



# RSHM Highlights

Eastern America

Spring 2021

## CONGRATULATIONS! FELICIDADES! MAKOROKOTO!

**T**he increasingly global profile of RSHM was joyfully evident on January 23, 2021, as three African young women pronounced their first vows at the International Novitiate in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. The novitiate experience involves two years of life in a multi-national, bilingual (English and Portuguese) community of professed sisters and novices who may come from the United States, Latin and South America, Europe, and Africa. The first novitiate year is devoted to a study of the mission, history, and spirit of the RSHM Institute, a study of the vows, and the deepening of prayer and spiritual life. The second year normally offers opportunities to experience a variety of ministries, but the pandemic prevented such outreach in preparation for this year's First Profession.

Nevertheless, expansiveness of spirit and contagious joy characterized the celebration. Sisters Elizabeth, Lesley, and Naomi pronounced their vows during an inspiring bilingual Eucharistic liturgy livestreamed to participants on four continents. They danced the *Gloria* with their Formation Directress, Sr. Rosemary.

Sr. Kathleen Murphy called them forth to receive the lighted candle from Sr. Christine Caetano, Area Leader in Brazil. Each one in turn expressed her desire to become a Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary:

*I desire to live the gospel in an authentic way, to know and love God, to make God known and loved, and to proclaim that Jesus Christ came so that all may have life.*

Then, after pronouncing their vows, the newly professed appealed to God and the community to bless and sustain these promises:

*I rely on God's fidelity and the support of my sisters to be faithful to my commitment in this Institute.*

The message sent from the novitiate community to RSHM throughout the world was expressive of the unity deeply felt across the globe:

*Heaven and earth seemed to collaborate in the celebration of the first vows of Elizabeth, Lesley, and Naomi. While the church benches may have been quite empty, the living rooms across the world were full and in harmony with us. The Profession of each one was sincere and moving. For the first time, the entire Institute as well as the families and friends of the sisters, were virtually present. It was a truly moving experience. Now, Sister Elizabeth, Sister Lesley and Sister Naomi are glowing with happiness as they adjust to being "sister." They also have the challenge of preparing to return to Zambia and Zimbabwe to reconnect with their families and communities in the face of the ongoing pandemic. The response from throughout the world, both Institute and otherwise, has been magnificent. All of us here in the Novitiate, and indeed in the Brazilian Area, are most grateful and joyful. We really felt united and cared for.*

