



Heart

Spring 2006

A Journal of the Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province



...to Heart

Dear Friends,

This issue of *Heart* arrives during the Easter season. We most often experience Easter as the culmination of the journey of Lent, the unexpected burst of new life in the midst of grief and suffering, a gift which comes after a forty-day journey of purifying our hearts, our vision, our desires, our choices. We celebrate with music, flowers, food, gathering and – we hope – a beautiful spring morning. For most of us, Easter lasts a day, perhaps two, and we return to ordinary time, hardly noticing that in the liturgical calendar Easter is fifty days long! The Church tells us that Easter is an experience, a process, a season in itself.

As I was pondering what it might mean to celebrate this Easter *season*, a line from Gerard Manley Hopkins' *The Wreck of the Deutschland* kept coming to me: "Let him easter in us." What might it mean for Jesus to *easter* in us?

In the scriptures, the first approaches of the resurrected Jesus do not often occasion an *eastering* experience. Mary Magdalene, weeping in grief, does not recognize the gardener; the disciples on the road to Emmaus want to understand but seem unable to absorb the explanations or the presence of the risen One; for Thomas, neither the testimony of others nor the words of Jesus are sufficient. We can sense the desire of Jesus to be known as he stays with each one, finding a way that s/he can move beyond loss and discouragement to experience new life: calling Mary by name in a way that recalls their relationship, welcoming the disciples to the table to share a meal, inviting Thomas to touch his woundedness. The *eastering* one is indeed loving, creative and personal.

What would it be like to recognize Jesus *eastering in us* this season, perhaps emerging gradually, perhaps appearing at surprising moments? We might experience the flowering of new parts of ourselves, our families or communities; new life opening up in the midst of our losses; new meaning revealed in our personal or global experience; new voice and courage to speak the truth we have come to see; new awareness of not being alone; new passion to share the love we have known.

As you read this issue of *Heart*, you may want keep in the background this mantra, *let him easter in us*. Celebrate this season by rejoicing in the life emerging in the young women at Josephinum Academy; by entering into the journey of immigrants in Mecca, California, toward empowerment and change; by being attentive to God breaking through in new experiences of spirituality.

As the scriptures tell us, Easter does not happen all at once. We need a whole season – to notice it, nurture it, let it take root and flourish. Let us be open to the ways the resurrection is happening this season.

Happy Eastering! ✦



Kathleen Conan RSCJ

Kathleen Conan, RSCJ
Provincial

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Feature articles and photos are by Pamela Schaeffer, editor of Heart, except where otherwise noted.

Heart

Heart is published three times a year to highlight the mission and ministries of the Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province, for a broad circle of friends. The covers, photographs of hearts in nature, symbolic of Christ’s presence at the heart of the universe, bear witness to the contemplative dimension of the Society’s “wholly contemplative, wholly apostolic” mission: to discover and reveal God’s love through the service of education.



Cover photo: A lily growing in Malta by photographer Elizabeth Shearman, RSCJ (See her essay about Malta on page 20.)

The Society of the Sacred Heart was founded by Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat in post-revolutionary France and brought to the United States by Saint Philippine Duchesne in 1818. For more information about the mission and ministries of the U.S. Province, please visit www.rscj.org.

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Photo: Lisa Buscher, RSCJ

So Hee Shin, RSCJ, of Korea, who is studying theology in the United States, was one of two Korean guests for the North American “Emerging Vision” conversations in March involving RSCJ professed ten years or less.

Emerging Vision

How best to follow Jesus in the world today. How to live a simpler life, live closer to the poor, be rooted in the local culture, open to the global. How to love each other more, develop flexible new structures that will facilitate collaboration with lay colleagues and other religious congregations, participate in creating a more just and peaceful world.

Those are some of the questions Religious of the Sacred Heart are asking themselves, each other, and their friends in an “Emerging Vision” process begun at an assembly of provincials of the Society of the Sacred Heart, held in Korea in 2003. Since then, Religious of the Sacred Heart in each of the Society’s thirty-two provinces worldwide have engaged in conversations aimed at an “emerging vision of our religious life.”

Two meetings, one last fall and one in March, involved the “new generation” RSCJ from the United States and Canada – those professed ten or fewer years – and three guests from Korea and Cuba. The gathering revealed common desires and hopes among participants:

- To develop stronger connections among themselves and their ministries;
- To foster personal relationships and international connections;
- To discover hope and find God in the midst of painful situations, whether cosmic or close to home.

One thing is sure: As religious life changes over the next couple of decades, RSCJ will be actively engaged in helping to direct that change. And newer members of the U.S. province noted that it will be rooted in the legacy of the Society’s founders.

Anne Wachter and Imma DeStefanis, two “new generation” RSCJ, wrote in a report for the province, “We may not yet know exactly what the future holds, but of this we can be certain: Our hope rests, in part ... in the vision, perseverance and courage of the sisters who came before us.” ❖

Journey with us

Fourteen Religious of the Sacred Heart will lead a **Spirituality Forum** in late July for women interested in immersing themselves in the spirituality of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

Speakers and topics will be **Patricia Garcia de Quevedo, RSCJ**, former Superior General of the Society of the Sacred Heart, on “Prayer Rooted in Culture”; **Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ**, former U.S. provincial, on “Glimpses of Sophie’s Teaching and Practice of Prayer”; **Nancy Kehoe, RSCJ**, on “How My Ministry to the Mentally Ill Has Changed Me and My Prayer”; **Justine Lyons, RSCJ**, on “In Search of Beauty.”

Others participating as facilitators of small group reflections on related topics will be ten RSCJ – Elaine Abels, Muriel Cameron, Kim King, Oonah Ryan, Sis Flynn, Cecile Meijer, Mary Frohlich, Anne-Marie Conn (provincial of Canada), Eve Kavanagh, and Lucie Nordmann – and Sacred Heart Associate Diana Anderson.

The program will be held July 26-30 at St. Mary’s College, Notre Dame, Indiana. A non-refundable registration fee of \$25 is due May 1. Cost will range from \$224 to \$304 depending on the number attending.

More information is available at www.rscj.org or by e-mailing Sister Ryan at oryan@rscj.org or Marie-Louise Wolfington, RSCJ, at mwolfington@rscj.org. ❖

Sendoffs

Please join in expressing gratitude and best wishes in future pursuits to three heads of Sacred Heart schools who are retiring at the end of the 2005-2006 school year.



Anne Dyer, RSCJ

Anne Dyer, RSCJ, is leaving Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart in Bethesda, Maryland, after thirty-eight years as an administrator there, twenty-two as headmistress.



Anne Storey Carty

Anne Storey Carty will retire from Regis School of the Sacred Heart in Houston, where she was founding headmistress fifteen years ago and before that served for sixteen years as a teacher and administrator in other Sacred Heart schools.



Mary Blake

Mary Blake is retiring after thirty-seven years as an educator, the last six as headmistress at Convent of the Sacred Heart "91st Street" in New York City.

Interim heads have been appointed at all three schools: Dr. Richard Barbieri at Stone Ridge, Dr. Nancy Taylor at Regis and Mrs. Patricia Hult at 91st Street. ❖

Chocolate factory

Rose Guidroz, RSCJ, has made \$1,400 so far this year for Academy of the Sacred Heart in Grand Coteau, by selling her popular homemade fudge to students. Sister Guidroz, 87, began fudge-making as a hobby before hearing loss forced her to retire from teaching biology in the 1990s. She has kept it up, for a total of two decades according to her best estimate, as a way of boosting the school budget and staying in touch with students. To assure consistent quality, she follows her recipes carefully, with a candy thermometer close at hand.

