940).

In 1967, the AAUP, National Student Association, Association of American Colleges and Universities, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and National Association of Women Deans and Counselors issued a joint statement on academic freedom for students. This statement included the following academic principles: (1) freedom of access to higher education, (2) freedom to take 'reasoned' exception to views of the professor or the course, (3) protection from 'prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation,' (4) protection from improper disclosure of views, beliefs, and political associations by

professors. In student affairs, students should be able to (1) organize and join associations that promote their common interests, (2) examine and discuss, individually or in groups, all questions of interest and to express their opinions both publicly and privately, (3) invite and hear any person of their own choosing, making clear to the academic and larger community that sponsorship of guest speakers does not necessarily imply approval or endorsement of the view expressed, either by the sponsoring group or by the institution [underlining mine], (4) expression on views and participation in issues of institutional governance, and (5) freedom of the student press (AAUP, 1967).

Student academic freedoms often clash with the Catholic moral teaching. Student groups forming gay and lesbian organizations and staging *The Vagina Monologues* are not consonant with Catholic sexual morality. Forbidding *The Monologues* has been a central focus of pressure on universities from the Newman Society. The position taken by individual universities where the play has been staged is complex, but according to Kaveny (2006), the decisions depend on where administrators stand on the question of the importance of the institution's openness, Catholic identity, and/or ability to engage the secular world.

The AAUP standards of academic freedom have not been embraced by all Catholic scholars. For the Church the search for truth through reason will lead to divine truth and faith. For the university, the search for truth through reason is totally open. O'Brien suggests, "A Catholic university is ... a particularly troubling entity for the open inquiry that marks the academic enterprise," because the Church has "definitive answers" to question of truth (2002, p. 147). *Ex Corde* states, "Every Catholic university ...guarantees to its members academic freedom, so long as the rights of the individual person and of the community are preserved within the confines of truth and the common good" (pp.147-148). The question for academic freedom in Catholic higher education is "who establishes 'the confines of truth'" (p.148).

## Academic Freedom and Catholic Identity in Colleges and Universities in the United States

The prominent concept in the academic freedom and Catholic identity discussions was, once again, LINE, with extensions to *roles*, *speaking*, and *testing*. Each of these concepts can be seen as creating or being the result of *lines* or *boundaries*. For example, *roles* are delineated by *boundaries*, or, in the theatre, by another extension or meaning of *lines*. *Speaking out* or *speaking against* pushes or tests/challenges boundaries. *Speaking for* or *in favor of* binds the speaker and idea. In these instances, the administrators expressed their worldviews about academic freedom and Catholic identity.

The LINE concept was used as *boundary* in relation to academic freedom in the same manner it was used in the above sections. Participants talked about the *separation* of the mission of the Church from the mission of the university. One participant, in personifying the Church, said, "The University is not the catechetical arm of the Church." This is a *body boundary* extension of the LINE concept. Another, often quoted personification of the Church and university, was, "The university is the place where the Church thinks." This metaphor *draws a line* between human functions where each institution plays its proper *role*. This clearly separates the religious function of the Church and the educational mission of the university.

Continuing a personification of universities and college and the *line/boundary* concept, the concept of *speaking* was often invoked as the proper *role* for institutions of education to play in reviewing the *boundaries of roles*. "It is important for the university to *speak* forthrightly and firmly" to the Church on official positions that can benefit from scholarly inquiry and knowledge. This sentiment was voiced by several participants. The rationale for this statement is that knowledge has changed on numerous topics

from biological science – a new understanding of homosexuality; the usefulness of stem cell research. The Catholic universities have a responsibility to “*push questions* about official positions ... to see if the positions still hold.” The topic of women in the Church was raised by several participants. One voiced the opinion that the university must *voice* its concern about the many issues relating to women ... ordination, sexuality, and the general approach of the institutional Church to women.

These discussions included another metaphor, EDUCATION AS TRUTH. This is a metaphor that sometimes conflicts with the CHURCH AS TRUTH metaphor, and harkens back to the earlier discussion about who determines *truth* (O’Brien, 2002). This appears to be a struggle over *authority* as well as *truth*. While not denying the *truth* and *authority* of the Church, the participants expressed that the Church did not *look* outside itself to see the how the world had changed.

Administrators believed that if real *engagement* between the university and the institutional Church took place, the Church would learn much to help it deal with current realities. As the universities initiate scholarly inquiry, participants expressed a desire for *dialogue* with the institutional Church. *Dialogue* requires *suspending the assumptions, relaxing the line, temporarily setting aside the boundaries, and having a seat at the table*. The metaphors indicated that the administrators hope for a new type of *engagement* with the institutional church.

## CONCLUSIONS

The fact that the participants said more about the relationship of the Sisters of Mercy to the institutional Church than they did about Catholic identity is curious and interesting. It is my belief that most of the participants felt they answered the question of identity when they talked about this relationship. The Sisters of Mercy and their colleges and universities evince a proclivity for *standing some distance apart* from the Church on a number of issues. They seem to *walk a fine line* in reference to what is allowable according to the Church. The often *speak* about issues and engage in behavior the institutional Church sees as impertinent. Their worldview in terms of Catholic identity appears to be that universities and the Church often disagree, but they are *family arguments*. Regardless of how distraught the university may be, it is still part of the *family*. The conceptual metaphor, IDENTITY AS EMBEDDEDNESS, expresses this idea. The college was characterized as *embedded, lodged, and solidly placed within* the Church. Regardless of differences of opinions, drawing boundaries and discontents, Mercy higher education was viewed as being inseparable from the institutional Church. I should add that from my conversations most of the administrators who were Sisters of Mercy saw themselves *standing between* Church authority or groups who wanted to dictate what the university should do and the institution. In other words, shielding the university. If this is a role the sisters play, it will be interesting to see what happens when there are fewer religious to fill the administrative positions.

In spite of strong statements about the *separation* between the community and the university mission, Mercy values have a high priority on all campuses. Administrators expressed deep concern about those values being sacrificed or simply disappearing. All agreed that the primary mission of the college or university is *excellence in education*. The question of the *service* component was not a change in the view of the importance of *service*, but rather how it was presented in an institution of higher education. Administrators expressed concern about ongoing support from the sisters once all of the governance changes concerning the institute are complete.



As with Catholic identity, or Mercy identity as the case may be, administrators have valid concerns about how the situation for the institutions may change as the structure of the congregations change. However, the participants expressed a positive view of the missions of their various colleges and universities. They hold the missions up with pride and believe that the mission is instilled in their students. The mission is the hallmark of the institution.

The administrators took a hard line in reference to academic freedom. A university must have independence and academic freedom. Most of the participants felt that students should be able to invite speakers of their choice, regardless of their political views. *The Vagina Monologues* were mentioned several times, and the participants either allowed or would allow the performance on their campus. The worldview expressed by the administrators was a desire for their campus to be *open* to human experiences from which educational lessons could be learned.

In the case of Sister of Mercy colleges and universities, the worldviews of the institutions have not moved away from their founders. They are united in their mission, strong in their idea of academic freedom, and somewhat wary of the authority of the institutional Church.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> This paper is a prelude to a much longer and more comprehensive study about the Sisters of Mercy and their colleges and universities. While this study revolves around the intersection of mission, Catholic identity, and academic freedom, each deserves a paper. While exploring this topic, I have become especially interested in the ways the Mercy heritage can be continued with a diminishing number of sisters. So there is much more I wish to investigate.

<sup>2</sup> See Mardsen (1994) *The Soul of the American University From Protestant Establishment to Established Disbelief*; Burtchael (1998) *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Christian Colleges from their Churches*; O'Brien (2002) *The Idea of a Catholic University*; Budde and Wright (2004) *Conflicting Allegiances: The Church-Based University in a Liberal Democratic Society*; Morey and Piderit (2006) *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis* for an understanding of Protestant colleges shedding their bonds with their churches, and, especially Burtchael, O'Brien and Morey and Piderit for some insight into traditional thinking about how universities might maintain their Catholicity.

<sup>3</sup> Alice Gallin in *Negotiating Identity: Catholic Higher Education Since 1960* (2000, pp. 186-187) persuasively suggests Margaret Steinfeld's list of characteristics of the Catholic intellectual tradition as 'non-negotiables' of Catholic identity. They are as follows: 1) In this tradition reason and faith are not seen as antagonistic or unconnected; 2) The tradition takes philosophy and philosophical thinking seriously; 3) It challenges the belief that facts come in pristine form – no baggage, no assumptions, no preconditions, no ends, no language, that fills it with meaning; 3) It resists reductionism; it does not collapse categories; we do not deny reason in order to profess faith nor deny faith because we trust in reason. Both are part of the picture. (Gallin, 2000, pp.186-187). While the list is a part of the tradition, it clearly embraces, not only the best of the Catholic tradition, but it also embodies very progressive ideas.

<sup>4</sup> For an early discussion of fairness and parity, see Eleanor B. Wymard, "An Academic Profile: Laywomen in Women's Catholic Colleges," *Commonweal*, October 1977.

<sup>5</sup> In *America* (2006, pp. 14-19) Cathleen Kaveny, professor of law and theology at Notre Dame, reviewed a controversy relevant to church, university, and the culture in the United States. The "current of openness," operating from approximately 1975 to 1990, emphasizes openness to secular culture. The "current of identity," operating from 1990 to approximately 2005, holds the distinctiveness of Catholicism as standing against the secular culture. She says she is "cautiously optimistic" that a "current of engagement" is entering the Church in the United States. This current is based on "humble Augustinian realism," knowing there is "sin in the world," but that the Church is not "morally pure or distinct" from that world. Such a stance would enjoin the university and church a "critical and constructive engagement" with society.

## APPENDIX A

1. What are the discernible indications of the college/university mission, or of Mercy culture in your institution?
2. How do you define academic freedom? What limits do you place on it? Have you had academic freedom incidents on campus? How do you balance Catholic tradition and freedom of academic

exploration and inquiry? For faculty? For students? For the institution? Could you tell me about any outside pressure and how it is handled?

3. How do you define the Catholic identity and culture of your institution? What elements would you emphasize?
4. Tell me how you see the intersection of the college/university's mission, academic freedom and Catholic identity?

## APPENDIX B

### Types of Catholic Colleges (Morey and Piderit, 2006)

- Catholic Immersion Universities – emphasize being pervasively Catholic; immerse students in Catholic culture; several courses in Catholic theology and philosophy are required and perhaps Catholic literature and history of the Catholic Church; Catholic norms are enforced in the dormitories; student groups invite speakers who articulate Catholic views; students are encouraged to attend Mass at least once a week; emphasis on hiring practicing Catholics.
- Catholic Persuasion Colleges/Universities – emphasize a “religious maturity” about Catholicism in both Catholic and non-Catholic students; require a course in theology and another related to Catholic teachings; dormitories emphasize Catholic moral teachings; student groups are seldom allowed to invite speakers who advocate positions deviating from Catholic moral teaching; seek to hire practicing Catholics.
- Catholic Diaspora Colleges/Universities – endeavor to help students gain religious sensitivity; 50 percent or more students are non-Catholics; students usually are required to take a course in Catholic teachings; students in residence hall are expected to follow the ethical principles of the Church; do not invite speakers who take public positions contrary to Catholic views; have both Catholic Mass and nondenominational religious services; majority of faculty may be non-Catholic.
- Catholic Cohort Colleges/Universities – promote religious knowledge and practice; attempt to attract academically talented students regardless of their religion; students are encouraged to take a course/s about religion; student groups may invite speakers who disagree with Catholic teachings, but the institution tries to maintain some balance; students in residence halls have a great degree of freedom; hiring Catholic faculty is important to some positions, but is not generally stressed.

