



# R S H Highlights M

Eastern American Area

Fall 2023

## SAVING AFGHAN GIRLS

Last Spring, I was asked by a friend to join a small group who were trying to save five girls from the Taliban in Afghanistan by bringing them to the United States. There is a long back story, but the good news is that all five are now here and enrolled in schools in New York City. One of them, Dunya, is at Marymount School of New York in grade 11. The other four are at Birch Wathen Lenox, another private school in New York City that offered them scholarships.

Meg Chapman and her husband Mo have been involved with an organization called Afghan Child Education and Care (AFCECO) for many years. I am so impressed with the work of this organization; I hope that you will take a look at their inspiring website. AFCECO was founded in 2004 by an Afghan woman, Andeisha Farid, who grew up in war torn Afghanistan. Andeisha, grateful for her own education, wanted to help the children in her country not only to be sheltered and safe, but also to be educated so they in turn could help rebuild Afghanistan. She understood the culture, the tribal conflicts, and the importance of keeping the children connected to their home families and villages. With the help of CharityHelp International, a not-for-profit which had a program inviting people to sponsor a child, she was able to fund her work.

Of course, the fall of the government of Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, and the coming of the Taliban threatened the work, the children, and Andeisha herself. Because the program had significant American funding and emphasized art and music education (forbidden by the Taliban), they have struggled to protect the children. Many are still in Kabul and other cities, some in safe houses. Boys have been allowed to return to secondary school, but secondary education of girls is forbidden.

These five girls were in special danger, among other things, because they were studying art and music. AFCECO managed to get them to Pakistan on one year student visas. Despite having letters from the U.S. State Department that they qualified for special assistance, the consulate in Islamabad was unable to process this type of visa and they were in imminent danger of being deported back to Afghanistan.

Our little group decided to try to get them here on student visas. This meant finding schools approved to accept foreign students who were also willing to offer full scholarships, finding host families who would parent them, and raising funds to get them here and to provide support. It also meant finding help to navigate the U.S. immigration system. Acceptance at a school was the key to being able to apply for student visas. The first school we approached was Marymount School of New York who accepted Dunya. Her younger sister, Setayash, is with the others at Birch Wathen Lenox.

Our group is committed to shepherding these girls in their adjustment to life in the United States and in their very challenging educational journeys. For the moment, however, we are rejoicing that they are here and that they are doing well.

Catherine Patten, RSHM



Dunya



Dunya and her sister Setayash

# Signs of the Times

## Pope Francis on Climate Change

On the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4, 2023, Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Exhortation (*Laudate Deum*) on climate change. *Laudate Deum* is an extension of Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* on the care of our common home. Eight years after the publication of *Laudato Si'*, the situation of climate change has become so dire that the Pope felt compelled to address "All People of Good Will on the Climate Crisis." The document is forthright in its review of the relevant facts and challenging in its call for immediate and substantial changes in our understanding of the human community from within nature rather than outside of it. The Pope directly critiques the control of a few powerful, transnational corporations and the failure of world organizations/meetings to limit the damage from excessive burning of fossil fuels which is warming the planet at an increasingly rapid rate.

Speaking within the Catholic tradition of concern for human dignity, Pope Francis stresses that because of global climate change we are in a crisis that is intimately related to the dignity of human life (LD 3). He criticizes those who "deny, conceal, gloss over or relativize the issue" (LD 5). He speaks of those who deride what is incontrovertible scientific research on global warming, who ridicule those who are fighting for change, who would place the responsibility for global warming on the poor, or who insist that using cleaner energy would result in a loss of jobs. In sum, the Pope writes that "the climate crisis is not exactly a matter that interests the great economic powers, whose concern is with the greatest profit possible at minimal cost and in the shortest amount of time" (LD 13). He also signals that these dismissive attitudes are found even within the Catholic church (LD 14).

Pope Francis is not afraid to name a "growing technocratic paradigm" as the core of our global crisis. Quoting from *Laudato Si'*, he repeats that this mentality insists that "goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power as such (LS 105); this must be resisted. Technological advances often are based on a belief that the world's resources are unlimited, and that the human person is free to exploit nature for its own limited benefit for the few. The problem is compounded by the fact that "our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience" (LS 105).