Except for some special creations, and over protests that she should charge more, she keeps her fudge affordable at twenty-five cents apiece. Appreciative smiles from her young customers (and some older ones too) add to her reward.

A Louisiana native, Sister Guidroz lived and worked at schools in St. Louis before moving to Grand Coteau in 1969. ❖

Websites to watch

Check the following websites: **www.sofie.com** to sign up for popular Society-sponsored summer programs; **www.rscj.org** for U.S. province news and features and much more; **www.rscjinternational.org** for news of the Society at the United Nations and features about and RSCJ around the world; **www.sproutcreekfarm.org**

to order some of the best cheese you'll ever eat, and gift baskets too. ❖



Sister Rose Guidroz has been making fudge to benefit Academy of the Sacred Heart in Grand Coteau, Louisiana, for two decades.

In Memoriam

Please see www.rscj.org for biographical information on RSCJ who have died.

May they live in the fullness of God's love.

Sylvia Rauch
December 2, 2005

Mary Gray McNally
December 18, 2005

Kathleen Whitfield
January 14, 2006

Margaret Dunn
January 14, 2006

Meghan Shannon
February 19, 2006

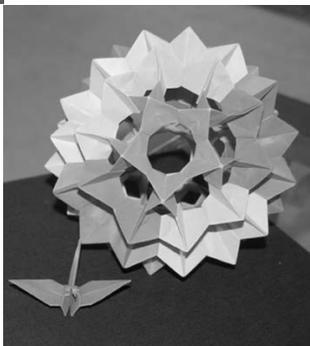
Mary Catherine Rilley
March 14, 2006

Pinning down the future



Sister Burk's eyes danced as she reported on her work at an international Catholic parish, Kristus Konungens (Christ the King), whose 5,000 members come from 60 nations. Just two percent are Swedish. There she oversees catechetics and works with a variety of groups, including an all-ages English-speaking group whose members are affiliated with local offices of multi-national corporations. She conducts after-school religion classes for parents and their children, who range in age from infants to sixth grade. Talented in various forms of paper art, she uses them as a learning tool: origami, pop-up cards and "magic books" – little books with secret compartments. "I want to make religion classes fun, especially for the children," she said. She also spends several afternoons each week at an ecumenical day center at the parish, where retired people come to enjoy music, cooking and arts and crafts, to learn a new language, or just to enjoy a friendly chat. Sister

Burk engages her elderly friends in paper arts too, and in calligraphy.



Carol Burk, RSCJ, uses pop-up art and origami as teaching tools in her religion classes in Sweden. Here she displays her own work.

She spends one day a week as Catholic chaplain in an area hospital, and she leads week-long ecumenical retreats and guides people in integrating the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises into their daily lives. Some of these are among the country's nine million people who belong to the Church of Sweden, the evangelical Lutheran state church. (Less than two percent of Swedes are Roman Catholics). Sister Burk finds native Lutherans, including some Lutheran clergy, to be interested in learning more about Catholic spirituality, though

some view it with suspicion at first.

Sister Burk stresses that her educational work is for everyone. "I came here for the people, not to build a stronger Catholic Church." At the same time, she finds that the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart meets a need. "Our emphasis on God's love for each individual, on the worthiness of each person in the eyes of God" is a new insight for many Swedes, she said. ✦

Carol Burk, RSCJ, has a vivid memory of her first impulse to serve as a missionary in Sweden, her home for the past thirty-two years. It happened on a "mission day" during the early 1960s when she was a novice at Kenwood Convent of the Sacred Heart. According to Sister Burk's recollection, her novice director, Sister Margaret Mary "Mavi" Coakley, invited novices to pinpoint a country on a map in which they might like to serve as a missionary someday. Without knowing what drew her to the spot, Sister Burk stuck her pin in Sweden.

That initial impulse grew into a deep conviction and led her to Sweden in 1974. "I always thought I would go, even when people said it was a silly daydream," she said. Sister Burk had no prior relationship with Sweden. She is a native of New Orleans and the fifth generation in her family to attend the Academy of the Sacred Heart there. She holds a master's degree from Tulane University.

A natural story teller, she kept up a running chatter during a visit to St. Louis last year about her ministries in Göteborg, or Gothenburg, where she lives with four other RSCJ from Germany, Austria and Spain. The community is affiliated with the Society's Central European Province. Göteborg, Sweden's second-largest city, is situated south of Norway and north of Denmark on the North Sea coast.

PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA

RSCJ and others help new immigrants rebuild lives

Esperanza Jasso, RSCJ, has vivid memories of her friend Carol Putnam's last days – the days in which the pampered daughter of a Mexican general and a doting mother, as Sister Jasso describes herself, would agree to take up residence in a rundown trailer in Mecca, California, one of the poorest cities in the United States. Her saga began on October 10, 1992, when Sister Putnam phoned her from a hospital in California's Coachella Valley to report that she had been diagnosed with a brain tumor. Knowing that she would be unable to continue the work she had begun with Native Americans and migrant workers in the valley, Sister Putnam pleaded with her friend to carry it on.

Sister Jasso could hear her friend crying out in her sleep, "The clinic, the clinic." Grieving and torn, Sister Jasso reluctantly told Sister Putnam she would "give it a try."

"Go in peace," she told her friend. "I am going to go to Mecca."

"Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace," Sister Putnam replied in Latin: "Lord, you now allow your servant to depart in peace, according to your word." She died April 16, 1993.

Even before that life-changing encounter, the two RSCJ had developed a strong bond. Both had served for many years in Sacred Heart schools, Sister Putnam as founder and chair of the art department at Newton College, Sister Jasso as administrator of Sacred Heart schools in Mexico. In the late 1980s, their lives had converged in Indiantown, Florida, where, in working with migrant pickers and their families, Sister Jasso first experienced a "different face" of the country she knew from attending Sacred Heart schools in Lake Forest, Illinois, and Menlo, California, and from her father's diplomatic forays into Washington D.C.

Now, as a result of her promise to a dying friend, and a follow-up discernment with Rosemary Bearss, RSCJ, then U.S. provincial, Sister Jasso's experience of America's disadvantaged would grow, and the Society's commitment would expand. She and Sister Bearss reflected on the move to Mecca in the context of "An Act of Hope," a 1992 document of the U.S. Province that put into new language the Society's historic commitment to people who are marginalized and poor.

Three ways out

Like the holy city in Saudi Arabia of the same name, Mecca in California is a place of pilgrimage. To reach Mecca, Mexicans seeking work across the border must make a dangerous trek, often across the Rio Grande or long stretches of desert, while avoiding El Centro, a major immigration checkpoint just eighty miles to the south. Many who complete the journey choose to stay.

continued

Fields of crops abound in the Coachella Valley.



At the northern end of the Coachella Valley, forty miles away, is Palm Springs. The highway passes near lush fairways, gated developments, and chic restaurants and shops. The drive, notes Fran Tobin, RSCJ, is study in economic contrasts, “a theological reflection in itself.”