The typology was intended for conversation less than for participants rating their colleges or universities.

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## Changing Structures . . . Learning Through Doing

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MARY MONTMINY-DANNA, PhD, SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY

*“I feel that my service learning has provided me with a better understanding of the mission statement by allowing me to observe it in action. Consequently, I have become a better citizen of the University, the community of Newport and the world.”*

—a freshman student

The idea of *learning through doing* is at the very heart of our mission, undergraduate core curriculum, and faculty development. Students and faculty are first introduced to the commitment to service during their university orientation and the first year experience program. Service learning belongs to, and exists in, all departments. Service learning and a commitment to social justice are integral parts of the wellness of each student and are formally established within the academic life of all students and faculty. Participants become aware of their innate gifts and gain an appreciation for the diversity of the world. Our active community service program coupled with a variety of courses with service components, spanning the four years, fosters a love of service and a commitment for lifelong learning and responsible world citizenship.

### THE STUDENTS

As our students are welcomed into the University they are introduced to and invited to embrace the mission and service opportunities that will be afforded them throughout their career at Salve Regina University. During orientation the students learn that the experience of SRU is guided by the mission statement which highlights the importance that service has in gaining a full and rich educational experience—one that is steeped in social justice principles and prepares students for lifelong learning and responsible world citizenship. As a university community, we fully recognize that students entering higher education in 2007 have (likely) had multiple opportunities for volunteer work. It is with that in mind that we build on their experience. Our service component does indeed ask them to give of their time but in a very purposeful and focused way. Purposeful in that they are to both give of themselves and learn about others and focused in a manner that asks of them considerable discernment relative to giving of their time. Service learning involves careful exploration, embracing challenge, and meaningful verbal and written reflection.

Exploration begins with the process of deciding where, who, and how best to serve. This up-front process is sometimes arrived at individually and at other times reached through group consensus. Students are strongly encouraged to “challenge themselves, their beliefs, and to take a risk outside of their present comfort zone” with a population that they have not had experience with. Doing so puts the student decidedly in the position of learner rather than experienced volunteer. Providing students with a variety of potential learning opportunities is critical in weighing the possible ways in which to give of one’s time. This is arrived at in a variety of ways. We are fortunate enough to have an active service learning office and full-time coordinator. A wide range of opportunities are presented to the students for their consideration. The first service component of the students’ education is placed within

the context of the first year experience; a year-long course that is required of all entering freshman and transfer students. A number of service learning readings such as *Charity and Justice: A Reflection for service*, *Catherine McAuley: The Difference that One Women Can Make*, *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*, *the Works of Mercy*, and *The Biography of Dorothy Day* are read in community and ample opportunity for reflection is given. The important works are read prior to undertaking the action component of the service learning experience. These articles serve as a foundation for the depth and reflection that become an essential part of the service experience. The reflective questions, crafted by students, are posed prior to each reading and serve as the foundation for a guided discussion.

For example, here are some of the questions posed:

1. Think and reflect about a time in your life that you or someone you know was treated unjustly. How would you have handled the situation if you could have changed the outcome? (*Charity and Justice*).
2. How did Catholic values motivate her in her life's work? Do you have Catholic Values? If you are not Catholic or do not have a religious affiliation, what are your values? (*Catherine McAuley: The Difference that One Women Can Make*).
3. Have you ever walked past or ignored a person in need? Why or why not? (*The Parable of the Good Samaritan*).
4. Why is it important to have a merciful approach to others in life? Why is it important to go out of your way to help others and not simply do community service for recognition? (*Works of Mercy*).
5. Where did Dorothy Day's motivation come from and how did her life story affect others, affect you? (*The Biography of Dorothy Day*).

The important themes related to these questions are revisited throughout the students' experience. It is very important to keep coming back to these questions as the circular process is essential to the intellectual and emotional development of the student. Additionally, two movies are shown in community and then discussed and reflected upon in writing. The first, *Entertaining Angels*, depicts the life of Dorothy Day, both her personal challenges and compassion for the vulnerable and disenfranchised in society. Its themes include moral decision making, faith, forgiveness, and community. In the second movie, *Pay It Forward*, the theme of mercy is depicted by a young boy who teaches others to extend the compassion that has been shown to him to others. After viewing the movies, students are again asked to examine their own lives in the context of these messages and bring that new awareness into the community of Salve Regina University.

Students complete 10 hours of service within their first year at the University. A number of students will continue beyond their required hours, some will finish out the year, while others continue for the entire four years. The variety of service ranges from tutoring children to working with older students with developmental disabilities. Some students work with the elderly, staff food kitchens, or work with victims of domestic violence, and others support the local boys and girls clubs by mentoring adolescents. Students become active members of the community by conducting their service in and around Newport, Rhode Island. This requirement assists the students in learning about the residents of Newport that is home to many mansions and tourists but also to many disenfranchised populations.



The students articulate the experience in their semester end culminating reflection. This paper is required of all students and asks them to look back over the semester and to identify personal and professional developments and challenges and to explore the place that service holds in their lives. Most have a solid understanding of the university mission and goals relative to lifelong learning and responsible citizenship. Many speak of broadening their minds and hearts, having a better understanding of poverty and other social issues, appreciating that the service requirement is in place for all students, understanding themselves and being introduced to different ethnicities, social classes and value systems. Some begin to really see the differences between charity and social justice and see that even well intended services often deny persons their self-determination and respect. Many students are able, for the first time, to see common ground with those that they serve and can articulate the profound impact the experience has on their lives.

### **Student Examples**

Student #1—Sarah, a junior marketing major, was conducting her service at an inner city soup kitchen. She tells of being face-to-face with a guest who, because of his diabetic condition, was unable to eat the food that was being served. She shared with the class that she, too, is diabetic and for the first time in her life, was forced to think about how medical conditions and hunger may be intertwined. She herself had never had the experience of not having the food necessary for her diabetic condition.

Student #2—Jim, a junior English major, was quite sure of his future as an author. Throughout his life, most things had gone his way. He is intelligent, outgoing, wealthy, and resourceful. After reading about social injustices and being faced with them in his service work with an immigrant population, he noted that for the first time in his life, he felt compelled to write about the struggles of humanity.

Student #3—Ken's insight came when he was helping a local church prepare for the Thanksgiving meal for the homeless. He was assigned the task of washing and polishing the wooden floor in the church. He recalled that hours of being on hands and bended knee brought him a profound awareness of serving. He wondered out loud if the persons cleaning floors were appreciated for their work.

### **THE FACULTY AND CURRICULUM**

The faculty of SRU embraces the service learning approach and realizes that service is not the domain of only the helping professions, but rather the center of any discipline. Students are encouraged and helped to see how their individual gifts and talents can be tied to service within their chosen fields. To further facilitate this, each year a series of courses are offered that have been designed with a service component. The service component is a natural extension to the classroom dialogue. Service outside of the classroom is connected very specifically to the course content and the concepts of building social capital and community development. Service courses have been offered in the fields of biology, business management, information systems management, nursing, politics, psychology, and social work. In the upcoming semester, four courses with a service learning component are being offered. Students taking an information systems management course have the opportunity to tutor older women at a local social

service agency who are attempting to increase their job skills and potential by gaining a certificate in Microsoft Office Systems. Students enrolled in a business management course partner with a non-profit organization and assist them by developing a marketing plan for the agency. Last year, the students in this class produced a plan for the city of New Orleans that would assist the city in bringing back tourism. A community and population focused nursing course puts students face-to-face with the life issues faced by developmentally disabled adults in a group home. Finally, a survey course in social problems analyzes race, gender, and class. In this last example, students enrolled in this social work course engage in 28 hours of experience in a social service agency of their choice.

At the front-end, students are challenged to understand the difference between charity and social justice. These distinctions are understood as follows: the fundamental principles of charity are that this is the response when there has been an accidental event, charity is spontaneous and temporary, and it is also non-controversial. In contrast, actions aimed at achieving social justice are required when the injustice is not accidental, the remedy is long-term and continuous, victims have experienced a multitude of discrimination and oppression, and the change needed to address the injustices is controversial (National Conference of Diocesan Directors of Religious Education). They are challenged to explore the myriad social problems that require an immediate approach, systemic change, and a combination of the two. Service is documented through journal entries that are a combination of descriptive detail and personal reflection. Students are encouraged to bring the theory of the classroom into the experience and the experience into the classroom. In preparation for the experience, papal encyclicals (*Peace on Earth, Work and the Economy*, and *Community Development*) and letters of the bishops are read and discussed to further the students' understanding of the Catholic ideology and principles of care and compassion. Specific focus is placed on obtaining a conceptual and practical understanding of the life and dignity of the human person, participation of the family and community, fundamental human rights and responsibilities, providing options for the poor and vulnerable, the dignity and rights of workers, solidarity, and care for God's creation (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1999).

A course of studies entitled VIA, which is an acronym for Vital Studies for Whole Life Design, is yet another way in which students are introduced in a very purposeful way to a life that includes service. VIA is a six course program that engages the average student who wants to broaden his or her education beyond a stated major and minor. The first courses in the VIA program introduce the students to a number of interdisciplinary readings and discussions that embrace the "Good Life" and "Great Ideas" and in the junior year prepare to take a course in action. In preparation for this course students spend the first half of the semester engaged in readings like *Habits of the Hearts: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* by Robert Bellah and *The Haves and the Have Nots*, edited by Barbara Solomon. Both of these texts focus on racial and social divides and economic injustices and ultimately challenge myths about poverty and social class. These readings then serve as an excellent foundational point of discussion when the students, in the second half of the semester, take on service work that is focused on those populations most in need.

## UNIVERSITY

The University supports and honors service learning. In an effort to encourage faculty to offer traditionally taught courses with a service component, courses can be offered as both three and four credit courses. This allows students to take a three credit course as a four credit course with service making up the fourth credit. Some years ago when this model was introduced, a number of faculty

workshops were held in order to discuss ways to bring service into the courses that had not attempted to do so, or thought it possible. Since then, different departments have taken the opportunity to offer service learning courses.

Faculty members are strongly encouraged, as part of their responsibility as members of the Salve Regina University community, to engage in service both on and off the campus. The service is regarded highly and becomes a point of serious consideration in the promotion and tenure process.

The manner in which service opportunities are afforded students and faculty at Salve Regina University brings together the best of the integration of knowledge, faith, reason, and the person. The experiences give great attention to the moral questions and active living of the mission.

