



RSHM Highlights

Eastern America

Summer 2021

RSHM EASTERN AMERICAN AREA WELCOMES NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM

August 1, 2021, ushers in a new moment for the RSHM Eastern American Area, blessed by the warmth and confidence of the tried and true. Sr. Rosamond Blanchet, newly appointed Area Leader, served earlier years in various capacities: school principal, formation director, and provincial councillor, prior to her term as provincial superior, 2003-09. During this term, Sr. Rosamond oversaw the successful completion of a capital campaign for the major renovation of Marymount Convent. Other notable areas of development included strengthening the province committee structure, expanding the RSHM Network of Schools, and collaborating with the Western American Province in formation of novices and young professed sisters.

Sr. Rosamond's leadership rose to a global level with her election as general superior for the years 2013-19. This new role involved travel on five continents for visitation of communities and ministries, enlarged general council meetings, consultations for leadership, assemblies, and special celebrations. She led her council in extensive planning, especially for our mission in Africa and heritage in Béziers. There were many special events, but one of the most memorable was a papal audience where Pope Francis recognized and blessed the RSHM on the occasion of the 170th anniversary of our founding in 1849.

Catherine Vincie and Susan Gardella also bring proven leadership skills to this new team. Catherine, having been a councillor for the past six years, brings invaluable continuity in ongoing plans and projects, as well as the richness of her gifts and credentials in



Rosamond Blanchet

Catherine Vincie

Susan Gardella

liturgy and music. Her talent and experience have been central in planning the renovation of the chapel in Marymount Convent and creating many rituals of celebration.

Susan is widely recognized for 25 years of leadership of the LIFE Center in Sleepy Hollow, making it, especially during the pandemic, a central source of much-needed food security and educational stability. Recently, Sleepy Hollow's Thursday Club presented a gift of \$82,000 "to the LIFE Center and its driving force, Sr. Susan Gardella."

This new team has a graced history, both in their individual contributions and in their shared experiences. Sr. Rosamond ended her letter naming the two councillors with the invocation, "Once again, we ask God to grace us in our living of our 2019 General Chapter theme: 'Called to continue the mission of Jesus Christ: Firm in faith, vibrant in hope, rooted in love and one in service.' Rejoicing in the blessings of Pentecost, we pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on us and upon our human family. Come, Holy Spirit, come and renew the face of the earth."

Signs of the Times

TOWARDS AN EVER WIDER “WE”

Pope Francis chose a deceptively simple but immensely challenging theme for his message for the 2021 World Day of Migrants and Refugees: *Towards an ever wider “We”* in order to “indicate a clear horizon for our common journey in this world” and “to ensure the proper care for our common home.” We are called to become a “we” that is ever wider and more co-responsible, “in the profound conviction that whatever good is done in our world is done for present and future generations.”

Over the last 16 months of the COVID pandemic, it became easier to “hunker down” locally than to stretch out to global concerns. The travel restrictions, lockdown and “stay home” mandates shrank our horizons of space and time. It was easy to become focused on the immediate here and now — our household, our community, our neighborhood, or our country. Even outreach service programs needed to be local. It was easy to lose that larger perspective of the common good that we were reminded of by Pope Francis on March 27, 2020, in an eerily empty St. Peter’s Square, devoid of pilgrims and tourists.

While our spatial horizon needs to be broader, our sense of time must become more acute. Recent UN scientific and climate reports remind us that our use of the shared resources of our planet today will determine the fate of present and future generations, and of all life on our planet. Scientists have been very clear in telling us that our present modes of production and consumption are unsustainable!

In many indigenous traditions, the consequences of people’s actions are measured by their impact on the seventh generation from the present. In our RSHM timeline, this is comparable to the impact that actions during the early ministry of Fr. Jean Gailhac would have on our world today. How will the decisions we make today affect the seven generations from now into the future? Are we deeply attuned to the global impact of our choices?