When Sister Jasso first arrived in Mecca, she worked with Native Americans, giving them religious instruction and other kinds of help. After brainstorming with Georgie Blaeser, RSCJ, who “came for a day and stayed for a week,” she collected books from Sacred Heart schools around the country and set up libraries on the reservations. Then, as she became more familiar with the area’s culture, she redirected her energies, and her native

According to Sister Tobin, a immigration lawyer, “There are three ways out of Mecca: papers, education and courage.” She referred to metaphorical Mecca: the life of poverty that Mecca represents. Early on, Sister Jasso enlisted Sister Tobin and the Religious of the Sacred Heart at the Spiritual Ministry Center in San Diego to help with all three. Sister Tobin guided families in the process of obtaining legal papers, often representing them in court. The sisters at the center, and later Sister Eileen Bearss, brought a faith dimension to the educational work. Sister Bearss made bi-monthly trips over the mountains from San Diego to teach the women of Mecca about the courage of women in the Bible. Knowing little Spanish, she



Olga Granados traces the course of the Mississippi River on a classroom map.

Gradually, participants realized “they were like the disciples being sent, and they began to teach others,” she said.

Sisters Bearss and Tobin were among some forty RSCJ who came to visit and show their support in just her first year in Mecca, according to Sister Jasso. Together, using the methods of “popular education,” or education for positive social change, they planted the seeds of an empowerment program for women in Mecca that has helped them to find a place and a voice in their complex and often intimidating new home.

On its face, the empowerment program, as it has evolved today, is simple. On a morning last February, for instance, a half a dozen young mothers and their preschool children drifted into a classroom at Mecca Elementary School, directly across the street from Sister Jasso’s trailer. Sister Jasso gave the children snacks while their mothers set to work making Valentines. After a while, the women gathered around large table for their daily English lesson, leaving the children to play together or watch educational videos. On this particular day, the women practiced words for family relationships – uncle, aunt, cousin, father-in-law, sister-in-law and the like – in connection with computer presentations they were preparing with help from Elena Alonzo, computer teacher and librarian at the school. When a small child brandished a plastic hockey stick, Sister Jasso quietly exchanged it for a safer toy, a case study



Young Pedro bites into a freshly made tamale while his mom works on Valentines. Soon he will join his friends to play.

language, to working with Spanish-speaking families of field workers. She established an after-school program in the trailer she inherited from Sister Putnam to keep children off the streets until their parents finished working in the fields.

relied on simple words and gestures. Sister Jasso invited women she had identified as potential leaders to take part. In alternate months, participants would go to San Diego, many leaving Mecca for the first time. “Some had to overcome their husbands’ fears that they would not return,” Sister Bearss recalled.

for her ongoing lessons in parenting skills. As the child drifted off again to play, the mothers took turns reading aloud in English. Sister Jasso coached them in correct pronunciation and inserted brief text-related lessons in American culture and social skills.

Huge in magnitude

Over the past eleven years, the program has helped to transform the lives of more than a hundred women, many of them on temporary leave from field work while caring for young children. One participant, Jaquelin Ramirez, speaks for others when she describes herself as less isolated, more assertive, and a better parent. She sits on the “site council” at Mecca School, a forum developed by Sister Jasso to allow parents and educators to work together on issues of concern. Olga Granados, formerly a nurse in Mexico, is gaining enough confidence and proficiency in English to consider resuming her career in California. Several women said their participation in the program had strengthened relationships at home.

Manuela Sylvestre, principal of Mecca Elementary School, praised the program, noting that it had transformed not only individuals, but life at the school and throughout the region. “Sister not only teaches English, she teaches protocol in a system of education the women don’t know,” Sylvestre said. Previously, she said, frustrated parents often approached her with anger and blame. “Now, they come with specific questions and ask how we can work together to solve a problem.” She noted that the site council model at Mecca has been adopted by seventeen other district schools.

“I think it would be an endless list if we tried to name everything Sister does for the community,” Sylvestre said. “She trains five people and they train five others. She has key people at every apartment complex, every community site. In Mecca, if people are needed for any event, we just give Sister the date, and they are here.”



Women arrive early in the morning for the daily empowerment program, bringing young children, who play together while mothers learn.

“The program seems simple but is huge in its magnitude,” agreed Pam Cantine, a doctoral candidate in anthropology at the University of California Riverside, who meets with women in Mecca to record their stories. “It is a huge deal when women are isolated because they don’t know English, in a country that demands so much from citizens. She helps the women understand and deal with the structures of this country – the doctors, the politicians. They will go to the council meetings now and voice their opinions. They never would have done that before.”

Visitors to Mecca can see that dramatic changes have occurred over time. When Sister Putnam first arrived, many of the town’s streets were unpaved and makeshift housing was everywhere, according to Sister Tobin. One of Sister Putnam’s first improvements was to set up showers for migrant farm workers who slept in the brush. Today there are paved streets, blocks of subsidized apartments and a new community center, where programs include legal and social services and a health clinic – the fulfillment of Sister Putnam’s dream.

Sister Jasso, a key player in making the center happen, serves on the Farm Workers Board of Riverside County, which meets monthly to talk about workers’ issues and needs.

College attendance, once as low as five percent in Mecca, is today the norm for young people. With the help of RSCJ, several have attended the University of San Diego, and one young man whom Sister Jasso taught to read now attends Stanford. Some women in her program have become teachers or teachers’ aides; some men, with her encouragement, have left the fields for jobs in area businesses. A few have even started businesses of their own.

The names of RSCJ who have helped her in Mecca roll off Sister Jasso’s tongue. They include Sister Bea Brennan, who taught English to women who now serve as teachers in Coachella valley schools, and Sally Furay, who helped to secure scholarships to the University of San Diego. Pat Shaffer, RSCJ, annually brings students from Mecca to the university, and university students to Mecca. Retired sisters at Oakwood and Kenwood have given support in money and in prayer.

continued

“Our work as Society of the Sacred Heart has mushroomed here because of so many people” – so many who have brought their love, their support, their skills, Sister Jasso said. She has received several grants from the U.S. province Fund for Ministry, and the Sacred Heart parish in Palm Desert has provided substantial funds. Students from Sacred Heart schools, in Network-sponsored programs, have taught children to read.

Another world

In her dozen years in Mecca, Sister Jasso has kept vigil with her friends through waves of anti-immigration sentiment. In the mid-1990s, when Proposition 187 denied social services to undocumented immigrants (a law later overturned in federal court), helicopters hovered threateningly overhead and Sister Jasso sheltered frightened children in her trailer, teaching them Bible stories.

One day she had enough of fear. “So much fear. I got sick of all the fear,” she said. Immigration officials would come around “like dogcatchers,” and people without papers were afraid even to ride the public buses. But it wasn’t just the undocumented immigrants’ fears that she was chasing. It was her own.

Although she is often described as fearless, Mecca has been hard for her, she said, “another world.” When the Santa Ana winds blow, whipping up dust and wildfires, she has been known



Jaquelin Ramirez, here engrossed in an English lesson, says she is less isolated as a result of her participation in the empowerment program.



Sister Jasso talks with Moises Moreno, a young friend, who shares his excitement about his role in a high school play.

to joke, “I am going to buy a pair of red shoes, because my trailer is going to go as far as Kansas!”

Possessions sit lightly in Sister Jasso’s trailer – she gives away most of the gifts she receives, Sister Tobin lamented with a sigh – but there are a few that stay. One is a photo of Sister Putnam that hangs on her living room wall. “I keep it there so that I can argue with her,” Sister Jasso said, her words betrayed by the twinkle in her eyes. “I ask my friend Carol, ‘What were you thinking? Why did you want me to come to this dusty town?’ ”

She also keeps, though not on display, the numerous plaques and carvings, each bearing her name, that have come in recognition of her work. She is especially fond of an inscribed crystal vase, because it came from her alma mater in Menlo (now Atherton).

