



# RSHM Highlights

Eastern American Area

Winter 2023

## YEAR OF GAILHAC

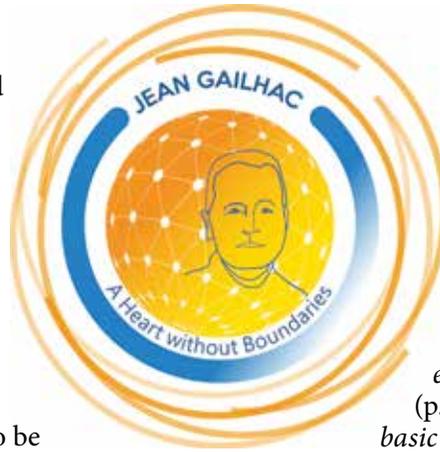
On November 13, 2022, the RSHM Enlarged International Leadership Council joined in celebration of the Eucharist at Cormaria Retreat House in Sag Harbor, NY, to mark the opening of the **Year of Jean Gailhac**. Sister Margaret Fielding, Institute Leader, extended a warm welcome to those present and to all who joined online from many parts of the world. The following is her reflection on the legacy of Père Gailhac:

Venerable Jean Gailhac, born 220 years ago on this day, is not just a fascinating figure of the past, but an inspiring and energizing presence for us today. His spirit and charism continue to be a guiding and motivating force in the choices we make for mission. He has left us a rich legacy, in the choices he made, the works he established, and the abundant letters he wrote, in which he communicated his spirit and charism. The celebration of this *Year of Jean Gailhac* is an opportunity to reflect in more depth on that legacy. Because the charism given through him to the Church and the world is not, in the words of Sister Mary Milligan, “a treasure to be locked away and preserved, but a plant to be watered, pruned, cared for – always drawing its life and strength from the same roots...” (Cf. M. Milligan, *That They May Have Life*, p. 205-6)

At the heart of our charism and mission and at the core of our history is Father Gailhac’s faith and zeal, his apostolic heart. When he founded our Institute in the mid-19th century, the structures to express apostolic religious life in its fullness did not exist. Female

religious life was lived in a semi-cloistered way. Yet he stated specifically that women were called to play an essential role in the work of redemption. He was clear that the Institute he founded was to be apostolic, that the sisters were to be fully at the service of those in need (p. 204). As the logo for the *Year of Jean Gailhac* states, Father Gailhac was “a man whose heart was without boundaries.” His apostolic heart and spirit inspired, guided and accompanied the sisters in the first 50 years of our Institute’s existence, leading them to go out to several countries and undertake diverse works. The same vision continues to inspire and motivate us today.

Another dynamic force at work in Father Gailhac’s life was his quest to discern God’s will and to carry it out. His willingness to act only when he was clear that it was God’s will profoundly shaped how our Institute evolved. Throughout our history important decisions were made only after discerning God’s will in the signs of the times. This discerning approach became a characteristic of our history, which, according to Sister Kathleen Connell, could be described as “a constant yes to God.” Mission today requires that we have discerning minds and hearts, that we always seek to act according to the mind and heart of Christ.



Fidelity to the Church is another precious heritage from our founder. In her history of the Institute, Sister Rosa do Carmo Sampaio speaks of Father Gailhac’s “*deep ecclesial communion*” (p. 38-9) which was “a *basic orientation of his whole life*” (p. 166), and a gift he

transmitted to the sisters, the gift of always seeking to be in communion with the Church. Today all of us are called to that same “ecclesial communion” with the people of God walking the synodal journey together.

Jean Gailhac’s faith vision has weathered well the changes that have taken place over time. Born of a faith that was tried and tested by suffering, sustained by hours of prayer, scripture reading and reflection, and deepened over a lifetime of ministry among the most marginalized people in his hometown of Béziers, it continues to inspire and guide us.