## RESOURCES

*Service Learning Readings*, Salve Regina University.

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*, Reflection of the U.S. Catholic Bishops.

*Understanding Distinctions Between Responses of Charity and Justice*, The Social Justice Component for Religious Educators.

# To Do the Work of God:

## Catholic Colleges in the Mercy Tradition

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DANIEL P. SHERIDAN, PhD, SAINT JOSEPH'S COLLEGE OF MAINE

### MEMORY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The very acts of remembering Catherine McAuley may well stimulate constructive changes in the culture of our Catholic colleges and universities in the Mercy tradition. We can activate foundational memories of what Catherine McAuley was all about. But let me digress. Memory is not just recollection, an uninvited guest from the past. Memories ignite actions that can be incorporated into a culture. In the words of the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, “Remembering is not only welcoming, receiving an image of the past, it is also searching for it, ‘doing’ something. The verb ‘to remember’ stands in for the substantive ‘memory.’ What the verb designates is the fact that memory is ‘exercised.’”<sup>1</sup> Memory connects us to that past and draws the past into the present. Memory implicates us (1) as receivers, (2) as internalizers, and (3) as witnesses. In order to be faithful to memory, we must (1) allow its power to draw us in—be receivers as the past comes into the present, (2) we must act to achieve the memory—be internalizers by bringing the past into our present, and (3) we must then share it with others—be witnesses to the present power of the past.

Memories, engaging us as receivers, as internalizers, and as witnesses, should so form us (1) that our colleges become distinguishable from other colleges, and (2) that the organizational and community culture of our colleges, rooted in authentic memories, be inherited by their faculty, staff, and students. Culture results from interplay between the actions of people and their remembered inheritance. *Actions* make a culture. The *remembered inheritance* is the interpretative context, the steering current, for further actions. When an inheritance is no longer active in memory, the culture will wander from its authentic foundation. Further, *distinguishability* and *inheritability*, as specific dimensions of culture, are needed for the colleges to be true to their missions and for them to prosper in the future. *Distinguishability* and *inheritability* are thus mutual functions. Let me cite Morey and Piderit from their work, *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis*:

“*Distinguishability*, defined as the readily apparent differences between a specific culture and other competing cultures, is a necessary condition for a vibrant culture. So, too, is *inheritability*, or the ways of acting in a specific culture that assure authentic cultural assimilation by new groups that enter the culture. Clearly, distinguishability and inheritability are intimately related. If an organization’s culture cannot be distinguished by new actors joining the institution, there is no hope that these new actors will be formed or socialized by it. In fact, in an indistinguishable culture, it more likely that the process will work in reverse, with the content and symbols of the culture eventually being influenced by these new actors . . . To secure distinguishability at a Catholic university, proposed activities have to be significant in two senses. The activity must play a central role in the life of the university as a university, and the activity must be related to a central activity of Catholics . . . But unless the activity is also central to the core activities of a university, the activity does not establish

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 56.

distinguishability, though a frequently performed activity may contribute to distinguishability. . . . Because the concept of inheritability deals with the dynamics of culture, it pertains directly in situations of cultural change. A culture has to be able to absorb and form new members entering it, while retaining the commitment of those presently within it and remaining faithful to the ancestors who came before. If cultural changes are to make sense, they must be authentic in terms of previous cultural inheritance, gain acceptance by the existing group, and be sufficiently persuasive and intuitive that subsequent generations of participants in the culture will accept and be shaped by them. Cultural changes that are inauthentic or not contiguous with what has been inherited will create a cultural disconnect that disrupts rather than modifies cultural inheritance.”<sup>2</sup>

I am reminded of Cardinal Newman’s famous statement: “Old principles reappear under new forms. It changes . . . in order to remain the same. In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often.”<sup>3</sup>

## THE REMEMBERED LIFE OF CATHERINE MCAULEY

Most of us know the story. Catherine McAuley was born in Ireland, a land of sorrows and religious strife, on September 29, 1778. She was baptized as a Catholic shortly thereafter. However, her middle-class family, with a staunchly Catholic father but less committed mother, was very much immersed in the Protestant culture of Dublin. Her father, James, a builder, died in 1783 and the family’s fortunes declined. At the age of 19, she was confirmed and received her First Holy Communion. When her mother, Elinor, died in 1798, Catherine, 20 years old, went to live with Protestant relatives who discouraged her Catholicism. In 1803, she went to Cullock outside of Dublin to live with William and Catherine Callaghan, a childless Quaker couple who allowed only the most discrete practice of her faith. Mrs. Callaghan died in 1819, but not before converting through the power of Catherine’s example to her faith. Mr. Callaghan died in 1822, also converting, and leaving Catherine his entire fortune of 25,000 pounds [about one million dollars].

Catherine McAuley, now forty-four years of age, and very experienced in suffering and death, returned to Dublin and ended her hidden life. As an act of faith, she determined that her inheritance would not be spent on herself, but be used for the relief and instruction of the poor and that she would build a refuge for distressed women. Thus she began to build the House of Our Lady of Mercy on the corner of Baggot and Herbert Streets. It was dedicated on September 24, 1827, the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy when Catherine was 49. A group of women began gathering around her to help in this apostolate of service. At the suggestion of Archbishop Daniel Murray, in order to provide for the continuance of her work after her death, she started a congregation of Catholic religious women, the Sisters of Mercy. She and her companions professed vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty on December 12, 1831. They also took a fourth vow to take care of the poor, the sick, and the uneducated. Among the first seven Sisters who joined her community was Sister Mary Frances Warde, the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy in the United States. For the last 10 of 63 years of life, Catherine McAuley, once she was a vowed religious, was called Mother Mary Catherine. She traveled extensively, founding convents and schools. Very much respected for her holiness, she received the last sacraments and died of tuberculosis

<sup>2</sup> Melanie M. Morey and John J. Piderit, S.J., *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 31, 34–35, 38.

<sup>3</sup> John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p. 40.

on November 11, 1841. Tradition has it that her last words were: “Will you tell the Sisters to get a good cup of tea—I think the Community Room would be a good place—when I am gone, and to comfort one another, but God will also comfort them.”

These are the bare facts. How do these translate into an exercise and activation of memory in service of a college culture whose focus is higher education? A college culture that needs to be distinguishable and inheritable? In order to point in the direction of an answer, let me give four different examples of acts of memory of Catherine McAuley, which allow the power of the past to be the power of the present and the future.

## FIRST EXAMPLE: CATHERINE MCAULEY’S LIFE WORK

How does the remembered life of Catherine McAuley translate into an activation of memory in service to the culture of Catholic colleges in the Mercy tradition, cultures that need to be distinguishable and inheritable? In order to point in the direction of an answer, let me give four different examples of acts of memory of Catherine McAuley.

Sister. M. Joanna Regan, in her book, *Tender Courage*, which treats the life of Catherine McAuley, concludes:

She connected the rich to the poor  
the healthy to the sick  
the educated and skilled to the uninstructed  
the influential to those of no consequence  
the powerful to the weak . . .<sup>4</sup>

This is a “memory.” It lists her actions as the basis for a culture, but the list of actions is insufficient. Others have worked with the poor, the sick, the uninstructed, those of no consequence, and the weak. These actions do not create a distinguishable culture. Even though these works of mercy are the actions of the Catholic Church that are most acceptable to contemporary society, they are also at the basis of most current social welfare programs. These acts of charity, or of social welfare, are valued by contemporary society, but many consider the Catholic theological basis for these activities, as intended by Catherine McAuley, to be “excess ideological baggage.” Yet, this excess baggage, the basis in Catholic faith for the works of mercy, allows a distinguishable and inheritable culture at our colleges.

Let me read the passage from Sister Joanna again:

“She connected the rich to the poor  
the healthy to the sick  
the educated and skilled to the uninstructed  
the influential to those of no consequence  
the powerful to the weak  
*to do the work of God.*”

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<sup>4</sup> M. Joanna Regan, R.S.M., *Tender Courage* (Gwynned Valley, PA: Gwynned Mercy College, 1978).



Notice the added last line which I did not cite the first time, “to do the work of God.” Here is the real memory! The steering current for a distinguishable culture that can be inherited! Without “to do the work of God,” our colleges would be like other colleges. With “to do the work of God,” they can be Catholic colleges in the Mercy tradition in accord with the memory of Catherine McAuley.

## SECOND EXAMPLE: CATHERINE MCAULEY’S MERCY SPIRITUALITY

Sister Kathleen Healy in her book, *Sisters of Mercy: Spirituality in America 1843-1900*, activates a Catholic memory of Catherine McAuley. “For Catherine, love of God and one another always remained the precious heritage of the Sisters of Mercy as followers of Christ.”<sup>5</sup> Healy lists five characteristics of Mercy spirituality as founded by Catherine McAuley.

- (1) “continual interior contemplative renewal in love combined with active service of God in love.” The spiritual and the corporal works of mercy are reciprocal with prayer and service. Action without contemplation is empty.
- (2) “firm belief in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, revealing the gifts of the Spirit to both the congregation and individual Sisters.” According to Healy, Catherine McAuley’s special gift was the service of the sick poor; Frances Warde’s was instruction of adults in the faith. The Mercy apostolate can take more than one form.
- (3) “the vocation of Sisters of Mercy as witnesses to Christ . . . the best means of helping one’s neighbor is to live a life of holiness itself.” Practicing what one preaches is a key Mercy principle stemming from Catherine McAuley.
- (4) “the strong conviction that Sisters of Mercy should serve in love the needs of the people of God in the age and culture in which they find themselves.” The works of mercy are to be determined by the contemporary needs of the people.
- (5) “profound confidence in her Sisters and insistence that they too trust one another . . . A quality of Mercy spirituality that can always be stressed in the life of Catherine McAuley is courage, daring, and risk-taking for Christ.” The spirit of mercy can be handed over to others with confidence because mercy is a gift from God.

These memories of Catherine McAuley, as exercised by Sister. Kathleen Healy, are embedded in the specifics of the Catholic faith. [However, I note that there is no specific mention of the Catholic sacraments and liturgy, or of the specific vows of a Catholic religious community, such as obedience, chastity, and poverty.] To forget that the Catholic faith is what makes sense of the memory is to wander far from the actual memory of Catherine McAuley. A college in the Mercy tradition is one with a Catholic identity.

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<sup>5</sup> Kathleen Healy, R.S.M., ed., *Sisters of Mercy: Spirituality in America 1843-1900* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), p.5.