One foundational principle of Catholic social teaching interwoven throughout both recent encyclicals,

Laudato Si’ and *Fratelli Tutti*, is the **common good**, mentioned more than 30 times in both encyclicals. If earth is our common home and we are a single family experiencing common threats to our survival, then the principle of the common good becomes a “summons to solidarity” and a preferential option for those who are poorest and most vulnerable. The shared natural resources on which all life depends — air, oceans, climate, the biodiversity of our world — are the global commons we take for granted. They are both finite and irreplaceable. We have an ethical and moral responsibility to protect and promote the common good, so that *all may have life*, now and into the future.

In his opening remarks to the One Planet Summit on Biodiversity in January 2021, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres noted that we have been abusing the planet as if we had a spare one. He deplored the growing imbalance and vulnerability in our global ecosystem and called for urgent action to address the climate crisis that human activity has caused. Declaring 2021 as the year to reconcile humanity with nature, he said “Now is the time to transform humankind’s relationship with the natural world – and with each other. And we must do so together. Solidarity is humanity. Solidarity is survival. That is the lesson of 2020.” This echoes the ecological conversion that Pope Francis called for in *Laudato Si’*.

There are signs of hope. The Interfaith Forest Alliance is an international multi-faith initiative that recognizes forests not as privately owned assets to be exploited for financial gain, but as carbon sinks, helping to regulate the global climate and serving as stewards of biodiversity. The Alliance aims to bring faith-based leadership and moral urgency to bear on efforts to end tropical deforestation. The newly launched *Laudato Si’* Action Platform is a collaborative effort of the Vatican, an international coalition of Catholic organizations and people of good will, inviting communities to join a seven-year journey to total sustainability. Initiatives such as these invite us, as RSHM and collaborators, to new dimensions of our mission, *so that all may have life*.

Veronica Brand, RSHM

TEAM OF THREE COMPLETES TRANSFORMATIVE TERM

On July 31, 2021, a transition ceremony will mark the passing of the mantle of leadership of the Eastern American Area to a new team. It's a time to look forward, and also a time to remember with immense gratitude the blessings of the past six years. The wisdom and work of Sisters Catherine Patten, Catherine Vincie, and Maria Timoney (and Monica Walsh until her missioning to the Generalate in Rome) have enriched us in countless ways. A broad overview reveals a consistent pattern of facing challenging realities with a view toward new possibilities. As sisters in the Area have dealt with the vulnerabilities of aging and loss, leadership has sought to be transformative, to ensure care for the membership and the ministries into the future. To facilitate this process, professional collaborators were hired and have made significant contributions in the areas of Advancement, Maintenance, Finance, Communications and Human Resources.

Special times of coming together – Missioning Day, Learning Festival, Feast Days, Jubilees, and Anniversaries – were planned and celebrated with reflection on current realities. The scourge of racism, concern for immigrants and refugees, the inequalities revealed by the COVID pandemic, the work at the United Nations, Pope Francis' challenge to us for personal transformation in response to climate change – gave impelling focus to the desire “that all may have life.” The same focus led to landscape and construction projects: creation of the RSHM Native Garden and renovation of Rogan Lodge as a gift to LifeWay Network for a new administrative center.

Properties in Tarrytown and beyond have been transformed. Butler Memorial Chapel was renovated to increase accessibility and update the worship space liturgically while preserving its beautiful features. The walkway and supporting wall behind the convent and the space where Pelissier Lodge had been are newly reconfigured and greened for leisurely enjoyment. The main house in Cormaria has been totally renovated to preserve its beauty and enhance its ministry. Traditional



(L-R) Sr. Catherine Patten, Eastern American Area Leader, with Councillors, Srs. Catherine Vincie and Maria Timoney

RSHM appreciation of the arts has been evident not only in care for property but in encouraging the development of sisters' gifts and talents -- for example, upgrading the organ in the convent chapel, hosting Catherine Vincie's concerts, reconfiguring Bianca's stained-glass windows for the Native Garden, and supporting Clare McBrien in establishing the convent art studio.