As we open the *Year of Jean Gailhac*, we celebrate and give thanks for the legacy we have received and we welcome the graced opportunities this year will bring, to drink anew from the wells of our sources, to renew our commitment to live the Gospel authentically, and to continue the mission of Jesus Christ who came that all may have life. May Father Gailhac be our inspiration as we walk together along new paths towards the horizons which open before us.

# The Heart of God Beats Here



*This mother mourns the loss of her brother who fell overboard during the journey from Tunisia.*



*L-R: Sister Ines, two refugee children, and Sister Ausilia*



*Standing in the "Doorway to Europe" are Sisters Ausilia, Paola, Ines and a visiting sister.*



*Refugees, with only the clothes on their backs, are in these boats for 2-3 days as they cross the Mediterranean Sea.*

**G**reetings from the Island of Lampedusa, Italy, in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea. It is also known as the Doorway to Europe and the Island of Hope, where the islanders' compassionate welcome for refugees and migrants after so many years is now at odds with Italy's new immigration laws.

Less than a year ago, I was asked by Sister Margaret Fielding, our Institute Leader, on behalf of the International Union of Superior Generals based in Rome, to join an inter-congregational community with two other sisters on this very island. Our mission is to be a presence to the citizens of Lampedusa in prayer and service and a compassionate, WELCOMING presence to those arriving from North Africa and Asia. These refugees are fleeing desperation, war, famine and fear, seeking a new way to live with dignity, even at the risk of losing their most precious life on the open sea.

In the words of the song "There Was a Man," our founder "had a vision to proclaim: that the Lord has come to give us life and we are to do the same." Each one of us is given that mandate, which is defining for a Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. That is God's dream for us and it is God's dream for those whom we welcome, to have LIFE to the fullest - a life with hope and dignity as a child of God...as a child of Allah!

To celebrate the Year of Père Gailhac, I want to reflect on how the spirit entrusted to us by our founder lives in our current missionary presence in Lampedusa. I live here in the only religious community on this island of 6,000+ with two other sisters: Sister Ausilia (a Salesian Sister of St. John Bosco) and Sister Paola (a Sister of Charity of St. Giovanna Antida Thouret), both of whom are Italian. We have very different personalities, talents and gifts that we bring and offer for the same mission!

The following is an observation by a married couple from Taizé, France, who came for a week to experience what we do with the multiple daily arrivals at the dock. (Note that the Italian word for "dock" is "molo.")

*"When my husband and I arrived at the 'Molo,' the police were not nice, neither with the young volunteers nor with the migrants. They raised their voices to hurry things up. The atmosphere was not nice. And then you sisters arrived. Something changed. You are from the generation of their mothers or grandmothers. Your presence calmed them and your natural authority and kindness required respect."*

When Sisters Ausilia, Paola and I read this, we conversed about what we want our presence at the "Molo" to reflect: gentleness, concern, human warmth, respect for the dignity of all: the migrants and their children (our brothers and sisters), our collaborators at the "Molo," as well as the police and coast guards who operate there. It is expressed in concrete gestures.

This morning we went to see some of the migrants off on the ship that would take them to Sicily to be processed by immigration before, hopefully, being given permission to stay. In an October 3rd testimonial, one survivor of the many tragedies that occur in Lampedusa said: "I was able to stay with a family in Europe. I studied and received two degrees at a University in Italy...and, like so many others, I found a new way to live! ...All because you welcomed us."

To see the refugees who danced and clapped and some who, as soon as they set foot on solid ground, knelt to kiss it and bless it...this is to know that the HEART OF GOD beats at the dock in Lampedusa. Please pray for the newly arrived and for us who are here to greet them.

*Ines Gizzarelli, RSHM*



# Signs of the Times

## The 60th Anniversary of Vatican II: Ecclesial and Liturgical Reform

The Second Vatican Council began its work on October 11, 1962. This Ecumenical Council not only affirmed the Church's life and doctrinal patrimony, but also opened the windows of the Church to let in some fresh air, fresh perspectives, and critical views on the life and mission of the Catholic Church. In Pope John XXIII's words, "Our duty is not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity, but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us..."<sup>1</sup>

From the start, Pope John tried to balance the old and the new, the gift of tradition and the challenges of the present time. Sixty years later, we are invited to consider the same balance between honoring the gifts of tradition with a thoughtful critique of the Church's present practice and teachings. Is it possible for us to be faithful members of the institutional Church and its official liturgies even as we turn a critical eye on both?

