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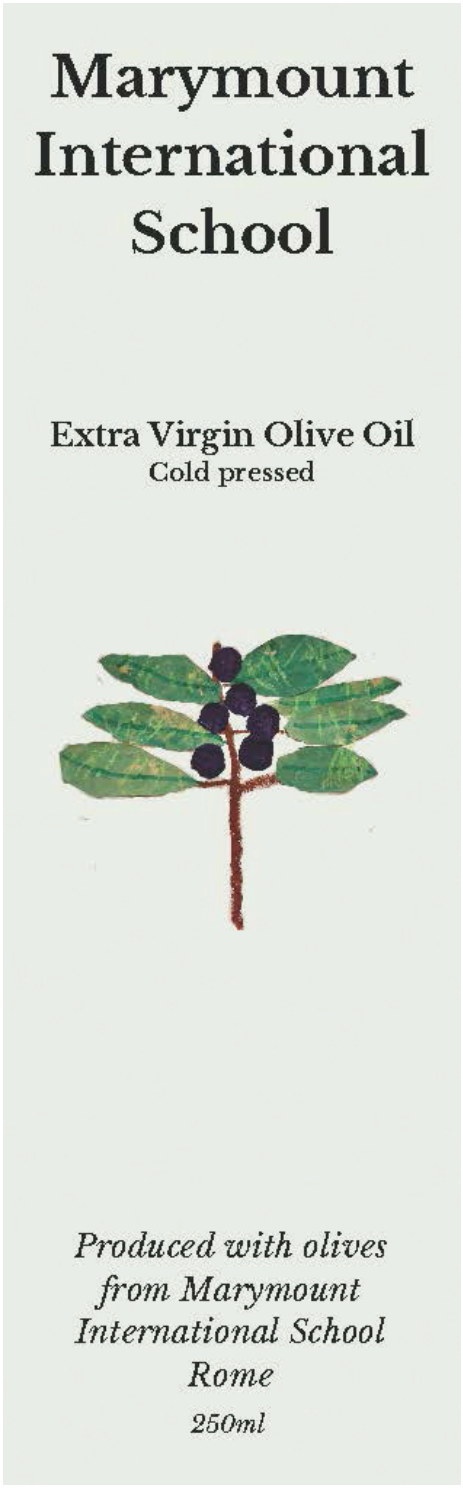
Highlights

Eastern American Area

Winter 2025



Olive Oil bottle label created by the students

Marymount Rome's Deep Dive into Spiritual Ecology:

Learning from the Olive Tree

Students harvesting olives

The olive tree holds profound significance in the Bible, symbolizing peace, prosperity, and God's covenant with humanity. From Noah's Ark, where a dove brought an olive branch to signify restored harmony (Genesis 8:11), to its representation of God's covenant people (Romans 11:17-24), the olive tree reflects enduring themes of faith, stability, and divine blessing. The fruits and oil it yield are equally rich in meaning, representing abundance, consecration, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

At Marymount International School, we are centered on caring for creation, fostering community, and promoting spiritual ecology. The school's annual olive harvest is a living example of these values in action, uniting students, faculty, and staff in a shared effort to care for and celebrate God's gifts.

This year, our olive harvest brought the community together in an activity that transcended agricultural labor. The campus' olive trees became the focal point of a meaningful learning experience. Early Childhood 2 (EC2) students connected the harvest to their "This is Me" curriculum, exploring how they fit into the natural world. Older students in Grades 4 through 9 worked collaboratively, building teamwork and shared purpose while learning about sustainable agriculture.

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The 16th Episcopal Meetings on Synodality Have Ended… Let Synodality Begin!

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On October 27, 2024, the Second Session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops[1] concluded the Church's official exploration of synodality. For the first time, lay and religious women and men joined the episcopacy as official and voting members of the meetings. Begun in 2021, the synod process included reflections by members of the church community from parishes, religious congregations, ad hoc ecclesial groups, diocesan gatherings, continental assemblies and culminated in two worldwide sessions. Never has the Roman Church or any other body involved such a broad consultation of its members.

The synod process, which began as a worldwide consultation process, touched deeply into the experience of church members. Some of the laity reported that this was the first time anyone had asked for their input on ecclesial issues. As such, the synod raised expectations that this inclusive process could be the way forward for the church.