The Pope not only criticizes the present problems and their roots in an overly optimistic reliance on technology, but



Pictured L to R: RSHM Sisters Virginia Dorgan, Jacquelyn Porter, Veronica Brand, Kathleen Kanet and Sister Dusty Farnum, OP  
Picture courtesy of Chris Herlinger, Global Sisters Report

he also cites the problem that the relationship between human persons and nature is skewed. "Human beings," he says, "must be recognized as a part of nature. Human life, intelligence and freedom are elements of the nature that enriches our planet, part of its internal workings and its equilibrium" (LD 26). Although he does not use this language, he implies that we must not treat any element of the natural world as an object to be exploited but as a subject to be encountered. We need, he says, to "rethink...questions of human power, its meaning and its limits" (LD 28).

In addition, the Pope mourns the "weakness of international politics." While individual efforts at recycling, for example, are valuable in that they bring about a change in the culture, these individual efforts are not sufficient to mitigate the massive problems of climate change and destruction of the environment. Worldwide organizations, conferences, and agreements such as the Paris Climate Accord are essential if we are to forestall the irreversible global warming of the sea, land, and air. These global bodies must create agreements that are "efficient, obligatory and readily monitored" to achieve effects that are "drastic, intense and count on the commitment of all" (LD 59).

Finally, the Pope ends by calling on the Catholic faithful to be motivated by their faith. Passages throughout the bible recall that all that God created is good, and that all creation, not just human persons, are being called by God towards a fullness as their end (LD 65). On a positive note, the Pope states that "the world sings of an infinite Love: how can we fail to care for it?" (LD 65). Because the problems are so global and massive, Pope Francis calls for a conversion that will bring about "large processes of transformation rising from deep within society" (LD 71).

Catherine Vincie, RSHM

# Missioning Day 2023



Dr. Zeni Fox

A great bond of friendship was evident as Catherine Vincie, RSHM, introduced her former colleague from Seton Hall University, Dr. Zeni Fox, to the sisters gathered at Marymount Convent on Saturday, September 16, for our annual Missioning Day. The opening prayer with vibrant visuals included a prayer of Pope Francis:

*Lord, let us learn how beautiful it is to live together as brothers and sisters.*

**I**t also drew upon the Vision Statement from the RSHM 2019 General Chapter:

*We collaborate with others as we journey together – women of prophetic hope who proclaim that all have a place in our “common home.”*

The focus of the presentation was the laity and the Roman Catholic Church. Tracing a clear path of change from the role of lay persons described by one bishop at Vatican II as “pay, pray, and obey,” Dr. Fox reviewed some significant developments in the life of the Church such as the Catholic Family Movement, the Catholic Worker Movement, St. Vincent de Paul Societies, and Associates of Religious Congregations. She then set before us an awe-inspiring sequence of documents illustrating the growth in understanding of the role of the laity in the mission of the Church.

From the Second Vatican Council: *“For the exercise of the apostolate God gives the faithful special gifts” (Art. 3)...“That men (and women), working in harmony, should renew the temporal order and make it increasingly more perfect: such is God’s design for the world. All that goes to make up the temporal order: personal and family values, culture, economic interests, the trades and professions, institutions of the political community, international relations, and so on...all these possess a value of their own, placed in them by God...” (Art. 7).*

From the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church:

*“The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized...(who) do not however profess the Catholic faith... (And) those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways” (Arts. 15 and 16).*

From Pope Benedict XVI’s Address to the Pastoral Leaders of the Diocese of Rome:

*“In the first place we must renew our efforts for a formation which is more attentive and focused on the vision of the Church.... At the same time, it is necessary to improve pastoral structures in such a way that the co-responsibility of all is gradually promoted.... This demands a change in mindset, particularly concerning lay people. They must no longer be viewed as ‘collaborators’ of the clergy but truly as ‘co-responsible’ for the Church’s being and action.”*

Dr. Fox ended her presentation with eyes on the upcoming global assembly at the Vatican, October 4-28, 2023, for the Synod on Synodality. Pope Francis had invited Catholics to submit feedback to their local dioceses on the question “What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our ‘journeying together?’” The resulting synthesis, the Working Document for the Continental Stage of the Synod is crystal clear in affirming the role of the laity: *The mission of the Church is realized through the lives of all the baptized.*

The lecture was followed by an anointing for mission by Sisters Roz, Catherine and Susan, Eucharistic Liturgy with Reverend Senan Taylor, OFMCap, presiding, and a festive lunch for all.

Bea McMahon, RSHM



## FESTIVAL OF LEARNING

RSHM Sisters with Father Sean Martin

**C**ormaria, ever beautiful, was brimming with welcome as we arrived on Monday, July 9, to begin a week that would bring learning and joy beyond expectation. The topic was the life and writings of St. Paul, and the presenter, Father Sean Martin, priest/teacher from Dallas, Texas, seemed to hold Paul of Tarsus as his best friend.

We were introduced to Paul as an unlikely leader. He was not a good speaker and his spirituality was one of failure. He encountered much resistance. But his rock and fortress, source of indomitable courage and zeal, was Jesus Christ. He describes his relationship with Jesus in very personal terms. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

For Paul, self-emptying and exaltation were two sides of the same reality. He expresses this with poetic vision in his hymn to Christ (Phil. 2:6-11), "Though he was in the form of God...he emptied himself...even unto death, death on a cross...at the name of Jesus every knee should bend in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

Paul's self-presentation (2 Cor. 12; 7-10) underlines the connection between suffering and the glory of the Risen Christ. "We are only earthen vessels...persecuted but never deserted, knocked down but never killed, always, wherever we may be, we carry with us in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, too, may always be seen in our body." Describing the experience of this contradiction in his own body as "a thorn in the flesh," Paul writes, "I have pleaded with the Lord three times for it to leave me, but he has said, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'"

The conclusion of this reflection is, "So I shall be very happy to make my weaknesses my special boast so that the power of Christ may remain over me, and that is why I am quite content with my weaknesses, and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and the agonies I go through for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong."

Some passages in Paul's letters suggest that he thought the "coming of the Lord" was near at hand. For instance, he writes in 1 Thes. 5:1-7 and 23 "...you know very well that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night... stay awake and sober... May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul, and body, for the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ."

The contrasts in Paul's writings – life and death, hope and tribulation – give us a sense of how he was able to embrace shipwreck, persecutions, and every manner of hardship as channels of grace. His life testifies to the truth of Elizabeth Dreyer's reflection in *Suffering and the Christian Life* (Orbis Books, 2013), "The mystery of suffering is above all concerned with...the power of the Spirit, who as Gift and Love brings life and courage, humility, and creativity."

All too quickly, a week of graced learning and true festivity came to an end. The Ritual of Farewell at our final Eucharist was animated by the words of Paul (1 Cor. 12:4), "There are different kinds of gifts, but one Spirit." Each of us received a handcrafted gift, a packet of coasters made by indigenous women in Guatemala. We treasure these as a reminder of the blessings shared during the festival and of the wealth of creativity of the poor in our world.

Bea McMahon, RSHM

# That Families May Have Life

At the celebration in August of its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala in Wytheville, Virginia, the Family Resource Center (FRC) Director, Karli Meagher, thanked Maria Timoney, RSHM, "...for allowing us to honor your passion and commitment for decades to survivors in our community. Not only have you had an impact on the community, you have had a major role in the development and survival of our program."

*The following reflection was Sister Maria's response to the honor received:*

My very first awareness of the Family Resource Center was way back in 1983 (40 years ago) when I learned that a group from St. Mary's Catholic Church in Wytheville volunteered to help paint and furnish its very first shelter facility.

In 1989, I started working as a staff attorney at Southwest Virginia Legal in Marion, Virginia, handling lots of cases in the Juvenile Courts. In those days, I don't recall women contacting us self-identifying as victims of abuse. They called asking about a legal separation or a divorce or about custody or for help in dealing with the Department of Social Services (DSS) because the agency was concerned about the safety of children. Only during the course of advising and representing clients did we as lawyers often learn about the abuse.

Around 1990-1991, I was invited to join the Board of Directors of FRC. In those early days, we at Legal Aid together with FRC staff worked to create awareness in the community about the prevalence of domestic violence and to engage with law enforcement, judges, social services staff and health professionals in the efforts to provide protection for victims.

In 1992, the facility on Main Street had a fire in the middle of the night. I was Chair of the Board at that time and remember standing on Main Street that freezing February night watching the firefighters and giving thanks that all the residents and staff got out safely.

After the fire, and a period in temporary office space, FRC moved to a newly constructed building on the grounds of the Children's Home. Both Legal Aid and FRC struggled with fluctuating funding and fewer staff than was ideal as we attempted to help victims do safety planning, obtain and enforce protective orders, and find safe shelter while guiding them through the intricacies of custody agreements. For the most part we were very effective partners.

I reached a very low point in my representation of domestic violence victims in 1999 when my client and her teenage daughter were shot and killed by the abuser shortly after our court hearing on the protective order and custody. My client and her two daughters had been sheltered at FRC for a month and after the court hearing an FRC staff person drove all three back to their former home to pick up some of the personal things they couldn't take with them when they fled. A Sheriff's Deputy accompanied the group. No one knew that the abuser (husband/father) had returned and hid in the home with a shotgun.



*Regina Eller, former ED of FRC, recounts Sr. Maria's involvement with FRC*



*Sr. Maria speaking with Bill Fuller, a supporter of FRC*

After my time on the Board, I continued to act as an advisor to those in Administration at FRC. On occasion, the agency would receive subpoenas to appear or to produce privileged information that required responding to the Court. Also, several times a victim who sought shelter was, in fact, a minor and that necessitated cooperation with DSS. Other instances occurred when FRC staff became aware that a victim was not adequately caring for her child, which necessitated a report.

As our clients lived constantly with fear and trauma, we experienced a great deal of stress ourselves. But in the midst of this, our staff did amazing service. In addition to our work with individuals, through our annual Domestic Violence Conferences, we provided ongoing continuing education for law enforcement, magistrates, social workers, attorneys and counselors as well as ourselves. I can't imagine what it would have been like in this part of Virginia for the last 40 years without the Family Resource Center!

*Maria Timoney, RSHM*

# Recent Events Around the Global Network

The Mission of the Global Network of RSHM Schools is “to foster and develop the work of education initiated by the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary.” Comprised of nineteen schools, the Global Network “unites all its schools in a common purpose to foster the gift of internationality and to promote and deepen the commitment to the transformation of the world through the RSHM educational vision” (*Mission Statement*). The approximately 30,000 students educated each year in the Global Network are prepared to become global leaders who value differences between people and who manifest mutual understanding for the common good. The “transformation of the world” into a more just community based in Gospel values and the charism of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary is the goal of every school of the Network.

In September of this year, I was invited to work with the students, staff, faculty and administrators of three of our schools: Marymount International School, Rome; Marymount School Medellin, Colombia; and the school in Barranquilla, Colombia which is celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. In Marymount Rome, I worked with faculty and staff on the topic of Interculturality – a new educational term that aims to create teaching/learning environments that honor, promote and celebrate the differences among us. I used the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob

from John’s Gospel to gain insight into how even in Jesus’ life he encountered people of different backgrounds and was challenged to engage with the Samaritan woman in a way that enhanced his own self-understanding and broke down traditional boundaries between different communities – such as Jews and Samaritans. The very purpose of intercultural teaching/learning is to create communities that foster respect for difference and take action on social justice issues – values that the Global Network of RSHM Schools has always fostered.

In Marymount School in Medellin, I spoke with 550 students about the RSHM community’s identity and educational mission as well as encouraged the development of each student’s unique gifts while responding to their unique needs as Father Gailhac had always insisted that the sisters do. Later I met with faculty and staff to share Father Gailhac’s approach to educational ministry.



*Sr. Catherine addressing Marymount International School, Rome*



*Sr. Catherine and Susan Kunnick, Coordinator, Global Network of RSHM Schools, visit a classroom in Medellin*



*"Differences Unite Us" forum participants from Marymount, Barranquilla*

Marymount Barranquilla School is celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “educating leaders who make their mark.” As part of their celebration, they hosted an educational forum, “Differences Unite Us,” which was open to students, faculty, parents, and educators throughout the region around Barranquilla. As a Roman Catholic theologian with a great interest in the relationship between the Divine and human persons as well as with sustained work on culture and cultural diversity, I presented evidence from the Scriptures that God delighted in creating the cosmos and delighted in the vast diversity that marks our Earth community and the Cosmos in general. In so many situations where diversity is the cause for division, I tried to provide the foundation for celebrating our common humanity as well as celebrating the cultural diversity that human communities have shaped as they interact with the diverse environments that make up our Earth. The call to Christian discipleship is a call to celebrate unity in difference as well as to labor toward achieving that goal. “Differences Unite Us” is given to us as a task.

Finally, I met with 25 religion teachers and counselors from the Marymount schools in Colombia and Mexico and shared with them new insights in shaping ethical decision-making among students. According to ethicist Father James Keenan, the preconditions for making ethical decisions is the development of **vulnerability** in its positive aspect and the development of **responsiveness** to the needs of the other as persons worthy of our time, effort and concern as demonstrated by the parable of the Good Samaritan. It is these preconditions that **arouse** us to act on behalf of the other in need.

It was a privilege to work with so many dedicated lay educators who are committed to the RSHM educational values and who cherish the RSHM heritage and the many sisters who founded and staffed these schools. As the number of sisters in these ministries has declined or even ceased, it is clear that through the Global Network of RSHM Schools our heritage is in very good hands in the many laity who now administer, staff and support schools founded by the RSHM.

*Catherine Vincie, RSHM*

*Come away and rest a while.*  
*Mk. 6:30*

Are you looking to deepen your spirituality or go on a retreat? Cormaria Retreat Center has a number of new programs and retreats scheduled. Visit [Cormaria.org](http://Cormaria.org) for more information.

**Save the Date**

**The Weaving Center's Annual Holiday Sale**

**December 2-3, Noon - 5 pm**  
For more information, visit [www.theweavingcenter.org](http://www.theweavingcenter.org)

# HIGHLIGHTS PUZZLE: Marian Titles

The themed clues in this puzzle are traditional forms of address for our Blessed Mother. Answers are posted at: [www.rshm-east.org/rshm-highlights](http://www.rshm-east.org/rshm-highlights)

## Across

1. \*Her own soul a sword did pierce
12. Overdose, briefly
13. Off limits twosome, briefly
14. Bring in
15. Letter for a sock hop
20. \* "Hail. \_\_\_\_\_"
23. Southeast United States, briefly
24. Multiply it by the diameter to get the circumference
25. Footnote: same as above
26. Don't give cards to Terence, informally
29. Boss of Sgt.
31. Society of Young Democrats, abbr.
32. Medical practitioner, briefly
33. Intelligence Quotient Optimization, abbr.
36. Tender loving care, abbr.
38. Counterpart of output
41. Old movie channel
45. \_\_\_\_, come home!
46. \*She reigns on high
50. A year in Paris
51. Reverse order, abbr.
52. Overused
54. In top form
58. \*Isaiah prophesied that she would conceive and bear a son
59. Technical University of Oregon, abbr.
61. Angry
62. Long Island, abbr.
63. Approving foolishness

## Down

1. Daddy counterpart
2. Old Dominion Athletic Assn.
3. Long pious time
4. Santa's helpers recreating
5. Rural delivery expulsions, briefly
6. \*She belongs to us
7. Newborn horse
8. Called
9. First class Englishman, informally
10. Not they
11. RU connector
16. Ithaca Regional School District, abbr.
17. \_\_\_ mine, the feel-good chemical
18. B movie upgrade?
19. Shed tears
21. "\_\_\_ the wagons," means unite for a common purpose
22. Dreyer and \_\_\_\_, founder of Edy's Ice Cream
27. \_\_\_\_\_ Stein, the Saint of Auschwitz
28. Informal top
29. Fifty-one to Caesar
30. Fine Vietnamese cuisine
34. Wee hours constrictor snake
35. Amusement
37. Connecticut, abbr.

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54				55			56						57
		58											
59	60						61					62	
63													

39. Concerning punishment
40. Wrongful acts
42. Metropolitan Fire Dept. Recruiting Office, briefly
43. Group of fellow travelers, e.g., across a desert
44. "\_\_\_\_\_ kings of Orient are..."
46. La vache \_\_\_ rit
47. Enemies
48. Goes to see
49. Northeast Interest Group, abbr.
53. Little Orphan \_\_\_\_\_
55. Half
56. Restraining strap
57. Certain paintings
59. Fro's partner
60. United Kingdom, abbr.

Bea McMahon, RSHM

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