Community life progressed on several fronts. The pandemic led to positive developments in technology – livestreaming from the chapel, improving internet in the convent and Provincial Center, creating assemblies on Zoom, and ensuring that all sisters have what they need to participate in Zoom events. The website and social media posts were enhanced. A new publication, *Highlights*, updated the long-loved *Soundings* in content and design. More lay staff in administration, life enrichment and pastoral care added to the quality of life at Marymount Convent. Establishment of the Planning Team expanded participation of the sisters in the Eastern American Area in visioning for the future.

Transformation is written large in the exercise of leadership during the past six years. It has been a season of hope in the face of challenge, laying solid foundations for times ahead, exemplifying the words of our RSHM Constitutions: Our faith-journey as Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary is one of total commitment to follow Christ, to personal transformation in Him and to transformation of the world.



HEROES WORK HERE

Thank You for all you do

As we continue to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, we look forward with hope and offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the minimal impact this global health crisis has had on the RSHM community in Marymount Convent.

While 12 RSHM sisters contracted the virus, none had to be hospitalized, and none succumbed to it. Other religious communities across the country were less fortunate, experiencing higher infection rates and many lives lost.

How were we so blessed? We only have to look to our dedicated staff

for the answer. Prior to “New York on Pause” in March 2020, Karen Seery, RN, Director of Nursing/Coordinator of Health Care Services strategized with Sr. Margaret Hoyne, Convent Coordinator, and the Area leadership. The team decided that the sisters would remain on campus, leaving the convent only when medically necessary; volunteers and visitors were not permitted; and, Mass attendance was limited to sisters only. Eventually, Mass was replaced with daily communion service to further reduce the sisters’ exposure to non-residents.

When the first sister was diagnosed with COVID-19 right before Easter 2020, immediate action was taken. Group activities ceased and sisters were instructed to return to their rooms. Sodexo Food Service staff immediately pivoted, creating boxed meals for the sisters to pick-up and take back to their rooms. A few days later, as several sisters became ill, the convent fully locked-down. With all sisters confined to their rooms for approximately five weeks, more than 65 meals had to be delivered three times daily. “Everyone pitched in – they were wonderful. They all absolutely went above

Highlights Feedback!

and beyond,” said Sr. Margaret. “Nursing staff, housekeeping, food service, Marianne Walsh and Susannah Alao from Life Enrichment, and Donna Ruperto – all put in extra hours, including on their days and weekends off.”

By late spring, Karen Seery eased some restrictions, beginning with community dining. The auditorium served as an additional dining facility to ensure social distancing. Initially, sisters gathered for one meal daily, gradually expanding to all meals. As restrictions lifted in Westchester County, some sisters ventured out locally - always following safety protocols. Priests were invited back to celebrate Mass, but sisters could opt to attend virtually. When necessary, Mass would be suspended and communion services reinstated based on the overall health of the sisters in the convent. “We have to give Karen a lot of the credit for being on top of the situation at all times, keeping us safe,” said Sr. Margaret.

As the virus surged again in the fall and early winter, family visits for Thanksgiving and Christmas were ruled out. However, the New Year brought good news for the community with all the sisters receiving their first vaccination at the end of January 2021, and their second on February 28. Happily, now that all have been vaccinated, the sisters have returned to full community. They have returned to one dining room, can leave the convent for shopping and excursions, and have welcomed back volunteers and visitors. They look forward to seeing sisters from across the Area as they all gather in Tarrytown for the Convocation this July. The sisters, like everyone else, appreciate the return to normalcy. Reflecting on this experience, Sr. Margaret was not surprised that the staff rose to the occasion. “They are truly dedicated and always come through,” said Sr. Margaret. “They have always looked out for the best interests of the sisters.”



Sr. Margaret and Karen Seery, RN (seated, center) celebrate National Nurses Day with convent nursing staff.

As always, I enjoyed the latest edition of *Highlights*. What a joy to see Genevieve’s amazing pencil portraits! Apparently, a former president is not the only one to discover an artistic gift late in life. And, of course, I very much appreciated the summary of Catherine Vincie’s piece on baptism, especially her affirmation of the need to understand the paschal mystery not in terms of traditional understandings of atonement (e.g., penal substitution! Ugh!) but in terms of the Christic identity, mission and communion (a very different understanding of at-ONE-ment). Thanks to all who work on this publication!