By far her greatest reward, though, is seeing the skills and courage of the immigrant women grow. If once they were too afraid to ride buses, today they join arms with U.S. citizens to

demonstrate for immigrant rights.

In recent weeks, as the U.S. Congress has deliberated over the fate of undocumented immigrants, Sister Jasso has accompanied friends from the Coachella Valley to demonstrations. No longer cowering in fear, her friends are lobbying in the streets for legal status in the country where they live and work.

“If I wanted to see the results of my work, I saw it there,” she said. “It was the women standing up for their rights. Education has given them the words.”

As she reflects on her years in Indiantown and Mecca, her own pilgrimage, Sister Jasso notes that this growth has not been a one-way street. If her presence among the new immigrants has made them stronger, they have had a similar effect on her.

“I have helped to shape them, and they have shaped me,” she said. “In helping the people to conquer their fears, I have conquered my own. Today, I have to say that this journey has been, for me, a journey of joy.” ❖



Cheering students let off steam at an annual intramural event. "I love to see these kids having fun," said Josephinum principal Martha Roughan, RSCJ, who joined them in the bleachers.

a glittery top with "Drama" emblazoned across the front. Cynthia Arevalo, who describes herself as a future teacher, easily made do with everyday clothes.

Other students, though, like Cassha Pearson, went for a more immediate reward. Pearson has her eye on medical school, but wore her aunt's CTA uniform – her aunt is a driver for the Chicago Transportation Authority – and took first place.

While such events are intended to be fun – and Josephinum principal Martha Roughan, RSCJ, is all for having fun – there is a deeper agenda at work. Many Josephinum students face tough odds. Family incomes, for the most part, hover around or fall below the federal poverty line. Many girls will lead their families in earning a high school diploma and attending college. And many, particularly the high percentage who come in performing below grade level, will need a lot of help to make it through.

Sister Roughan, the third RSCJ to serve as principal at the racially diverse "Jo," following Bonnie Kearney and Donna Collins, knows that the way out of poverty is mostly uphill, and it doesn't hurt to have a village pushing from behind.

So Career Day is about keeping an eye on the higher prize. It is one plank in a concerted attack on all that threatens to distract the focus from achievement and success in life. A mantra, often recited with fierce determination, helps Sister Roughan keep her own vision for her students clear. "I don't want to hear anyone say 'they can't, they don't, they won't.' Because they *can*. They *must*. They *will*."

Historic ties

Founded in 1890 by the Sisters of Christian Charity to educate children of European immigrants, Josephinum Academy today is one of two inner-city schools affiliated with the Network of Sacred Heart schools. (The other is the co-educational Our Lady of Guadalupe in Houston, which ends with eighth grade.) The trail of this evolution leads back to Helen Ryan, an alumna of Woodlands Academy of the Sacred Heart, and through her to Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat, founder of the Society of the Sacred Heart. Ryan signed on to the Josephinum board in the 1980s, when the school was deeply in debt and in danger of closing. Reluctant at first, she was moved by a priest's lament. He was tired of "burying young people," he said – kids killed by drugs and gangs. He wanted the school to stay open as a beacon of hope.

continued

JO on the go

It was Career Day at Josephinum Academy in Chicago in late February and the girls had turned out accordingly. Career Day is the annual event when students at the all-girl school for students in grades six to twelve are invited to exchange school uniforms for outfits representing a particular field of work. The most realistic costumes get a prize.

Many students opted to reflect their personal goals. Dawn Banks, an aspiring lawyer, looked the part in a stylish gray blazer. Melissa Hernandez, envisioning a career in professional dance, sported



Courtney Wilburn, an avid explorer, loves politics as a path to social change.

Below, Sister Roughan consults with middle school students putting last-minute touches on a morning prayer service. Karen Ekpenyong, below left, brings experience in leadership development to her dean of students post.



and revised administrative structures. Sister Roughan (2003 to present), working with the academic dean, continues to ratchet up academics. A better coordinated curriculum and

a program to require students to demonstrate levels of knowledge and skills are among plans on the table. At the same time, Sister Roughan is working with students to give them more freedom and voice.

By introducing students earlier to the college selection process, she has watched the acceptance rate at four-year schools climb from fifty percent to sixty-six percent. (While more than ninety percent of the girls go on to college, the others apply first to two-year schools.)



When a new principal was needed, and the Sisters of Christian Charity had no candidates, Ryan reached out to her former educators, who directed her to Sister Kearney.

Like Ryan, Sister Kearney was hesitant at first. But this time it was Ryan who prevailed. She had learned of an historic link between the two religious orders. More than once, Pauline Mallinckrodt, founder of the Charity sisters, had gone to Saint Madeleine Sophie for help. That information became Ryan's persuasive coup.

Thus began a three-way operational effort in 1990 that gave financial responsibility to the board, property oversight to the Sisters of Christian Charity, and educational responsibility to the Religious of the Sacred Heart. Since Kearney took the helm in 1989, numerous RSCJ have held positions on the faculty, staff and board.

Ryan said RSCJ faculty and administrators have strengthened the school in important ways. Sister Kearney (1989-1996) brought financial stability; Sister Collins (1996-2003) started the middle school

No pretense

The Josephinum's village of caring taskmasters consists of a cadre of committed lay administrators, faculty and staff. Some are alumnae who have "come home" to work. Others are young educators who have made inner-city education a choice.

Michael Heidkamp, who signed on in 2004 as academic dean, came with degrees from Williams College and DePaul University and six years experience at an inner-city Jesuit school. He knows the challenges. "School has not always been a welcoming and affirming place for many of our students," he said. He also knows that real successes help. He recently accompanied a group of students to an academic competition, where they took third place citywide among schools of a similar size.

Karen Ekpenyong, dean of students, holds degrees from the University of Illinois and American University, and brought experience in leadership development from a former job. Like that job, working with students can be high-stress. "But they are worth stressing about. I have met kids here whose spirits floor me."

Anna Waring, president of Josephinum Academy, holds degrees from Williams and Stanford, and is charged with building relationships with donors and marketing the school. In contrast to other Sacred Heart schools, who fund most of their annual budget with tuition, the Josephinum relies on donors for eighty percent of its annual \$2 million operating budget. Only three Josephinum students pay the full tuition of \$5,400 (increasing to \$7,000 next year) and some families pay as little as \$50 a month. The school gives out \$450,000 a year in financial aid.

Faculty members often wear many hats. In the middle school, Carrie Stewart teaches science and math, language arts and religion at various times during the week. She also coaches basketball, moderates student council, chaperones field trips and attends graduate school. What gives her most pleasure is “setting these kids up for success.” Her colleague Scott Benke, another deft juggler, likes the opportunities to create new programs “in partnership with the kids.”

In their hands

Most will acknowledge that it takes a special kind of person to teach at the Jo. “You have to be patient, flexible and creative to reach our students,” noted Kathy Buschman, RSCJ. Sister Buschman, in her seventh year of teaching high school math at the school, loves the “reality check” it provides. There are no pretenses here,” she said. “The first time I came to visit, I knew I had to be here.”