In our present context, suspicion of institutions, be they religious, political or social, has become a reality for us. Too often the rejection of institutions relies on a one-sided bias towards personal autonomy. Yet persons are intrinsically social and social structures are necessary to carry the achievements and contributions of the past into the present and the future. They can be distorted and oppressive; they need not always be.

We need to balance a positive evaluation of the Church with a responsible critique of that same Church. As Richard Gaillardetz says in a recent article in *Worship* magazine:

And that task...requires holding in a reflective equilibrium two necessary interpretive stances toward our religious tradition: first, an affirmative hermeneutic of trust that remains confident in the tradition's ability to faithfully mediate the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the path to authentic discipleship; second, a critical hermeneutic of suspicion that exposes our tradition's biases, blind spots, and distortions.<sup>2</sup>

We do not have to choose between tradition or its critique; we must hold them in balance.

Let us look at a liturgical example of this approach. First, there is an intimate connection between the Church and its liturgy. Any of the Church's liturgical rites are the Church in "performance" or in action. How we gather, in a circle or in rows, where the ministers are in relationship to the assembly, who touches what with what, who says what, etc. are all expressions of how we understand ourselves and our relationships. A new ecclesiology needs a new liturgy.

Because of this correlation, Pope Francis has recently limited the celebration of the older Tridentine Mass. Reflecting an older ecclesiology, the Tridentine liturgy



had no reference to the role of the assembly. There were no dialogues to which the assembly responded; the readings were read in Latin with the priest facing the wall; communion of the people was considered an interruption of the flow of the Mass, etc. Vatican II ecclesiology has a very active role for all the baptized in the life of the Church which is reflected in the revised rites. The post-Vatican II Mass of Paul VI explicitly involves the assembly at every moment of the celebration including readings and prayers in the vernacular that all may understand; and, the highpoint of the celebration - the communion of the whole assembly - priest and people together.

Yet even this post Vatican II Rite is not above critique. In light of the relative social acceptance and theological support of the full humanity of women, why are some roles still limited to men? If the charism of preaching is given to some lay women and men of the community, why may only a priest preach at the Eucharist? If language is truly a sign of recognition of another individual's personhood, why is inclusive language not part of the translation of biblical and Mass texts? More could be said, but these few items make the point.

In sum, with an affirmative hermeneutic of trust, we are invited to acknowledge the Roman Catholic tradition as a true extension of the life and mission of Jesus Christ. That being said, the Church and its liturgies are not beyond reproach. We are also invited to engage in a critical hermeneutic of suspicion and keep these two interpretations in balance. The Church as an institution is graced and flawed, and the liturgies of the Church are graced and flawed. So too are we when we voice our critiques of past and present realities in light of contemporary challenges.

Catherine Vincie, RSHM

1. John XXIII, "Opening Speech at the Council."
2. Richard Gaillardetz, "Loving and Reforming a Holy but Broken Church," (*Worship* 97 January 2023), 72.

# A Time to Remember

The visit of the RSHM Enlarged International Leadership Council to the Eastern American Area from November 18 to December 6 was a time of joy, filled with special gatherings and celebrations. Their follow-up letter included the following reflections:

*We experienced a strong sense of life and mission among you, not just among those actively engaged in external ministry but also among sisters who are retired or dealing with the limitations of aging or illness, who continue to live our mission through their prayer, presence, and acts of service within the community.... We were very happy to meet many of you again at the Area Day on the 3rd of December and members of the SHM Extended Family on the following day. We saw that relationships between the Extended Family and the sisters are warm, appreciative and life-giving. In general, it was evident to us that, while numbers are diminishing in the Eastern American Area, life and mission are flourishing.*

One of the highlights of the visitation period was the Area Day featuring the video of a dialogue between Constance Fitzgerald, a Carmelite contemplative nun, and Shawn Copeland, a theologian especially attentive to the black experience of slavery in this country. It is a conversation between two deeply religious women who are both struggling to tease out the meaning of our human situation and the place of religious life in this contemporary time of diminishment and displacement, which is a common worldwide phenomenon.

