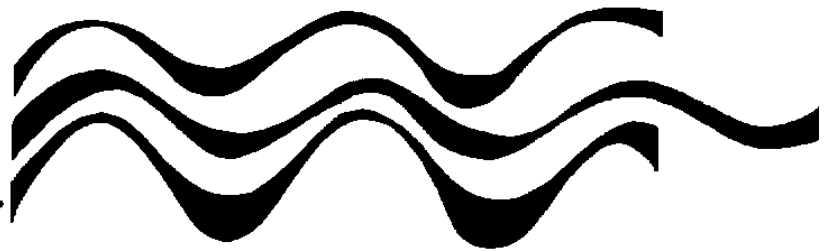


RSHM SOUNDINGS is a quarterly publication of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Eastern and Western American and Northern European Provinces, and Zambezi Region. Waves sent out, reflected back, reveal an inner reality not always evident on the surface. Thus SOUNDINGS probes RSHM life in expanding circles of ministry and community. You, our readers, are part of our life. We invite your comments and suggestions so that your thoughts may be reflected in these pages.

# r soundings

# h m



Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary  
English Speaking Provinces

Volume XXV, Number 2  
Summer 2017

## AS THE EARTH TURNS

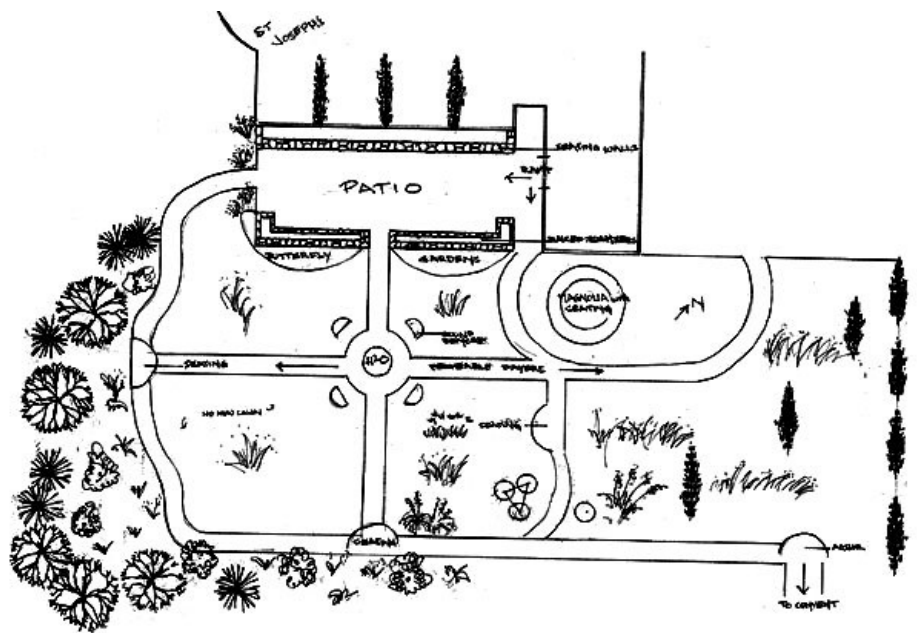
by Edith Hart, RSHM

TARRYTOWN, NY 40 Wilson Park Drive was a very well worn building that went through many TURNING POINTS. In its early life it was a Novitiate, House of Studies, Retreat House, and rented to St. Jude's Habilitation Institute.

Long consideration of various options led to a decision to return the land to nature in the form of a Native Plant Garden, a holy place of healing and health for native plants, animals, and humans.

Our most recent RSHM General Chapter document states that "we recognize the sacred commitment we have with our earth and its peoples. As contemplative listeners with a preferential ear to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, we desire to respond by taking prophetic action, reflecting our conviction that the earth is God's dwelling, a sacramental communion of creation and re-creation." We are also inspired by the encyclical of Pope Francis, 'Laudato Si', and the desire for ecological conversion and the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The plans for the garden will include a native meadow, patio area, small woodland, water feature,



benches, and accessible paths that are wheelchair and walker friendly.

Deciding to give a part of RSHM property over to regeneration is a small idea with big implications. It is an educational experience for us and we plan to visually document it along the way. It opens a window to a new spirituality that includes all of creation, restores biodiversity, and health for all. Hopefully it will inspire others to want to restore the health of their

yards and gardens.

Can we dare to think that this action will be a turning point that will contribute to the movement to save the planet?