Persistence counts too. Pam Hickey, RSCJ, who previously worked as a counselor at the Jo, returned in 2002 to help teach English and math. “If students can see some immediate result and you push them from there, step by step, telling them ‘yes, you can,’ they reach a point where they begin to push themselves. If we accept a student, we have to make it possible for her to succeed.”

Students like eleventh grader Chequaleis Sargent are well aware of the steady pressure at their backs. “They are not going to put us down here, like tell us we can’t do it,” she said. “Here they push us. In public school, they put it in your hands, and if you do it, you do it.”

Although, in terms of Goals and Criteria for Sacred Heart schools, Sister Roughan’s top focus for now is Goal Two – “deep respect for intellectual values” – students and faculty are enjoying rewards of a previous focus on Goal Four, “building community as a Christian value.” After several fights broke out in fall of 2003, Roughan, with a grant from the U.S. Province Fund for Ministry, brought in facilitators for a “Peaceful Transitions” workshop. It helped to restore what many

describe as the school’s home-like atmosphere.

Tiangela Wells, a sophomore who commutes from southwest Chicago, a two-hour round-trip by bus, is among those grateful for an alternative to an often-chaotic world outside. “You need to be comfortable to focus,” she said.

Roughan is expanding extracurricular options – volleyball for middle schoolers is one recent addition – and allowing students more unstructured free time, while instilling values needed to use it wisely. She is also inviting her girls to respectfully have their say. “I want them to show initiative, to suggest new courses and clubs. I want them to see that a good part of their education is in their hands,” she explained. In response to frequent requests for more electives, including foreign languages, she is teaching French herself.

Staying connected

Ryan sees a difference when she visits. “Sister Roughan has brought joy, and laughter, things that are essential to a Sacred Heart school,” Ryan said. “The girls greet me when I come around. There’s a wonderful spirit there now.”

Much of that laughter happens in the school cafeteria, recently transformed from a lackluster, crowded spot to a bright open space. Bright bulletin

boards display articles about role models – notable men and women of color – and photos of service projects in which students have been involved.

Campus minister Marjorie Frana, the one in charge of those projects, looks for rewarding ways for students to be involved. They have helped build Habitat for Humanity homes, opposed domestic violence in a *continued*



Ninth-grader Brittney Gwin engages in a lively discussion about Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Raven.” Above, Cassha Pearson, top prize winner in a Career Day costume event, accepts congratulations from Tamieka Pitts, though a more important prize, Pearson says, will be graduation from medical school.

Anna Waring, Josephinum Academy's president, and Michael Heidkamp, academic dean, right, are among administrators and faculty deeply committed to inner-city education. Below, science teacher Carrie Stewart assists students with an experiment.



Photo: Jason Smith

walkathon, and canvassed in support of affordable housing. They have researched problems of gentrification and limitations of health care services for the poor. “My job is to keep students connected to the community,” Frana said.

She defines community broadly. Before the last national elections, she took five girls to New Hampshire for the primaries. In other years she has introduced students to the Hispanic culture in New Mexico, the African-American culture in the South, an Amish community and the Underground Railroad in the Midwest, and an ecology camp in Canada near Quebec.

Several students have participated in summer service programs of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools, and Sister Roughan is committed to seeing that number grow. For example, Courteney Wilburn worked in a nursing home in Seattle with eleven other girls, including six from Japan, and learned from both the elderly residents and her Asian peers.

Wilburn, who is recovering from a bone infection, hopes to enroll at a university in Chicago and later, when her health improves, transfer to the University of Pennsylvania. “I know I will have to work hard to get in,” she said, “but I want to explore the world, be in an environment I’m not used to and learn to adapt.”

Lurching forward

To supplement the mantra in her head, Sister Roughan keeps reminders of her values and aspirations in her field of vision. There is a statue of Saint Philippine Duchesne in her office — “because I know she would be happy we are here” — and a drawing of a bus labeled “Josephinum Academy” is taped to an interior door. “I firmly believe that if we have the right people on board, we can go anywhere,” she said. Meanwhile, she is grateful for many things, especially her committed faculty and staff, whom she has rewarded by increasing salaries, using an anonymous \$2.25 million gift. (She hopes for another \$100,000 grant

to extend the school day.) She is grateful, too, for the considerable help she receives from other Sacred Heart schools, and from donors who provide critical funds — an anticipated \$1.2 million this year.

From day to day, though, that metaphorical bus lurches and stalls. “What is hardest for me is that we can plan and plan, but we are so dependent on other people’s generosity to carry out our plans,” she said. On the dark days, “we have to remind ourselves that we are dealing with a population that is poor, that doesn’t know what is coming around the corner. We have to be prepared to live the very insecure life they are living. We should expect to mirror their lives.”

Counselor Ali Brennan, who spends her days listening to students, gives them “enormous credit” just for showing up. “I am really proud of these girls for coming to school every day,” she said. “They have lots of friends who are not going to school, so it’s a big deal for them to be here.”

Sister Buschman said the students, even when they complain, are well aware of the harsh alternatives. “Many of our students know someone who has been killed by gunfire or is in jail,” she said. “If we weren’t here, many of them would drop out of school, be on the streets, get involved in gangs.”

“When we dismiss them at the end of the year, we always tell them to have a great vacation. But we know full well that most of them can’t wait to get back to school.” ❖

Kenwood's Pioneers

As white handkerchiefs fluttered in farewell, Christine Webber, RSCJ, became the first pioneer to leave Kenwood Convent of the Sacred Heart in Albany, New York, for a new home across town at Teresian House, a skilled care facility operated by the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm.

Teresa Kent, just turned 93, was next to go, following a liturgy of sending that included music by students at the Doane Stuart School and testimonials to Sister Kent's long presence there. She had welcomed lower-school students to school each morning for years.

The third and fourth to leave were Mary Sessions and Dorothy Holmes, again with a liturgy of sending and a flurry of white.

After a year of planning, the move out of Kenwood had begun and the nucleus of a soon-to-grow community of RSCJ was formed at Teresian House.

Teresian House is one of three skilled care facilities in Albany that have gained province approval as potential new homes. Owned by the Diocese of Albany, it is highly regarded among health care professionals for its progressive approach to delivering care, by residents and their families for its warm and homey atmosphere, and by RSCJ at Kenwood for its deeply Catholic ethos, which includes daily Mass in a brightly-lit new chapel. Each resident has a private room and half bath, and each unit, modeled as a "neighborhood," has its own living area, dining room and communal kitchen.

The painful decision to discontinue health care at Kenwood came more than a year ago, when the U.S.

provincial team, like leaders of many other religious orders, confronted the harsh reality of shrinking funds and escalating health care costs. Additionally, despite a deep emotional attachment to Kenwood, the estimated cost of much-needed renovations at the facility was prohibitive. Without them, the building could no longer serve modern health care needs.

A search for alternate facilities began in various parts of the country, with consideration given to quality of life and financial implications. Members of the province were invited to offer input to the U.S. provincial team on alternatives, with common good as a primary goal. It was decided to maintain retirement options on both coasts: in Albany, where Kenwood has previously served over more than a century as a school and noviceship, and in or near Atherton, *continued*

Christine Webber, RSCJ, the first to leave Kenwood for Teresian House, is waved off by friends. Karen O'Rourke, director of nursing, is at the wheel. Below, Kathleen Conan, U.S. provincial, blesses Angela Lubert, RSCJ, who moved to Oakwood in early April. During a recent visit to Kenwood, Sister Conan blessed all of the residents in preparation for their moves.



