

Summer 2019



pursuing justice, we
seek god's gift of peace.

Living peace

congregation of the sisters of st. joseph of peace

Finding Peace in Challenging Times

in this issue



The mission of *Living Peace*, a free biannual publication of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace is to build community with a diverse audience by engaging our readers in contemplation and action for justice and peace through informative and reflective articles, poetry and prayers.

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Sister Mary Southard is a life-adventurer fascinated by the wonder and creativity of the cosmos, most especially our Earth. Her unique art explores the great gift of existence with all its beauty and longing, its passion and mystery.

Mary entered the convent in her late teens and became a member of the Congregation of St. Joseph (CSJ) in 1954. Her love of art began to unfold in high school. Mary is also an experienced educator, retreat director, and spiritual companion. Mary's art commissions and program work have taken her to many places in the US, Canada, Europe, and Australia. Publications include a yearly art/meditation calendar currently distributed around the world, book and journal illustrations, and book cover art.

Mary lives and has her studio in the Congregation of St. Joseph La Grange Park Center. To see more of Mary's work, visit her website: www.marysouthardart.org

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What Really Matters?

By Margaret Shannon, CSJP

What is grace? If you ask Siri, you'll be given at least six definitions. I personally like how the poet John O'Donohue defines it: "Grace is the permanent climate of divine kindness; the perennial infusion of springtime into the winter of bleakness."

I recently attended a retreat day where as part of the experience we were asked to consider generous questions, those bigger questions that may not want answers or at least not right away.... questions that require or prefer to be pondered and reflected upon instead.

A question that surfaced from one person in the group gave me pause.

"Will humanity be consequential to the Universe Story?" In this vast universe with millions of galaxies, will humanity make a difference in the bigger

story? Needless to say, I don't have an answer, immediate or pondered! Not yet anyway. After catching my breath though, it did raise another question of my own. What really matters? In the short term, in the long term, in these turbulent and uncertain times in which we live, what keeps us grounded, centered? After all is said and done, what really matters?

Another question that was asked at that retreat day was equally a reason for pause. "Do you, do we, believe that our contemplative practice is an act of social justice?" If the answer is yes, then it makes sense that only in stillness and contemplative silence can we begin to notice our place in this mysterious universe in which we play humanity's part.

In this contemplative space, imagine being given a grace, that divine grace that allows us to hold

a vision and a quiet purpose of millions and millions of human beings shifting the balance toward earth's highest good, bringing together our best of humanity's energies of loving kindness, compassion, forgiveness, courage, right action for the common good, shifting the balance from bleakness to wholeness over time. We are in a moment in history where this openness to divine grace and focusing our energies in cooperation with this grace has never been more urgent, more critical. Now more than ever we are invited to participate in an "infusion of springtime into the winter of bleakness."

Will humanity have a consequential part in the Universe Story? Let's do our part and find out. That just may be what really matters.



Photo by by IndiraFoto from Pixabay

FROM THE EDITOR

Send Me

by Jan Linley

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” – Isaiah 6:8

When I popped open Google on April 4, I found their tribute to the great South African jazz musician, Hugh Masekela, on what would have been his 80th birthday. There was a link to his popular, upbeat “Grazing in the Grass” on YouTube. And then, as YouTube will, it took me from one Masekela song to another, including “Thuma Mina (Send Me)”.

No stranger to challenging times, Masekela lived in exile in the United Kingdom and the United States for 30 years before returning to South Africa. He was beloved both as a musician and a social activist. His son Sal wrote of him: “He carried a deep seeded belief in justice, freedom and equality for all peoples to the very end. He scoffed at the futile idea of borders defining humanity.”

Many of Masekela’s songs were politically motivated, such as “Bring Him Home”, an anthem for Nelson Mandela. “Thuma Mina” was written in response to Masekela’s personal struggles with addiction as well as the larger struggles of a country he remained forever committed to, even while exiled. By intrinsic example, Masekela teaches the power of art and commitment, of holding fast and steady, especially during challenging times. We didn’t intentionally set out to approach this issue of *Living Peace* with a Masekelian view that we each hold the power to commit and remain steadfast to affect change—

regardless of what is swirling in and around us—but that is where our writers took us.

The context and conditions of the challenges we face today may seem relatively extreme, but in every age there have been challenges, and the response to those times can be a guidebook for us now. Sister Susan Francois finds this to be true in the reflections of Bishop Bagshawe, one of the Congregation’s founders. And Sister Coralie Muzzy discovers the same in Jon Meacham’s book, *The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels*.

Sister Susan Dewitt and barrister Christabel McCooey recognize that it is easy and tempting to blame the enemy. In her article about Brexit, Christabel writes: “...Paul reminds us that any solution, however well-strategized, will be shrill and jarring if it is not grounded in love, which endures whatever the time or crisis.” And to help with that, Sister Susan has provided practical tips for loving the enemy.

Sister Sheila Lemieux notes that people are looking to Catholic sisters more these days to try to help make sense of our chaotic times and for some stability and hope. She suggests that it is humbling, while at the same time wrestling with the best way sisters can be of service.

Underserved populations are often forgotten in the best of times. We are grateful to three busy

executive directors of ministries supported by the Congregation (York Street Project, Harbour Place, Jubilee Women’s Center) for taking time to share with us how they manage to continue to meet the needs of their clients.

Frank McCann, the Congregation’s Peace through Justice Facilitator and the NGO representative to the United Nations, reminds us that clean water is a precious commodity for many people. Through the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, that is changing.

Small, committed actions can yield big change, sometimes change that won’t be seen in our lifetimes, hence the need for faith and the courage of our convictions. Bishop Dermot O’Mahony, on the occasion of the farewell Mass for Peace House in Dublin, said: “Small is beautiful—that’s at the very heart of building the Kingdom of Peace.”

“Send me” can be as simple—and disciplined—as waking up every day and asking your best self to show up, or as Sister Margaret Shannon suggests, practicing contemplation “with an openness to divine grace and focusing our energies in cooperation with this grace.” Thuma mina.



Weathering

From out of the fog's
enormous space
a fencepost clears and then
an edge of the road, grasses,
a tree trunk lifts, slowly
green returns,
the taste of oranges,
speed, tomorrow.

Getting through fog asks patience,
asks belief
that underneath the soft blanket,
the echoing wet grayness,
lies a familiar world of heft and color,
the taste of oranges.