Sue Calef, MC Tarrytown '77

My claim to fame is that I completed the entire crossword for the last issue. No one can believe that! The puzzles are quirky, brilliant, creative and engaging...what could be better?

*Annette Sarah Cunningham,
MC Tarrytown '60*

Thank you, dear sisters, for the wonderful puzzles. They are very well done and a welcome challenge! I also love keeping touch with Marymount. I treasure my years there.

*Janet Lucia Chowdrey,
MC Tarrytown '54*

LIFEWAY, A WELCOME NEIGHBOR



ENDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING
RECLAIMING LIFE.

Marymount, Tarrytown has gladly extended a welcome to LifeWay Network, an organization that provides safe housing for women who have been trafficked, and educates the public about present day human trafficking and slavery. When renovations of the Marymount Convent grounds began two years ago, the Eastern America Area Council led by Sr. Catherine Patten decided to rehabilitate Rogan Lodge and offer it to LifeWay Network for use as its administrative offices.



Rogan Lodge

RSHM have long supported LifeWay's work. In 2005, seven sisters from five different religious congregations (Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame, and Sisters of Charity) attended a conference on human trafficking. The group left the meeting compelled to do something. Mary Heyser, RSHM, facilitated a gathering of sisters from ten congregations, hosted by the Sisters of Charity in the Bronx, NY, to discuss next steps. In fact, according to Jo Piazza, author of *If Nuns Ruled the World*, Sr. Mary "...became the glue for the group that would become known as NY-CRC-STOP: New York Coalition of Religious Congregations to Stop Trafficking of Persons." This coalition, co-chaired by Sr. Mary and Sr. Joan Dawber, SC, continued to educate themselves and conduct workshops. Today, more than 30 congregations of women and men religious in the greater New York area work to end trafficking through education, advocacy, and support of persons who are trafficked.

As NY-CRC-STOP continued its important work, Sr. Joan envisioned a "Safe House" for women rescued from trafficking. She established LifeWay Network, and with the support of the coalition members' contributions of time, talent and funding, Sr. Joan's

vision became a reality in 2012. This first safe house accommodated five women rescued from labor and/or sex trafficking. A host community of three religious, supported by social workers, a house manager and dedicated volunteers, provided a caring and supportive environment, enabling these women to heal and move forward with their lives. Today there are two homes that can accommodate up to 16 residents in the NYC area for both longer-term housing and emergency needs.

Over the years, many RSHM sisters have supported and volunteered with LifeWay. Sr. Rosamond Blanchet currently serves as one of the four corporation members, and Sr. Elizabeth Kolb serves on the Board of Directors as Secretary. Sr. Ann Miller was part of the original host community at the first safe house, along with Ursuline and Dominican sisters. "I was blessed to be able to do this for eight years – we have grown together and increased our understanding of the needs of victims of human trafficking and the effects of trafficking," said Sr. Ann. "It was a gift for us to be there."

Continuing the important work started by Sr. Joan, Marion Kendall joined LifeWay Network as the Executive Director in 2018. She brings a clinical perspective with continuing emphasis on trauma-informed care, and is implementing new programs to benefit alumnae survivors, such as Welcoming and Inspiring New Growth as Sisters (WINGS) and the Restorative Community Mentorship Program, in partnership with the Beck Institute on Religion and Poverty at Fordham. "Trauma-informed care is about ensuring that ALL individuals feel physically and emotionally safe, are noticed and listened to and are given a voice," states Ms. Kendall. She is grateful for RSHM's continued support and shared understanding that everyone deserves a life of dignity. For more information about LifeWay Network, visit lifewaynetwork.org.

NEW LEADERS IN THE MARYMOUNT TRADITION

From my first steps in the recruitment process, the vision “That all may have life and have it to the full” resonated profoundly with me. It aligned with my educational philosophy, recognizing the intrinsic value of each individual while enabling all to develop their gifts and talents to the full. The genuine commitment of the staff, students, and wider community to realizing this vision has been so heartening to see. The school is a welcoming environment where all are challenged to be the best version of themselves.