Photo: Claire Kondolf



Photo: Dinna Wall, RSCJ

California, where approximately fifty sisters live in retirement at Oakwood Convent of the Sacred Heart.

RSCJ at Kenwood who need assisted living, but not skilled care, will move either to Oakwood, where space for a few new residents has opened up, or into a dedicated wing in a new facility in Albany expected to be completed within a year. The U.S. Province will be part owner in that project, known informally as “Guilderland.”

The process of preparing to leave Kenwood has been complex and painstaking, done with “unbelievable care,” according to resident Mary Ranney, RSCJ and numerous others. Lay staff members, many with deep, longstanding relationships with residents, have worked closely with RSCJ to develop a plan. “We tried to chart out everything,” said Marie Buonato, RSCJ, a member of the pastoral care staff. “We listed more than ninety categories.” These included assessing each resident’s level of care by an objective standard, reviewing personal wishes regarding end-of-life care, and helping each resident to take an inventory of personal possessions and decide which to keep.

Each resident was assigned a “buddy” of her choice to support her in the journey and, along with Kenwood’s pastoral care staff, to provide visits and support after the move. The nursing staff

prepared detailed reports on residents needing skilled care for face-to-face delivery to new caregivers. “This was especially important for those sisters who would not be able to speak for themselves,” said Karen O’Rourke, director of nursing.

Julia Soto, director of programs, works hard at providing entertainment to keep sisters “in the present” and anxieties at bay. Psychologist Nancy Kehoe, RSCJ, was engaged for monthly consultations with residents and staff in need of extra support.

Staff members were offered incentives to remain on board as long as needed – a delicate balancing act in a health care climate where jobs and hiring bonuses are plentiful. “We haven’t missed a beat in caring for these sisters, and I don’t want that to stop,” said Brian Hoffman, director of plant and grounds, a Kenwood employee for twenty-eight years. Hoffman is among many staff members who say their relationships with the retired sisters will continue.

Administrator Meg Canty, RSCJ, is presiding over the process with well-honed administrative skills and

a “keep-no-secrets” style that provides for daily exchange of new information. Sister Canty, along with Margaret Miller, RSCJ, administrator at Oakwood, serves on a five-member “transition team” keeping track of processes on both coasts and reporting



An aerial view shows the exterior of Teresian House, where RSCJ have already formed a new community. Inside, the building is divided into homey “neighborhoods.” At right, Kenwood’s two centenarians, Edna Tierney, RSCJ, and Kathryn Sullivan, RSCJ, share reflections. (To view more photos of Teresian House, see www.rscj.org.)



to the U.S. provincial team. Barbara Rogers, RSCJ, is chairing a committee developing recommendations for the future use of the Kenwood property.

“Everyone has given the best of themselves, across the board,” said Diana Wall, RSCJ, who moved from New Orleans, bringing useful experience and skills, to help with the transition.

Although a certain amount of anxiety, anger and fear among both residents and staff is undeniable, RSCJ and staff have been widely praised, inside Kenwood and out, for virtues often attributed to Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat: generosity and courage. Some noted that anxiety had diminished in late February after residents watched a video about Teresian House. It was narrated by Monsignor Jack

Jones, a longtime confessor at Kenwood who now lives at Teresian House.

At Kenwood, and later at Oakwood, there will be many more sendings, many more hand-kerchiefs waving aloft in the longstanding custom of Society farewells. Pastoral care staffs will be reconfigured in each area to provide ongoing support for RSCJ in their various new homes.

“I think people have a wonderful spirit about it all,” said Maribeth Tobin, RSCJ, noting that RSCJ throughout history have grown to expect movement and change. Edna Tierney, RSCJ, one of two Kenwood centenarians, said she is confident the sisters will adapt well. “You know, this would be so hard for people who had been living in their own homes, but we are so used to moving around. We are not afraid of change.” ❖



The student body and staff of Doane Stuart School join in waving good-bye to Teresa Kent, RSCJ, the third pioneer to leave for Theresan House.



Diana Wall, RSCJ

Like a fine cellist

Diana Wall, RSCJ, was enjoying living in the South – New Orleans to be precise, before the hurricane – when she heard Sister Kathleen Hughes, then provincial of U.S. Province, report via teleconference that the provincial team had decided to close the health care facility at Kenwood. Sister Wall knew how courageous that decision was, given Kenwood’s key place in the Society’s history. She recalls being “profoundly moved.”

As she considered the implications, and the painstaking work of moving sisters in frail health, she knew she wanted to help. A wealth of experience had prepared her: a nursing degree, work in intensive care, up-close knowledge of the health care business – her family owns facilities in the San Francisco area, including an assisted living home – and a master’s degree in business administration. Before entering the Society, Sister Wall had been groomed to take over her family’s health care business by her father, a physician and businessman.

Soon she was on her way to Kenwood with blessings and gratitude from Sister Hughes and Timothy Burns, head of the Academy of the Sacred Heart in New Orleans, where

Sister Wall had worked in development. She was appointed assistant for special projects to Kenwood’s administrator Meg Canty, RSCJ. Her work in Albany during the past year has ranged from helping to develop an overall transition plan to serving as “point person” for construction of a new assisted living facility, whose residents will include RSCJ.

“I am a doer,” said Sister Wall, who won an award for “most generous service” during her student days at Schools of the Sacred Heart in San Francisco. “One of my gifts is motivating people and getting things done.”

Sister Wall entered the Society as an “interested woman” in 1996, when she was thirty, after struggling with the decision for three years. “This thing about religious life kept coming up and I kept putting it down,” she said. For one thing, she was enjoying dating, and for another, her father was counting on her. Then her mother grew ill and died of cancer in her fifties, and she recalled advice her father had given her and her five siblings as they were growing up: “If there is something you want to do, don’t be afraid to try.” She gathered up her courage and told her father of her changing plans. “Do what will make you happy,” he said.

A year after she entered, she left for two years to review her life plans in the context of a relationship with a man she had previously dated. She returned for the noviceship program and professed temporary vows in 2001. Her work at Kenwood, she said, has been “pure gift.”

“Every day I am blessed to be with these wisdom figures in the Society. I am forever changed, I know, for having this experience.”

Sister Canty, a musician, likens Sister Wall’s contributions to having a fine cellist join an orchestra that was doing well, but could truly excel with the additional artist. “She has so much expertise, and she is someone I enjoy working with,” Sister Canty said. “It’s been fabulous.” ❖

Photo: Diana Wall, RSCJ

Treasure Shared

By Mary Frohlich, RSCJ



The number of Religious of the Sacred Heart may be shrinking, yet the number of people attracted to the spirituality of Madeleine Sophie Barat and her “little Society” keeps on expanding.

Throughout the United States and world today, the Catholic laity and other Christians are eager for resources, spiritual direction and formation that will help them deepen their life with God and one another. In the case of the “Sacred Heart family” – the sisters, Sacred Heart Associates, people who work in Sacred Heart schools or other Society ministries, alumnae/i and students of Sacred Heart schools, friends and colleagues of sisters or Associates, and others who have encountered the Society’s spirituality – we know that, in our experience of the Society’s spirituality, we have discovered something precious and want it to shape our own hearts ever more deeply.