Weathering fog
I choose to doubt
its permanence
who once spent years
lost in enormous gray-space.
I look for the edge of the road
coming clean
into the light.

by Susan Dewitt, CSJP

Catholic Sisters Finding Meaning in Times of Chaos

by Sheila Lemieux, CSJP

Recently, my niece Megan came to me expressing how troubled she was regarding the Church's response to the abuse of children, as well as by all the other disturbing events happening in our world today. She was looking to me not only as her beloved aunt, but as a Catholic sister who could help her make sense of what is happening.

Megan has had a lifelong familiarity with our sisters; our Bellevue Convent is a place she has visited since childhood. She shared that she has received a lot of peace and a sense of grounding and purpose from being with the sisters over the years. Megan is convinced that we have something to share with her generation given the climate of chaos and uncertainty they are experiencing.

People are watching Catholic sisters. I don't mean that in the sense of international intrigue like you see on television – a CSI episode or some other

series. Rather, I say that in the sense that we are living through unsettling, disorienting and unimaginable times. People of faith are watching Catholic sisters to see how we are finding meaning in this kind of environment.

It is interesting, and at the same time ironic, that as the demographics of vowed sisters are on a downturn, it is at this moment that people are turning to us for wisdom, insight, and support, perhaps for peace and to know how to make sense of what is happening in the Church and the world around us.

They are curious to see how we, as followers and disciples of Jesus, are navigating these chaotic times, including the scandals in the Church, especially the devastation in the lives of the abused; loss of trust in institutions (religious, political, economic); the unknown future of religious life; lack of openness to the immigrant, the stranger and the poor; and conscious attention and action to save our common home, earth.

These are a few of the critical issues that we carry in our hearts and minds, that we bring to prayer. And these are some of the very issues that our founder, Mother Frances Clare, asked us to be attentive to, since she too was deeply moved by the suffering of oppressed people. How does one grapple with all of it? Our Congregation's charism of peace through justice has been a powerful gift meant to be shared: it's a lighthouse in the dark. It is our guiding gift and challenge.

A time of trial can be a very good teacher. Staying present to an overlying cloud of loss in all its dimensions—not rejecting, denying or escaping it—can lead to new life. I am convinced that it is the prerequisite and necessary step before surrender, so we can welcome the new that is yet to unfold. It goes against the natural instincts to surrender. It seems weak and may feel like we are not rising to the difficult challenges before us. What I am learning is that there is strength in surrender. It serves as a gateway to the movement of the Spirit, to the still waters that are always within regardless of what is raging around us or looming ahead.

It is humbling to be sought for understanding, insight, and counsel. What do our simple lives offer? We know that we stand on the shoulders of the sisters that have gone before us, those that took care of



Sisters Kevina Keating, CCVI, Sheila Lemieux, CSJP, and Tere Maya, CCVI in Rome for the International Union Superiors General Plenary

orphans, started a school for the blind, welcomed the immigrant and served the poor, who built and ran schools and hospitals in places no one else cared to go. So many sisters have powerful and touching stories of how their lives profoundly impacted others, stories they tend to share only among themselves. Recently, a friend who helped place Vietnamese orphans after the fall of Vietnam shared a story of reconnecting with a few of them who have found her through Facebook. Her name is on their adoption paperwork.

So, for those who watch us....and they do.... what does hope look like in our lives? What kind of meaning can we offer to others? Can we be stabilizing forces, grounding rods for our families, friends and colleagues?

Possibly, the striving we each seek to live a life of integrity is a witness. Maybe our attempt to be rooted in God and live out the way of the gospel and our charism are the gifts we've been given to share. Maybe it is as basic as standing with and for others as they traverse the challenges of their personal lives. Perhaps what women religious offer is space for others to ask the big, generous questions confronting their lives and the world.

When Pope Francis recently met with the Bishops from England and Wales for their yearly ad limina visit



Sister Sheila with her nieces Monica Lemieux (left) and Megan Bell (center)

he spoke of the place of joy in our lives. He reminded us that in connecting with our center through silence and prayer, we will find hope and joy. Possibly, as people do turn their view toward the lives of sisters, they will find humor and joy as the unexpected gifts that radiate from them.

It is important to look deeply into the suffering of others. Someone whose actions are unkind, whose thoughts are unwholesome, whose speech is unwholesome is certainly suffering a lot. When you look deeply and see this suffering, your heart will open and the key of understanding will reveal itself. (Thich Nhat Hanh)





Love and the Pilgrim, Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones, Bt 1833-1898 ©Tate, London 2019.

Brexit: Here's to More Love

by Christabel McCooey

Note: This article was written prior to the resignation of Prime Minister Theresa May on 24 May 2019.

I have a confession to make. I have been avoiding news about Brexit like the plague. Ever since the first vote on 23 June 2016, wherein 51.9% of British voters opted to leave the European Union, I have had an impulsive urge to steer conversations away from the subject.

It is not that I am unaware of the positions; I know the flavour of the skirmishes occurring in homes and pubs and in our dishevelled House of Commons. I saw the placards of the Peoples' Vote March, attended by an estimated one million people on 23 March 2019.

Yet despite the very real effect of Brexit, in terms of division at best, and racism, vitriol and hatred at worst, there remains something very abstract and intangible about it. Brexit reminds me of an air dancer balloon that you might see loping about a car dealership: huge billowing arms and legs that leap about in all directions; closer inspection confirms it is animated simply by hot air.

What is the spirit animating Brexit?

We are advised in the Gospels: "*Do not believe every spirit, but put the spirits to the test to see whether*

they are from God!." Certainly, the fruits of the spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—do not readily spring to mind when reflecting on the sentiments exhibited in Parliament this past spring, particularly after the latest 'deal' to leave the EU was rejected, leading to a subsequent scramble for Britain to reach a new solution in time for the fourth deadline from Brussels of 31 October 2019, ironically, Halloween.

It seems that Brexit has accentuated the dominant personality of our current system of politics: self-seeking, dualistic

Tempting though it is to blame those with an opposite view, there is no one 'side' to blame for the chaos following Brexit.

and self-righteous, rarely with humour or apology. This unsavoury picture perhaps explains a rare occurrence that took place in early April: a near-defeated Theresa May approached Labour-leader Jeremy Corbyn to try and break the stale-mate, a movement he has welcomed. Notable, too, is the equally uncompromising and war-like framing of political discussion by the media: 'What will you be demanding of [Theresa May]?'²

Tempting though it is to blame those with an opposite view, there is no one 'side' to blame for the chaos following Brexit.