Margaret Giblin, Head of School, Marymount London

During this year of the pandemic, we sought (as the sisters did before us) to meet the needs of our community, which at this time was to feel **together yet apart**. This became the theme of our school community and we connected with all our constituents in shared daily prayer, and through streaming our key celebrations such as Father Gailhac’s Feast Day.

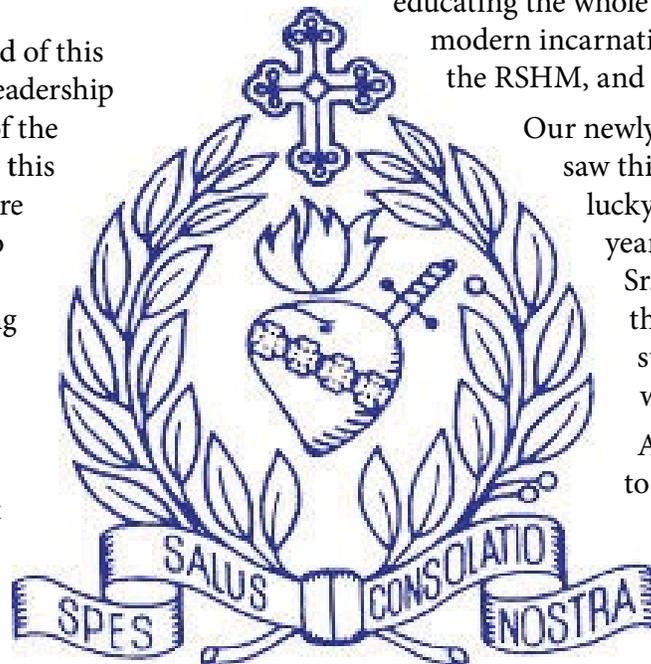
It is a huge privilege to be Head of this school, and I (and my senior leadership team) hold a keen awareness of the responsibility that comes with this as stewards of the mission. Here in London, we are fortunate to have the guidance of current RSHM sisters on our governing body. There is a tangible commitment to send our students out into the world as compassionate global citizens, who are **firm in faith, vibrant in hope, rooted in love, and one in service**. What a wonderful endeavor!

We have called this year at Marymount Paris our *retour aux sources* (back to basics). This goal led us to contemplate the guiding principles of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, and to reignite in our students the fire that inspires them to learn and seek knowledge. As 2020 made abundantly clear, never before has the world more clearly needed a generation of leaders who will act for the causes of humanity and creation and transform their world in the spirit of justice and peace.



Sarah Thomas, Head of School, Marymount Paris

I stepped into the role of Head of School humbled by the incredible journey of the RSHM and their vision of international education over the last 100 years. I was also inspired and strengthened by the faith and determination of our founders and the women who have stood upon their shoulders. While I have worked at Marymount Paris for over a decade, and found much joy in it, my new role of leadership revealed another dimension to me. It is a desire to continuously deepen my understanding of Pere Gailhac’s charism -- both how it translated to a visionary model of educating the whole child and how it has infused the modern incarnation of our schools today through the RSHM, and now with lay school leaders.



Our newly formed senior leadership team saw this as a spiritual exercise. We were lucky to be shepherded throughout the year by the RSHM sisters in Neuilly. Sr. Marion Shanahan has shown us the power of the oral tradition of storytelling to infuse a community with a shared mission.

As summer comes, I look forward to a time for contemplation on what I have learned this year and how I can put that at the service of Marymount Paris in the years to come.