Two years ago, the RSCJ of the U.S. Province held an assembly to set direction for the future. Several proposals for developing and sharing our spirituality were affirmed. **We are sure of two things: first, that our spirituality is of great value and calls out to be shared; second, that new language and new media must be developed if we are to offer our spirituality effectively to the people of the twenty-first century.** Here, we would like to share what is moving forward in this regard, and invite readers of *Heart* to offer input on what may be most helpful in these projects.

Treasures old and new

The mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart, as set forth in our Constitutions, is “to make known the love of the heart of God.” From the first days of the Society of the Sacred Heart until today, the Sacred Heart way has been to live deeply rooted in intimate relationship with God and to share that relationship with others by commitment to building friendships, communities and institutions that sparkle with love. This foundation is an “old” spirituality in the best sense of the term, for love, prayer, and commitment are surely perennial values in any era.

Yet in so many ways, the world today is vastly different from the world of early nineteenth-century France in which Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat founded the Society. For many, the language and imagery traditionally associated with the devotion to the Sacred Heart is more of an obstacle than an inspiration. How do we best speak of “the love of the

Heart of God” in a world connected everywhere by Wi-Fi and Internet, constantly tweaked by technological innovation, and known to be a vast network of evolving species and ecosystems? Fresh images, spiritual practices, and ways of living community are already beginning to emerge organically from within this radically changed world; yet we are only at the beginning of being able to claim them in a way that is authentic both to our traditions and to our potential future.

Sharing face-to-face

New life emerges when life is shared. Some initiatives for sharing Sacred Heart spirituality in fresh ways are already in progress. Last summer a “Spirituality Seminar” led by Religious of the Sacred Heart was held at Kenwood in Albany, New York. This summer a similar seminar will take place July 26-30 at St. Mary’s College in Notre Dame, Indiana. (See page 4 for more information.) Also, in many of the areas around the country where RSCJ live, the sisters are inviting others to share times of prayer and reflection with them. (If you are interested in participating in something like this, contact the RSCJ in your area to find out what they are doing in this regard. If nothing has been started yet, your expressions of interest may stimulate new efforts.)

In another new initiative, a group of RSCJ have been meeting by telephone, through conference calls, to develop ways to share the Society’s spirituality via the Internet and production of CDs, DVDs and PowerPoint, as well as through more traditional printed media. Not everything needs to be reinvented. We have many excellent resources already in the form of books, articles, and lectures that beg to be distributed more widely. For example, we hope that two books, the recently published *Southward Ho!*, a collection of essays about the Society’s pioneer forays into

Latin America in the nineteenth century, edited by Marie Louise Martinez, RSCJ, and *Philippine Duchesne, a Woman with the Poor*, an excellent biography of Philippine Duchesne by Catherine Mooney, can be reprinted and offered for sale at a modest price. Essays and pictures from past events, such as the Society’s bicentennial or recorded retreats, might be distributed on DVDs.

This group is also planning to develop a website (actually a sub-page of the present Province website, www.rscj.org) that will give access to a variety of resources, such as essays from two former publications of the province, the *RSCJ Journal* and *Occasional Papers*, or current essays, reflections or prayers being written by RSCJ or others. Some materials of this type are already presented on the U.S. Province website, but the hope is to expand and coordinate the offerings more effectively. The group will also post an annotated bibliography to let people know what Society materials are already available, and where to find them.

Finally, some RSCJ and Associates are at work to foster development of new resources. We hope that some original research on topics in RSCJ history and spirituality will emerge.

An invitation

If you are a reader of *Heart*, you are already among the friends and supporters of the Society of the Sacred Heart, and you already know something about our spirituality. We would like to invite your help by asking for your thoughts on what we can offer you in other venues to further enhance your spiritual journey. For example, if any of the initiatives described in the paragraphs above are of particular interest to you, we would like to know. If you have other creative ideas for ways our spirituality can be offered more widely, please share those as well. If you want to join the effort in some more



active way, such as by writing, working on a website or media presentation, or sponsoring a particular project, let us know that too.

Here are a few more questions to which we invite your response:

- What would most help you to deepen in Sacred Heart spirituality?
- What kind of resources would you be interested in seeing on a website?
- What would you want to have available in other formats, such as print or DVDs?
- What thoughts do you have on new images, spiritual practices, or ways of living community that can “make known the love of the heart of God” in today’s world?

Please send your responses to Mary Frohlich, RSCJ, at mfrohlich@rscj.org, or to Mary Frohlich, RSCJ, Society Spirituality Project, 5142 South Blackstone Avenue, Chicago, IL 60615.

By many working together, we hope that even as the number of RSCJ declines, the Society’s mission will put down new roots and deeper roots and produce a great harvest of love. ✚

Sister Frohlich is associate professor at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Her essay “Thérèse of Lisieux and the Sacred Heart” appeared in the Winter 2004 issue of Heart.

Multi-layered Malta

Text and photos by Elizabeth Shearman, RSCJ

“For a number of days both the sun and the stars were invisible and the storm raged unabated until at last we gave up all hope of surviving. ...Then, when they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among the men. “Friends,” he said ... I ask you not to give way to despair. There will be no loss of life at all, only of the ship.” ... Once we had come safely through, we discovered that the island was called Malta. The inhabitants treated us with unusual kindness. They made us all welcome by a huge fire because it had started to rain and the weather was cold.” (Acts of the Apostles 27: 20-22, and 28, 1-2)



Despite Malta's identification with Saint Paul, its known history stretches back many millennia from his visit. The country, an archipelago of three islands situated at a crossroad between Europe and Africa, is replete with underground temples and sanctuaries dating back to the Stone Age, predating Stonehenge and the great pyramids of Egypt. The country's recorded history probably begins with the Phoenicians who came about 1450 B.C., followed by the Carthaginians about 900 years later. Another 700 years, and Malta became part of the Roman Empire. The country fell to the Arabs in 870 A.D., who left their mark on the Maltese language, then to the Normans in 1090 and to the Spaniards in 1282. At this stage Malta entered a period of being passed from the hands of one owner to the other, depending on who received it as a dowry.

The Knights of Malta (also known as the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem) became the keepers of Malta in 1530. These defenders of Christianity in the eastern Mediterranean,

As I write this on the tenth of February, 2006, it is the Feast of the Shipwreck of Saint Paul in Malta, a fitting day to give an account of this small nation where the Society of the Sacred Heart set down roots more than a century ago, and where I have been privileged for the past three years to oversee the physical, material and spiritual welfare of our elderly sisters at Tal-Virtu, Rabat, in a former teacher training college once operated by the Society. This feast is a national holiday in Malta, where, as a sign of a great devotion to Saint Paul, many people are named Paul or Pauline or variations of those names. Our parish church in the village of Rabat, built over the cave believed to have Paul's dwelling after the shipwreck, is named for him.

In his three months here, Saint Paul spread the Christian faith, planting it deep into the souls of the inhabitants. Through twenty centuries and fierce battles, this faith has sustained the Maltese in turbulent times. As they clung to the rock, which is Malta, they clung to their faith.



Fishing boats dot the picturesque harbor of Marsaxlokk, Malta's largest fishing village and one of its oldest ports.



Maltese and tourists enjoy the country's numerous parish feasts.

driven first from the Holy Land and then from the Greek island of Rhodes, provided prosperity and stability as Malta entered into the most glorious period of its history. In 1565 the Ottoman Turks attempted to invade Malta in what is known as the "Great Siege." The Knights and stalwart Maltese triumphed, saving themselves and Europe from the Ottoman Turks.