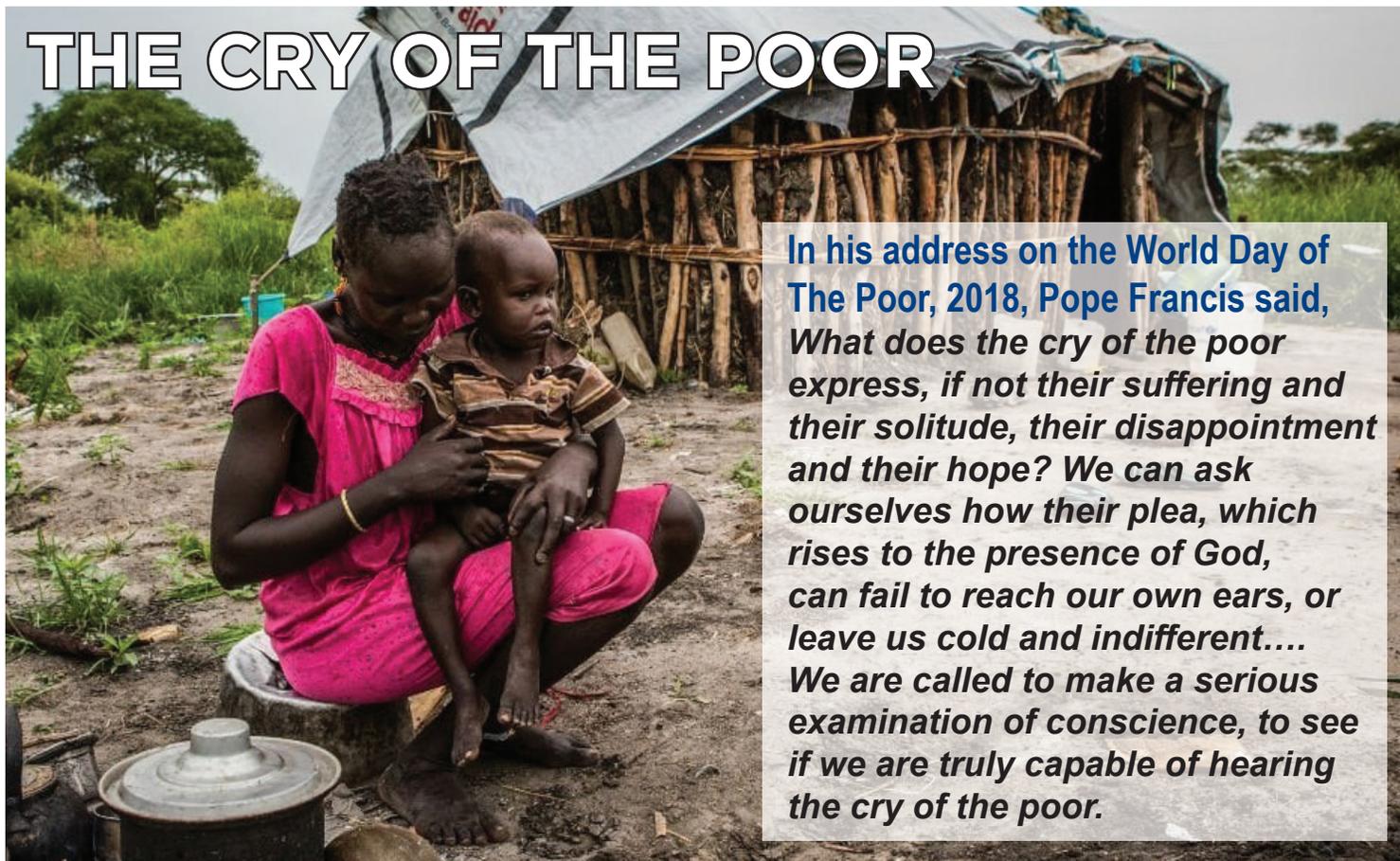
This spirit of union and care will accompany Elizabeth and Naomi in their missioning to their native Zambia, and Lesley to Mozambique, a country new to her. In their journey of faith, the spirit of RSHM founders continues --a spirit that traverses oceans and centuries and moves ever forward in the creative embrace of God.



(L-R) Srs. Lesley, Elizabeth, and Naomi

# Signs of the Times

## THE CRY OF THE POOR



**In his address on the World Day of The Poor, 2018, Pope Francis said, *What does the cry of the poor express, if not their suffering and their solitude, their disappointment and their hope? We can ask ourselves how their plea, which rises to the presence of God, can fail to reach our own ears, or leave us cold and indifferent.... We are called to make a serious examination of conscience, to see if we are truly capable of hearing the cry of the poor.***

**T**his is a challenge to each of us individually, and to all of us together, to find effective means of response. One such means on a global scale is *Solidarity with South Sudan*, a new model of ministry and collaboration among women and men religious and the laity in serving the poor.

When Africa's longest-running civil war ended in 2005, South Sudan continued its struggle for independence, finally achieving it in 2011. But conflict continued to plague the new nation. In February 2017, a famine was declared in parts of South Sudan in what the UN described as a catastrophe caused by civil war and economic collapse. In August of that year the number of refugees fleeing from the violence in South Sudan to Uganda passed the one million mark.

In the face of these huge challenges, *Solidarity with South Sudan* seeks to develop leaders and build the capacity of people to be teachers, health care professionals, sustainable farmers, and diocesan

pastoral agents. It began in 2008 with a request from the Sudanese Bishops' Conference. A magnanimous response to the people of this land torn apart by poverty and violence came from women and men religious, representing the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), and Union of Superiors General (USG), respectively. In the first 10 years alone, between 2008 and 2018, *Solidarity with South Sudan* succeeded in training 475 primary school teachers, 190 nurses and midwives, over 1000 farmers, and more than 1500 pastoral agents.