Conclusions:

The first and most far-reaching conclusion was that synodality is a constitutive element of the church in mission. "It is essential to how the church understands itself." It means that from this point forward, the church must be more participative on every level; that there is a need for greater accountability, transparency and evaluation of individuals and structures; that conversion of relationships, processes and bonds is essential.

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Picking up themes from the Second Vatican Council, the synod stressed the baptismal roots of **all** in the life and mission of the church. It reiterated that local churches (read: diocesan churches) are fully church, and that it is in the communion of local churches that the one, universal Church of Christ is made. The synod reaffirmed the authority of bishops, bishops' conferences and the papal office as inalienable, but noted it was not without limits. The whole baptized community has a *sensus fidei* or a sense of the faith, and "[t]hose with pastoral authority are obliged to listen to those who participate in the consultation and may not act as if the consultation had not taken place" *(Final Document* #91*)*. Structures and processes at the institutional level must be inclusive, especially of those at the margins of church and society.

The synod participants stressed that the church is always lived at the local level. The particularity, the diversity, the richness in culture, history and context of local churches are a sign of the catholicity of the church. Plurality is not an absolute obstacle to unity so long as this does not mean differences in doctrine, discipline and communion.

The synod addressed the worldwide issue of the lack of full participation of women in the life of the church. It noted that there are no obstacles that prohibit the participation of women in church leadership, but that all opportunities were not being taken advantage of. The issue of clericalism (the attitude of privilege, status and superiority of clergy) was acknowledged for the first time at a worldwide level. Conversion of these attitudes and formation programs for clergy that promoted a more relational model of ordained ministry were recognized as essential.

Issues needing further development:

Some hoped that issues such as the ordination of women deacons, married clergy, LGBTQ+ concerns, and polygamy would be addressed and resolved. Others feared that the diversity of opinion on these issues would divide the church; accordingly, these and other issues were sent for further development to the 10 study groups that will continue their work until July 2025.

The recognition of the plurality of local churches is a relatively new insight, but the implications of that plurality on doctrine and discipline remain problematic. Can the churches of Central Africa have a different approach to polygamous marriage than the churches in Europe? Can the churches of the Amazon have married deacons or ordain women deacons while others do not? The issue of the inculturation of the liturgy or its adaptation to local cultures was also relegated to a study group for further development.

The *Final Document*, which was accepted by Pope Francis as part of the ordinary magisterium, notes that "without concrete changes in the short term, the vision of a synodal church will not be credible." Affirming this position, Pope Francis said in the final Mass of the synod, "Now it is time for the church to 'get its hands dirty' and carry the joy of the Gospel through the streets of the world."

[1] *An Episcopal Synod is a formal gathering of bishops to address issues of concern to the church.*

Catherine Vincie, RSHM

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Students harvesting olives

Teachers and staff joined in, embodying the unity central to our ethos. Together, the community harvested olives, which were sent to a local mill, producing 30 bottles of olive oil, each labeled with custom artwork by an Early Childhood student. The resulting "Marymount Oil" became a tangible expression of the school's values: care for creation, gratitude, and community involvement.

To honor this collaborative effort, Marymount prepared a special olive oil tasting during Thanksgiving week. This event not only showcased the fruits of the harvest but also deepened the community's understanding of spiritual ecology.

In the cafeteria, a dedicated table supervised by Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) students served freshly pressed Marymount oil with bruschetta. Younger students in Grades 1 and 2 enjoyed this treat at their tables, ensuring that all ages partook in the celebration.

The Elementary Student Council prepared a bulletin board featuring photos and reflections from the harvest. This visual display allows us to relive the day and reflect on the connections between gratitude, stewardship, and God's blessings.

Marymount's olive harvest is more than a school event - it's a manifestation of the principles outlined in Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*. By engaging students in hands-on activities like harvesting and oil production, the school teaches the interconnectedness of creation and humanity's responsibility to care for it.

The olive tree, as a biblical symbol of peace and prosperity, takes on new relevance as students learn to cherish and protect the environment. This year's harvest has shown how these ancient lessons can be applied in a modern educational context, teaching the values of collaboration, sustainability, and gratitude.