In 1798 the Knights abandoned Malta into the hands of the French. Two years later the Maltese managed to free themselves from the French and asked the British to adopt them as a

colony. Malta remained a British colony until 1964, when it became a sovereign nation within the Commonwealth. In 1974 Malta became an independent republic, and in 2003 the country received full membership in the European Union.

Positioned as a stepping-stone to Europe, Malta played a part in both the First and Second World Wars by providing hospital facilities for the Allies. During heavy bombing in World War II, the Maltese again stood firm. It was said of this tiny nation, "Malta... alone but unafraid, one tiny flame in the darkness."

Magnificent view

When the Religious of the Sacred Heart arrived in 1903, Malta was under British control. Religious orders were being repressed in France by the government of the Third Republic, and Reverend Mother Digby was determined to open a new house for each one closed in France. Three RSCJ arrived in January – Reverend Mother Stuart, Superior Vicar at Roehampton; Reverend Mother de Loe, Superior Vicar in Italy; and Reverend Mother Helen Rumbold from Hammersmith – seeking possibilities for a foundation, extending the vicariate of England. Seven founders from six nationalities with no common language arrived in August and began a small school at Villa Portelli. The Rosary School, a school for poor children, opened the following year. Three years later, the community and schools moved to property in nearby St. Julian's.

During the two world wars, the Sacred Heart convent in Malta became a haven for those seeking friendship and spiritual help. Many soldiers and sailors requested religious instruction or returned to the practice of their faith.

In 1944, the Society was asked to train teachers for the country, and classes were established in rooms borrowed from the boarding school. Later, the Mater Admirabilis Training College moved to a new facility in Tal-Virtu. It closed in 1973, when the government of Malta took over the training. The property in Tal-Virtu sat vacant for four years until the Church took it over for a diocesan seminary and boys' school. The Society continues to occupy the convent section as an infirmary for our sick and elderly religious.

At present, there are twenty-nine RSCJ in Malta sixteen of whom are at Tal-Virtu. Others live in four communities and are engaged in various ministries, including retreat, library and parish work, counseling and visiting the sick. The school

continued



Sister Shearman will soon return to the United States filled with memories of Malta and its people.

Wayside chapels dot the landscape of Malta, which dates its strong Christian heritage to Saint Paul's shipwreck on the island's coast.

at St. Julian's, for one thousand girls between five and seventeen, is a member of the Irish Network of Sacred Heart Schools and under lay administration.

The view from Tal-Virtu is magnificent. On the western side of the Island, at the highest point in Malta, it affords a panoramic eastern view to the capital, the ancient walled city of Valletta, and to Sliema and St. Julian's with the sea in the background. To the north is St. Paul's Bay and to the south the colorful fishing village of Marsaxlokk.

Near Rabat is Malta's ancient capital of Mdina. One of the few remaining medieval and Renaissance towns in existence, it is built high on a plateau, The local farmers fields are spread out over the valley, cordoned off by handmade stone walls.

Greatest Treasure

Malta's surprises include prehistoric temples and sanctuaries, numerous catacombs, and small centuries-old wayside chapels, some still in use, that dot the landscape. Ancient artifacts abound. In busy Valletta, where Malta's capital was moved after the Great Siege, there are palaces, magnificent churches and massive fortifications erected by the Knights. The Upper Barracca, originally the private gardens of the Knights, offers a breathtaking view of the Grand Harbour. Surrounding everything is the sea, its deep blue giving way to lighter hues as it meets the sandy beaches.

Despite its location in the Mediterranean, at the tip of Africa just south of Sicily, Malta is not warm year-round. The winter season, as the shipwrecked Saint Paul noted, can be unpleasantly cold and damp, as can the interiors of buildings, often made of local rock and devoid of central heating. Spring, though, brings wonderful weather and results of winter rains: lush green fields, some covered with mantles of flowers in yellow and red. Lilies grow in all sorts of gardens. (See cover photo.) Hot, dry summers bring village parish feasts, enthusiastically celebrated with fireworks, processions and food.

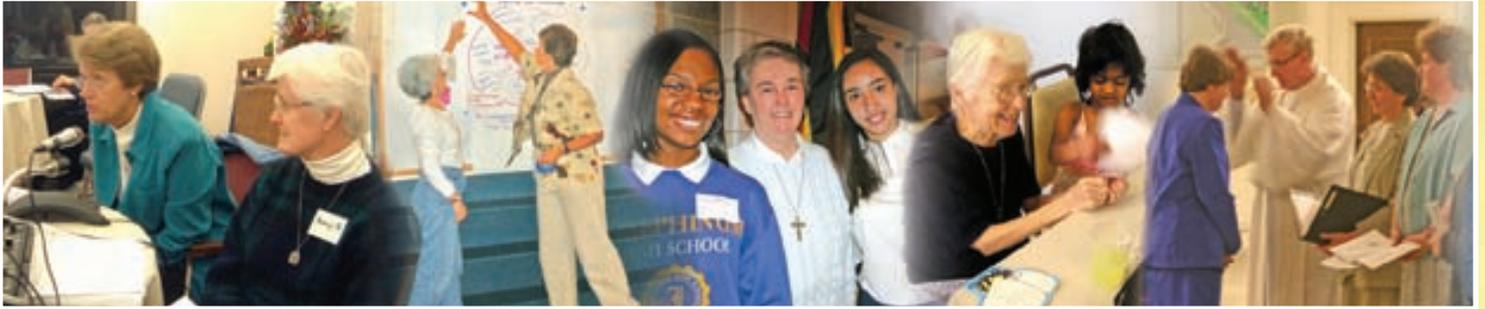
Of Malta's many treasures, I have found the greatest treasure to be its people. Today, the Maltese are as Saint Paul found them nearly two thousand years ago: warm, welcoming and, for the most part, deeply religious.

As I return home in June, to the United States, and to Albany, New York, I, like Saint Paul, will be marked by my time in Malta and will carry its sights and its people forever in my heart. ✦

Before her appointment as superior of the communities in Malta, Sister Shearman worked for twelve years with elderly RSCJ at Kenwood Convent in Albany and established an art program there. Her photo of a lily growing in Malta appears on the cover of this magazine. The history of the Society of the Sacred Heart was paraphrased from the forthcoming book History of the Society of the Sacred Heart in Malta by Pauline Curmi, RSCJ. It is due to be published this summer.

Join us in mission

Help us make God's love visible in the heart of the world



How?

VOCATIONS

If you are interested in membership in the Society, please contact
Nancy Koke, RSCJ, Director of Vocation Ministry, vocations@rscj.org

ASSOCIATES

If you would like to learn about the Sacred Heart Associates program for men and women
who want to share in the mission and charism of the Society, please e-mail

Anne Byrne, RSCJ, at abyrne@rscj.org

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Please consider including the Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province,
in your estate plan or your will. For more information, e-mail

Shirley Miller, RSCJ, at smiller@rscj.org



Esperanza Jasso, RSCJ, empowers California's new immigrants with English and parenting skills. It's all part of their **Pilgrimage to Mecca.**



Aspiring lawyer Dawn Banks is building a strong educational foundation as a student at **Jo on the Go.**



Elizabeth Shearman, RSCJ, ending a three-year sojourn abroad, has discovered that ancient structures abound in **Multi-Layered Malta.**



Kathleen Conan, U.S. provincial, shares a moment with Teresa Kent, one of **Kenwood's Pioneers.**

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