Our Sr. Clare McBrien who lived the ethic of care for the earth in Southwestern Virginia for over 30 years has stated that, "When we think of the poor, we must include the earth as the new poor." ♦

# TRANSITIONS IN PEACEMAKING

by Liz McAlister

*NEW YORK, NY After 43 years at Jonah House, committed to community, nonviolence and resistance, Liz McAlister and other 'elders' of the community recently handed the ministry on to the new generation. A letter of farewell expressed confidence in the ongoing vision of this community which had been founded in Baltimore in 1973 by a group including Liz and Phil Berrigan: "It is a new moment, a new day and we give gratitude to God. We say 'Presente' to all who lived and served here but have now left this life. We continue to celebrate their resurrection."*

*Continuing her life of community, spirituality and nonviolence, in Benincasa on the West Side in NYC, Liz reflects here on turning points as she experienced them in the peace movement:*

In the earliest days of the Vietnam War, Dan Berrigan along with Rabbi Heschel and Pastor Richard Newhouse formed CALCAV—Clergy and Laity Concerned about the War in Vietnam.

It was one of many efforts to bring people together and out into public resistance. In those years I was living and teaching Art History at Marymount College in Tarrytown. It was an easy trek from there to participate in the emerging resistance and there was a wide variety of gatherings:

- participating in a simple meal of reconciliation followed by a procession through Manhattan's streets
- gathering at a Church to support a young man seeking sanctuary to avoid conscription
- gathering at induction centers to resist the conscription of young men, especially to support those resisting induction
- and the seasonal marches down 5th Avenue to participate in what then seemed like massive opposition to the war.

A circle of friends would gather at Marymount Manhattan College after each NYC event. We'd evaluate the event in which we'd participated; talk about the war and our hopes and fears, share a drink, a meal—often one we'd cobble together. And we'd pray. What we were doing, without alluding to it or maybe even understanding it, was building community. This circle was the beginning of deep community with one another and a growing circle of people. The community became strong and close.

Dan was a central, significant part of that circle whenever he was in the city. He was its heart. His valuing of each of us, our presence, our perspective, our growing commitment to peacemaking was a source of strength and insight—into ourselves, into the concept of community, into the very process of resistance, into the true nature of our country. That circle grew, deepened, and continued to learn from one another.

At a certain point, the question became: "How do we move from dissent to resistance? Phil Berrigan first raised the issue. October 21–23, 1967 became that time for many. The National Mobilization organized The March on the Pentagon to confront the warmakers. 100,000 people met at the Lincoln Memorial in D.C. As many as 50,000 continued to the Pentagon to engage in civil resistance. Two days later, with Dan and many others still in custody, my beloved Phil and three friends engaged in the first of more than 300 actions against the draft boards.

Looking back on times past, and looking ahead to my present and future involvement in Benincasa, I want to emphasize a spirituality that is communal as well as individual. I cannot emphasize this enough. Few, if any, of us can continue to be solitary actors against the unspeakable evil of war.♦

# TURNING A SCHOOL AROUND

by John Bosco Gorla, RSHM

ROME, ITALY A significant turning point for Marymount Nomentana in Rome occurred in 1999. I recall that at the time things were not going well for the school and we thought it might have to close. Sr. Anne Marie Hill, who had been appointed headmistress, suggested that we offer a bilingual program. It was at this time in Europe that the knowledge of English was becoming essential.

We were the first school in Italy to offer such a program. Major subjects were taught not only in Italian but also in English, always following the program of the Italian Ministry regarding the Italian program. Our English teachers were all mother tongue ( American, English and Irish teachers). Our enrollment doubled almost overnight and Marymount was seen in a different light.

Today, eighteen years later, many schools claim to be bilingual but we still are distinguished by our mother tongue teachers. Our children begin English when they are three years old and by the time they complete the eighth grade they are fluent in English. They have no difficulty in going from Italian to English and vice versa .

I wonder if Père Gailhac and Mother Butler did not see this in their vision of the future. Neither oceans nor language barriers constrained their sense of mission. The school Mother Butler loved and founded in the Eternal City will carry on the mission so dear to our Founders, "That all may have Life."♦



## TURNING, TURNING, WE COME 'ROUND RIGHT

by Bea McMahon, RSHM

BRONX, NY The turns in the life of Sr. Martin Fleming brought her over the Atlantic Ocean more than once. As a child in County Galway, Ireland, Mary Fleming had sometimes thought of becoming a nun, but it was a critical point in the family that turned thought into action. A younger sister, Eileen, always full of fun and optimism, became suddenly ill at age 14. As it turned out, Eileen recovered and lives a full, healthy life to this day. But that fragile moment for one who was so filled with vitality brought her older sister to reflect on what she was doing with her life. She recognized her true calling, and came to the Novitiate in Tarrytown, preceding her two younger sisters, Agnes and Kathleen, who were studying at the 'Juniorate' in Paris.



