



RSHM Highlights

Eastern American Area

Winter 2024

Area Day - *Laudate Deum*

Central to the program for the Eastern American Area gathering on December 9 was a video of the October 12, 2023, Georgetown University Public Dialogue “Caring for the Environment and Each Other: Pope Francis’ Follow-up to *Laudato Si’*.” The video presented an urgent conversation among five exceptional leaders discussing the renewed challenges and new questions posed by the pope’s follow-up exhortation, *Laudate Deum* (Praise God) which contains the pope’s strongest language on climate change. The panel’s dialogue reached more than 2,000 people in-person and online.

Christiana Zenner, associate professor of theology at Fordham University in New York, called the document “a challenge of the heart,” noting sobering passages such as the following: “We must move beyond the mentality of appearing to be concerned but not having the courage needed to produce substantial changes. We know that at this pace in just a few years we will surpass the maximum recommended limit in worldwide temperature increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius and shortly thereafter even reach 3 degrees Celsius with a high risk of arriving at a critical point.”

None of this surprised Sharon Lavigne, who leads Rise St. James, a faith-based environmental justice group in the Louisiana region known as “Cancer Alley” from the effects of industrial pollution.

On the panel, Ms. Lavigne drove home the real effects of pollution. Her neighbors eventually realized they were being poisoned by a massive Formosa Plastics plant.

Her area’s elected officials, she said, feel beholden only to industry. “We will not be able to breathe. We will not be able to live. This is genocide,” she said.

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Signs of the Times

Finances as Ministry

“Finances as Ministry” might, at first glance, seem like a bit of an oxymoron. However, as we have fewer sisters engaged in full time ministry, we have come to realize that using our financial resources is another way to fulfill our mission “that all may have life.” We are called by our *Constitutions* “to use the goods of this world according to the spirit of the Gospel” and by our Mission Statement to “place ourselves and our resources at the service of those most in need of justice.” In carrying out this ministry we collaborate with a number of organizations.

Investor Advocates for Social Justice (IASJ) (iasj.org) assists religious congregations and other faith-based organizations in using their investments to advance human rights and environmental justice. Two years ago, our RSHM Eastern American Area was the lead filer in a shareholder proposal asking Microsoft to commission an independent review of the human rights impacts when its surveillance technology and government contracts target Black, Indigenous and People of Color. Subsequent discussions focused on our concerns with the review and the report Microsoft issued. At present, we are also participating in dialogues between IASJ and several auto companies about electric vehicles, specifically concerns about child labor, violations of indigenous people’s rights, health issues, supply chain viability, and environmental damage from the mining of essential minerals.

Another dimension of “finances as ministry” is “impact investing,” whereby we can use our investments to support specific community development projects. Low-income individuals and nonprofit organizations in underserved areas often struggle to obtain financing for needed improvements like the construction of affordable housing and other neighborhood revitalization projects. Since 1983 we, along with many religious communities in the tri-state area, have invested in the Leviticus Fund (leviticusfund.org). Since 1994, we have invested in the Florida Community Loan Fund (fclf.org). In both cases, we have offered to give back any gains we might realize. The result is that our original contribution and any increases in that investment are available to be loaned again and again. These investments provide capital specifically to communities outside of the economic mainstream. For example, the Collective Empowerment Group of South Florida (CEG) helps build wealth through homeownership in underserved communities of color. The Florida Community Loan Fund provided financing through a line of credit that will allow CEG to build an estimated 26 affordable homes in Miami.

Photo Credit: [micheile dot com @ unsplash](https://unsplash.com/@micheile)



In addition to our investments in revolving loan funds, in light of the need to work toward dismantling systemic racism, we have placed funds with Community Capital Management (ccminvests.com). This investment in their Minority CARES (Community Advancement Racial Empowerment Strategy) enables us to positively impact empowerment for minority individuals, businesses, and communities for local economic development, education, health and wellness, civic involvement, and energy efficiency.

There was a time when socially responsible investing was considered morally admirable, but not a very good business practice. That has changed. These days, investors like ourselves want to know about a company’s impact on the environment; they want to know about the working conditions of their employees and whether they pay fair wages; and they want to know about compensation paid to executives, the presence or absence of women and minorities on boards of directors, and to whom they are making campaign contributions. Positive reports about a company’s environmental, social, and governance practices can both benefit the investor and hold the corporation accountable.

Joanne Safian, RSHM and Maria Timoney, RSHM



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Lavigne, the 2022 Laetare Medal recipient from the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, said of the corporate polluters, “We are being sacrificed so they can make a profit.”