HIGHLIGHTS PUZZLE: I Want to Be in That Number

The themed clues in this puzzle are for holy men and women of God known to us as saints. Answers are posted at:

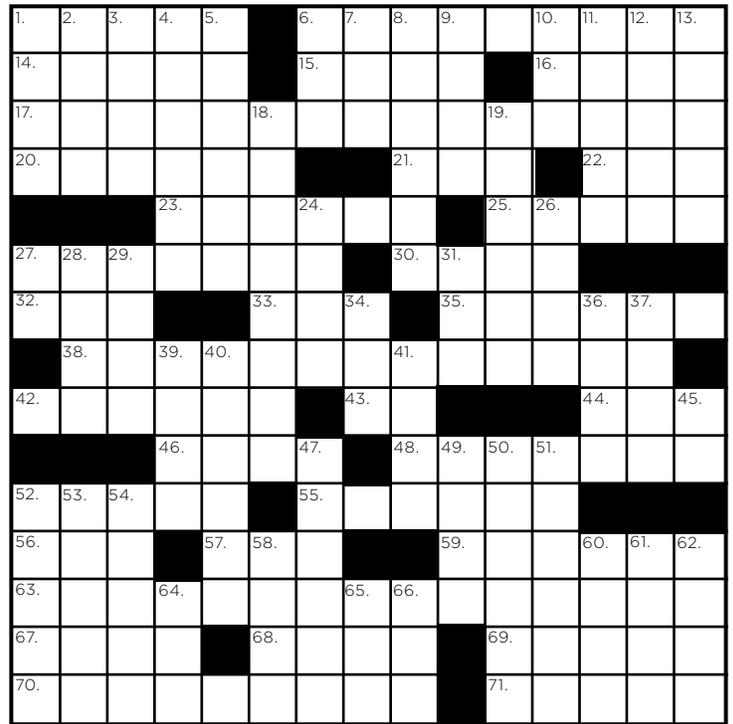
www.rshm-east.org/rshm-highlights

Across

1. Hewlett Packard promotions, briefly
6. *The Maid of Orleans*
14. Brief ID statement of Elsie the Cow
15. About
16. At-bat stat
17. *He loved Brother Sun and Sister Moon*
20. Chevrolet model
21. Immaculate Heart of Mary, abbr.
22. _____ of thieves
23. *He gave his life in service to the lepers of Molokai*
25. Digitized hand-writers for iPads
27. Curses (archaic)
30. Fashion magazine
32. Spanish pronoun
33. Giant baseball great, Mel _____
35. Supply with air
38. *He convened the Second Vatican Council*
42. Irish song, 'Moonlight _____'
43. When doubled, a toy on a string
44. Run from L to P
46. American organization for access to higher education, abbr.
48. *He is said to have driven the snakes from Ireland*
52. Whose pal is Ernie?
55. Ukulele classroom pack, briefly
56. Consumed
57. Solid, liquid, or _____
59. Double cheer in Pamplona
63. *She promised a shower of rose from heaven*
67. _____copter
68. Much
69. Boredom
70. *Mother _____ Seton*
71. Resident nurse, abbr.

Down

1. High Fidelity, abbr.
2. I'll have the chicken _____
3. What you need on a treasure hunt
4. You're welcome in Madrid
5. St. Lawrence edible bivalve, briefly
6. Whose hair is sold to support the family in *Little Women*?
7. Gold in Mexico
8. Equally good
9. He saved two of every kind of land animal from the deluge
10. Catholic priests, abbr.
11. Remain
12. Like a cake baked with yeast
13. Calumny and covetousness?
18. Declaration from a drink in a tea cup
19. Poison 'happy gas' used by Joker in the Batman series
24. That _____ say
26. _____winkle
27. To _____ or not to be
28. Basic cable sports channel
29. _____ and gloom
31. LA airport
34. Hallowed be _____ name
36. Primary goal
37. _____ture of iodine
39. Official agreement
40. Looks at US soldier
41. No, slangily
45. Approve, briefly
47. Hustle and _____
48. Physical Education, abbr.
49. Starting on
50. Snitcher?
51. Major East Coast



- US Highway
52. Cleanse in water
53. Merman or Kennedy
54. First part of a movie projection
58. He ran up _____ at the bar
60. Has
61. French possessive
62. _____Go Bragh
64. _____ Taylor, familiarly
65. His wife became a pillar of salt
66. Biblical verb ending

Bea McMahon, RSHM

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