Brexit is one crisis of many taking place in a moment of human history. By attributing a vital importance to its outcome, whatever that may be, it seems we have been distracted from the daily task of loving our neighbour as ourselves, Brexit-supporting or otherwise. Meanwhile our ever-present social ills remain unaddressed: homelessness, poverty, excesses of corporate capitalism and militarism, and a lack of rehabilitation of the vulnerable, including addicts and criminals, to name a few.

In *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium*³, Walter Wink explores how one resists evil without succumbing to its methods, advocating a 'Third Way', which is neither submission nor violent assault: "evil can be opposed without being

mirrored, the oppressor resisted without being emulated, and the enemy neutralized without being destroyed." This is perhaps what Jesus meant when he bizarrely said, 'Do not resist an evil person'⁴; if we respond with hatred to our perceived enemies, however seemingly justified, we invariably dehumanise them and add to a world already crippled by division.

What would Brexit look like if all concerned embodied Jesus' command to love our enemy? Is politics capable of this? Is a nation capable of this? If yes, wars would surely end. But we cannot wait to change a nation, we can only begin to change ourselves.

This revolutionary movement towards encountering and loving all people, regardless (and indeed in spite of!) their politics, is a grace that comes only when we surrender to God our will and our ego-driven desire to find instant solutions. As Richard Rohr insightfully captures in his book on the 12 Step Programme: "*When religion does not move people to the mystical or non-dual level of consciousness it is more a part of the problem than any solution whatsoever. It solidifies angers, creates enemies, and is almost always exclusionary of the most recent definition of "sinner."* At this level, it is largely incapable of its supreme task of healing, reconciling, forgiving and peacemaking⁵."

By trusting God in the turmoil of Brexit and trusting God's promise that all things are being made new, we are freed to release the weight of the world to God. This is necessary, as Paul reminds us that any solution, however well-strategised, will be shrill and jarring if it is not grounded in love, which endures whatever the time or crisis.

"These are the only genuine ideas; the ideas of the shipwrecked. All the rest is rhetoric, posturing, farce⁶."

Christabel McCooley is a barrister specialising in criminal, family and human rights law living in London, UK.

Endnotes

1 John 4:1

2 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-47794604/corbyn-very-happy-to-meet-may-for-cross-party-brexit-talks-at-0.30>

3 New York Double Day, 1998.

4 Matthew 5:39

5 Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the Twelve Steps, Franciscan Media 2011

6 Jose Ortega y Gasset, The Revolt of the Masses, Ortega 1932

Loving the Enemy: Practical Tips

by Susan Dewitt, CSJP

Jesus said to his disciples, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.” Luke 6: 27-28, 31-32

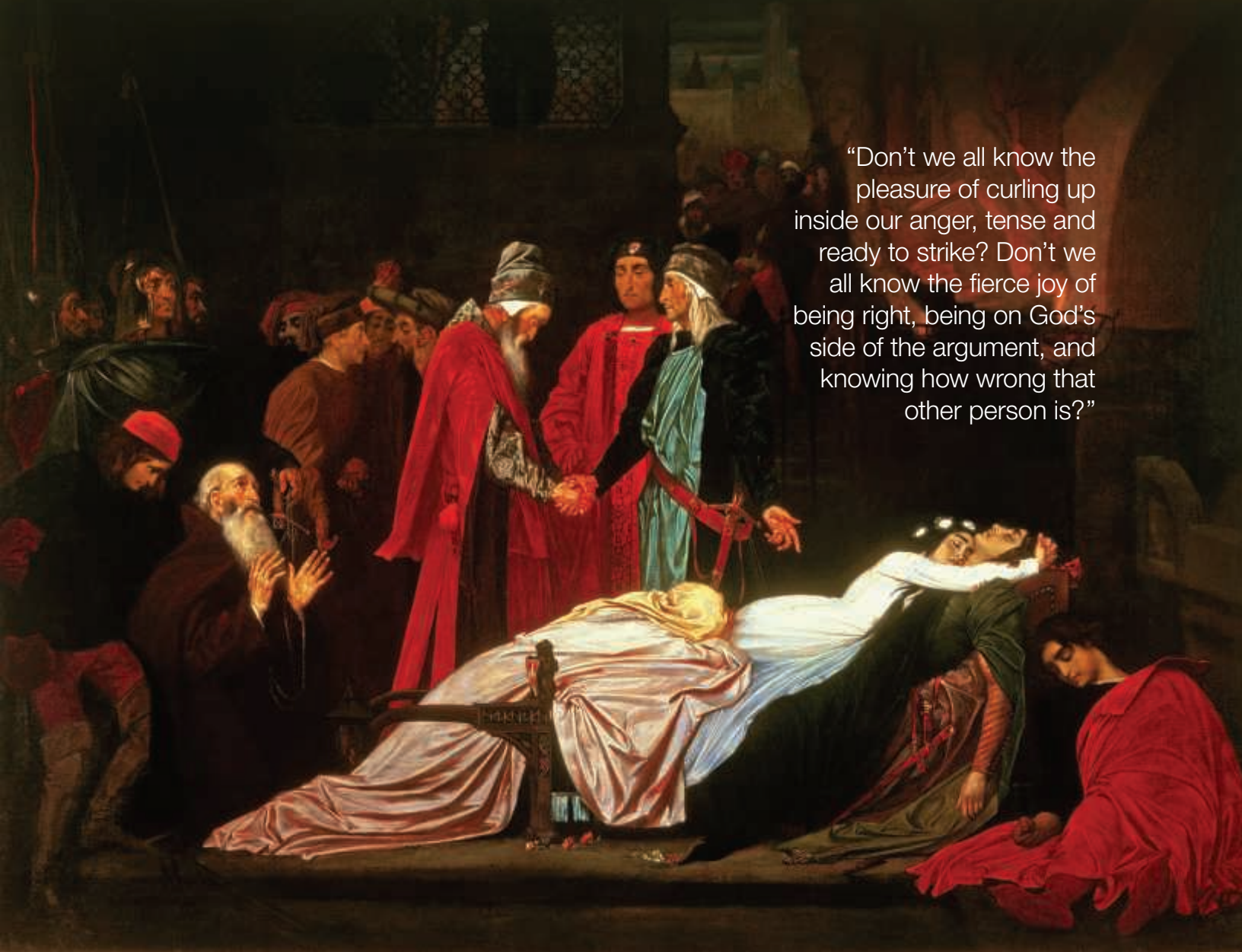
Love my enemy, do good to those who hate me, bless those who curse me, pray for those who mistreat me – how do I begin to do that? How do I even begin to want to do that? Don't we all know the pleasure of curling up inside our anger, tense and ready to strike? Don't we all know the fierce joy of being right, being on God's side of the argument, and knowing how wrong that other person is? Don't we all hear the news, read the tweets, and fling a curse at the terrible people on the other side, the side of wrong? And then maybe we catch ourselves and remember hearing these words in Luke's gospel and wonder how we possibly can live from them. How can I, how can we meet the Holy One in this other difficult, aggravating, demanding person?