Nineteen members of the project currently offer their time and talents in four communities. They come from 13 different countries, include both religious and lay people, and represent 14 Catholic religious congregations. Working closely with the local church, they administer a teacher training college, a health training institute, a sustainable farm with an outreach program, and pastoral services.

*continued on page 3*

## THE CRY OF THE POOR

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While continuing to respond to the social and economic realities that impact peoples' everyday lives, *Solidarity with South Sudan* is committed to securing these goals by accompanying the people, and providing them with the skills and knowledge they need to overcome the traumas of the past, and to build a healthier and more just society for the future – together.

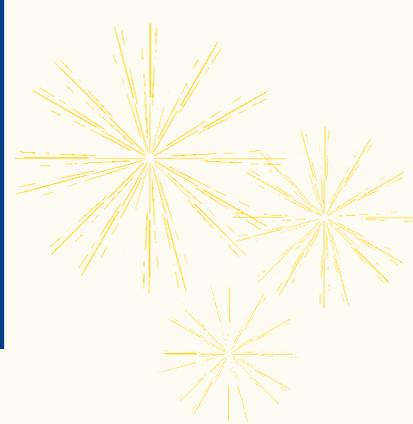
A recent report in the Leadership Conference of Women Religious newsletter expressed grateful acknowledgement for the funds raised for the projects in South Sudan:

*Friends in Solidarity is pleased that, in spite of the pandemic, we received 15% more donations from donors and supporters in 2020 than in 2019 and were able to contribute nearly \$425,000 in support for projects of Solidarity with South Sudan. More than 50% came from women religious! This support included salary support for tutors and staff at the Solidarity Teacher Training College, Catholic Health Training Institute, and the Good Shepherd Peace Center during the shutdown occasioned by the pandemic. Women religious have assisted Solidarity to be the Payment Protection Plan for our loyal South Sudanese staff who, otherwise, would be among those facing severe food insecurity.*

We RSHM are happy to have been able to contribute at both Institute and Eastern America Area levels. We want our *Highlights* readers to know that it is your generous support that enables us to reach out, in ways such as this, to realize our mission “That all may have life,” especially in response to the cry of the poor.

## THANK YOU FOR

# Highlights Feedback!



Thank you for the latest *Highlights*! I just love the crossword and head right for it each issue. Still trying to figure out how anyone can create something so complex – with religious theme, good humor, and clever allusions. The articles, e.g., the Native Garden, Carol Schommer among our Zimbabwean and Zambian future, the warm feelings toward RSHM at the Istituto, Monica's nursing life -- all are encouraging and inspiring. Thank you, and keep at it!

*Anne O'Brien (formerly RSHM) SHM Park Terrace '53*

I miss *Soundings*. When I came to retirement at Marymount Convent, this homespun publication was a way in which I came to know and have an understanding of life here in the Eastern America Area. The quality of themes and responses was impressive, giving many sisters' perspectives on some particular aspect of reality. I remain grateful for the creativity of the *Soundings* staff.

*Sr. Francis of Assisi Kay, RSHM*

I enjoy the *Highlights* newsletter and read each issue from cover to cover when it arrives in the mail; it is wonderfully informative and the stories are inspirational. I particularly enjoyed Elizabeth Kolb's recent article “Worship during a pandemic” which beautifully captured the importance of community in Mass. I also love Bea McMahon's crosswords, and admire her skill in creating these brain-expanding puzzles! Kudos and blessings to all who contribute to producing this high-quality publication.

*Rena Micklewright, MC Tarrytown '90*

In response to the *Highlights* article on liturgy during the pandemic I share my experience: I feel fortunate to gather with the RSHM sisters each day to view the Mass which is live streamed from the Convent chapel. While I watch the Mass with the sisters gathered on the 3rd floor, I know the Mass is taking place LIVE two floors below and I feel one with the community. I feel profoundly grateful that the Church has continued through this pandemic with creativity and adaptability.

*Susannah Bourbeau Alao, MC Tarrytown '07*

# DRAWING NEW LIFE THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

As COVID raised its ugly head and strung its tentacles around our beautiful globe, we, the human family became singularly aware of how fragile, how fleeting, how uncertain this life is.

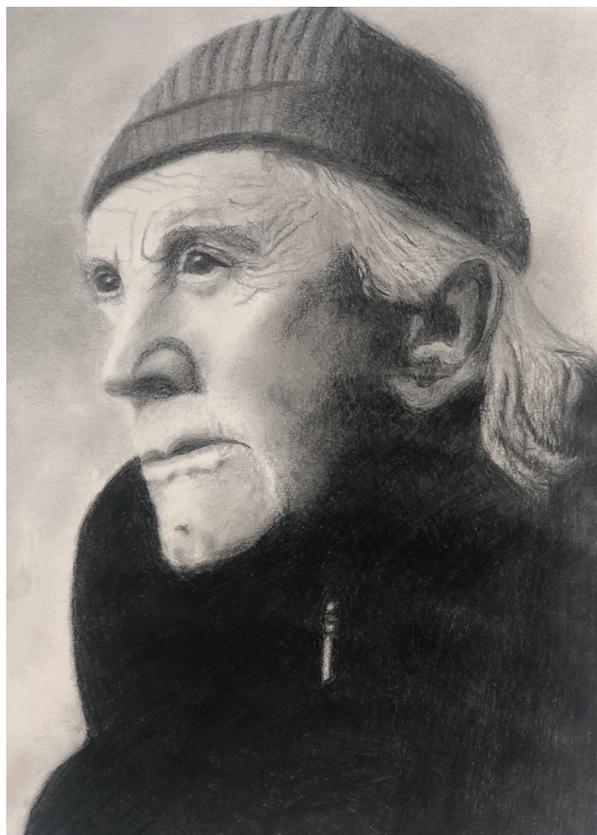
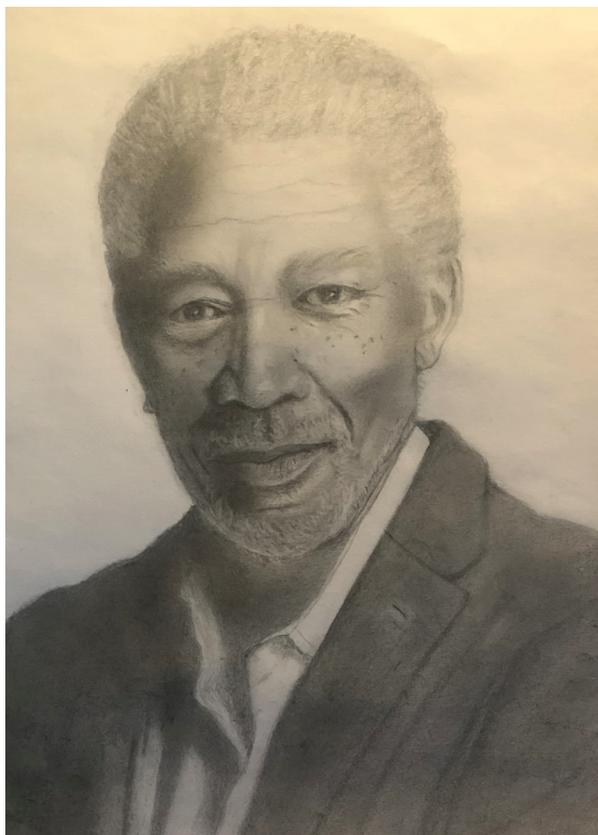
We put on our masks, kept far apart and huddled at home while the brave, the strong, the gifted and talented, the prayerful, loving, generous and kind stretched out their arms to heal us.

And so, bereft of my little students, deprived of the Eucharistic Liturgy at Marymount Convent and visits with the sisters, I dove into my new-found joy – drawing with a lowly #2 pencil.

Portraits have become my specialty. I can't believe what joy lies hidden within a simple graphite pencil. I can press hard, lightly or in between with my little piece of lead and images emerge that constantly amaze me. Of course, the images are often not what I am struggling to achieve. They are far from the desired effect and so it takes bundles of time, hours in fact, to adjust, redo, tweak and then – joy – there it is!