Sister Constance has spent her life exploring the richness of the Carmelite prayer tradition especially that of St. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. Her conviction is that, currently, religious women are invited to a deeper place, a place of intimate



union with Christ crucified and the Trinity. From this place, they find themselves in communion with all the displaced and suffering people of the world

Shawn has developed in contemplative life a deep commitment to the transformation of consciousness that binds all human persons together as one and as one with the cosmos. She invokes the “dark wisdom” of the enslaved not to avoid suffering, nor to deny suffering, but to SUFFER suffering.

Their conversation leads us to view displacement as a planetary experience: wave upon wave of migration; the

diminishment caused by climate change; the perceived loss of power by dominant groups, white males in particular; escalation of violence; limitations of the pandemic; and in our current experience of religious life, declining numbers, loss of motherhouses, and varied expressions of coming to completion.

Women religious today are led by the Spirit to stand with all the despised and excluded at the foot of the cross. We are invited to a deeper place, called to appropriate a totally relational life, an identity shaped by the crucified Christ for the awakening of the entire cosmos.

The frailty and losses which we experience are like the dark night of the soul in classic mysticism. The Christ-life takes on a new depth, luring us to greater union and communal love. This involves a stretching of the soul, not just our individual souls, but the soul of religious life.

There are lifelong obstacles to be faced in this stretching of the soul. One is the false self, the egocentric bent that blocks true communion. The other is simply the condition of being human, the limitations of our incomplete and restless nature.

The soul-stretching to which we are invited involves reconfiguring our selfhood - replacing the selfhood based on autonomy with one based on communion. It is like the unraveling of a ball of yarn, both painful and exciting. Wisdom is so often expressed in paradox. A beautiful quotation from slave literature is: “Wisdom in the heart is not the same as wisdom in the mind.” It is this deeper wisdom that seeks a “freedom future” rather than a “fractured future,” secure in the unwavering conviction that “*He Be With Us.*”

Bea McMahon, RSHM

# MINISTRY IN ACTION

Our lives are built around the common understanding that everyone deserves a life of dignity. And, in the spirit of our motto *Ut Vitam Habeant* (that all may have life), our ministries are committed to caring for the vulnerable and marginalized.

This past Fall, the convent community realized that it had several cars that were no longer in use. The Area Council decided to see if they could be donated to individuals in need. Clare Horn, co-chair of the Extended Family and Immigration Task Force member, volunteered to find an organization that might take the cars. She connected with Hearts & Homes for Refugees in Pelham, New York – which proved to be a perfect fit.

Hearts & Homes for Refugees is a volunteer-driven nonprofit organization that works with U.S. Department of State-designated agencies to welcome refugees. They inspire, educate and equip others to resettle, assist and advocate for refugees. Working with a network of neighbors, community organizations, faith-based, student and civic groups, they offer safe and inclusive communities to our refugee neighbors and empower them to rebuild their lives with hope and dignity. The organization selected two refugees to receive the cars. They were presented to these individuals at the convent in October.

The first recipient (names are withheld to protect their privacy) is a former Special Immigrant Visa holder from Afghanistan who was visiting family in August 2021 when Kabul fell to the Taliban. He was able to bring his wife, her brother, and his own two brothers to safety in the U.S. They all stayed at a military base in New Mexico for several months as the family was processed. Hearts & Homes for Refugees took on their case when they left the camp in November 2021. They have been living in Yonkers for the past year where he commuted to work via public transportation. Upon receiving the car, not only is his work commute easier, but the car serves two important additional purposes for the family: to take his wife and their newborn baby to medical appointments; and, as transportation for his brother and brother-in-law to their jobs at a restaurant. (They had been biking back and forth to work, including late at night.)