I can learn to walk softly. I have to tell you that often when I'm hurt or angry I have put a lot of energy into rehearsing my anger, making up dialogues with the other person in which the full weight of my righteousness is unleashed. But inevitably, over the years, I've noticed that actual encounters are nothing like my imagined dramas, that all the time I've spent rehearsing just gets in the way of an actual meeting with the other.

And so, we go in armed and hostile to a confrontation with an unreasonable boss or a family reunion with impossible Uncle Bob. But what if we approached them softly, with curiosity instead of condemnation? What if we did our best not to set off alarms? What if we see the face of God's beloved in this person who has been so difficult for us? Then everything changes.

I used to be a mediator with the King County Dispute Resolution Center, and I always remember one mediation between two couples who lived in the same apartment building and were at each others' throats in a dispute involving – well, I can't even remember now what it involved, but back then it felt as if we were going to be in this mediation for a long, thorny, painful time. But then, when the first couple was invited to talk about the dispute, they began by apologizing, acknowledging that they hadn't thought how their actions could affect others. And everything changed. The other couple now could also be generous, understanding. The rest of the mediation was a piece of cake: they really didn't need me anymore.

What Jesus asks of us in this terrible, challenging, impossible gospel is to keep doing in ways small and large what the first couple did, to move into our enemy's space with our hands open, to bless instead of curse, to offer prayers instead of hatred, to give instead of withholding and so to make it possible for everything to change, for the enemy to become the beloved.



“Don’t we all know the pleasure of curling up inside our anger, tense and ready to strike? Don’t we all know the fierce joy of being right, being on God’s side of the argument, and knowing how wrong that other person is?”

The Reconciliation of the Montagues and the Capulets over the Dead Bodies of Romeo and Juliet by Frederic Leighton

We all know, I surely do, how comforting it is to be among the ones who love us, and that’s precious, love that’s comfortable and comforting, intimate, reliable, enduring. For those of us who are fortunate to live in a circle of loving family and loving friends, it’s the ground under everything we do. But as Jesus tells us, that’s the easy part. The challenge is to reach out past the familiar circle and love those who seem to be ungrateful and wicked, to be merciful the way God is merciful

The reward is astonishing:

“Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.” (Luke 6: 37-38)

What’s the measure with which I measure, with which you measure? How can you make your measure more spacious, how can I let my measure take in more people, how can we forgive and give? I think with sadness of the sister of a dear friend of mine who has never been able to forgive my friend’s divorce and remarriage, who will not speak to my friend, but who every week, and probably every day, prays “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

We all have our places of untempered rage, of unforgiveness, of spiritual stinginess. God longs to forgive us, to pour forgiveness into our laps, God who loves our enemies. The steps we need to take are simple: be curious, be open, be hospitable, get outside our own righteousness and meet the face of God where we might least expect it.

MINISTRY FOCUS:

Everyone Has the Right to Change Their Lives for the Better

by Robin Barr, Cheryl Sesnon and Susanne Byrne

No matter what is happening in the world, there is always a population of disenfranchised, underserved, and usually poor, who are struggling. As our editorial board planned this issue, we realized we wanted to hear from people at the nonprofit ministries that serve those populations. They are forced to think fast on their feet for survival while continuing to meet the needs of their clients. We were curious how they do that in challenging times.

Three executive directors of ministries founded and supported by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, in the Congregation's three regions (United Kingdom, Western and Eastern United States), answered our questions. Our thanks to Robin Barr of Harbour Place, Susanne Byrne of York Street Project, and Cheryl Sesnon of Jubilee Women's Center for sharing some of their very precious time.

Harbour Place Is About Change

Grimsby, United Kingdom

Robin Barr, Executive Director

Harbour Place was established in 1996, and for over more than 20 years, we have been a recognised part of the community in which we are based. From the beginning, Harbour Place, led by Sister Hilda Baxter, CSJP and an amazing team of staff and volunteers, worked with the homeless, the socially isolated and vulnerable in some of the most deprived wards in the country. Many of our clients were coping with complex / multiple issues, including:

- substance / alcohol issues
- social isolation
- mental health /dual diagnosis
- repeated patterns of homelessness
- offending history
- long-term physical health issues
- long-term unemployment
- childhood trauma

Many of our clients fell outside the remit of statutory agencies, or were distrustful of, and loathe to use services that they saw as "authority".

Over the course of the year, Harbour Place often worked with up to 600 individuals a year, frequently registering up to 300 new clients each year. Harbour Place became an essential "safety net", yet one that often went unnoticed.

Has that mission changed in the last few years?

The focus of our work now is working with the homeless, in particular, those living on and near the streets. We operate a 15-bed night shelter, 365 nights of the year. We also have an outreach team working



with rough sleepers and street beggars. The project works extensively with those considered marginalised and hard to reach. In addition to practical support, shelter, hot food, showers, sleeping bags and change of clothing, the team provide advice and advocacy services helping clients to re-engage with benefits, health and harm reduction services and family. Harbour Place believes that everyone is capable of change and will only achieve their full potential when offered a safe, supportive, empowering and non-judgmental environment.

It is our intention to provide such an environment and meaningful activities, which will help reverse the spiral of rough sleeping and homelessness. Harbour Place is about change and about believing that everyone has the right to change their lives for the better.

We aim to assist individuals to re-establish the foundations for a stable, positive life, built upon



consistent support and the opportunity to have “your own front door”.

Since opening our new premises in September 2018, we have registered over 200 people for our service and have assisted over 115 people to find permanent accommodation.

Biggest Challenges

As for most organisations like ours, a major challenge for us is to ensure we have enough funding to deliver the important services we provide.

I never cease to be amazed and humbled by the generosity and compassion of the communities in which we work. We receive terrific support from local companies and church groups, and receive grants from a number of charitable foundations, but, as hard as we work to achieve financial sustainability, the reality is that this will always be a challenge for us.

Without wanting to be over-political, austerity has also impacted directly and severely on our community. The cuts in benefits, the introduction of Universal Credit appears to have hit the poorest disproportionately hard, and the re-shaping, downsizing or complete withdrawal of services (mental health, harm reduction etc.) has meant that we are often now the first point of contact for people at the point of crisis.

Work and Personal Life Balance

I joined Harbour Place four years ago, intending to work three days a week, as part of a planned move towards retirement. Things have not quite worked out like that, and I feel more engaged and immersed in work than I have for some years.

Working with a group of committed people to develop and deliver services that really make a difference is enormously rewarding, and I feel very fortunate to have had this opportunity to build on the foundations laid by Sister Hilda and others.

Away from work, I am lucky to have a great family. Gilly and I have been married for 40 years this year and have three lovely daughters and five amazing grandchildren. There is nothing like spending time with kids to put things in perspective and help you to remember what is important.



Jubilee Women’s Center – Strength in Adaptability

Seattle, Washington

Cheryl Sesnon, Executive Director

The mission of Jubilee Women’s Center is to support women who are experiencing homelessness to build stable and fulfilling futures, one extraordinary woman at a time, led by the guiding principle that women of all races should be treated with respect and dignity. Jubilee began in 1983 when Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace leased a converted convent with 20 bedrooms. We now have four homes (two are converted convents) and can house 55 women at any given time. Additionally, we have grown our referral services, computer lab, and free clothing boutique so that we serve nearly 2,000 low-income or homeless women each year.

Adaptability

One of Jubilee’s strengths as an organization is our adaptability.

During the recession many women ended up homeless because they got laid off and couldn’t find another job, especially older women. Entry-level jobs were going to young people just out of college, because jobs were scarce. The average age of a Jubilee client was 50 years old. For many of the women, our focus was to get them on Social Security benefits and into subsidized housing, so they would be stable.

Without jobs, Jubilee’s clients had more complex barriers, such as no health insurance. Women with disabilities (physical and/or mental), or who had a chronic or debilitating disease, such as cancer or severe arthritis would lose their jobs, their insurance, their homes, and end up on the streets or living in their cars.

We created a program track called the Healing and Restoration Track for women who would likely never be





able to keep a full-time job. We taught business skills to women on that track. The goal was to keep them from isolating (because without jobs they were often depressed), create a supportive community through teamwork, and provide resources for them to create products they could sell at fairs and markets. They learned everything from branding and marketing to pricing and cash management. Most importantly, they built their confidence and self-esteem. This program had a transformative impact on the women who participated.

New Challenges – No Exit Strategy

Then things changed.... The City of Seattle decided to embrace Housing First where the people who were chronically homeless with the most barriers would move into the subsidized housing the city had available. That dramatically reduced the amount of housing available for our women who were ready to exit Jubilee's program. Also, because they were temporarily housed at Jubilee they couldn't even get on the Housing First waitlist and apply for subsidized housing anymore. That created a dilemma for us – if we accepted someone into our program who would never be able to get a job and/or afford market rate housing, there was no exit strategy for them. The only way to eventually get into low-income, subsidized, permanent housing would be to go back on the streets and get on the Housing First waitlist. All of this was happening while market-rate housing costs began to soar in Seattle because of the booming influx of Amazon, Google and Microsoft employees. Affordable housing was becoming impossible.

We determined the niche we could best serve is women who are homeless but have the potential to become employed within two years. We restructured our program to focus on getting women back to school and/or into jobs with potential career paths. We have strengthened our Education Center to provide career exploration, work readiness skills, interpersonal skills and money management. We also purchased a home

with 12 bedrooms that is available for women who have completed the two-year core program at Jubilee but still need more time to increase their salaries to afford market-rate housing.

The other innovation we added was a Matched Savings Program. If a woman in the Jubilee program saved a minimum of \$20 up to a maximum of \$100 per month, and they did this consistently each month for up to 20 months, showing staff their bank statements of the deposit and no withdrawals, at the end of 20 months, we would match their savings 2:1. That would give her up to \$6,000 that she could use for first and last month's rent and security deposit to move into a new apartment or home. She might also use it to pay off old debt, purchase a car or any other purpose that could move her into a new level in her life. Plus, she will learn great savings skills! We believe this is a key piece to really moving out of poverty.

Shifting the Tide

Some of the bigger picture concerns are the political trends we see in our country. There seems to be some popular support for moving backward in areas like women's rights, government support for people in poverty, low or no cost mental and physical health care, addressing racial equity and finding solutions to homelessness. I pray these trends are temporary and we can shift the tide in the direction of compassionate, inclusive and humane policies and actions.



York Street Project

Jersey City, New Jersey

Susanne Byrne, Executive Director

Our mission is to shelter, feed, educate and promote the healing of persons in need, especially women, children and their families.

While the mission hasn't changed, how we are able to carry out that mission has. For over 25 years we were able to provide transitional housing to homeless families. Due to changes in funding priorities and policies at the federal, state and local government levels, we had to move away from the transitional housing model, which allowed for 18 months of onsite housing, and now operate a shorter-term emergency shelter onsite and a 24-month offsite housing program for homeless families. The average length of stay for our onsite families is now just over 100 days.

This change has impacted almost all our programs within the ministry, but fortunately our leadership and staff have found ways to adapt and evolve our services to continue to meet the needs even under changing conditions.



Challenges

We experience many challenges, from lack of funding for our programs to a lack of quality community resources to assist our families with their needs, but ultimately our biggest challenge is the lack of safe and decent permanent affordable housing for our families.

We can address the multiple barriers that cause or contribute to our families becoming homeless. We provide mental health services, and we teach parenting skills, life skills, and household management skills. We can connect our families to treatment programs when needed, and we can teach them job readiness skills. But a lack of formal education, work experience and access to high paying jobs means that our families earn a hourly wage between \$9-\$14 per hour, and they cannot afford a monthly rent that at minimum will exceed \$1,100.