Due to COVID, it has not been possible to attend classes in person. I work with my amazing teacher through computer and phone for 30 minutes once a week. If it were not for his skillful and demanding observations, I would never have the sense of accomplishment that is mine when I complete a project.

Art, for me, is a reawakening of the mystery and intricacies embedded in the human face. I am constantly amazed by the tiny lines, shapes and shades that make each individual unique. Please enjoy some of my projects shown here. May they bring you joy and hope. Maybe you can do this too!



*Genevieve Murphy, RSHM*

# AN ANNIVERSARY TO REMEMBER

Twenty-five years is quite a milestone in the life of an organization, one to be celebrated with great gratitude and fanfare. That was the expectation for the RSHM LIFE Center in June 2020. But planning for parties, reunions of former students, and anniversary t-shirts all came to a crashing halt March 13th as the COVID pandemic thrust us into lockdown. The LIFE Center has been addressing the needs of the low-income community for these past 25 years, evolving to respond to the needs of the Sleepy Hollow – Tarrytown community. This year has really tested our resolve to do that.

The first days after closing were filled with phone calls between staff and our families. Most of our parents cannot work remotely. They found themselves without income and not qualified for unemployment. “How can we help?” became the rallying cry of our staff. Within a week, we had made arrangements with a local food bank to become a food distribution site, with all safety measures implemented, all before March ended. Local restaurants donated meals; other organizations and individuals offered funds. We also supported our children’s online learning, and our legal office started working remotely. Over the next 14 weeks, more than 13,000 meals, 26,000 pounds of produce, and \$32,000 were distributed to families. Staff stayed healthy and safe, needs were met, and we were grateful to be able to help.

We were tested again in late June when restrictions eased a bit. Many of our parents could work again, but needed a safe place for their children during the day. We usually run a 5-week summer camp, but this year we initiated a different kind of program, in accord with new guidelines. Five weeks of camp flew by. Children and staff stayed healthy and safe, parents were happy to be working again, needs were met, and we were grateful to be able to help.

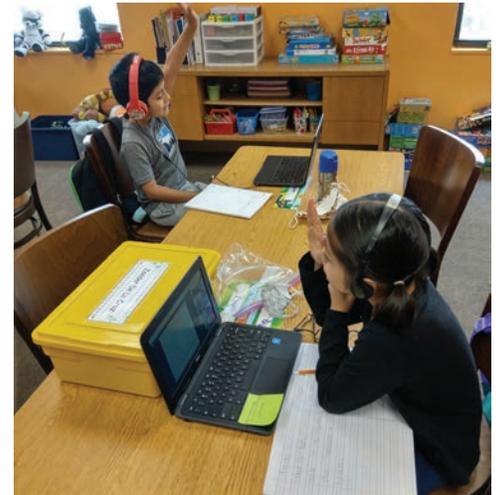
By late August, our school district implemented a hybrid model when children would be in school part-time and learn from home online the other days. But many of our families did not have internet or computers; parents could not stay home on remote learning days and were worried about helping their children with the schoolwork. So, following regulations and working closely with the school district, we set up Learning Labs—all-day classes that follow the online schedule. Our staff supervised the students’ learning and stayed in contact with teachers. School breakfasts and lunches were provided, and our local Rotary Club supplied a weekly dinner to each family. When schools return to 5-day classes we will phase out the Learning Labs and return to our regular After School Program. For the past seven months, children and staff stayed healthy and safe, needs were met and we were grateful to be able to help.

Our anniversary year will soon close, without big parties or gatherings, but with much accomplished through the care and dedication of the LIFE Center staff. Slowly we will reopen our traditional programs: After School, Parents & Tots, Adult English Classes, Friday Night Fever Teen Club, and Summer Fun. The RSHM LIFE Center opened its doors in June of 1995 with the goal of responding to the needs of women and children living in Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown. This anniversary year needs were met and we are grateful to be able to continue to help.

As we begin a new year I am reminded of the words of Dag Hammarskjold, it is my wish...

***“For all that has been, Thanks. For all that will be, Yes!”***

*Susan Gardella, RSHM*





Spiritual life programming at Marymount School has followed a simple plan for the last year: catch up and keep up. We opened the year with all-school and divisional chapels broadcasting online. Small in-person Masses replaced the Spring 2020 Sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation which would have been celebrated live at the Church of Saint Ignatius Loyola. To mark the occasion of our 95<sup>th</sup> Founder's Day, we developed ambitious plans to record, edit, and share a full Mass video. Little did we know that a snowstorm would have prevented us from gathering for Mass on that day anyway; in hindsight, the Spirit's guidance is obvious!

The selection of February 2<sup>nd</sup> for our Founder's Day is Mother Butler's lasting gift, as it ensures an annual recitation of the Luke narrative of Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus (and the offering of two turtledoves) in the Temple in Jerusalem, 40 days after his birth, as was customary in the Jewish Law. There they meet old Simeon, who spotlights Mary's sacred heart with a warning of the sword of despair which will pierce it. That mother, that heart, that sword: these are the images that reassure us that no challenges, not even our current heaviness of heart, are unknown to the blessed mother or outside her loving care.

Drawing on the lessons learned from our cinematic video ministries shared in Advent, we prioritized the inclusion of certain Founder's Day traditions. Our nurses are our saintly partners in ministry, and their advice and counsel has been of enormous help to develop our prayer protocols. This is not surprising since each one of them has an active faith of interior prayer and participation in the life of the Church.

On the December taping day, our senior class served as the congregation for the Mass, and were blessed by

Sr. Catherine Patten, RSHM, Eastern America Area Leader, in a prayer sourced from phrases from Mother Butler's prayerbook. Through the magic of editing technology, we were able to include the voices and faces representing Classes I-XI, plus the voices of our chamber choir. We appeared together, although we had been recorded separately. (Film courses should be required in divinity school!)

Class III has a longstanding tradition of enacting the Gospel text and they processed into the church clutching three-foot wooden dowels with colorful paper doves tailed with crepe-paper streamers, flitting as they flew. This class knows what it means to long to worship in sacred space because their First Communion was delayed. This was all masterfully choreographed by Courtney Esteves, a 2015 alumna and religious studies teacher. The 25 alumnae on our staff are living the words of our mission, "care, serve and lead" in ways that Mother Butler could not have dreamed of. I am so grateful that our alumnae and staff collaborated on a dramatic reading from a biography of Mother Butler, *I Knew a Valiant Woman*, which was shared in chapel to celebrate the 95<sup>th</sup>.

As Charlotte, a senior and daughter of alumna Carol (Dorrian) Carbonetti, said in her reflection after Communion, "every day at Marymount is unique and has shaped me into the person I am today." How blessed we are to have been able to offer in-person learning, liturgies and even a Mass this year; and how blessed we are to be able to offer our ministries virtually as well, shrinking the distance among the schools in the global network, and allowing us to connect with all of you who have brought us to this achievement of 95 years of educating hearts and minds.

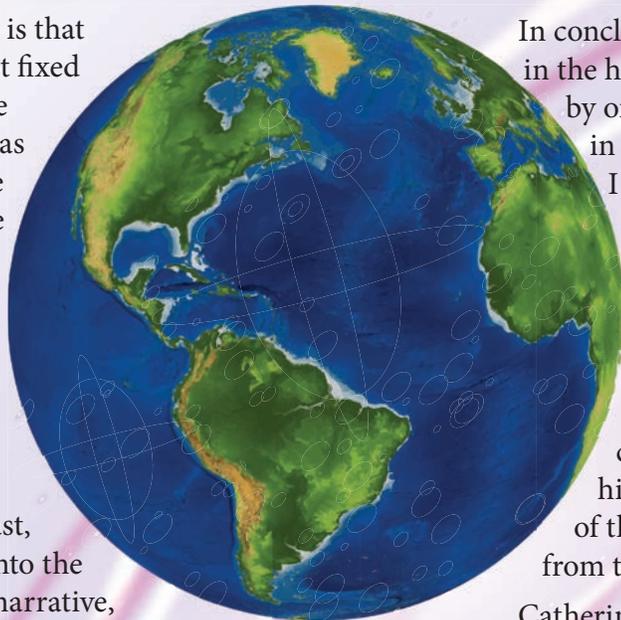
*Alice Kearney Alwin, Director of Ministry and Mission*