The second recipient is a woman who arrived in the U.S. with her husband and their two teenage boys in February 2022, from Honduras. Honduran refugees, along with those coming from other countries including El Salvador, Venezuela, Nepal, Nicaragua and Haiti, have been granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) by the U.S. due to conditions/circumstances preventing their safe return to their home country. This woman's family had been targeted by gangs. While her husband could walk to his construction job in New Rochelle, she had a long late-night/early morning walk to her part-time job at a local store, and an expensive commute by train to her second part-time job in Harrison. They are excited and grateful for her safer and easier commute. Also, with a car, there is potential to earn extra income by taking on additional work at night, such as cleaning or meal delivery.

***“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me.... Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” Mt 25:35, 40***

*Cathy Wilkins, Director, Communications & Advancement*



# Standing On Their Shoulders



Susan Kumnick



Anne Marie Hill, RSHM

The Global Network of RSHM Schools stands securely on the shoulders of RSHM sisters who value education to transform the future by inspiring young people in our classrooms and beyond to know and carry on Father Gailhac’s mission “that all may have life.”

Years ago, Sister Anne Marie Hill saw the advantage of bringing together administrators from the Marymount Schools in Rome, Paris, and London for annual meetings, thereby creating “unity through diversity.” As lay heads replaced RSHM sisters in leadership positions, other RSHM schools reached out to be included in the June meeting. In time, the *Goals and Criteria* were created to guide the RSHM mission in each member school. At the June meeting, written reports were shared describing how each school implemented one of the five Goals (or the “Ideario” in Portugal and Brazil). A variation of the June meeting occurred twice when two students from each school traveled to Rome and Porto for RSHM leadership sessions while the heads and staff members met in a separate area. The school heads depended on and appreciated Sister Anne Marie’s leadership of the network. Shortly after the 2013 annual meeting in Medellin, Colombia, Sister Anne Marie’s retirement was announced. The network remained without a successor until Sister Rosamond Blanchet, RSHM General Superior, summoned school representatives to a meeting hosted by Marymount New York at the end of the 2014-15 school year. Stressing the importance of carrying on the founder’s work through education, she shared a new vision. No longer would an RSHM sister lead the network. Instead, a transition to lay leadership began. Sister Roz assured the group that the RSHM Institute was fully committed to working with the schools as “an instrument of mission.” With that promise, she introduced Sister Mary Jo Martin who would facilitate this transition by building a new structure with a representative group of lay heads.

Sister Mary Jo quickly assembled a coordinating committee of five school heads, each representing a geographical area and serving a 2-3 year term. From 2015 until 2022, a new structure, mission, and website for the network were created, and committee meetings, conferences, and spiritual retreats for school heads took place. Ongoing consultation and communication

between the committee and all the network members as well as a close bond with the RSHM Institute keep the RSHM spirit alive in our schools.

In December 2021, Sister Margaret Fielding, RSHM Institute Leader, along with Sister Mary Jo discerned that the moment of transition to lay leadership was imminent and announced the search for the first lay Coordinator of the Global Network. I believe that my appointment to this position in 2022 was the result of a lifelong relationship with RSHM sisters and my educational experiences at Marymount College, Tarrytown and Colegio Marymount, Barranquilla, Colombia; without a doubt, part of God's plan.

Thanks to those sisters on whose shoulders we now stand, the Global Network of 19 RSHM Schools in Europe, the USA, Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil will move forward as we update our guiding statements, expand the use of social media for communication, encourage student/faculty exchanges, reach out to institutions founded by the RSHM not yet members of the Global Network, and make the Network financially, spiritually, and administratively sustainable. There is much work ahead, so please keep the Global Network of RSHM Schools in your prayers.