John Mundell, director of the *Laudato Si’* Action Platform, acknowledged both the emotion and urgency expressed in the new document. “Pope Francis is challenging us to live a more authentic faith life.”

“In the eight years since the pope’s encyclical *Laudato Si’, On Care for Our Common Home*, “we’ve not seen significant progress,” said Jose Aguto, executive director of Catholic Climate Covenant, a nonprofit group based in Washington, DC. “So he wants us to step into this work [using] a lot of courage.”

Aguto observed that the exhortation is aimed particularly at Americans when it states, “If we consider that emissions per individual in the United States are about two times greater than those of individuals living in China, and about seven times greater than the average of the poorest countries, we can state that a broad change in the irresponsible lifestyle connected with the Western model would have a significant long-term impact.”

His concluding statement underlines the centrality of Pope Francis’ challenge: “The document makes it clear that caring for the environment is integral to our faith.”

Bea McMahon, RSHM



CORMARIA

Cormaria...the loving heart of Mary. That loving heart is a source of grace, a place of meeting, a place to develop one's interior disposition. Through the charism of the founder, Jean Gailhac and the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, individuals are invited to enter the heart to contemplate its sentiments, intentions, love and devotion.

The Spirit is present to those who come away and rest awhile at Cormaria Retreat Center's 14 sacred acres in Sag Harbor, New York. The mission of Cormaria is to create an atmosphere where the Spirit flourishes for the life and dignity of all. The RSHM consider this inclusive hospitality an expression of their call to celebrate God's love and to make that love known to others. That love is intentionally woven into all aspects of Cormaria's operation.

Our new Hospitality Ministry strives to create a warm and peaceful atmosphere, welcoming all who come to savor the movement of the Spirit. Whether you come for a retreat, prayer service, film series or special event, we want you to feel at home. No detail is overlooked, from the first greeting and introductions to meals, accommodations and accessible grounds. Our staff and volunteers ensure that our guests encounter an atmosphere where God's love is celebrated.



The New Year began with a program spanning New Year's Eve through breakfast and Mass on New Year's Day that focused on Prayer for Peace. Moving through the Winter, we will offer in-person day programs and repeat them on Zoom for individuals unable to join us in-person. A new addition will welcome the Lunar New Year – Year of the Dragon – through the lens of two films from China followed by a discussion and a meal. The Triduum, March 28-31, will close the month, as well as the first quarter of the year. We have also added a monthly film series and continue to host recovery groups.

We have increased the number of programs and events offered in 2024. You can find them listed on our website or contact us via phone: 631-745-4206 or email: info@cormaria.org to request a schedule be sent to you.

Whether you are searching for a few hours just to be still or are interested in lingering longer with God, Cormaria provides what God has placed in your heart. Come celebrate the gifts of one another coming together as part of the divine tapestry of creation and allow yourself to feel the loving embrace of Mary's heart...Cormaria.

*Joan McGovern
Director, Cormaria Retreat Center*



L to R: Joan McGovern, Sr. Rosamond Blanchet, Eastern American Area Leader, and Lisa Field, Cormaria Board Chair

The Gardens Come Together - Eden, Gethsemane and the Resurrected Gardener

A Holy Triduum Retreat

On March 28-31, join Father Larry Lewis, MM, at Cormaria Retreat Center as he leads us through the Holy Triduum using the imagery of the gardens of Eden and Gethsemane and Jesus as the resurrected Gardener who calls us by name into imaginable hope!



**For more information, or to register, call 631-725-4206
or email info@cormaria.org.**

Reflections on the National Eucharistic Revival

Throughout the dioceses of the United States, the Church has initiated a three-year Eucharistic Revival to counter what some people perceive as a lack of belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. In the present reality of very low participation in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist by the Catholic community, it is not surprising that there is also a lack of understanding of what the Church believes about how Christ is present under the forms of bread broken and wine poured out. What the Church has come to call “transubstantiation” as the most adequate (but not complete) way of understanding the change that takes place to the bread and wine to become the Body and Blood of Christ is indeed a pastoral issue that needs to be addressed. My concern is that the single focus on the Real Presence and on adoration of the reserved host¹ alone is not sufficient by itself to contribute to a much-needed Eucharistic Revival in the lives of the Catholic community.