# "SEEING GOD AND THE WORLD IN NEW WAYS"

A sea change in my way of seeing God and the world occurred in the summer of 2008 when our RSHM Theology Study Group sponsored a workshop at Cormaria Retreat House with theologian John Haught. The thinking of Teilhard de Chardin was presented in compelling ways that profoundly affected me. The process of learning begun at that time has continued since then through the insights of various writers, most recently Catherine Vincie, RSHM. I wish to share here just a few thoughts from Catherine's article "Original Sin, Baptism, and the New Cosmology" published in the periodical *WORSHIP*, Volume 95, January 2021.

Catherine's premise is that "... creation was not fixed and complete 'in the beginning.' There was no original paradise from which we were cast out and no original experience of perfection from which we fell. Science tells us that the whole cosmos is on a vast journey from the past, to the present and into the future. In this new narrative, we find ourselves incomplete, morally limited, still developing virtue, awaiting a fullness yet to come. We are not being pushed from the past; rather we are being called from the future . . . ."

Drawing on the thinking of paleobiologist Daryl Domning concerning the origins and pervasiveness of evil, sin, suffering and death, Catherine states that "One of the primary discoveries we have made in evolutionary science is that a primordial selfishness is built into the very processes of evolution . . . . Never was there a time when this material universe existed in perfect equilibrium or perfect peace. That would be possible only in a static universe, but everything we have learned about the cosmos from evolutionary science points to a radically dynamic universe."



Catherine goes on to consider "good" and "bad" human behavior. "Primate studies such as those of Jane Goodall, Frans de Waal, and others, make it obvious that the higher primates have a significant list of 'bad behaviors' that we had heretofore associated only with human behavior. Examples such as aggression and bullying, theft, deception, premeditated murder and a score of other 'human-like' traits have been found in primate behavior. We do not ascribe 'sin' to these primates because we don't credit them with the kind of intelligence, consciousness and self-consciousness that we hold as prerequisites for sinning. However, . . . it is here that we can speak of the origins of sin."

In conclusion, Catherine states, "Suffering and death in the human community or in nature are not caused by original sin, but are the consequence of living in an evolving, dynamic, material universe."

I presume the universality of grace and the salvation desired by God for all creation, and the particularity of the revelation of God in Christ.... Rather than understand the paschal mystery in any sense of atonement, I believe Christ presents a new model for being human. The church's sacrament of baptism (of adults or children) incorporates believers into Christ and his mission, and into the church as the symbol of the communion (read: salvation) God offers us from the future."

Catherine's insights were liberating for me in placing "sin" and the waters of Baptism in a new framework. This perspective relates even to that tiny infant who may be startled by the feel of the christening water, but whose coming into this world makes a unique contribution to the fullness and joy of life. God, the absolute future, is calling each new being formed from the "clay" of the age-old struggle to evolve into the lasting communion of the blessed.

I can't do justice to Catherine's thought within the space limitations of *Highlights*. But those who may wish to go deeper into her insights can request an electronic copy of the article by e-mailing her at [cvincie@rshmeap.org](mailto:cvincie@rshmeap.org). I think you will be enriched, as I was.