The bottles of Marymount Oil are more than just products of the harvest; they are symbols of the collective effort that went into creating them. Each drop of oil represents the dedication, teamwork, and stewardship of the Marymount community.

As Thanksgiving approached, the olive oil tasting served as a moment to pause, reflect, and give thanks not only for the earth's bounty but also for the unity and care that make such projects possible. From the youngest EC2 learners to the supervising CAS students, every participant contributed to a legacy that emphasizes the values of spiritual ecology and gratitude.

The harvest and its celebrations highlight the timeless wisdom of the olive tree: enduring peace, fruitful abundance, and God's enduring covenant with His people. In bringing these values to life, Marymount fosters a culture of care and gratitude that will inspire generations to come.

Ilaria Bimbo, Marketing and Admissions Assistant, Marymount International School Rome

An Update from One of Our RSHM NGO Interns

The High-Level week of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is held annually in September at the U.N. headquarters in New York City. It brings together world leaders and representatives from member states to tackle international issues. This year's 79th session focused on the theme of "acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development, and human dignity for present and future generations" (UN.org).

The High-Level Week included some of the organization's most important meetings to resolve pressing global issues, advance the 2023 agenda, and take action towards the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A major event was the first-of-its-kind **Summit of the Future**, a high-level initiative aimed at finding multilateral solutions to foster better global cooperation among countries.

September 21, 2024, was the **Summit of the Future Action Day** program at United Nations Headquarters. It consisted of three sessions, each highlighting one of three areas: a sustainable, digital, or peaceful future for all. Since these sessions ran simultaneously, participants attended the session of most interest to them.

I attended at least two sessions at each meeting. Following the summit's opening ceremony, I participated in the **Digital Future for All** meeting. The purpose of this session was to lay the groundwork for how digital technologies may promote an online environment where everyone can prosper and build a more inclusive future.

The Secretary-General's Envoy in Technology, Amandeep Sing Gill, stated that "our future is digital, and we've worked to ensure it's open, safe, and secure." This meeting highlighted the Digital Global Compact, one of the outcome documents included as an annex to the Pact of the Future.

Following this session, I attended **A Peaceful Future for All.** This session stood out to me because it focused on the need for intergenerational voices in sustaining women's and girls' peace efforts. The goal of this meeting's second session was to dismantle the structures of patriarchal dominance and how it has negatively impacted the lives of women. This session focused primarily on raising awareness

High-Level event on the inclusion of women in the future of Afghanistan, UN Photo/Manuel Elías

Summit Of The Future Action Day One, UN Photo/Laura Jarriel

for Afghani women and how young female voices can encourage member nations to begin integrating more female voices in political decision making.

I finished my day by attending the **Sustainable Future for All** meeting. The final two sessions centered on multi-stakeholder partnerships and techniques for redesigning the financial system to enable it to expedite the 2030 agenda and SDG goals. "When we talk - none of us would have a future without the other - thus looking at the global financial architecture is important," said Rania A. Al-Mashat, Minister of Planning and Economic Development of Egypt.

Due to the numerous events being held on Saturday, I was unable to attend other activities happening simultaneously, such as various side events and the U.N.'s media booth. Overall, I was grateful to have attended the **Summit of the Future Action Day** and appreciated hearing about the U.N.'s desire to revise its institutional framework to better address the international demands of the 21st century.

Angelina Ispir, RSHM NGO Intern

Expressions of Spirit:
The Art and Ministry of RSHM Sisters

"Artists remind us that the dimension in which we move, even unconsciously, is always that of the Spirit. Art is like a sail swelling with the wind of the Spirit propelling us forward." [1]

The RSHM founders understood that the Spirit works through people in many ways. "Love for one another helps us to affirm and rejoice in the gifts that God has given to each of us for the good of others. As individuals and as a community, we are responsible for the development of our talents, the recognition and encouragement of our sisters' talents, and the creation of an atmosphere where these gifts develop and be fruitful" *(Constitutions #29).*

Cathy Deubel with skating partner James Brown

For some sisters, artistic expression is part of their DNA from a young age. Shortly after graduating high school, Catherine (Cathy) Deubel, began taking private lessons in freestyle roller skating. "Roller skating was my life," she said, noting that traveling to new places was a definite perk. In 1960, she along with James Brown, her skating partner, won the New York State Novice Pairs Roller Skating Championship in Buffalo, NY, and placed second at both the Regional Championship in Massachusetts and National Championship in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Many years later while employed as a Secretary to an Officer at Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MetLife), Cathy attended a talk given by a representative of "Catholics for Latin America." Subsequently, she made the decision to leave MetLife to live and serve as a full-time staff member with this organization in Briarcliff Manor, N.Y. preparing volunteers for mission work.

Sr. Cathy with one of her paintings

This experience eventually led her to various other ministries of service, as well as higher education. As an adult, Cathy returned to school to become an R.N. and later received a B.A. in Sociology. After joining the RSHM, she returned to college and earned an M.S. in Special Education (Guidance and Counseling).

Shortly after attending a Life in the Spirit Seminar led by Sister Ann Tubman, an RSHM and dear friend, Cathy experienced a spiritual awakening and expressed the desire to become a nun. She entered the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary in 1983 and made Final Vows in 1992. She served in many ministries, including The Partnership for the Homeless, Catholic Charities, Highbridge Community Life Center, and Parish Outreach at St. Catharine of Alexandria in Brooklyn, NY. Sister Cathy also lived and served for three years as a member of an RSHM international community in Amacuzac, Mexico.

Watercolor by Sr. Cathy Deubel

Sister Cathy served as Provincial Secretary during Sister Rosamond Blanchet's first two terms as Provincial. At the request of Sister Kathleen Fagan, Provincial, she, along with Sister Anna Maria Lionetti, served as co-directors of the RSHM Vocation Office.

Sister Cathy's love of dance, previously expressed in roller skating, found a new outlet in liturgical dance. She had opportunities to dance with the St. Ignatius Dance Choir and interpreted sacred music through liturgical dance at a number of RSHM celebrations. Encouraged by Sister Catherine Patten, who recognized her creative ability when she was a member of the 93rd Street RSHM Community, she enrolled in art classes in New York City for a short period of time. At present, she utilizes the Marymount Convent Art room for her watercolor paintings.

While Sister Cathy came to her vocation later in life, two things were certain for Catherine Vincie, RSHM, as a young girl: "I have always been a musician," playing piano at age six; and "I decided I would be a sister at the age of seven." Having been taught by Josephites and Dominicans, she desired to enter a community. It wasn't until she attended Marymount Manhattan College (MMC) and came to know the RSHM that she knew this community was the right fit. At MMC, she majored in piano performance through a cooperative program with the Mannes College of Music. Upon graduating, she entered the RSHM community.

For the first several years during her formation, she taught math and religion at Pius X School in Queens and served in parish ministry. Then, Sister St. John Casey, RSHM, the congregation's organist, began to work with Sister Catherine, intending that she eventually take over as organist. This led to an opportunity to pursue graduate studies at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, a joint program between Yale's Music School and Divinity School.

However, God works in mysterious ways. As her liturgical music interests led her deeper into the study of the liturgy, her interest in theology blossomed. She later pursued doctoral studies in liturgical theology as she answered the call to her new ministry as a theologian. Embarking on this journey, she felt conflicted. Did she have to make a choice between music or theology? She realized, "I don't have to make a choice; one is always supporting the other." She used her musical talents to help support herself as she pursued her studies. She ultimately secured a position at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, Missouri, teaching liturgical theology. During this time, she also volunteered with Habitat for Humanity and discovered that she liked to build and create things with her hands. This interest eventually led to a hobby in woodworking.

She taught at Aquinas for 20 years until she was asked to join the Eastern American Province's Leadership Council in 2015 and continues as a councilor today. She has also written numerous articles and book chapters, as well as three books: *Worship and the New Cosmology, Celebrating Divine Mystery: A Primer in Liturgical Theology,* and *The Assembly in Christian Initiation.* Additionally, Sister Catherine has given many presentations across the country as well as in Europe. Most recently, she participated in the "Assisi Conference" - an international, interdenominational, Orthodox and Roman Catholic effort to examine whether our present worship practices are adequate to help build a consistent ethic of care for our planet in crisis. In addition, she participated in a second Assisi Conference for Roman Catholic theologians with the goal of establishing a Solemnity of Creation in the Roman Calendar that would take place during the Season of Creation (September 1 – October 4). Sister Catherine is also part of the U.S. Roman Catholic theological group working with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops towards this same goal.