<sup>6</sup> Mary C. Sullivan, R.S.M., Ph.D., “Catherine McAuley and the Characteristics of Mercy Higher Education,” *The MAST Journal* XVI, no. 2 (2006), pp. 18-26

### THIRD EXAMPLE: CATHERINE MCAULEY'S ENDURING EDUCATIONAL VALUES

Another example of the activation of memory is the recent paper of Sister Mary Sullivan, "Catherine McAuley and the Characteristics of Mercy Higher Education."<sup>6</sup> Sullivan listed six educational values, based in the life and teaching of Catherine McAuley. "Creative fidelity to the values in the Mercy heritage bequeathed to us by God through Catherine McAuley involves both knowing her contextualized philosophy and theology of education, as revealed in her instructions and practice, and interpreting her views in the context of present realities." The values are:

- (1) "the dignity to be accorded each student and educational co-worker."
- (2) "the fundamental necessity of Christian learning and spiritual development."
- (3) "a special concern, in learning and practice, for those who suffer material poverty."
- (4) "a persistent effort to diminish all sorts of debilitating ignorance."
- (5) "the primacy to be always given to mercifulness and spiritual consolation."
- (6) "the demanding effort to 'practice what we teach/preach,' i.e., to be ourselves, as teachers and administrators, insofar as humanly possible, examples of the Mercy heritage we wish to share with others."

### FOURTH EXAMPLE: "CULTURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MERCY EDUCATION"

In 2004, the Conference for Mercy Higher Education circulated a White Paper entitled, "Mercy Higher Education: Culture and Characteristics." It stated: "While each Mercy institution of higher education has its own mission statement and articulated core values, four characteristics unmistakably define the formative culture of every Mercy campus:

- (1) "regard for the dignity of the person."
- (2) "academic excellence and lifelong learning."
- (3) "education of the whole person: body, mind, and spirit."
- (4) "promotion, through action and education, of compassion and justice towards those with less, especially women and children."

Anchored in these four characteristics, the culture of a Mercy college or university endeavors to witness its Catholic identity and to honor its Mercy heritage."<sup>7</sup>

When I first read this paper three years ago, my judgment was that the four characteristics were pretty thin as descriptors of Catholic higher education in the Mercy tradition. I thought that they did not actually describe the characteristics of Catholic higher education in the Mercy tradition. In the light of the above examples, they do not reveal any "distinguishability" for Mercy colleges and universities from other institutions of higher education. They are not based on the specific memory of Catherine McAuley. As stated, they do not promote an "inheritable" culture.

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<sup>7</sup> "Mercy Higher Education: Culture and Characteristics." Discussion Paper. Winter 2004 Draft (Chicago: Conference for Mercy Higher Education, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Sullivan, p. 24.

Sister. Sullivan, in her paper mentioned above, also noted that something is missing in the four characteristics. She states politely: “With some modification, I accept these four characteristics. However, in light of the founding views of Catherine McAuley, which I have discussed, and allowing for some slight extension of her views in accord with evolving theological, ecumenical, and inter-faith understandings as well as present economic and social circumstances, I would like to suggest the addition of three more characteristics:

- 5) “religious learning and spiritual development, through frequent courses in Christian theology and the Scriptures, courses in other religions, Catholic liturgical celebrations, and other religious events.”<sup>8</sup>

Sullivan notes, “I do not believe that the wording, ‘education of the whole person: body, mind, and spirit,’ is adequate to represent this central element in the Mercy heritage coming to us from Catherine McAuley. While Catherine herself would, I believe, have surely embraced the ecumenical and inter-faith respect, aspirations, and understandings of the present time, she would not wish such desirable collaboration and co-learning to silence or diminish a courteous emphasis on and provision for explicitly Christian, and where necessary, Catholic religious education and experience. Such an emphasis was the primary, though not the only, characteristic of her practice of the works of mercy, including the work of education.”

- (6) “education in and a commitment to mercifulness, as revealed in the Mercy of God made manifest in Jesus Christ;”

- (7) “strenuous efforts to give good example by modeling, individually and corporately, all the values the school seeks to promote through its educational and other endeavors.”<sup>9</sup>

## FIFTH EXAMPLE: “THE WORKS OF MERCY: THE HEART OF CATHOLICISM”

My fifth example is the fine book by Father James F. Keenan, S.J. Keenan’s thesis is God-centered. “God’s mercy makes human love possible.”<sup>10</sup> Keenan defines mercy as willingness to enter into the chaos of others. Thus the creation of the world by God is an act of mercy where God brought order out of chaos. The Incarnation of the Word in the person of Jesus Christ is the entry of God into human chaos. “And redemption is bringing us out of the chaos of our slavery to sin.” When we experience God, we experience God’s mercy for us, the primary premise for an authentic human work of mercy. Keenan concludes with a meditation on the phrase from the Mass, *Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world have, mercy on us*. The mercy that the Lamb of God grants us is union with God, one of Catherine McAuley’s foundational principles.

He makes four points.

- (1) “God never intrudes, but invites; we are free to accept or reject the invitation.” God’s mercy makes union with God possible. We are always free. Every work of mercy that we perform must recognize our own sinfulness and need for mercy.

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<sup>9</sup> Sullivan, pp. 25–26..

<sup>10</sup> James F. Keenan, S.J. *The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism*, (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), p. xi.

- (2) “The presence of God is illuminating.” Or, in accord with Catherine McAuley, to do an act of mercy is “to do the work of God.”
- (3) “Our union with God never replaces our relationships with one another.” It is truer to say that God loves us than to say God loves me. As Keenan says: “In union with God, the variety of human relationships remains intact, and, like us, the relationships are respected and become consecrated by the abiding presence of God.”
- (4) “Union with God.” A merciful God comes to us, not we to God. We were created in an act of God’s mercy to be one with God. When we show mercy to another, perform one of the works of mercy, we always discover that God was there first.

## CONCLUSIONS

The memory of Catherine McAuley, a fine Catholic woman, should play a creative role in forming the cultures of our Catholic colleges in the Mercy tradition. We can bring our questions to bear as receivers, as internalizers, and as witnesses to the memory of Catherine McAuley. “Is Catherine McAuley out of date?” “Can the memory of Catherine McAuley still be activated so that our college and universities are distinguishable and inheritable?” Another way to put these questions might be: “Can ‘mercy’ really be a distinguishing and inheritable feature of the culture of a Catholic college?” Based on the retrieval of memories of Catherine McAuley activated here, we answer the questions with an emphatic YES. Why?

Yes, (1) simply, because, as Catherine McAuley taught, the works of mercy flow from the heart of Catholic faith. Yes, (2) simply, because Catherine McAuley’s gift to the generations that follow her is the operation and sponsorship of institutions of higher education precisely as works of mercy, as works of God.

In conclusion, if memory is an exercise and activation, if the Catholic cultures of our colleges and universities in the Mercy tradition need to be distinguishable and inheritable, then the appropriate actions need to be ours. Our memory of Catherine McAuley should challenge us as educators to have the courage to see higher education as a work of mercy, as an activity of a compassionate mind and heart inspired by the love of God. The multifaceted memory of Catherine McAuley encourages us to fulfill the missions of our colleges (1) in order “to do the work of God” [Regan], (2) based on “. . . continual interior contemplative renewal in love combined with active service of God in love” [Healy], (3) founded on “the dignity to be accorded each student and educational co-worker” [Sullivan], (4) striving for “academic excellence and life-long learning” [Conference for Mercy Higher Education], and (5) because “God’s mercy makes human love possible” [Keenan]. We should all follow Catherine McAuley, a Catholic woman, of beloved memory.

## Making Connections

Water flowing in and through our cities requires us to build bridges in order to connect with one another. How can we build bridges between and among our institutions? What kinds of collaborations can we create to further our institutions' missions? *Emma T. Lucas-Darby, PhD, LSW, Chrys Gabrich, PhD, Christine Eberle, MA, Betsy Stone Plummer, MS, LSW, and Deanna Acklie, PhD*, offer “snapshots” of bridges reaching out from the institutions they represent.

# Connecting to the Community at Its Doors: The Mercy Neighborhood Ministries

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EMMA T. LUCAS-DARBY, PhD, LSW, CARLOW UNIVERSITY

*Two bright and healthy yellow roses are symbolic of the relationship between Mercy Neighborhood Ministries and the West Oakland community. Just as water is necessary to nurture this plant, the relationship between these two entities nurture each other.*

## INTRODUCTION

Sister Fidelis has been a guest presenter in the social work course, Macro Practice III, for the past two years. The information she presented always fit well with the course content. However, most often she did not use the same terminology that the text or I used. During her presentation and the debriefing, students were challenged to relate the information they had heard to the materials covered in class. The connections were always present and frequently easily identifiable. I told Sister Fidelis on several occasions that someone should begin documenting all the work that she was doing in the West Oakland community.

One day as I was arriving home from work, a neighbor commented that she had been with the Women of West Oakland (WOWOs) earlier in the day and that she thought Sister Fidelis was wonderful. This brought a new dimension to the value of the work Mercy Neighborhood Ministries (MNM) and Sister Fidelis were doing for the community. With the information I had from Sister Fidelis' class presentations, my observance of the WOWO's present at campus events, and my neighbor's comments, I decided that I would start the documentation process.

I am approaching this ongoing qualitative study as a work in progress. When I began this project, I thought I could look at the academic connections, but as I began, I realized there are several other perspectives that must be addressed. These include an analysis of the Sister Fidelis' leadership style and the connections between the Mercy Outreach work, Catherine McAuley's advocacy work, and Catholic Social Teachings. Therefore, this paper covers the birth of the Mercy Neighborhood Ministries and the Mercy Outreach and some of the activities that are planned and supported by them. An examination of the assessment approach used to determine the community's needs and the sensitivity to working with the community are addressed.

## THE BEGINNING

During the middle of the summer in July 1999, Sister Georgine Scarpino called me and said that there is a ministry the Chapter approved in 1996 that we've never launched. She asked me, "Would you be willing to set this up?" I said, "Give me some time to think about this and I'll get back to you." In two weeks I agreed. That was the start of Mercy Neighborhood Ministries (MNM), a division of Mercy Outreach Ministries. The Sisters of Mercy passed a Chapter mandate in 1996 to have an active presence in West Oakland.



The MNM is a division of the Mercy Outreach Ministries which was incorporated in 2002. All programs of the Outreach Ministries are to be managed and operated consistent with the traditions, spirit, and charisms of the Sisters of Mercy of Allegheny County and rooted in the gospel and legacy of Catherine McAuley. The Ministries would minister to the poor through compassionate and competent services that reflect the gospel mandate to be just, to be merciful, to love, and to be consistent with the teachings, traditions, theology, and Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church.

Skills as a program developer, change agent, and community organizer would be utilized if MNM would become a reality. Cognizant of the work that lay ahead, Sister Fidelis focused on the shared values and interest of the community and MNM, as well as inventorying community interests and resources. She also looked at the capacity to use the resources to act on the interests. She envisioned the development of new relationships out of the old contacts, as well as linking one person to another and whole networks of people to each other (Ganz, 2002). Ganz continues and notes the actions of an organizer deepen people's understanding of who they are, what they want, and why they want it. People are then able to articulate their values and identify the challenges, as well as strategies for facing the challenges, while remaining aware of their being as individuals and as community (p. 16).

## **THE WEST OAKLAND COMMUNITY**

During the 1960s and '70s the population of this community began to change. Families, many of whom were Irish, moved out or died, and the racial make-up shifted to predominantly African American. Based on the 2000 census and data for West Oakland and Oak Hill, 81 percent of all neighborhood families with children under 18 live in poverty compared the 15 percent of all Allegheny County residents. Seventy-seven percent of households with children under 18 are headed by single women. Ninety-one percent of births were to single women, with 28 percent of these births to teen mothers. Approximately, half of the residents over 25 years of age had not completed high school.