As a result, we are constantly building relationships with landlords to secure lower cost housing whenever possible. We are enhancing our career development program to help identify industries and programs that will enable our women and families to identify employment areas where there is room for advancement. Our goal continues to be helping our families to break the cycle of poverty, but with housing cost so high, that goal has become more of a challenge than it was before.

How Things Have Changed

We are still serving homeless and financially disadvantaged women, children and families, however since moving to the emergency shelter model we have found that some of the families who are seeking shelter need more crisis intervention services than the families we used to serve in transitional housing. In the past, families would be on a waiting list before being

accepted into our program; now families are coming to us during their crisis.

Due to the shortened length of stay in the shelter program, not as many families are placing their children in our early childhood development center. Because of this, we have opened the program up to community families, both low-income and higher-income families. Our low-income families qualify for a voucher to help them cover the cost of tuition. While taking in families from outside our programs was a change, we believe that it offers us the opportunity to serve a more diverse socio-economic group of families, and we believe that all the children in the center will benefit from that.

Work and Personal Life Balance

It is challenging to maintain a good work/life balance, but it is critical if you plan to do this work long term. For me, I learned that I needed to leave work at work. We are witness to a lot of tragedy, heartache, unjust actions and violence, and if we were to carry that with us outside of work, it would be difficult to focus on anything else. It continues to be a struggle and it takes a lot of discipline, but it is important.

I have asked my staff to respect boundaries and to only contact coworkers during non-work hours if it is an emergency (unless the contact is non-work related). When I am off work, I will check my email but only respond to things that are urgent.

I take time off to attend my children's events and games. For me, this is critical, because the time passes so quickly, and they grow too fast. I have missed so many things over the years before I made the decision that this needed to be a priority.

I have also learned to better organize my day, plan meetings, prioritizing items that must get done, while also building in time to focus on more longer-term projects. This has helped me avoid having to stay at the office until late in the evening.



Securing Peace in the Modern World: Reflections from Bishop Bagshawe

by Susan Rose Francois, CSJP

When the very first Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace professed vows on January 7, 1884 in Nottingham at Our Lady Chapel in St. Barnabas Cathedral, they did so in the presence of Bishop Edward Gilpin Bagshawe. Indeed, it was Bishop Bagshawe who welcomed the new community to the diocese and approved the original rule and constitutions of the new order written by Mother Francis Clare (Margaret Anna Cusack).

In his homily that winter day, Bishop Bagshawe set the stage for the mission ahead. Reminding the first Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace that Jesus, the Prince of Peace, gave peace to his disciples as a special gift, he then continued: “To secure this divine peace for ourselves, and to provide its blessings for your fellow-men in the midst of the sin and strife and turmoil and restless anxiety of this modern world, is the object of your Institute.”

A few days later, he accompanied the sisters to the town of Grimsby on the North Sea, where there was a fledgling

Catholic population in need of their presence and ministry. The new Church of St. Mary on the Sea had just been opened the previous year. During his 27 years as Bishop of Nottingham, more than 40 new missions were opened in the diocese, the majority, like St. Mary in Grimsby, in working class, mining, fishing, or industrial communities. Over the years, the sisters would later open schools, an orphanage, health care facilities, and provide social services in this seaside community.

Mercy and Justice to the Poor

Bishop Bagshawe is remembered as an early proponent of Catholic Social Teaching. One year after the founding of the new congregation, he published a compilation of pastoral letters on political economy titled *Mercy and Justice to the Poor* in which he criticized the hyper-privatization of property and the corresponding negative impacts on people made poor and vulnerable.

“There can be no doubt that in many of the received usages of business and modes of making money prevalent in modern times, by which such enormous fortunes are accumulated in the hands of a few, while the multitudes are ever more and more impoverished, there is very much which is contrary to justice no less than to mercy.” He called for state intervention and for the Church to develop Catholic Social Teaching grounded in Gospel values of justice, mercy, and peace. Pope Leo XIII’s papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*—published a few years later in 1891—is considered the first major document of Catholic Social Teaching and embodies many of Bishop Bagshawe’s ideas.

There can also be no doubt that he found kindred spirits in Mother Francis Clare, Mother Evangelista Gaffney, and the other early sisters. Here were women ready to roll up their sleeves and help people who were poor in their own circumstances and bring peace to a restless world.

“You are happy in your intended work,” he told the sisters during the profession ceremony. “You will hope, if God blesses your work, to sow the seeds of peace in modern society—broken up now into mutually hostile classes—by laboring to provide cheap and suitable homes for the very poor, and to establish workshops

“To secure this divine peace for ourselves, and to provide its blessings for your fellow-men in the midst of the sin and strife and turmoil and restless anxiety of this modern world, is the object of your Institute.”

whereby a fair division for profits, mutual peace and charity between employers and employed may be happily restored and bring back joy and prosperity in its train.”

Spirituality of Peace

Yet, he also knew that sustained action for peace through justice requires the development of a deep spirituality of peace. “But you cannot do this if peace does not reign first in your own heart,” he told the sisters at their profession. “You must cast out impatience, remembering that each cross and suffering either of body or soul comes to you from the hand of a loving Father, and is, in His intention, full of blessings for you. Beware then of the least thought, word, or gesture of impatience. You must cast out anxiety, or any fear as to what the future may bring you or what may be the consequences of your past actions. ... Be, therefore, never solicitous for the morrow, but be solicitous only to do at the present moment the will of God, your union with him in peace and tranquility of heart.”

Our present moment contains many of the same challenges Bishop Bagshawe observed in the late 1800s, from sin, turmoil and strife to inequity, extreme poverty, and anxiety. His critical insight that we require *both* social analysis in light of the Gospel and development of the capacity to dwell in the peace and love of God are as relevant to 21st Century readers as they were to those first expectant, and most likely anxious, Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace gathered at Our Lady Chapel, ready to begin their new adventure.



FrankSpeak

Clean Water to Wealth: The SDGs at Work

by Frank McCann, CSJP-A

Water is one of our most precious resources, one that many of us take for granted. Yet, for more than 844 million people worldwide, or one in every nine people on Earth, access to clean and safe water is still out of reach. Women in sub-Saharan Africa spend 16 hours a day collecting water, much of it unsafe to drink. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), unsafe drinking water and lack of water for hygiene and sanitation contributes to approximately 800,000 deaths annually from diarrheal diseases. Most of those deaths are children.



by Sophie Mbugua

In Kenya's Kwale County, Juma spent three hours a day getting water. In the dry season, that time extended to five hours and became more dangerous as disputes over the limited supply broke out.