Bea McMahan, RSHM

# HIGHLIGHTS PUZZLE: Hail Mary

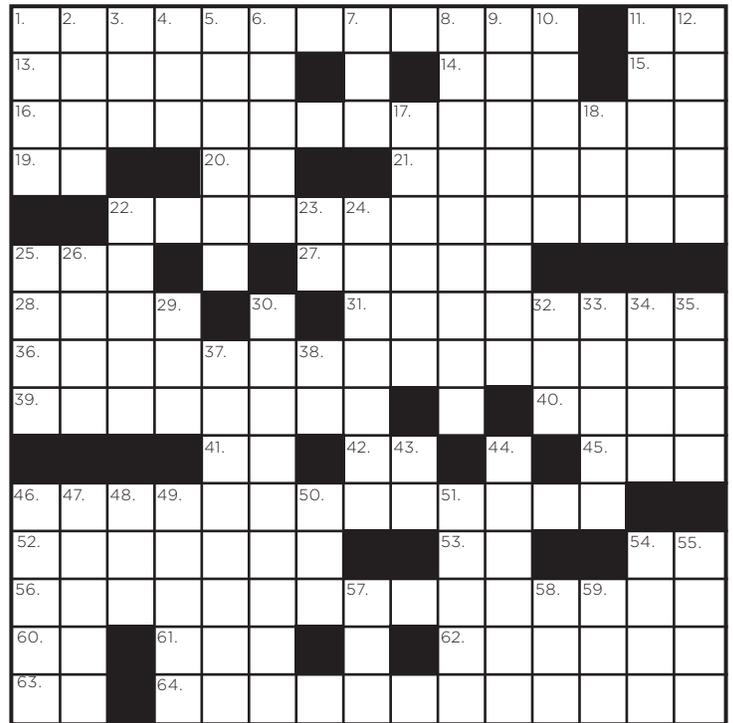
The themed clues in this puzzle refer to titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Answers are posted at [www.rshm-east.org/rshm-highlights](http://www.rshm-east.org/rshm-highlights)

## Across

1. *Lady of Knock*, my \_\_\_\_\_
11. Center of the world for an egotist
13. United Soccer League equal scores, abbr.
14. Official web portal of the United States government: www.USA. \_\_\_\_
15. Typeface unit of measurement
16. (Pure soul) \_\_\_\_\_ of Mary
19. \_\_\_\_ pass, QB achievement
20. \_\_\_\_ C , popular take-out, abbr.
21. Period after the Bronze Age
22. *Graced bearer of the Holy Child*
25. Wonderment
27. Adherent of a philosophy emphasizing unity among all beings on a deep spiritual level
28. Exclamations of discovery
31. One who abandons country or cause
36. *Her maternal soul a sword did pierce*
39. Italian luxury car
40. Animal fat used to make mincemeat
41. Met\_\_\_\_, subway in Paris
42. Father, in Ireland
45. Tennessee State University, abbr.
46. *She appeared to Bernadette*
52. Bulletproof, as a car
53. Sound of hesitation
54. Yes in Madrid
56. *She appeared to Juan Diego*
60. Year in Paris
61. Ontario International Airport, on flight schedules
62. In case I knock
63. Undergraduate degree in science, briefly
64. Nuns' overnight camping gear

## Down

1. Give up
2. United States March of Dimes, abbr.
3. One of the most common trees across the northern hemisphere
4. Greek letter 'e'
5. Wounded slightly
6. Eggs in French cuisine
7. The princess and the \_\_\_\_
8. A vaccine
9. Owl in a duet?
10. Happening
11. Consolidate
12. Go in
17. Neatens (up)
18. Syllable spoken during throat exam
22. Wins against
23. Mi casa es \_\_ casa
24. Put down faithful dog?
25. Abbreviation for morning, with a stutter?
26. Roy Rogers to Trigger: 'Stop!'
29. \_\_\_\_ Loves You, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah
30. Historical period of young newts?
32. Catholic Relief Services, abbr.
33. Talks up or shows off
34. Is in debt
35. Run from Q to V
37. A pasta of mistakes?
38. Old Testament, abbr.
43. \_\_\_\_ reservoir
44. A preliminary version of a piece of writing
46. Los Angeles Laboratory, briefly
47. Irish hand-knit sweaters
48. Doctor of Medicine in Dentistry, abbr.
49. Toys on a string
50. Lodge, abbr.
51. Quick disinfecting wipes
54. Brief quarrel
55. Individualized Educational Plans, abbr.
57. Luau instrument, briefly
58. Prevaricate
59. Where the dust settles?



Bea McMahon, RSHM

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