Sr. Catherine with a selection of her handmade decorative boxes

Sr. Catherine at the organ

With all of this work, music remains an integral part of her life. Sister Catherine worked part-time as a church organist while studying for her doctorate at Catholic University. She has played the organ at St. Patrick's Cathedral for several community and Marymount Manhattan College anniversary events. She is also the organist for some RSHM liturgical celebrations and has performed concerts at the community's chapel in Tarrytown. "I appreciate the community's support for the gifts that I have and have tried to give back what I have learned as a gift to the community," she stated.

Like Sisters Cathy and Catherine, Sister Edith Hart, RSHM, was blessed with gifts of artistry. At a young age, she was drawn to create things with her hands, often playing with Tinker Toys and erector sets. This artistic talent ran in her family. Her great grandfather was a watchmaker and engraver, and her mother was always interested in making art with fabric and later oil paint.

Most of her childhood was spent in Sag Harbor, attending the Sacred Heart of Mary Academy in Sag Harbor from grade 2 through high school, and in 1957 expressed an interest in joining the RSHM. After she entered, she taught second grade for nine years at St. John's School in McLean, VA. Under Superior General Rita Rowley, who insisted that all sisters receive an education, Sister Edith was able to pursue a degree in art at Catholic University. There she took Master's level classes in art history and studio drawing and painting, then completed her undergraduate degree at Marymount College in Tarrytown.

Sr. Edith at work in her studio

Paintings by Sr. Edith

While she was accepted into graduate programs at both NYU and Pratt, she put her plans on hold when she took a leave of absence from the congregation. She took a job in Washington, DC public schools, and taught art to elementary school students for nine years. In 1977 she was introduced to art conservation and offered an apprenticeship which sparked a new passion and eventually led to full-time work. Upon completing her apprenticeship, she pursued a career in art conservation while feeling a pull back to the RSHM community.

Desiring to return to an RSHM community in New York, she secured a position in an art conservation studio in New York City, working on works of art on paper. This was followed by an extraordinary opportunity to work in Boston on the archives of Walter Gropius, the founder of the Bauhaus movement, under the supervision of the paper conservators at Harvard's Fogg Museum. She also took art history courses while in Boston.

When that ended, she returned to New York. While looking for something in her field, she returned to teaching. Eventually, she found a position as an assistant to an art conservator in Poughkeepsie, who became a friend and mentor. Simultaneously, she also began work at the Cooper Hewitt Museum in paper conservation, under the mentorship of another noted conservator, who also became a fast friend. With the encouragement of these women and the support of the RSHM community, Sister Edith started her own practice in 1986. For more than 30 years she worked in her studio in Tarrytown. She performed work for well-known galleries and museums in New York City. Much of her work was on works of art on paper of renowned Latin American artists, including Diego Rivera, and European artists including Rembrandt and Picasso. "I am most grateful for the God-given skills that I have and that have been trained and enhanced by the generosity of people who offered me opportunities and encouragement to do this work," she said.

Most memorable was her experience working on the Institute and Province archives, as well as participating in the renewal of the Mother House at Beziers. She worked on many RSHM works of art on paper, including portraits of the Institute's early General Superiors. She also worked on restoring Mother Butler's passport that had suffered some tears and damage.