A man who moved into her neighborhood drilled a well and sold water for two cents per 20 liters. The newfound hours of free time allowed Juma to start a small apparel business. She now makes between \$50 and \$75.00 per month, which enables her to pay school fees for her children and to participate in the local microfinance cooperative.

Likewise, Mshimu benefitted when she took a volunteer job monitoring the government-provided clean water station in her village. She had a small fruit and vegetable business near her home that she closed due to lack of customers. But Mshimu was able to reopen her stand at the water station where there was plenty of traffic and expand her offering to include fried potatoes, which proved to be popular with the students and teachers in the nearby school. Mshimu now makes between \$20 and \$30 a day, which pays for schooling for her two youngest daughters and allows her to contribute to a cooperative that will help other women start their enterprises.



by Bernard Kimani

In Kenya, the savings and credit cooperatives are called SACCOs. These co-ops traditionally provide capital, mostly for women, to fund small businesses such as small farming, clothing, transport and others. The 25,000-member Murang'a County Women's Cooperative (MCWS) had a bigger vision and decided to break the mold of members putting their money into each other's personal enterprises. Instead, they invested in real estate—even though only six percent of the land in Kenya is owned by women.

The women of MCWS, some investing only 10 cents a day, collected over a million dollars that they



by Sophie Mbugua

risked in building a 102-room apartment building. Thankfully, the rooms were quickly rented to students at the Murang'a university where there was a shortage of housing due to doubled enrollment. The explosive growth in students at universities throughout Kenya has prompted MCWS to continue to build youth hostels. These investments by local women now provide income for them.

At the heart of these empowering changes are the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The lives of these women, their families and villages have been transformed by the enactment of the SDGs, which are intended to create a sustainable global community where everyone has what they need to survive with dignity. The WHO analysis shows that every dollar invested in clean water returns a four-fold economic benefit.

Access to clean water is more than just a health issue. It's the key to gender equality in the world's least developed countries. As women can engage in dignified and productive work, they are able to focus on the education of their children, especially the girls. And that is the beginning of making the world a more level playing field.

Frank McCann is the Peace through Justice Facilitator for the Congregation and serves as the Congregation's NGO Representative at the United Nations.

The 17 sustainable development goals to transform our world:

- Goal 1:** No Poverty
- Goal 2:** Zero Hunger
- Goal 3:** Good Health and Well-being
- Goal 4:** Quality Education
- Goal 5:** Gender Equality
- Goal 6:** Clean Water and Sanitation
- Goal 7:** Affordable and Clean Energy
- Goal 8:** Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Goal 9:** Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Goal 10:** Reduced Inequalities
- Goal 11:** Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Goal 12:** Responsible Consumption and Production
- Goal 13:** Climate Action
- Goal 14:** Life Below Water
- Goal 15:** Life on Land
- Goal 16:** Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- Goal 17:** Partnerships for the Goals

Back to Basics

When chaos surrounds us—especially on a large scale that blends the personal drama with the world stage—it can be hard to keep our bearings. Temptation can swing wildly between being swept up in the energy and unplugging entirely from it. Who amongst us hasn't had days or weeks where we've wanted to take to our bed, as writer Brian Doyle described it, like it's a boat at sea and drift away? Or perhaps go to our familiar, not always healthy, crutches? So much roiling, so much lurking, so much we see and know and more that we don't. So... what to do?

For starters, go back to basics. Keep healthy routines such as getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, keeping socially active, eating healthy meals. Then add in some of the following:

- Take a walk or hike in nature. Science is starting to give Mother Nature the props she deserves for keeping us healthy. As little as 15 minutes in the woods can have profound effects on us, reducing cortisol and increasing overall well-being; 45 minutes can improve cognitive performance.
- Keep a disciplined meditation or prayer practice.
- Did you forget how to have fun? Make it a stress-free mission to remember and seek what makes you laugh, what brings you joy.
- Try or continue alternative therapies such as Reiki, acupuncture, reflexology. Same goes for the centering practices that incorporate breath, balance and flow like yoga, Tai-Chi, Qigong and others.
- Volunteer.
- Learn something new.
- Hang out with kids.
- Get art: read a novel, see a movie, go to the theater, a concert, museum or gallery.

RESOURCES

Meditation/Sleep

Insight Timer app—download for free at insighttimer.com

Chopra Center: Articles and information on meditation – chopracentermeditation.com

Nature

The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier and More Creative by Florence Williams

Blue Mind: The Surprising Science that Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do by Wallace J. Nichols

Poetry and Spiritual Writing

The Gift: Poems by Hafiz the Great Sufi Master, Translations by Daniel Ladinsky

A Year with Rumi, Daily Readings, Translations by Coleman Barks

Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver by Mary Oliver

The Wild Keeps Her Holy by Tiffany Aurora

The Wisdom Jesus: A New Perspective on Christ and His Message by Cynthia Bourgenault

The Time Is Now: A Call to Uncommon Courage by Joan Chittister

A Gospel of Hope by Walter Brueggemann

Wrestling with God: Finding Hope and Meaning in Our Daily Struggles to Be Human by Ronald Rolheiser



BOOK REVIEW

Solace in a Good Read

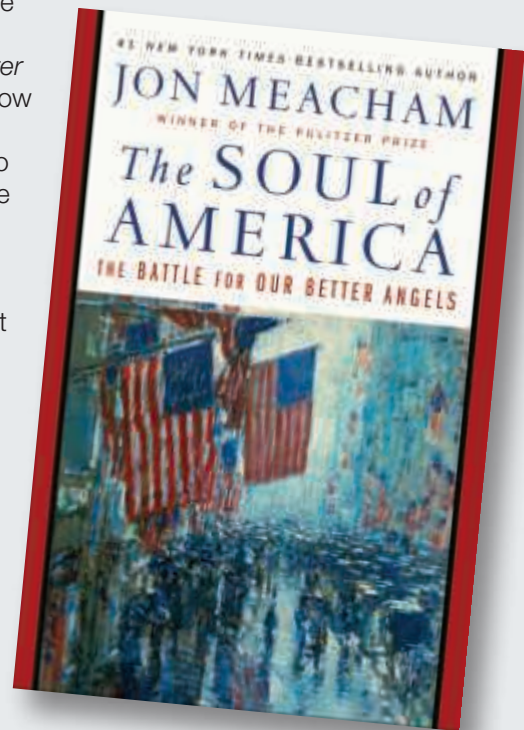
by Coralie Muzzy, CSJP

If you're American, your soul may be aching over the current state of political strife in our country. If so, you might find solace and encouragement from *The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels*. In this timely bestseller, historian Jon Meacham conveys how Americans have prevailed through our nation's most contentious political periods by following the conscience of our better angels to overcome fear and division with hope. And Meacham asserts: "We can do so again."