## **ANSWERING THE MANDATE: GETTING STARTED AND ASSESSING THE COMMUNITY**

In September 1999 Sister Fidelis began working to establish the Mercy Neighborhood Ministries (MNM). Based on the Chapter mandate, the objectives of MNM are:

- Make the Mercy mission a living reality for the people of West Oakland.
- Broaden understanding among these diverse neighborhoods and the Sisters of Mercy.
- Improve relations based in the sharing of values, spirituality, and Mercy resources.
- Improve the quality of life through programs, especially for women, children, and families.

After accepting this assignment to start a new ministry, Sister Fidelis realized the need to determine the existing resources in the community. She stated,

“I had to think about all the resources—they would be Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, the Sisters of Mercy—the whole thing of the Works of Mercy. That was my first guide—that which you know including educating you need education, mercy to the sick, help to the dying, feed the hungry—those sorts of things. But, my collegial background, my experience and work in planning dictated that I conduct a survey. I said, ‘OK, we have to find out what the people think and what they need.’

The Mercy Neighborhood Ministries had a vision to assist their neighbors in a new way and at the same time meet an unmet community need. The ideal functioning of a community to meet all its residents' needs is seldom a reality. The desire to be more than social entrepreneur was the impetus to provide needed community services. Such activities, according to Breuggemann (2006, p. 277) is program development and focuses on helping people construct their own social reality, meet their own needs, add to the store of social capital, and assist in making communities stronger and healthier. As a change agent and program developer, Sister Fidelis realized the need to assess gaps in services and the changing needs of the community. "I had to somehow get to the people, to have them to talk to me. I had the background with the history of the Sisters of Mercy working in the community and I learned a great deal from the old Sister that I accompanied in the community," stated Sister Fidelis.

Communities have varying levels of strengths and resources that must be uncovered and recognized. These strengths and resources within a community are grouped into four realms: power, expertise, funding, and service. Subsequently, a needs assessment is a critical first step in program development, and one that will produce both change and empowerment (Hancock and Minkler cited in Homan, 2008). This process involves several activities including gaining entry into the community, developing rapport, building credibility, and solving problems, notes Hardcastle, Wenocur & Powers, (1997). Homan (2008) cautions that to focus only problems will produce a listing of maladies with which the community is already aware, thus reducing the community to a repository of problems and confirming desperation (p. 111). A strengths-based approach allows for a process that also reveals community assets and potential. Careful planning for community problem solving and assessment involves several considerations:

- The community whose unmet needs you intend to clarify
- The range of needs you intent to examine
- The process of getting the information you need
- The method you will use to interpret the information
- The time and money you need to do this
- Who will own this information
- How this information will be used (Homan, 2008, p. 113).

As a program developer and change agent, Sister Fidelis focused on obtaining information that identified gaps in services and community assets that could be pooled to respond to identified gaps. In order to identify and verify community needs, interviews were conducted and a questionnaire was distributed in 1999. Using a cross-sectional design, the survey was carried out at one point in time. A community assessment process may be a complex and demanding task. The community programmer and change agent respond to existing community situation while also focusing on long-term community welfare. Assessment and community problem solving require focused thinking by the change agent. Hardcastle, Wenocur and Powers (1997) identify "ideal steps" that can guide the thinking of the change agent:

- Problem intake (identification, delineation if a social problem),
- Selection of potential problem-solving actors (construction, location of the action group or system),
- Determination of desired goals and potential consensus,
- Specification of types of action outcome (e.g., alleviate condition, control, rehabilitate, prevent, innovate)
- Analysis of the facets of the anticipated intervention,
- Inventory and evaluation of resources,

- Specification of means/actions to attain goals,
- Selection of priorities (among problems, needs, and services)
- Implementation of decisions made to reach solutions (allocation of resources),
- Evaluation (ongoing and feedback).

The distribution of the questionnaire required Sister Fidelis to go throughout West Oakland and through most of the streets in the community.

“I went from street to street and hand delivered it to everybody so I could also meet people. I came up to one house and the lady said she did not understand. I asked if she would mind if I came in, and she said, ‘Come on in.’ It wasn’t long before I realized she was on her way to Alzheimer’s. I was shocked that I would go into this house and did not know the lady. So, I stopped doing that. But, there were other people to would stand there and talk with me. It was very nice.”

Twenty-five residents responded and gave “excellent information.” Feeling a need to talk with more residents, Sister Fidelis asked the administrator of a local social service agency for names of residents whom she could ask to be a part of a focus group. At this point, the residents were contacted, the project was explained, and they were invited to come to the Mercy House. “They were happy to talk. I was still trying to find out their needs and strengths,” noted Sister Fidelis. Determining when to stop assessing is not always clear, but more immediate is the task of organizing the data collected.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND TAKING ACTION

A middle step in assessment involves action on the basis of information gathered, a transitioning to problem solving and developing task strategies ((Hardcastle, Wenocur, and Powers, 1997). These authors further suggest an integration of processes: open-minded inquiry combined with purposeful proceeding (p. 183). Having collected data, the task of analyzing it was about to begin. Several areas were clear from the data. The conversations revealed so much about the residents’ personal lives including the spousal and personal abuse they had encountered. Other needs identified in the survey were a center for seniors, homeownership, housing repairs, and teen programs. The senior citizens identified a gathering place or senior center as a priority. “So, I realized this was a starting point for me, and I needed to organize the seniors,” stated Sister Fidelis. While there is an existing church in the community, more community interaction was needed. Responding to the desire for more socialization activities, Sister Fidelis noted:

“They didn’t know each other. We had a house full of senior citizens, so I could bring the two groups together. The neighborhood could come to the Sisters of Mercy, and vice versa, the Sisters of Mercy could go to the neighborhood. This was a big thing, because still to this day, they’ll say ‘Carlow’ when they mean the Sisters of Mercy. And, I’ll say Mercy Neighborhood Ministries, and they’ll say ‘Sisters from Carlow.’ And the big goal was socialization. The neighbors did not know each other. So, I thought, this is where we can have an impact and then move on from there.”

The data clearly identified one area. Sister Fidelis commented, “I knew not to go religious,” meaning not to focus activities on the teaching of religion. She recalled being asked during the second year how many people she had converted to Catholicism. She quickly responded by noting the people she was interacting with were deeply religious. “These people believe in God; they are all God-fearing people. They don’t need to be converted; we just need to welcome them.”

The most significant need, according to Sister Fidelis' analysis, was a recreational and multi-purpose facility to house activities for all West Oakland residents. In addition, the respondents noted that the neighborhood needed a safe, off-street, place for school-age children to play. Homeownership, house repairs, and educational programs were also addressed. Sister Fidelis was a member of the board of Breachmenders for several years until October 2006.

MNM always helped children in the neighborhood by offering families scholarships for after-school tuition. The needs of individual residents have been met often by the identification and pooling resources of the Sisters of Mercy and Catholic Charities.

## **THE WOMEN OF WEST OAKLAND (WOWO)**

The needs assessment uncovered a need of the Women of West Oakland to interact with each other. This was also supported by interviews with other community workers. According to Sister Fidelis, "it is extremely important for these women, some of whom would be hiding in their homes." Initially, the women got together for bingo at the Mercy Convent. After several gatherings that were very successful and that showed the enjoyment of being together, discussions centered on naming the group and establishing a governance structure. The name Women of West Oakland or WOWOs was suggested and everyone loved it. The activities of the WOWOs have been continuous since.

## **MERCY OUTREACH AND OTHER COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING**

Based on data from the needs assessment, the Mercy Outreach has offered several programs and camps for neighborhood children. Among the activities planned and organized by Mercy Outreach are sports clinics – soccer, tennis, and volleyball; Tae Kwon Do lessons, robotics camp, and education outreach funds. Most of these have been offered in partnership with St. Agnes School, New Beginnings of the Breachmenders Community Development, and Carlow's School for Social Change and Athletic Department.

## **CONCLUSION**

Sister Fidelis continues to be a change agent and community programmer for the West Oakland community. She employs established community development approaches as she engages with the community. The beauty is that she does all of this because she knows it should be done. As has been indicated earlier, she is also a social entrepreneur who is intent upon providing needed community services that community residents themselves have identified.

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## APPENDIX

### SISTERS OF MERCY NEIGHBORHOOD MINISTRY

#### Neighborhood Census, 1999

STREET: \_\_\_\_\_ HOUSE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

Apt. #: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIPCODE: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY LAST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check:

Working \_\_\_\_\_

Retired \_\_\_\_\_

Disabled \_\_\_\_\_

Student \_\_\_\_\_

RESIDENTS:

Name	Age	Sex	Relationship	In school/level	Can Read	Can Write
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____



_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Home Owner: \_\_\_\_\_ Renter: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Housing:

Single dwelling \_\_\_\_\_ Apartment \_\_\_\_\_ Town House \_\_\_\_\_

Income Level:

Low: (-\$15,000) \_\_\_\_\_ Medium: (\$15,001-\$30,000) \_\_\_\_\_ Upper (\$30,001+) \_\_\_\_\_

Other important family information:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

On the other side, please let us know your thoughts.

OVER

1. From your experience, what are three major needs on your block? or in your neighborhood?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What problems are affecting the HEALTH of your neighborhood?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you feel safe in this neighborhood?

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If you keep a gun in your home, vehicle, other, why do you feel this is necessary?

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4. Are there children/teens in your neighborhood? \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate some of their needs. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. In this neighborhood are there senior citizens with special needs?

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The Sisters of Mercy welcome you to their home. Would you be interested in hearing of some activities we offer? \_\_\_\_\_

What is it you desire most for your neighborhood? \_\_\_\_\_

# Service Learning: The Power of University-Community Connections

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CHRYL GABRICH, PhD, CARLOW UNIVERSITY

Service learning has become a prominent feature in American education, K-12, as well as in many colleges and universities. Currently, over one half of all high school students are involved in community projects, and over 1,000 colleges and universities are members of Campus Compact. This commitment to service learning extends beyond our school districts and campuses. Even our elected officials and policy makers view service learning as a means to engage our youth in their communities and to build a sense of civic responsibility. Furthermore, philanthropic organizations have funded many service learning initiatives across the United States. (Butin, 2003)

Over the past 20 years we have witnessed this tremendous growth in service learning by educational institutions, government agencies, and not-for-profit groups. As faculty members, administrators, and staff at Mercy colleges and universities, we must take pride in the commitment of the Sisters of Mercy to serving those in need. We must appreciate and understand that service learning is deeply rooted in the Mercy tradition, and we must explore ways that Mercy colleges and universities can work together to build on this tradition and take a leadership role in service learning in higher education.