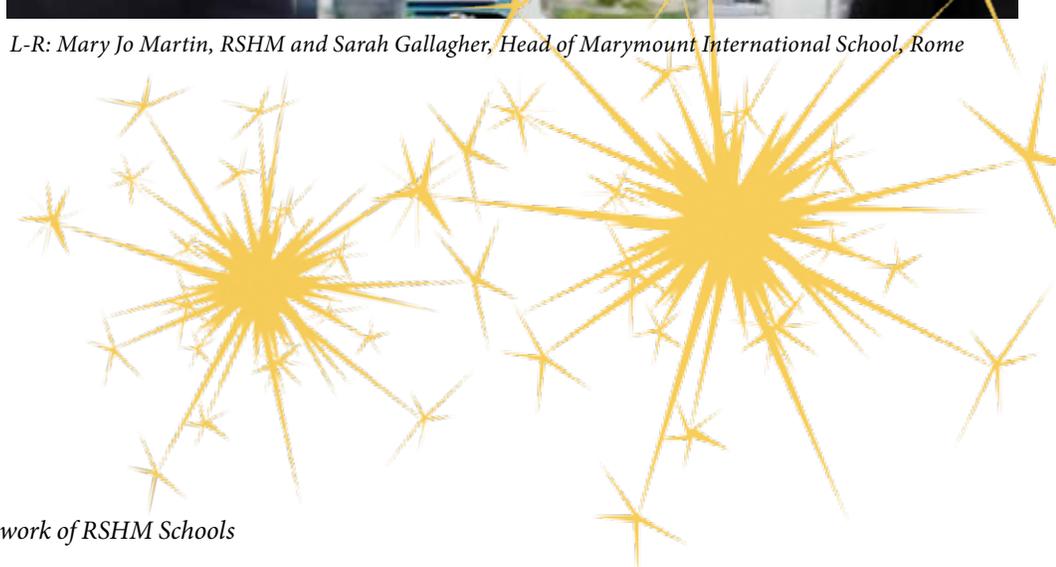
*Susan M. Kumnick, Coordinator, Global Network of RSHM Schools*



*2022 Global Network of RSHM Schools Conference*



*L-R: Mary Jo Martin, RSHM and Sarah Gallagher, Head of Marymount International School, Rome*



# HIGHLIGHTS PUZZLE: Prophets of Old

The themed clues, marked by an asterisk, refer to names of prophets. Answers are posted at [www.rsh-m-east.org/category/newsletter](http://www.rsh-m-east.org/category/newsletter)