The phrase "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union," from the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States of America was meant to express the deepest yearnings of the American soul. According to Meacham the stage was set for the start of a contest. "The war between the ideal and the real, between what's right and what's convenient, between the larger good and personal interest in the contest that unfolds in the soul of every American." Played out in the history of our nation's politics, the outcome of those battles tended to generate either politics of fear or politics of hope.

Meacham's instructive narratives of struggles portray how contrasting political outcomes of hope and fear alternately surfaced or subsided over time. The Civil War nearly split the Union though its outcome freed the slaves. Reconstruction enabled citizenship, but President Hayes brought Reconstruction to an end. The South's Lost Cause reigned for decades alongside the Ku Klux Klan. Only after fierce resistance did Women's Suffrage finally pass. Fear during the Great Depression led to the New Deal. It took Edward R. Murrow of the press to finally expose Joe McCarthy. And after the assassination of Kennedy, Texas native Lyndon Johnson managed to pass the Civil Rights act of 1964.

Throughout all these seesaw, public dispirited times, Meacham persuasively argues the better angels of American souls "prevailed just often enough to keep the national enterprise alive." He gives us cause to hope and reason to stay in the battle. "For all of our darker impulses, for all of our shortcomings, and for all the dreams denied and deferred, the experiment begun so long ago, carried out so imperfectly, is worth the fight. There is, in fact, no struggle more important, and none nobler, than the one we wage in the service of those better angels who, however besieged, are always ready for battle."





Sisters Margaret Byrne and Christina O'Neill, Bishop Dermot O'Mahony, Superior General of the Sisters of St. Clare, Sister Consilio Cosgrave, and Sister Bernardine Comerford at the opening of Peace House

History and Roots

Peace House

In 1978, the Irish Section of Pax Christi, the international Catholic peace movement, asked the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace to consider coming to Dublin, Ireland to work for peace and justice. The sisters' aims aligned with the goals of Pax Christi, and the invitation was accepted. Peace House was opened in 1980 and served the community for nearly 20 years. The excerpt that follows is from Bishop Dermot O'Mahony's homily at the farewell mass for Peace House, November 12, 1999.

I remember the occasion so well. We celebrated in joyful hope the opening of Peace House on a beautiful May evening at the beginning of summer 1980. The religious and secular press pointed out that this was the first convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace

in Ireland – “a congregation founded by Mother Francis Clare Cusack, the renowned nun of Kenmare!”

We prayed for the founding sisters – Christina O'Neill, Concepta Costello, Ann Helen Byrne and Consilio Cosgrave. We begged the Lord that their work would be a sign and a source of peace.

“A sign and a source of peace”. That prayer has been answered a hundredfold. We will find nothing big or dramatic or spectacular in the story of “Peace House”. But then that is so often the way of peacemaking. “Small is beautiful” – that's at the very heart of building the Kingdom of Peace. The call of the peacemaker is for the most part – not always, I must add – to do little things for “little people”. How

often we have recalled together the words of Jesus: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed.... the smallest of all the seeds" (Mt 13:31). But how it grows!

The sisters, during the past 19 years, have planted countless tiny mustard seeds of peace. Every peaceful work, every prayer, every act of peace flowing from this house influenced, often in a hidden way, the coming of a new dawn for peace on our Island home. The sun has still to rise higher in the sky. We are tantalisingly close to the warm sunshine of just and lasting peace.

For now, it is the Autumn and the beginning of Winter. As I look out at my garden, the leaves are falling faster from the trees. They will soon be empty and bare. Autumn in the beautiful phrase of Macrina Wiederkehr is "the Sacrament of Letting Go". The Lord, for some mysterious reason of Providence, has asked you to "let go" of "Peace House". That's a kind of dying and must be painful, but a dying to freedom and new life.

The closing of "Peace House" is a dying to new life. What kind of new life? I don't know! There is also "The Sacrament of Waiting" – like the barren and empty trees in my garden during Winter time. The same Divine Providence gives us the time of waiting to explore, to search, to examine, and above all to trust.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid" (Jn 14:27). This is a difficult time in the Church for Religious Congregations as they withdraw through lack of personnel from cherished apostolates. I have no doubt, just as during times of suffering and crisis in our personal lives, the correct question to ask is not: "Why is the Lord allowing this to happen, but where is the Lord in what is happening?" The Lord is definitely somewhere in this evening's Liturgy which marks the end of a particular chapter in the story of your Congregation.

I believe that his Spirit wants to give you three guidelines for the future:

- Don't concentrate on what you are letting go. Look at all that you still have – the beautiful charism of your foundress still finding expression in works of peacemaking.
- Give all that to me.
- Leave me to do the rest. And together we will continue to bear abundant fruit in the most surprising ways.



we invite you to connect & participate

consider becoming a sister

In the USA contact:

Sister Coralie Muzzy, CSJP, Congregation Vocation/
Formation Director, cmuzzy@csjp-olp.org

In the UK, contact:

Sister Maureen Brennan, CSJP, Regional Vocation
Director, maureenbrennancsjp@gmail.com

consider becoming an associate

Women or men who share our concerns and
charism, contact:

Sister Coralie Muzzy, CSJP, Congregation Vocation/
Formation Director, cmuzzy@csjp-olp.org

request prayer support

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything,
by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let
your requests be made known to God.*

—Philippians 4:6

Our sisters and associates pray daily for friends, supporters, all who ask our prayers and those linked with us through the Pious Union of Prayer. The original purpose of this Union was to form a network of prayer for peace in homes and in families. Send a request online by selecting "Prayer Request" from our website home page menu, www.csjp.org or by mail in the U.S. using the return envelope.

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If our role as messengers
of God's good news means
anything to us, the chorus
of people begging for peace
will touch a special place
in our hearts.

Sister Patricia Lynch, CSJP