This presentation will outline the strong connection between service learning and Mercy higher education and will propose initiatives in which service learning can help our institutions “build bridges” with our students and alumnae, as well as with the communities that surround our institutions. I will also discuss strategies by which service learning “builds bridges” on our individual campuses and within our respective institutions. Finally, I will propose several service learning projects that can help “bridge” connections between all Mercy institutions of higher education.

Before I discuss the connection between service learning and Mercy higher education, it is important to define this concept. Service learning usually takes place in two distinct venues on campuses:

1. **Service learning courses** integrate research and reading about social issues with community service. Faculty, in partnership with community organizations, design service learning projects so that they advance students’ understandings of the specific course content and related civic learning about the community needs.

Bringle and Hatcher (1995) state that “service-learning is a course-based, credit-bearing, educational activity in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility” (112). Students enrolled in these classes are expected to work in the community, to learn about and reflect on the community projects where they provided the service, and to understand the connection between this service activity and the learning objectives of the course.

2. **Co-curricular service learning** differs only with regard to a link to course content. The activity still has specific learning goals for participants who engage in service activities for community-

identified needs and the process of reflection and analysis is still critical to learning. In these co-curricular, community based projects, students understand the social, economic, and political issues that these agencies address, they collaborate and support the community organization, and they often reflect on their experiences and learning. Generally, these service learning activities are directed by student organizations and groups.

Service learning on college campuses helps students understand an academic discipline and develop a commitment to civic responsibility. In both course-based and co-curricular venues, the primary focus of service learning is to enhance students' classroom experiences with real life lessons that come from immersion into the community service. Linking abstract knowledge with human needs helps students appreciate the power of learning.

Most Mercy colleges and universities have offices that support both venues for service learning on their campuses. These offices and their staff work with the students, faculty, and community agencies to help make such service a positive experience for all. Mercy colleges and universities sponsor these initiatives because they see service learning as an integral part of their missions; it is one way that these institutions honor their founders, the Sisters of Mercy, and their vow to serve those in need.

In the Conference for Mercy Higher Education's "Culture and Characteristics Paper," Dr. Maryanne Stevens, RSM, President of College of Saint Mary, articulates four hallmarks of Mercy higher education. In *Introducing Students to Theological Reflection and Social Analysis: A Handbook for Facilitators of Service Learning at Colleges and Universities Founded or Sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy*, Reed-Bouley and Reed-Bouley (2007) describe the connection between these four hallmarks and service learning.

1. **Regard for the dignity of the human person.** This quality is grounded in classic Catholic anthropology indicating that God created humanity in His image and likeness, and therefore as good. Thus, humans possess an inherent dignity and God calls on us to become collaborators in caring for the common good of humankind and the world. Service learning is an excellent way for Mercy colleges and universities to teach students about human dignity—both students' own dignity and the dignity of those they help to serve. On Mercy campuses, students learn that they are not "servers" to those in need, but are collaborators with community partners to help those partners achieve their goals to provide to those in need.
2. **Academic excellence and lifelong learning.** The Catholic intellectual tradition emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge, truth, and faith. Service learning complements this hallmark because it helps students gain knowledge, skills, and values. If service learning experiences are appropriately designed to include learning and reflection, then students will gain a better understanding of social needs and develop a lifelong commitment to learning through community engagement.
3. **Education of the whole person.** Mercy higher education strives to educate the whole person in an integrated way. Colleges and universities strive to meet this goal by providing educational opportunities for all students inside and outside the classroom, from athletics to student organizations, to service learning experiences. All these opportunities help students develop their minds, bodies, and spirits. Service learning is a critical element in educating the "whole person" by addressing the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

#### 4. **Promotion of compassion and justice towards those with less, especially women and children.**

This is the most distinctive hallmark of Mercy higher education because it is connected to the unique fourth vow that all Sisters of Mercy take, which is service to the poor, the sick, and the ignorant. Service learning promotes compassion by offering students opportunities to learn what life is like for persons who may have vastly different experiences than they may have had. By glimpsing others' realities and gaining an understanding of their suffering, students may develop compassion for others. (Reed-Bouley, 2007, 4-6)

Reed-Bouley and Reed-Bouley (2007) clearly link service learning experiences to the four hallmarks of Mercy higher education, thus giving credibility to all the service initiatives that are currently sponsored by Mercy colleges and universities. They also affords a greater appreciation and deeper understanding our founders and the ways that Catherine McAuley's mission lives on today.

In the spirit of the Carlow Roundtable, I would like to discuss initiatives by which service learning can "build bridges" and make connections for all students, as well as the communities that surround our institutions. Also, I will outline strategies by which service learning "builds bridges" on Mercy college campuses. Finally, I will propose several service learning projects that can help "bridge" connections between all Mercy institutions of higher education. I will attempt to demonstrate the powerful connections that service learning can be for all—students, community, university, and other Mercy Higher Education institutions.

### **SERVICE LEARNING BUILDS BRIDGES FOR STUDENTS**

- One hallmark of Mercy higher education is to educate the whole person and service learning clearly supports our students' cognitive, spiritual, and emotional development.
- Service learning is directly connected to the Sisters of Mercy's fourth vow of service. Therefore, when students engage in this activity, they better understand the Mercy mission and its heritage, thus helping them better understand and live the mission of Mercy institutions of higher education.
- Generally, students engage in service learning projects as a group, which gives them opportunities to meet and socialize with other students and community members. These group activities help students to connect with others and to join a community of learners on their campuses.
- By engaging in service learning projects, students learn about social issues and develop organizational and interpersonal skills that will enhance their future careers.
- Service learning builds social responsibility and citizenship skills in our students.

### **SERVICE LEARNING BUILDS BRIDGES WITH THE COMMUNITY**

- When higher education engages in service learning, all members of the university community have a clearer and more empathetic understanding of the communities that surround their institutions. By establishing these connections, the university is no longer an oasis, but is a partner in helping to make that environment a better place for all.



- By engaging in direct, hands-on activities that support the missions of community agencies, students provide an immediate benefit for those organizations and build long-lasting goodwill between the university and its neighbors.
- Service learning projects clearly support agencies with limited resources to achieve their goals.

## **SERVICE LEARNING BUILDS BRIDGES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY**

- Service learning is an excellent opportunity for building partnerships between academic affairs and student life offices. Both of these offices are essential in the education of students, yet they seldom work together on projects. Service learning is one venue in which their knowledge and resources can be shared to better support the education of the whole student.
- Service learning also provides multiple opportunities for faculty members' scholarship. This research could support the community organizations, or it could expand the understanding in a discipline or an approach to teaching and learning.
- Research has shown that when students engage in service learning activities, they feel more connected to others and to the university. In turn, this connection assists our student retention rate.
- When universities partner with community groups, both institutions benefit. Faculty members and staff from the university may be invited to participate in community advisory committees. In turn, community members may serve on university advisory committees or give guest lectures to classes on campus.
- When universities are engaged in service activities in their communities, the city or county governments may recognize these hours of service as contributions to the community in lieu of tax payment. Some local governments are examining the tax-exempt status of not-for-profit organizations, such as universities. As government agencies examine this issue, universities also are exploring the multiple ways they support their communities. One concrete way is the hours of service that students and faculty provide to community groups. In lieu of financial compensation, universities provide hours of labor to their communities.

## **SERVICE LEARNING BUILDS BRIDGES BETWEEN MERCY INSTITUTIONS**

- Mercy colleges and universities should consider establishing a service learning research initiative. This unique initiative will bridge the divide between scholars and students at Mercy higher education institutions, social service providers, corporate leaders, and community activists. Its focus will be to encourage and facilitate research on service learning across Mercy colleges. This initiative will support faculty scholarship and will promote the Mercy commitment to service.
- In addition to this research focus, this joint venture across Mercy institutions might also sponsor seminars, workshops, and networking events on topics of importance to women and children. Furthermore, the initiative might publish a newsletter, conference papers, instructional materials, bibliographies, student research papers, and other documents pertinent to service learning. Such joint initiatives reflect current trends for collaboration among universities and embody the Mercy mission by concentrating on human problems and service to the community.

The Roundtable in Carlow, Ireland, provides all participants with an opportunity to explore our roots and examine how our common heritage influences our current identities and missions. I argue that service learning is an essential part of our heritage that shapes our current identities and can direct our future as Mercy Higher Education Institutions.

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# Mercy Works: Building Bridges One Heart at a Time

CHRISTINE EBERLE, MA, AND BETSY STONE PLUMMER, MS, GWYNEDD-MERCY COLLEGE

*(Catherine McAuley) connected the rich to the poor, the healthy to the sick, the educated and skilled to the uninstructed, the influential to those of no consequence, the powerful to the weak, to do the work of God on earth.”*

—*Tender Courage*, p. 135

## MERCY WORKS: BUILDING BRIDGES ONE HEART AT A TIME

All institutions that walk in the spirit of Catherine McAuley share her concern for the poor, sick, and uneducated, and her commitment to serve not with dispassionate charity, but through the *compassionate connection* of individuals. Gwynedd-Mercy College (GMC) has always encouraged direct community service through our academic programs, student organizations, and campus ministry. In 2004, however, a new program was formed, Mercy Works, which indicated an increased level of commitment to this ideal. Originally a grant-funded program within the Office of Campus Ministry, Mercy Works' primary role is to be the campus hub for community service opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. This program serves as a visible, unifying, and energizing force in the development of our Mercy mission of service to society. This paper will explore the impact of Mercy Works' connections through a variety of “bridge” analogies.

### Bridges Are Eye-Catching

From the majestic Golden Gate Bridge in California to the most humble covered bridge in New England, bridges are more than simply functional. They draw the eye, rivet the attention. Giving GMC's community service program a name—Mercy Works—was a first step in increasing the visibility of service on campus. A Mercy Works program administrator was hired, who gathered an advisory board, which then brainstormed additional ways to “brand” the program:

- A logo was developed with the Mercy cross embracing the globe; it is used on all Mercy Works promotion, literature, and giveaways. These include things like notepads and Frisbees for new students and T-shirts for participants traveling on service experiences. It is also used for major events imprinted on programs, banners, a display tablecloth, and within PowerPoint presentations. A grant from the Verizon Foundation enabled the program to lease a van with the logo on the side windows. Whenever students travel to service sites or even drive across campus, the Mercy Works name and logo is visible.
- There is a Mercy Works motto: “See. Feel. Think. Act. Mercy Works!” This motto was derived from four questions used in group reflection following every experience of service and serves as a simple way to remember them. A central goal of Mercy Works is to increase the depth of experience students have when they are involved in service through reflective questions such as these. Ideally, all students, faculty and staff who lead Mercy Works projects will be trained to use these questions so that student participants come to expect them and to reflect naturally on them each time they are involved in service.

- Mercy Works established Gwynedd-Mercy College's annual Celebration of Service. This event, held in late April, recognizes the service activities of individuals, student organizations, residence hall floors, athletic teams, and academic departments, thus raising the profile of service on campus to a new level. Everyone who has participated in some type of service activity is invited and receives a certificate for their participation. The focus is not on the "most" or "best" service involvement, but rather the large number of people who have done some type of service, and the collective impact of the College over the course of the year.