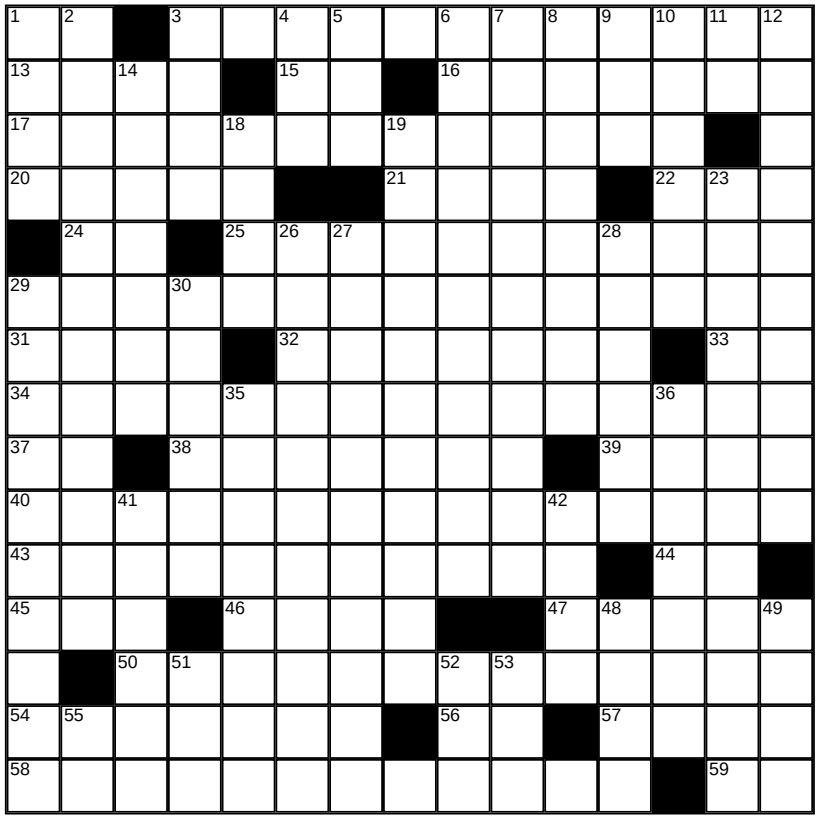
Now that she is retired, she has time to return to her art. Having handled varied pieces of art over the years has influenced her own artistic style, and she is thankful for the RSHM community's support in pursuing her gift.

[1] *Pope Francis, Address to Artists for the 50th Anniversary of the Inauguration of the Vatican Museums Collection of Modern Art, June 12, 2023.*

Cathy Wilkins, Director, Communications & Advancement

HIGHLIGHTS PUZZLE: Oh, Pairs!

The themed clues in this puzzle are sets of twos.
Answers are posted at:
www.rshm-east.org/category/newsletter



Bea McMahon, RSHM

Across

1 East Africa, abbr.
3 Those who consent
13 A gun is useless without it
15 Artificial intelligence, abbr.
16 Not inside
17 Rooney has 500 sheets of paper
20 Like a bubble bath
21 End of a cigarette
22 Mon. of St. Pat
24 Resident Asst.
25 Environmental Protection Agency Alert closers, briefly
29 *North and South
31 In Los Angeles, briefly
32 A day for average grades
33 __ what?
34 Refusal of sons' oath
37 Old Testament, abbr.
38 Henry the Fourth in Paris
39 What comes between gmail and com
40 To nephews in Fordham's color
43 Norma's New York pattern of speech
44 Advanced Placement, abbr.
45 Oncology, abbr.
46 Nat. Soc. Sec. Act, abbr.
47 Little Rose
50 One who redoes event with unexpected outcome
54 Sale of fish eggs
56 Railroad, abbr.
57 And-so-forths, briefly
58 *Heads and tails
59 East Yemen, abbr.

Down

1 *The better to hear you with
2 Love on a French cartoon
3 Counterparts of pros
4 New Amsterdam Yankee, abbr.
5 Salem Institute of Health, abbr.
6 No brilliance like that
7 *Gift closest to the partridge in a pear tree
8 Route to East African fauna, briefly
9 This room _____ mess!
10 Bring to a boil and_____.
11 Touchdown, abbr.
12 Those who entertain a fortune teller
14 In modal form
18 *The better to see you with
19 Lessen wee arctic revolution, briefly
23 "Arts Now" exhibit
26 Lone performance in the Poconos
27 Listening to oneself
28 Obeying the dentist, one opens and_____.
29 Certain reds
30 Break the 'no pork' rule
35 Over certain South American mountains
36 Aid for composing poems of praise, briefly
41 Title for believable guy?
42 Lima's country
48 Not closed
49 Shopping site
51 East Southeast, abbr.
52 Tolkien humanoid monster
53 To's partner
55 Osteogenesis imperfecta, abbr.

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 Clevie Youngblood, RSHM | Design: Barbara DeAngelo

Address Service Requested

Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary
50 Wilson Park Drive
Tarrytown, NY 10591

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