Srs. Martin and Agnes Fleming

A long life of teaching lay ahead for Sr. Martin. She was always known to have a special care for slower students, giving extra tutoring, accommodating expectations and testing. Some of the highlights of her ministry in many settings:

- Primary grades in Sag Harbor under the capable mentoring of Sr. Angela Hearne.
- Three years in London, trying to see clearly through the tumultuous changes of the 60's.
- Back to this side of the pond, teaching 8<sup>th</sup> graders at St. Catharine's, her first experience with class size 50 or more.

(continued on page 6)

## CROSSING A THRESHOLD

by Virginia Mullane, RSHM



Sr. Virginia visiting the sick.

CHOMA, ZAMBIA Reflecting on the theme of 'Crossing a Threshold' I initially found myself going back to the architectural concept of a door step as the crossing point into the interior of a house. At this level, the text of Revelations 3; 20-22 'Behold I stand at the door and knock' came to mind. Here there is the image of Christ standing at the doorstep, knocking, waiting for an invitation to cross the threshold and encounter the indweller. There is mystery and risk involved in such a circumstance, plus expectation, faith and trust. As I reflected on this image, it became a symbol of the whole mystery of the conscious acceptance of Christ in the journey of life and an invitation to a deeper personal communion.

A line from the poet Robert Frost reminds me of a significant threshold moment:

Two roads diverged in a wood,  
and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the differ-  
ence.

For me, the image of the two roads became the choice between a religious way of life as a Sister or to remain in the secular state. As Frost so aptly expresses it. the two roads seemed 'equally fair' to the eyes of

an eighteen year old but the ultimate choice became the 'less travelled road'. In that same context I can remember my Dad calling me aside in his taciturn fashion and posing the question: 'Do you know that you are putting your hand to the plough?' I replied rather brashly: 'Of course I know what I am doing'. It was many years later, that I recognised the full depth of what he was really saying.

Another threshold for me was the excitement and enthusiasm generated for renewal during Vatican Two. The Documents that emerged were a strong call and challenge to shake off some of the dust that had accumulated on the feet of many. There was the moment when Bishop Corboy, returning from Vatican Two to Zambia via Ireland, asked for Sisters to come to the newly independent State to build up the educational systems and the subsequent missioning of the first RSHM. Then my own missioning to Zambia came in 1979 and, again, it became a very significant and graced moment of faith, risk and dynamic change.

During the course of 2016, I celebrated my eightieth Birthday, my Diamond Jubilee as a Sister, the Golden Jubilee of SHM presence in Zambia, and the twentieth anniversary of the Zambezi Region, all of which were threshold moments calling for the recognition of seeds of new life. In the midst of many happy memories there was a renewed call to put my hand to the plough in recognition of the wholeness of all the combined thresholds of life's journey.♦

NEXT ISSUE:  
TO EVERYTHING  
A SEASON



# WEAVING CENTER TURNS 40 1977-2017

by Bianca Haglich, RSHM

TARRYTOWN, NY. It started in 1977 with the opening of the Craft Skeller at the closed Carpenter Shop in the ground floor of the New Wing at the Academy in Tarrytown, NY. We washed down the walls and lights that acquired sawdust through the years. We were offered metal shelving from the Academy Library that closed in 1976. You can still see the shelving at the new Weaving Center. Help from the RSHM college community, friends, and faculty was gratefully accepted and enabled us to open the Center.

This idea was formed after my sabbatical in Finland, 1968-69. They had centers in cities and towns where people could go to weave. We did not have such centers in the US, nor did we prize handwoven goods. But maybe, we could start one? We began with workshops open to the general public.

By 1993, the programs had grown and Marymount College incorporated weaving into its Continuing Education Program. With the first move, we had college students and adults sharing the craft room at Marian Hall. Sr. Imelda had learned to weave back in the 1930's. so we were continuing a tradition.