Let me explain further. The history of eucharistic celebration, its structure, meaning and practice across the centuries has always involved the Church struggling with how to keep faithful to God’s covenant of love with us through the incarnation, death and resurrection of the second person of the Trinity, the divine Logos. Covenant in the Sacred Scriptures always involves the divine offer of salvation and the human response of acceptance, praise, and thanksgiving to God for this offer. This is true of the covenants in the Hebrew scriptures and true of the New Covenant made known in Jesus Christ. Through his life, death, resurrection and ascension to God’s right hand, Jesus redefined what covenant love was about. He articulated this at the Last Supper through service in the washing of the disciples’ feet in John’s Gospel and through ritual table-sharing in a Seder-like meal in other Gospel accounts.

In the synoptic accounts (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Jesus reinterpreted the long-standing covenants of God with the Chosen People. At the Last Supper, Jesus’ actions revealed that God’s action in him went beyond all previous covenants. It was as if he were saying, “In me, and through me, God’s salvific love is definitively made known and offered. I am the new ‘turning point’ of salvation.” Additionally, Jesus provided the means of remaining present to the faith community through their memorial of him. “In light of my upcoming death and absence from you, I will be present to you when you remember me in sharing bread and cup and in



service to others. Under the very visible symbols² of bread and wine, I will be present, really present in truth, with you.” When the Church keeps memory of Jesus Christ through prayer, praise, thanksgiving and petition to the Holy Spirit, God’s covenant love is renewed, made actual and offered to the faith community. We need to be present to this offer and make our response—especially in the Sunday Eucharistic assembly.

This is what the faith community engages in when it celebrates Eucharist. Through sharing the Scriptures, praying the great Eucharistic (memorial) Prayer and sharing the Body and Blood of Christ in eucharistic symbols of bread and wine, it engages the living God through Christ and the Spirit in a renewal of Covenant commitment. When we remember, as Jesus asked us to do, then there is a promise of real presence.

It is this whole mystery of Eucharist that needs revival in the Catholic community. We need to revitalize our commitment to gather in the Sunday assembly as God has summoned us to do, to share the Word, to engage in heartfelt praise and thanksgiving for this offer of covenant love, to eat and drink the Eucharistic elements—the real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ—and to serve one another in all aspects of life. Yes, the presence of Jesus Christ in the bread and wine is real, is true and is substantial. However, this doctrine of Catholic faith needs to find its proper context in the actual gathering of the community to receive the gift of God’s love and to respond in praise, thanksgiving, offering and service.

Catherine Vincie, RSHM

- 1 The reserved Eucharistic host is secondary to and derived from the primary celebration of Eucharist.
- 2 A “real symbol” in theological terms truly participates in the reality it signifies. This is what we mean by “sacramental presence.” The sacramental symbols of bread and wine are filled with the real presence of Christ.

Marymount New York's New Home

This fall, Marymount School of New York opened the doors to its second permanent home on 97th Street, marking an exciting new chapter in the school's history. More than a decade in the making, Marymount's "school of the future" became a reality thanks to the visionary leadership of Headmistress Concepcion Alvar and the Board of Trustees, the generous support of hundreds of families and friends of the school, and the enthusiasm and dedication of the school's faculty and staff.

While students in Nursery-Class V remain in the flagship campus on Fifth Avenue, Marymount's Upper Campus offers 155,000 square feet of space for students in Classes VI-XII to grow and thrive through expanded academic, athletic, and artistic programming. Designed by COOKFOX Architects, the Upper Campus draws inspiration from the mansions on Fifth Avenue in an updated, modern way. Key spaces include:

- **Learning Laboratories:** Innovative learning spaces foster collaboration and leadership in students and effectively facilitate critical thinking and problem solving. In addition to traditional classroom spaces, the building features four science labs, two art studios, and a music room and practice rooms. The Fab Lab and Design & Engineering Studio on the ground floor anchor these spaces as hubs of curiosity, imagination, and innovation.
- **Fitness & Wellness Center:** With a regulation-size gymnasium, and dance, exercise, and training rooms, Marymount can expand its PE and athletic programs to promote lifelong fitness and provide opportunities for healthy competition, leadership, and teamwork. With bleachers on both the main floor and the mezzanine of the gym, up to 300 fans can cheer the Marymount Lions on to victory at home games and tournaments.
- **Theater:** On the Marymount stage, students find their voice, explore creative self-expression, and discover their passion for performing. The proscenium theater will allow 300 attendees to assemble for choral and instrumental performances, theatrical productions, and guest speakers. Marymount's new theater will open in Spring 2024.



- **Dining Hall:** Infused with abundant natural light, this is a place where students cultivate relationships, fuel their bodies and minds, and grow in community. This full-floor dining hall with spacious indoor and outdoor eating areas offers abundant healthy, nutritious food options.
- **RSHM Chapel:** The RSHM Chapel is the literal and metaphorical heart of Marymount's new campus and is a meaningful expression of the school's values and Catholic heritage. This sacred space encourages reflection and spiritual growth for a community of faith, as students explore questions of personal integrity, ethical decision-making, and social justice.
- **Outdoor Spaces:** Informed by the importance of nature to our intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual growth, numerous outdoor spaces are interspersed throughout the building, including a roof garden, dining terrace, and lobby atrium. Named by an alumna in honor of Sister Clevie Youngblood, RSHM, the Prayer Garden sits just outside the RSHM Chapel, offering a beautiful, serene setting for reflection, contemplation, and inspiration.

On Wednesday, September 6, Marymount's Board of Trustees and special friends of the school officially marked the opening of the building with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and a blessing by Sister Clevie Youngblood. Marymount then kicked off a new academic year with two days of orientation for students in Classes VI-XII as they learned the routines, policies, and procedures for the new campus.

On Saturday, September 9, the school opened its doors to nearly 2,000 members of the Marymount community at an open house that featured self-guided tours, activity stations, and volleyball home openers. Alumnae and alumnae parents celebrated the opening with a festive cocktail reception on the roof on September 14.



Opening festivities concluded on September 27, when Timothy Cardinal Dolan visited the school to dedicate the new Chapel in honor of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Over two dozen members of the RSHM shared in this special blessing and enjoyed seeing the beautiful features of Marymount's new home.

*Jennifer Cyranski
Director of Communication and Events, Marymount School of New York*

- 1 Ribbon cutting ceremony with Headmistress Concepcion Alvar (3rd from left) and Board of Trustees
- 2 Sr. Clevie Youngblood, with Concepcion Alvar, provides opening blessing
- 3 Marymount New York students
- 4 RSHM Sisters with Timothy Cardinal Dolan following chapel dedication

HIGHLIGHTS PUZZLE: Church Councils

The themed clues in this puzzle are references to various Church Councils throughout the ages. Answers are posted at www.rsh-m-east.org/category/newsletter

Across

1. *Council addressing the Protestant Reformation
5. One who preserves corpses
13. Our church leader freed me
16. Expression of disgust
18. One with an addiction
19. Home may be its prefix or its meaning
21. A bit better
25. To tell a story with a bias
27. _____ Lugosi
28. Excellent grades
29. Something better than a twosome
30. Go bad
32. All still
33. Divide it equally
36. Print measure
37. Free next time, abbr.
38. Rule of thumb, briefly
39. Confidential informant, abbr.
40. Johnny Carson's _____ Show
43. Great digs
45. Rate of return, abbr.
46. *Council promulgating papal infallibility
47. Anno Domini, abbr.
48. Without a date
50. _____ Holm, American actress
51. Feeling for the past
54. Follower of B Town
55. In a line
57. _____ C, college military training program
58. No one is closer than you
63. Came from Goldman Sachs, briefly
64. Covered with dust

Down

1. Have faith in a NY basketball team
2. *Council declaring Mary Mother of God, abbr.
3. North America, abbr.
4. Transport Security Administration dating, briefly
5. _____ the Red
6. Merrill Lynch cubes, briefly
7. Lower cost
8. Where it's _____
9. Licensed midwife,
10. Just between us: (2 words) you
11. For example, briefly
12. They go with slippers
14. Touchdown, abbr.
15. Overdose at public school, briefly
17. Pontiac muscle car donor party
20. Much required in advance
22. _____ Gore
23. A doctrine in Bari
24. *Council convened by Pope John XXIII
26. Lowland on the north side of the mountain
31. Old Testament, abbr.
34. Neighborhood credibility, briefly
35. Water coming in on the shore
41. Number, abbr.
42. Labeling
43. *Council that introduced the Nicene Creed
44. Post Office mail arrangements, briefly
47. Belonging to Andy
49. Teaching assistant, abbr.

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63										64			

52. Refuse to accept
53. Agnes in Spain
56. Accelerated reader, abbr.
59. Old English, abbr.
60. Air traffic, abbr.
61. Running back, abbr.
62. Syracuse University, abbr.

Bea McMahon, RSHM

RSHM Highlights is a production of the Communications and Advancement Office of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Eastern America. Editors: Maureen Egan, Bea McMahon, RSHM, Catherine Vincie, RSHM, Cathy Wilkins, and Cleve Youngblood, RSHM | Design: Barbara DeAngelo

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Religions of the Sacred Heart of Mary



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