## Bridges Span Differences

Whether connecting Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Camden, NJ, or Dublin's North-of-the-Liffey to South-of-the-Liffey, bridges often serve to link otherwise disconnected realities. For many students, pastoral Gwynedd Valley is an island: comfortable and insular. In order to give them a true Mercy education, it is urgent that the College connect students with people who are unlike themselves—that they learn from, and not just about, people who are poor or marginalized. The Mercy Works program provides students with many bridges over the troubled waters that ordinarily separate God's children:

- Each year on the Friday of Welcome Weekend, Mercy Works organizes a Day of Service. Students work in teams at 20 different service sites in the care of faculty, staff, and student leaders. Their service is accompanied by an educational component orienting them to the College mission and to the site in which they will serve. At the end of the day they use the "See. Feel. Think. Act." tool to reflect on their experience. Thus, from their first full day at GMC, our students learn that a Mercy education will mean stepping out of their comfort zone—off the island—and encountering others in humble, face-to-face service.
- Mercy Works' Alternative Spring Break (ASB) program immerses students in Mercy-sponsored ministries among the poor, sick, and uneducated across the country. Through ASB, students have served elderly residents of boarding homes in Cincinnati, Ohio. They have assisted special education students on a Native American reservation in St. Michael's, Ariz. And they have worked with people on the United States-Mexico border in Laredo, Texas, hearing the stories of struggling immigrants. Students often speak of the life-changing nature of these immersion experiences; it is worthy to note that three Gwynedd-Mercy College alumni currently in formation as Mercy Associates are veterans of the College's ASB trips.
- Mercy Mentors was established two years ago to build mentoring relationships between GMC students and children residing at nearby St. Mary's Villa for Children and Families. These children have been temporarily removed from their families due to abuse, neglect, or their own behavioral problems. They have had few stable relationships in their lives, and few have had exposure to the possibility of a college education. Mercy Mentors have helped some of these children to connect with people they could look up to and to test some of the relationship-building skills they are learning while at St. Mary's. Recently a grant application was completed to support further development of this program, including more in-depth training for mentors and the incorporation of the mentors' activities into the children's clinical treatment plans.

## Bridges Facilitate Connections

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel complex in Virginia is an engineering marvel, quickly connecting— via 20 miles of causeway, bridges, and tunnels—locations that would take many hours to traverse in any other way. We envision Mercy Works as this sort of bridge, facilitating an easy exchange of people, resources, and ideas across the many institutions with whom we partner:

- Mercy Works serves as a clearinghouse for agencies in need of volunteers and students in search of service. The program partners with service learning classes to find appropriate placements; it guides team captains who want to create service activities for their athletes; it also assists resident assistants organizing adopt-a-service programs for their residents.
- The “No Place to Sleep” Conference, hosted by Mercy Works in 2005, gathered service providers, formerly-homeless neighbors, and concerned citizens to explore the realities of homelessness in our affluent Montgomery County, and to brainstorm solutions. The primary goal of the conference was to give the participants a time and place to network with others grappling with the complexities of homelessness, and to share resources, information, and ideas. Additionally, this conference allowed many students to hear for the first time the struggles of hard-working suburban people to obtain secure housing.
- In the legacy of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Works serves as a bridge between those with skills or knowledge in a particular area and those desiring to learn or gain access to that information. This is demonstrated through programs such as the Mercy Consulting Group, in which Mercy Works collaborates with Institutional Technology Services, faculty from the School of Business, and Mercy Volunteer Corps (MVC) to partner business and computer science students with non-profit organizations in need of clerical and technical assistance.
- Knitting for the Needy is another example of a project that connects faculty, staff, and students who have knitting skills with those who would like to learn. Together they have created blankets for children who have experienced a loss or trauma and hats for at-risk newborns.
- Through the Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development (PHENND), Mercy Works employs several students as Scholars-in-Service each year. This AmeriCorps-funded program provides an education award to students who perform 450 hours of service annually; they may also receive federal work-study money for their efforts. The addition of the Scholars has exponentially increased Mercy Works’ outreach, as these exceptional students have created or coordinated many of the service opportunities mentioned above. Their other great gift is in the recruitment of fellow students for involvement in Mercy Works programs; the insight and access they have to their peers is unable to be matched by professional staff working alone.
- As the MVC office is housed on GMC’s campus, Mercy Works enjoys a thriving relationship with MVC programs and staff. Each organization assists with each other’s orientation programs, advisory boards, and fund-raising efforts. Many of the Alternative Spring Break trips involve students living and working with MVC communities; this year an MVC staff member served as one of the leaders for the ASB Laredo trip. This partnership enriches both organizations and inspires GMC students to continue their Mercy journey with MVC after graduation.

By building bridges one heart at a time, Mercy Works enlivens the College’s Mercy identity and teaches students to walk in the compassionate footsteps of Catherine McAuley, our founder and guide.

# LIFE: Literacy Influences Future Experiences

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## ABSTRACT

The majority of teachers in the United States represent a middle class lifestyle. The fastest growing age group living in poverty is children. The LIFE program (Literacy Impacts Future Experiences) was created to bridge the gap between preservice teachers' experiences and children living below the poverty level. LIFE works with children from inner-city settings to improve literacy development.

LIFE is a service-learning program designed to place preservice teachers in formal and informal inner city learning environments. College students enrolled in reading methods, language arts methods, reading assessment and young adult literature courses work directly with children from inner city settings to improve literacy skills. Students work with children ranging in ages from four to 18. The project is designed to provide the children with role models who encourage their individual literacy development. The project is housed in an elementary school and Girls Inc. after school program.

The College of Saint Mary (CSM) has an ongoing relationship with Girls Inc. The adult leadership at Girls Inc requested an activity that would allow middle school and high school girls an opportunity to expand their learning. The LIFE program was developed to meet this need. This informal learning program allows middle school and high school preservice teachers and opportunity to teach versus observe learning in formal classroom settings.

A Midwest Consortium Mini Grant funded a portion of the LIFE program. The grant funded the purchase of book sets and language extension materials for an after school project for young women enrolled at the North Site of Girls Inc in Omaha, Neb. Girls ages 12 to 18 enrolled in literature discussion groups and literacy circles. Preservice teachers planned activities to extend learning around the literature selection and facilitated the literacy circles. Preservice teachers involved with this portion of LIFE performed 20 hours of service learning.

The elementary and preschool levels of this program are conducted over two semesters at an inner city elementary school. The school houses over 600 children. Over 90 percent of the children enrolled in this elementary school qualify for free or reduced lunch. The school has a large population of children with English as a Second Language. The preservice teachers work with classroom teachers to promote literacy development within the classroom, work with small groups, and create materials and tutoring sessions for individuals or small groups based on authentic assessment techniques. Preservice teachers involved with LIFE performed 80 hours of service learning over two semesters.

Learning does not happen in a vacuum. The experiences offered to the preservice teachers through the LIFE program help to expand their knowledge of child development, teaching methodologies, and literacy learning. Preservice students complete lesson plans, write reflective journals documenting their learning processes, and complete a PowerPoint presentation summarizing their learning. Children's progress is documented through case studies based on authentic assessment techniques and classroom teacher reflection at the end of each project. It is the intent of this presentation to share learning outcomes and a glimpse of this program through a PowerPoint presentation.



OVERVIEW

The city of Omaha, Neb. is the city with the poorest black children in the United States. More than 23 million people in the United States live below the poverty thresholds set by the Federal Government. This statistic includes five million children. (Children’s Defense Fund). Children living in poverty are a legacy this nation has to live with. The impact of poverty on the United States economy is huge. The Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) estimates that for each year we allow children to live in poverty, it will cost the United States over \$130 million in future economic output as poor children grow up to be less productive and ineffective workers (Sherman, 1997). Conversely, the High/Scope Foundation’s research based on a longitudinal study of the Perry Preschool Project supports that for every one dollar invested in quality education projects our government saves \$13 in future costs in welfare, special education, prison costs, and mental health care (Schweinhart, 2006).

Poverty affects children’s lives in many ways, including educational outcomes. (See Table 1.)

Table 1

Why Poverty Matters

Outcomes	Low-Income Children’s Higher Risk
<i>Education</i>	
Math Scores at ages 7 to 8	5 test points lower
Reading scores at ages 7 to 8	4 test points lower
Repeated a grade	2.0 times more likely
Expelled from school	3.4 times as likely
Being a drop-out at ages 16 to 24	3.5 times more likely
Finishing a four-year college	Half as likely

Children’s Defense Fund, 2005.

Research indicates that adult society is quickly becoming a nonreading society (Bushman, 1997; Heather, 1982; McLemee, 2004; National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2003; O’Connor, 1980). Studies seem to suggest that adults read less than one book per year Literature programs offered in schools seem to produce less than 5 percent of adults in the United States who read for pleasure or leisure (Angelotti 1992). Graves (1990) indicates that “reading, like writing, requires some discipline if you aren’t used to it. Most people don’t read. A very small part of our population, about 3 percent, buys 95 percent of the books sold in bookstores.” Research indicates that children tend to read a great deal in the early years, yet tend to read only what is assigned as they get into higher grades. Many read very little outside of school (Bushman, 2006). Based on these results, something needs to change in the way we encourage children of all ages to read. Students need to have opportunities to read outside of class.

Research also indicates that there are methodologies for teaching children from low socioeconomic status. Students at the CSM are taught to use these methods when planning activities or skill development for all children. Preservice teachers are also given opportunities to learn about issues facing families in poverty. Training is conducted around the philosophy and materials developed by Dr. Ruby Payne. Payne’s materials discuss trends and characteristics of the behavior of living in poverty. Payne

purports a system of teaching using small group interactions, project based instruction, goal setting and pre-planning, teaching the structure of proper language construction, and graphic organizers.

The College of Saint Mary also has an ongoing relationship with the metropolitan school districts in the Omaha area. The inner city school selected for this project includes classrooms for preschool through grade six. Approximately 600 children attend the school. Over 90 percent of the children enrolled in this elementary school qualify for free or reduced lunch. The school has a large population of children with English as a Second Language. The school also houses English as a Second Language and GRE adult education classes. Most children in this school begin each school year not reading at grade level.

## PROCEDURE

LIFE Book Club was a service learning project for English 262: Young Adult Literature at the College of Saint Mary during the fall of 2006. College of Saint Mary is an all women's college located in Omaha, Neb. The preservice teacher education students enrolled in the course created book circles around titles selected for the course. Titles were a selection of young adult literature, which met one or more of three criteria:

- A strong female main character,
- A theme or issue relevant to middle or high school age women, or
- A woman author.

Literature selections were financed through a \$2,000 grant from the Midwest Service-Learning Consortium. Book sets of 10 books were purchased. A variety of reading levels and genres were selected. Titles included:

- *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* by Ann Brashares
- *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell
- *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis
- *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo
- *Cuba 15* by Nancy Osa
- *All Alone in the Universe* by Lynne Rae Perkins
- *Holding Up the Earth* by Dianne E. Gray
- *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan
- *Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli
- *How I Live Now* by Meg Rosoff
- *The Skin I'm In* by Sharon G. Flake

Students studied methods for engaging young adults in literature study. Teams of two college students then wrote a six-week lesson plan filled with activities to engage the learners. Each set of college students selected a title from the list above as the feature for their literary circle. Activities included discussion, journal writing, biographical poems, character analysis, graphic organizers, and theme based projects.

The learners were young women enrolled at Girls Inc who chose to be a part of the LIFE circles. The young women were ages 12 to 18. The groups met once a week after school for a one-hour session. Each group was lead by two college students. The projects were documented through weekly journals from the individuals on each team, projects, and digital photos.

The LIFE Book Club program was repeated again using a similar format during the spring of 2007. The format was adapted slightly based on the fall college student and participant feedback. Only two novels were offered. Book circles were 10 weeks in length versus six weeks. Four college students trained during the fall continued the spring program.

College students enrolled in reading and language arts teaching perform 80 hours of service learning in an inner city school housing approximately 600 children grades preschool through grade six. The elementary and preschool levels of this program are conducted over two semesters at an inner city elementary school. The preservice teachers work with classroom teachers to promote literacy development within the class room, work with small groups, create materials and tutoring sessions for individuals or small groups based on authentic assessment techniques. Students work with writing development through the use of six trait writing assessment strategies and writing process instruction. These students are trained to use a balanced approach to reading including:

- Phonics Instruction,
- Phonemic Awareness Instruction,
- Vocabulary Development,
- Comprehension, and
- Fluency.

Students also are trained to use Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) assessment to help measure student's level of reading. The assessment measures the following:

- Vocabulary (Basic Sight Words)
- Miscue Analysis
- Listening
- Comprehension

This assessment, writing sample, and spelling assessments then served as a guide to analyze strengths and weakness of individual children. Tutoring sessions are planned for children based on this needs analysis. Tutoring sessions include one to one or small group instruction based on mini lessons developed by the college students. Mini lessons last 10-15 minutes and include some tracking of skills. Methodologies used include repetition of sight words, practice improving writing process, phonics instruction, phonemic awareness activities, fluency work through oral reading practice, and comprehension strategy instruction.

## EVALUATION

Evaluation of the LIFE Book Club project was completed at the end of the six sessions (Fall) and 10 sessions (Spring). The college students leading the groups and the young women engaged in the groups completed evaluations, a series of open-ended questions focusing on the experiences of each individual involved in the LIFE project. Questions asked of the college students included:

- The thing I liked best about LIFE Book Club was....
- I learned that ...
- I would offer this suggestion...

Additionally, the college students were asked to list the title of the novel. Questions asked of the Girls Inc participants included:

- The thing I liked best about LIFE Book Club was...
- I learned that...
- I would like to read...

Also, girls were asked if they would participate again in the LIFE program at Girls Inc., and to provide the novel title and their demographic information, such as age and grade level.

Evaluation of the preschool and elementary project is completed at the end of each semester, both fall and spring. Evaluations include an evaluation by the classroom teachers of the preservice teacher's classroom performance. Evaluation of individual learning by preservice teachers includes weekly journals and an end of semester multimedia presentation documenting the learning of the individual preservice teacher.

Weekly journals are required to cover three main questions:

- What happened at practicum this week?
- How does this apply to what you are learning in class?
- How does this impact your future practice as a teacher?

At the end of the spring semester college students create a case study of one child within the classroom including:

- Whole Class Reading Interest Inventory
- Informal Reading Inventory (IRI)
- Writing samples with analysis based on Six Trait Writing Rubrics
- Spelling samples based on Spelling Levels of Development
- Tutoring lesson plans
- Post assessment of child's learning
- Personal reflection of learning

The case study measures the impact on one child's abilities after working with the preservice college student after a series of tutoring sessions built on assessment data from the IRI and writing and spelling samples.

## OUTCOMES

Learning does not happen in a vacuum. The experiences offered to the preservice teachers through the LIFE program help to expand their knowledge of child development, teaching methodologies, and literacy learning. Preservice students completed lesson plans, wrote reflective journals documenting their learning processes, completed case studies, and a PowerPoint presentation summarizing their learning. Children's progress is documented through case studies based on authentic assessment techniques and classroom teacher reflection at the end of each project. Outcomes of the LIFE program benefited two main groups of stakeholders the preservice teachers and the students enrolled in at the elementary school and after school program. Outcomes will be reported for each group.

## Preservice Teachers

Thirty preservice teachers majoring in education took part in the project this school year. Several of the college students were enrolled in more than one of the courses. The students represented majors in early childhood education, elementary education, middle school education, special education, and high school education. Several themes emerged in the journaling including personal growth, understanding of curriculum, and insight into the lives of the children enrolled in the program. Around these themes there were several significant statements of learning.

Examples of student reflection on personal growth include:

*Looking back over the past few months, I have noticed my own confidence level rise because of the positive experience with my case study. My goal as a future teacher is to not lose sight of the big picture, educating students by stimulation and engaged learning, and not to get lost in the pressure for all my students to pass “the test.”*

Students talked about the impact of seeing change on their own approach to future practice:

*Taking just 10 to 15 minutes a day and focusing in on the needs of one student does make a huge impact into their learning.*

*Educators must be flexible, encouraging literacy. Literacy can be the most valuable resource a person obtains in order to be successful in life.*

*After being at (School name) I have gained many different things. I have learned to understand differences not only in SES, but also race or culture and learning differences.*

*Flexibility is something that teachers have to deal with often.*

*Matthew 25. I looked up the actual verse in the Holy Bible to see what the real verse said. I began to wonder if we as a nation ever follow or act on what this verse says. I know that during the holiday season we really push donating food, clothing, and water to those in need, but what about the other 10 months out of the year when we really don't pay too much attention to those in need. Now I know that there are a few places that do follow God's word that says: **For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.** This verse goes along with a lot of what Payne writes about in her book about people needing certain resources in order to leave poverty. To me, I think that the verse Matthew 25 tells you all about what a person in poverty needs food, clothing, shelter, water and someone to care for and guide them.*

Other students commented on:

- The understanding of reading and writing processes through the authentic assessment. Techniques of the IRI and six trait writing assessment,
- Seeing the home/school connection,
- Ability and opportunity to work with a diverse population,
- Ability to see methods discussed in class come alive in the classroom with elementary children, and
- Ability to be in one classroom for a year and see the progress of one group of children.
- Need for additional time to work in the classrooms. (They had put in 80 hours)

## Children in Elementary Program

Thirteen classrooms took part in the LIFE project at the elementary school. Classrooms included preschool classrooms, kindergarten, first, second and third grade classrooms.

Growth based on case study results included:

- Basic sight word recognition
  - Increased growth from 144/300 to 294/300
- Significant changes in guided reading levels or grade reading levels
  - Increase from guided reading level four to 10
  - Increase of five book levels
  - Increase from a sixth grade reading level to eighth grade reading level
- Increase in sentence length
- Increase in use of prosody when reading
- Growth in letter recognition and phonemic awareness
  - An increase from recognition of 13 upper case letters to all 26 upper and lower case letters.
  - An increase from recognition of four letters in the child's name to all 26 letters upper and lower case.
- Understanding of basic word patterns including rhyme, CVC, CVCe and CVVC
- Understanding of quotes in writing.

## Children in After School Program

Fifteen young women ages 12-18 took part in the LIFE Book Clubs through the after school program over the course of the two semesters. When asked if they would participate in LIFE again, 100 percent pledged to return to the program. Participation from fall to spring was approximately 90 percent.

Answers to the first question, “The thing I liked best about the LIFE Book Club was...” garnered the following answers:

- *That we had a chance to read something very good. Age 13*
- *You get to have fun. Age 12*
- *The teachers. Age 14*
- *That we got to do projects for what we did. Age 12*
- *We got to do a lot of things that friends would do. Age 12*
- *How we worked at book club and how we got to design our jeans. Age 14*
- *The best thing about book club was getting an experience to read and talk about a fun book. Age 15*
- *I liked everything about book club especially my teachers. Age 12*
- *It was interesting. Age 15*
- *The projects. Age 15*
- *Getting to hang out with my friends. Age 12*
- *I really liked the book that was chosen. Age 16*
- *I like book club because I like to read. Age 17*
- *I liked everything about this club especially when we wrote and did activities in our notebooks. Age 12*



When asked, “I learned about...” Students answered the following:

- *Reading isn't so bad. You just need a good book. Age 12*
- *YOU should think about your friends. Age 15*
- *I learned not to judge a book by its cover. Also I learned that with friends you can do anything. Age 15*
- *Reading is very important. Age 14*
- *I learned how to make friendship bracelets. Age 12*
- *I should be grateful for what I read. Age 12*
- *Reading a book is good to learn. Age 14*
- *I am not very interested in history. Age 14*
- *That making projects is fun. Age 12*
- *I learned that it does not matter what color you are, you should treat people how you want to be treated. Age 17*
- *Reading a good book is fun. Age 13*
- *Reading books are good and this was a great book! Age 14*

Responding to the last question “I would like to read....” students gave the names of three new literature pieces and asked to repeat *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*. This book was repeated in the spring session. Ten girls choose to be a part of that reading club.

## REFLECTIONS

Where do we go from here? As a result of the challenges and triumphs from this past year we are now in the process of looking forward to moving this project into the next school year. For this to happen there is a need for an infusion of money. The grant from the Midwest Service Learning Consortium is not renewable. New grant moneys are being sought.

Possible additions to the project include a proposal for a Reading is Fundamental Grant (RIF). This grant would allow books to be given four times a year to each child enrolled at the elementary school. There is a need for additional book sets for the Girls Inc. after school program. There has also been a request to build a library at an additional after school tutoring site. CSM students at a Mercy Housing Project man this site. These children also need to have access to RIF books.

I will meet with the principal and directors of each of the programs in June 2007 to look for funding partners and to share iMovies made of the programs. My summer school class will kick off the book drive for the library in June. I believe these programs make a difference. Many of the classrooms my students worked in made their AYP goals this year. Teachers tell us that having an additional teacher in the classroom makes a difference.

I am committed to placing books and literacy tools in the hands of children across the city of Omaha. I believe these children teach my students and me something new every day. It allows me to keep my skills for teaching children sharp. It keeps me aware of classroom literacy trends. The literacy statistics scare me. We are so focused on passing tests in this country that we are losing sight of learning.

My students gain practical classroom experiences. They have the opportunity to apply the methodologies as they learn them in the classroom. There is a big difference between reading about a method and actually using these methods to teach. These preservice teachers gain confidence in their own teaching abilities as they see children gain skills because of their planning and teaching.

The professionals involved in both programs are supportive of all of our learning. They provide us with constructive feedback and access to their classrooms and programs. We are eternally grateful for this.

There is an African proverb which states: “It takes a village to raise a child.” I believe that service learning opportunities and community collaborations like LIFE allow my students and me to make a difference in that village. These children and future teachers are worth the efforts these programs take. As Ruby Payne states, education is one of the keys to escaping poverty.

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