The year 2007 was a memorable one. The college closed and we had to relocate. Sr. Roz, then Provincial, offered the old Academy gym for the new center! This was our second move. The looms, shelving, yarns, etc. were brought down-the-hill to furnish the new Weaving Center. We continued to offer workshops of Finnish techniques and also became known for creating prayer shawls or Tallits. Young and old, children, women and men made the most of the workshops we offered and learned the age-old technique of weaving.

In the Spring of 2015, we discovered the floor was soft underfoot. Only then did we realize that termites were devouring the wood! So, we



Sr. Bianca accepting Mother Butler Leadership Award for the Weaving Center from Jane Barnett, MC'76, President of the Marymount Alumnae Board.

had to move a third time, but where? The Provincial Council offered another gym in a newer building at the north end of the RSHM property. At that time it was a storage area, but it was twice the size of the current space. There were windows to the north that gave great light and to the south as well. More than 100 bags were filled with the yarns and transported to the new Center. The shelving followed, then the looms (which had to be taken apart) and finally other furnishings. It took time for all the things to be brought over and the weavers themselves assembled all the looms once more. By the Fall, we were ready to open our doors again!

We had fairs, slide presenta-

tions, and a variety of workshops. We displayed the handwoven goods created by the many weavers. In the fall of 2016, we joined the New York City Celebration of Fiber and Weavers and new people found us. In December, at Fordham University, the Marymount Alumnae Association gave the Mother Butler Leadership Award to the Weaving Center

The craft of weaving keeps one humble, but always on the road to creativity, learning, using new patterns, and exploring new yarns. It enriches the individual, yet allows for much sharing with fellow weavers. The Weaving Center has been richly blessed in our present beautiful site and at each turn in the road that brought us here.♦

## CONTRIBUTORS

- John Bosco Gorla, RSHM, is Treasurer of the Fondazione Marymount in Rome.  
Kathleen Connell, RSHM, lives with the community of Marymount, Kingston while researching material on RSHM history.  
Bianca Haglich, RSHM, is Director of the Weaving Center in the Provincial Center complex, Tarrytown, NY.  
Edith Hart, RSHM, is a conservator of works on paper with a studio in the Provincial Center complex, Tarrytown, NY.  
Liz McAlister, former RSHM, is currently continuing her life of community, spirituality, and nonviolence at Benincasa on the West Side of New York City.  
Bea McMahan, RSHM, is Chair of the Math Department and Director of Development at Aquinas High School, Bronx, NY.  
Virginia Mullane, RSHM, works with AIDS Outreach awareness in Choma, Zambia.  
Audrey Rushton, RSHM, retired at Casa Guadalupe, Montebello, CA, assists with transportation needs for the Sisters in residence.

## TURNING POINTS IN RSHM HISTORY

by Kathleen Connell, RSHM



LONDON, ENGLAND There were many turning points in the early history of the RSHM. Gailhac was known for his serious discernment before coming to important decisions. In imitation of Jesus Christ, Gailhac wanted “to do always what is pleasing to my Father”(Jn 8:29). He prayed to know God’s will and he was alert to the catalysts of God that signaled change.

One of my favorite turning points in RSHM history was the decision to begin a foundation in America. Gailhac had desired such a move, but the catalyst, the turning point was triggered by a seventy-four year old woman who struck up a conversation with M. Ste. Croix and M. St. Felix on the deck of a steamer from Marseilles to Civitavecchia in June 1874. The woman was an American from Cincinnati, Ohio, twice widowed, a convert to Catholicism. The conversation was possible since this woman, Sarah Worthington King Peter, spoke English, German, Italian and French. They conversed in French. In a letter to her son, Sarah Peter wrote: “We are the only passengers, except two very intelligent and agreeable Sisters on their way to Rome. Perhaps someday we may see their order in Cincinnati as they think of founding some houses in the U.S.”

Years later, M. St. Felix wrote this account of the conversation: “This good lady . . . told of how she had established several foundations in her city and that she would be delighted to have the congregation of the Sacred Heart of Mary there as

well, that she would have this foundation blessed by the Holy Father and as soon as she returned to the United States, she would take care of everything and would write to us. All this interested us greatly, although we did not count on it too much. We bade farewell to this lady . . . We didn’t think any further about a foundation in North America.”

Sarah Peter had given the sisters and Gailhac some extra tickets to the first official North American pilgrimage to Rome to demonstrate American Catholic support for the Pope. If, at any time, the RSHM had underestimated the prominence of this elderly woman, the large audience with the American pilgrims, which she had fostered, must have indicated Sarah Peter’s role in the American Church and the Pope’s respect for “La Signora Sarah Peter” was obvious. Years earlier, he had blessed and supported her vocation in the Church—to help the poor in America by bringing religious orders from Europe to serve them.