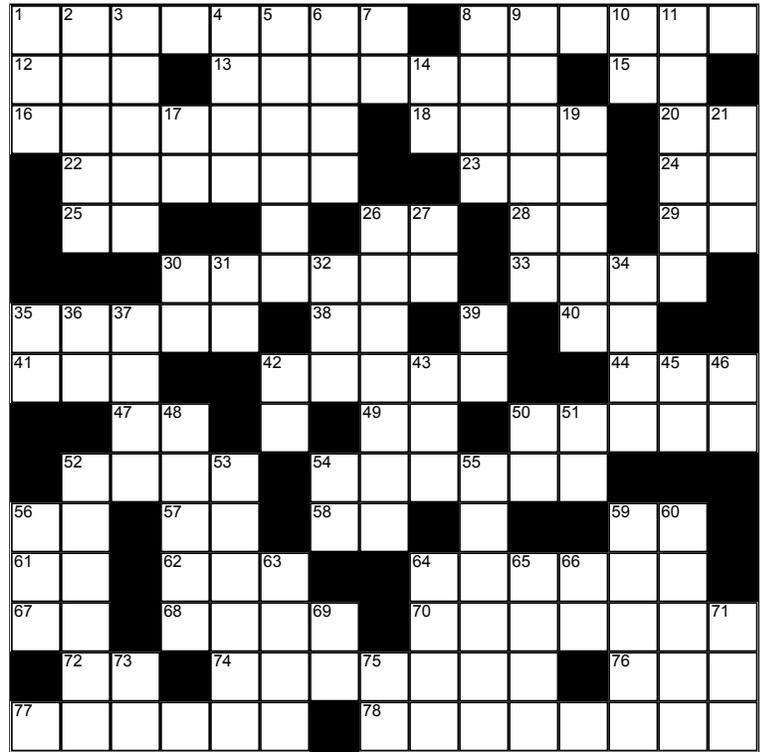
## Across

- 1 \*He saw life breathed into dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones
- 8 The 'O' in the abbr. for Congresswoman AOC
- 12 Padre, briefly
- 13 Going at it intensely
- 15 For example, abbr.
- 16 Cinderella's was sought after
- 18 Fragrance of choice for men
- 20 New Testament, abbr.
- 22 \*He danced before the Ark of the Covenant
- 23 Add an 'f' and you have a servant
- 24 In operation
- 25 Year in Paris
- 26 Et tu, Bru\_\_
- 28 Thanks in London
- 29 Right, abbr.
- 30 \_\_\_ Checkers
- 33 Location
- 35 \*He gave us the Ten Commandments
- 38 "\_\_\_ come home."
- 40 Northeast, abbr.
- 41 Terminate
- 42 Customers of dealers
- 44 Resident assts.
- 47 Letdown for a petitioner
- 49 Cubic cent.
- 50 \*He was swallowed whole and came out all right
- 52 The Three Kings followed one
- 54 I wore
- 56 Connecticut, abbr.
- 57 \_\_\_ what?
- 58 Low marks in school
- 59 A \_\_\_\_, intro into a pseudonym
- 61 Very funny!
- 62 Belief or philosophy
- 64 \_\_\_ down the road
- 67 Exists

- 68 Land of Anna's King
- 70 Unshakable
- 72 Freud defined it as the home of one's basic instincts
- 74 Old-time Russian ruler's approval
- 76 Young boy in Scotland
- 77 \*He invited all who thirst to come to the water
- 78 Army commanders

## Down

- 1 Emergency rooms, abbr.
- 2 Novelist Scott's wife
- 3 French mineral water
- 4 Arizona tribe
- 5 I need you, in text
- 6 He's between viscount and duke
- 7 Lieut.
- 8 They're busy when in the water
- 9 Small glass bottles, often used for oil and vinegar
- 10 Essentially, with per
- 11 Pay no attention to
- 14 Editorial Board, abbr.
- 17 Practical Nurse, abbr.
- 19 A wedding dress may have one
- 21 TV channel or explosive
- 26 Technicians in a tuberculosis clinic, briefly
- 27 Suffix with mon and monk
- 30 AD
- 31 Homeland Security, abbr.
- 32 Egyptian god worshipped as protector of households
- 34 Sea bird, smaller than a gull
- 35 Degree higher than a BA
- 36 Unbelievably, St. Thomas Aquinas was called a dumb \_\_\_
- 37 E-mail category
- 39 Nova Scotia, abbr.



- 42 Not in bed
- 43 Record Co. with a dog in its logo
- 45 Twelve-step org.
- 46 Sacred Heart, on scoreboards
- 48 It's a dream-come-true in a desert
- 50 She's the activist in Little Women
- 51 Taking a med, e.g.
- 52 Unchanging state or condition
- 53 Turquoise Hispanic Muppet
- 54 You need it to get on a plane
- 55 Absolutely right, slangily
- 56 Sweetheart of Sigma \_\_\_
- 59 Native Australian bear
- 60 Record of the events of one year
- 63 Korean War TV show starring Alan Alda
- 64 At \_\_\_\_, opposite of 13 A
- 65 For heaven's \_\_\_!
- 66 Dorothy's Aunt in *The Wizard of Oz*
- 69 Baby's first syllable, perhaps
- 71 Touchdowns, abbr.
- 73 Spouse of 69 D
- 75 Rio Grande, abbr.

Bea McMahon, RSHM

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