The meeting with Sarah Peter was the catalyst, the turning point, Gailhac had been waiting for. In a letter written to Sarah Peter in 1877 as the first community was setting out for America, Gailhac praised the wisdom and love of God that arranged the meeting in June 1874 to reveal, once again, the power of grace working in Mrs. Peter’s heart, giving his daughters a new occasion to prove their fidelity to their vocation. After God, Gailhac wrote, it is to her that all the glory of the new mission belongs. “As you are their foundress, permit me to constitute you their mother also. . . .My gratitude and that of all my daughters will last forever.”

Sarah Peter never received Gailhac’s letter. She had died eight days before he wrote it. But let us thank her for being a turning point for us and for choosing SAG HARBOR as our first foundation in America.♦

## THE SPIRAL

by Audrey Rushton, RSHM

MONTEBELLO, CA As Sr. Audrey’s poem *The Spiral* indicates, we have been crossing thresholds since the beginning of time. There are so many tipping points and they just keep coming!

Fourteen billion years ago silence  
reigned  
'Til suddenly throughout the heavens  
There thundered forth within the  
vacuum  
A nourishing abyss, pulsing with  
energy.  
Creative power,  
Spiraling, accelerating, transforming.  
Time has no meaning here  
Future has infinite capacity,  
Evolving into a universe  
Ever new, circling outward  
Stars, planets, earth  
Bringing forth new life in dazzling  
display  
Nature, wild and beautiful, fierce  
and terrible,  
Seas receding, mountains reaching  
Land, producing myriads of forests  
and flora  
Animal and human  
'Til finally we know that we know.  
From there in ever widening circles  
We move in quantum leaps  
With ever faster pace  
In our race to face the future  
Toward what?  
An earth destroyed? A race extinct?  
Or toward universal humans,  
Cherishing every living thing  
That moves or grows or sings  
To the glory of its Maker.♦



- Then a memorable sojourn with Sr. Joel Devlin as Principal at St. Joseph's in Manhattan. Martin loved the teachers she worked with there, and she always felt Joel's support.
- Teaching junior high math led to the next turning—a jump to high school math at St. Barnabas in the Bronx. When changing needs required her to teach religion, Martin enrolled in a theology program at St. Joseph's Seminary. That was a wonderful, broadening experience in her life.
- Eventually, a return to Paris at the invitation of Sr. Ann Marie Clancy, then Principal. This turned out to be a long sojourn through several administrations. The last years were part-time in the school, more of a presence in the community. What stands out in the hearts of all who shared those years is the thoughtful kindness shown by Martin to her RSHM sisters and guests.

Through these many years, the Fleming family had grown and extended in many directions, to Eng-

land, Canada, the U.S.A, and Australia. Martin kept close touch with all, a vital link connecting the distant branches.

In recent times, when illness required a return to Tarrytown to live in Marymount Convent, it was as if all the turning had come full circle: back to the place of her introduction to religious life; back to sharing a home with her younger sister, Agnes; back to praying in the chapel where she had made her vows. She sees a familiar place with new eyes. Experiencing again the beauty of Marymount, Martin finds her heart filled with gratitude for Mother Butler who made all of this possible—but not Mother Butler alone. So many RSHM have lived so that all might have life. Ursula Mahoney, and Dotsie Beck, volunteers at the Convent, speak of their desire to give back because of all that they received from RSHM at Park Terrace. And Martin has seen that goodness in so many communities and schools. It confirms her sense that God has been there at every turn, and is still beckoning.♦



**EDITORS:** Cecilia Brizuela  
Bea McMahon, RSHM  
Pierre Dullaghan, RSHM  
Ellen Marie Keane, RSHM  
Denise Osterhaus, RSHM  
Margaret Treacy, RSHM  
Monica Walsh, RSHM  
Mary Alice Young, RSHM

**ART EDITOR:** Edith Hart, RSHM  
**LAYOUT:** Bianca Haglich, RSHM

www.rshm.org; www.rshm-nep.org;  
province@rshmeap.org

Printed by JAM Press, Hawthorne, NY

***And the end of all  
our exploring  
will be to arrive  
where we started  
and know the place  
for the first time.***

*T.S. Eliot*

Non-Profit Org  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
White Plains, NY  
Permit No. 5432

**RSHM Soundings**

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED