

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.

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Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary
English Speaking Provinces

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UNRAVELLING THE MYSTERY OF "MYSTERY"

by Joanne Safian, RSHM

TARRYTOWN, NY. Reading a mystery . . . mystery of our faith. . . mystery ingredient . . . mystery guest . . . it's a mystery to me . . . mysteries of the Rosary . . . medieval Mystery Play. . . Over the centuries, the word "mystery" has come to be used in many religious and secular contexts. We also speak of "mystical experiences" and people whom we call "mystics."

An exploration of the etymology of "mystery" reveals some interesting common threads, however. The word itself comes from the classical Greek μυστηριον (mysterion) meaning "secret rite or doctrine" which in turn is from μυστε (mystes) "one who has been initiated," and that from μυειν (myein), "to close, shut," perhaps referring to closing the lips in secrecy or the eyes, since only the initiates were allowed to see the sacred rites of the ancient Greek religion.

The Greek word was used in the Septuagint for "secret counsel of God," translated in the Vulgate as "sacramentum."

Eventually, the Greek became the Latin "mysterium," the old French "mistere" and Anglo French "misterie." By the early 14th century, the theological sense connoted a religious truth received by divine revelation.

The non-theological use in English of something secret or hidden dates from the 14th century.

Following another strand of origin, one finds "mystery" to refer to a handicraft, or trade, or art. The word was used this way in late 14th century Middle English, coming from medieval Latin "misterium" which is a contraction of "mysterium" (mystery) and "ministerium" meaning "service, occupation, office, ministry." This combination of roots leads us to the medieval Mystery Plays or Mystery Cycles which were plays on religious subjects staged by

craft guilds. The Oberammagau Passion Play remains to this day a famous example of the genre.

I love the study of words and, in this investigation, I was fascinated to discover a connection between "mystery" and "ministry." How appropriate!■



ALL IS ONE AND ALL BELONG

by Mary Leah Plante, RSHM

LOS ANGELES, CA. Mystery, surprise, the only words that surface when I reflect on religion and science and an unfolding cosmos. I think when the practitioners of religion and science are open, the cosmos teaches.

Science seems to have learned that even though our time is organized in days, months and years and divided into seconds, minutes, and hours; the past, present and future are all together in our every now.

Even though our liturgical seasons take a year to experience, we live the meanings of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost in the moments of our every day - waiting, birthing, renewing, sharing food and ourselves, experiencing loss, "limbo" moments, rising, absence and regularly accepting our roles of building communities the gospels envision.

Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme make us aware of the

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GOD IS LIKE

From Students
Around the RSHM World

God is like the trees blowing in the smooth air. God is like a gentle kiss on the cheek. He wants us to be better people. He teaches us how to preach his message. God is us.

Emily Neunaber, Grade 3
Marymount School of New York
New York, NY

God is like light. When you need his help, he shines on you with a solution.

Joseph Menna, Grade 9
Archbishop Stepinac HS
White Plains, NY

I think God is love, joy, and hope. God is always there for me. When I'm lost, he's there; when I'm feeling bad, he's there; when I'm feeling good, he's there. I think God is my best friend.

Jordi Sanchez, age 11
Centro Corazon de Maria
Hampton Bays, NY

God is like the star on the Christmas tree—the only one that matters.

Christian Borselino, Grade 6
Istituto Marymount
Rome, Italy

God is like...a UFO. People say they see them all the time, but we never know for sure if we are the crazy ones for doubting, or they are the crazy ones for believing

Lauren Hauck, Grade 12
Marymount High School
Los Angeles, CA

God is like a cherished childhood toy, creating loving memories. Every time you think about God you are encompassed by bliss.

Tina Baffoe, Grade 12
Aquinas High School
Bronx, NY

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principles by which the cosmos lives and unfolds when they alert us to The Universe Story. I cannot be reminded enough of how Universe teaches appreciation for one's uniqueness, no-thing like any other. In fact, Brian Swimme has taught that the greatest contribution humans can make is to be different from everyone else—what fun! This self-appreciation goes hand-in-hand with complete acceptance of the individuality of others. These qualities create an openness to give and to receive and communion just happens! What a mystery; what a surprise!

Stories from the new sciences and the new theologies reveal close connections between elements invisible to the naked eye. Experiments have shown that anything once connected to any other remains connected even when separated by time, distance or death. Our own liturgy expresses this when we pray that life is not taken away; it has only changed.



Similar to the unfolding Cosmos, religion and science have the capacity to keep us involved in going ever more deeply into mystery. Their starting points may be different. Scientific approaches may follow the path of observing from the outside before moving inward in search of essence; religion seems to define and then contemplate essence from within before moving outward. Each in its own way reveals how crucial the practices of observing, of reflecting, of spiraling into one's deep to be with the Who or the What residing there. Familiarity with that LIFE within prepares us to believe that in its unfolding the Cosmos reveals all is one and all belong ■

Crystal and Carrots and Other World Moments

by Donna Cribari

*A paradox is something that
seems false and yet is true
or things that joined together
sort of puzzle me or you
like some of these:
why a rose needs thorns
or loving causes pain
and other things like:
dying means there will be life again
and why does victory need defeat?
and how come north and south can meet
and become one?
and tell me
if the sun's a star
then why is day when the sun's here
and night when the stars are?
and here's another paradox
as long as you've come this far
that is the sad and joyness of my life
were to be told it would be this
and only this:
that I have grown so slowly
up from young
and ah! so quickly into old*

OUT OF THE BLUE

by Madeleine Fitzpatrick, RSHM

LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND. Yes. Life can be a Mystery and the unexpected affords an opportunity for a gifted moment. Such offerings are out of the blue, blue sky or a deep blue-green ravine!

Little did I know, last night, that this morning would bring a special moment of mystery and beauty. I just pulled back my curtains, and there before me a winter wonderland of sunlight on snow revealed itself, here in Seafeld, Liverpool. I felt cosseted by brush strokes of silent snow, bathed in sunlight. Leafless branches on every tree etched an upward, radiant glory against the still whiteness. Each shape proudly displayed its unique form and texture, even silhouetting and deepening its variegated contours and style. Smaller shrubs, with scrawny, match-like branches, held in their slender fingers large shining clumps of snow whose roundness rested gently, seeming to extend a still, silent offering. In the distance, across the cerulean blue sky, an aeroplane, pencil-like, was heading down towards John Lennon Airport; I prayed it found a safe landing, as all other airports were closed today. A few seagulls were flying far away, and probably dipping for a catch in and out and over the river Mersey and the Irish Sea, my sea!

The scene, a wintry scene, stilled me: it made me just want to be, and to rest in this special



moment. It was an epiphany: a manifestation of a God of Beauty, and of the Beauty of God: the winter inscape of God. It surrounded me, filling me with images, thoughts and feelings that I hope will weave their way into my soul and be rooted there for always.

This morning's gift made me recall yet another moment of mystery and beauty. In 1995, I visited the Grand Canyon. This was what I might describe as the 'Mystery Tour' of my life. I remember arriving at Flagstaff from Chicago and hiring, with others, a van to take us to the Grand Canyon. When I stood at that great perimeter, I gasped at the wonder before me: I was looking down a vista of billions of years: gradients of strata, terracotta, colours merging, forming hues, tones, tints, shades and shapes that only One of Great Beauty, could bring into being. Only that Beauty, 'ever ancient ever new' (Augustine), could imagine, mix, refine, and define such magnificence. Finally, my eyes rested on the deep, blue-green ravine hewn by the Colorado River meandering silently through the rocks and depths below.

Filled with a sense of wonder and awe at the mystery realised, actualised before my eyes, my spontaneous response was a deep, inner silent 'Holy, Holy, Holy!' It was a Eucharistic moment, a moment of gratitude to the Artist and Master Sculptor of all. This was an experience never to be forgotten, fast-folded in the bedrock of my being.

Yes, indeed, life can be a mystery, an offering, a gift given as the moment presents itself, especially in the unexpected colourful chinks of light and life!■

NEXT ISSUE:

MESSAGE IN A MOVIE

MYSTERY BOOKSHELF

by Georgellen Archibald, RSHM

I am not a complicated person, so I think I might be able to solve a simple mystery—maybe!

Now that I am retired, I have the time for reading that I could not do when I was busy with full time ministry. I read mysteries because they are fun and they keep my mind alert, although I don't usually enjoy a book where the characters are so numerous and the names so complicated that I have to keep backtracking until I master them.

Mysteries also imply a sense of moral order and justice that often doesn't exist in the real world.

Mysteries are among the most popular genres for leisure reading, but within the general category are many subgenres—spy and intrigue either domestic or international, legal mysteries, police procedurals, "cozies," horror and thrillers, historical, and romantic.

I do like mysteries with some "bite." I don't like the "cozies" that are a bit too tame—the Miss Marple's of Agatha Christie or the many contemporary ones where entrepreneurial women who own bookshops or teashops or knitting shops or bakeries become involved in solving murders in small towns. I like Lisa Scottoline whose books the *New York Times* has described as "punchy, wisecracking thrillers" whose "characters are earthy, fun and self-deprecating."

I also like mysteries set in places with which I am familiar. For example, Mary Higgins Clark sometimes sets stories at the Jersey shore. I like Mary Higgins Clark's books and I admire her as a person. A Bronx girl, her father died when she was young and, after high school, she went to work. She married, but was left a young widow with five children, had to work, but wrote at her kitchen table at 5 a.m. Years later, her first success enabled her to go back to

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THE JOURNEY IS THE REWARD . . . OR IS IT?

by Anne Walsh, RSHM

BRONX, NY. It was Friday, February 26, 2010, and I was in the mood of the lyric, "My bags are packed, I'm ready to go . . . leaving on a jet plane" to participate in the closing events of the Béziers Bicentennial celebration, of the birth of Mère St. Jean. I had booked a direct flight from JFK, New York, to Charles de Gaulle, Paris, where I was spending the night in Neuilly, to connect with Sr. Ethna Egan, for our train trip to Béziers, on Sunday. On Friday afternoon, I received a recorded message from American Airlines, informing me that my flight was cancelled, due to a snow storm. This message included a phone number to call. After several invitations to "please hold" I honored my frustration and hung up the phone. Fortunately, my travel agent found me a solution which involved taking a flight from LaGuardia, New York, to Fort Worth, Texas, with a two hour stop-over and a change of planes, before departing again for de Gaulle.

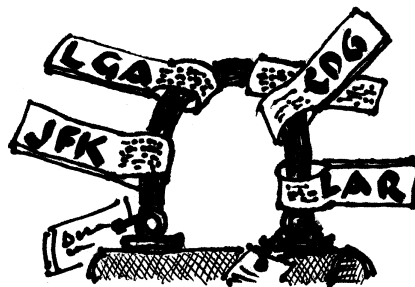
As we departed Texas, I settled into the last phase of my journey, or so I anticipated. However, as we entered the sky over de Gaulle airport, we encountered a severe storm. The plane shook fiercely as it ascended and descended abruptly through the air in an attempt to land. It was a "Nearer My God to Thee" experience which was followed with the announcement, from the captain, "This airport is closing. We are going on to Heathrow, London." Arriving, we spent forty-five minutes on the tarmac.

Now I wondered: Who is going to tell me the how and when of getting back to Paris? I signed up for the hotel where the pilots were staying so that I could get first-hand information from them regarding my need to return to Paris. I made known the importance of my being at de Gaulle train station,

by 11:00 a.m. the following morning, only to learn that we would not be leaving Heathrow before noon. In an effort to stay "in the moment," I called my brother who lives in London. We had a delightful meal and visit, without the pilots. The following hours can best be described as a state of "confident ignorance." I eventually got to Paris a day behind schedule.

Returning to the de Gaulle train station involved changing my train ticket, which found me in a very slow line, but at least did mean that escape was close at hand. No more airports, no more pilots. I received my change of ticket, went outside and hailed the first taxi driver. In doing so, I discovered that I had violated the taxi line procedure, when another driver approached and "in my face" with some indignation asked in English, "You speak French"? In such a moment of the absurd, I could only reply, "Je ne parle pas français," as I got in the initial taxi and left for Neuilly,

I was warmly welcomed by the community. In the meantime, Sr. Ethna had left for Béziers. Her prepared picnic lunch and our planned train visit now await another opportunity. The remainder of my trip allowed me time to put my experience in perspective. Yes, the trip was stressful but the opportunity it granted me was unexpected, and now, unforgettable. Was the journey the reward? What can I say? Conversion is a slow process. ■



LIFE CAN A MYSTERY TOUR

by Catherine Bennett, RSHM

TARRYTOWN, NY. I was the sixth of seven children. When my sister Ann and I were small, my mother always said the rosary with us before we went to sleep. In August of 1938 my father had no work. He was a carpenter, a builder, and as we said our rosary, we asked our Blessed Mother to find him work. In early September, eastern Long Island where we lived had the worst hurricane of the century. So many of the homes on the ocean front were damaged that my father received lots of calls to take care of them. Mystery? This was the first mystery in my young life which I can remember. Shall I connect it with the mysteries of the rosary? I don't know, but the Blessed Mother heard our prayers. My mother always had a deep devotion to Mary and the trust she had in her during her whole life always inspired me.

I believe our whole life is a mystery tour. We never know the future, and I have found that the best way to be on the tour is to trust that God is with us at every moment. The greatest mystery I experienced in religious life was when I was 29 and was sent to Africa. I think I cried lots on the plane going over with Sr. Sabyna Schmitz. In fact, she always told others that my tears wet the side of her habit! It was difficult at first as I had never left the U.S. and now here I was in a totally different culture. But once I got used to the new system of education, it was so interesting to be in Africa. I loved meeting the three or four different cultures we encountered. The people, the climate, the scenery, the seasons, the vegetation, the animals, and so many other things were part of the 'mystery tour. We had left New York in the snow and arrived in the heat of the southern hemisphere. During my first Biology class, I asked the students what the season was. I was

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A BLESSING IN DISGUISE

by Breda Galavan, RSHM

TARRYTOWN, NY. Life is full of surprises. In October 2010, I was working at Archbishop Stepinac High School. One week later I was hardly able to walk. X-rays revealed a fracture on my left thigh and shifting of my implant. Both knees were replaced twice since 1997 and now this? To avoid immediate surgery I was advised to rest the leg for 6-8 weeks. That meant returning to work was over for the duration. The kindness and understanding of the Provincial Council softened the blow as they encouraged me to allow the healing to begin and enjoy my jubilee year. It was a blessing in disguise, affording a memorable Golden year.

With my fracture not quite healed, I sought out a new ministry. In late June I submitted my resume to Education First (EF), conveniently located on the campus of what had been Marymount College, Tarrytown. In a subsequent interview, the Director indicated that my international experiences, educational background, and computer degree would be a good match for the school. I was assigned as assistant to the principal of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program for 11th and 12th graders who are motivated and intellectually gifted students from around the world. The other aspects of EF programs—pre-IB, the

language school, and the college prep programs—bring the total to 900+ students on campus.

The IB program is in its infancy at Tarrytown, so each day I am working in uncharted waters full of daily surprises. On my very first day I was asked to prepare a very extensive PowerPoint presentation for the principal who was attending an IB convention in Indonesia the following week. The presentation was no problem, but the research entailed many days and nights searching for IB facts, figures, and supporting materials for her to attract new IB clients from Asia. Next came the task of registering every IB student. I had to ensure that each student had chosen six courses, Theory of Knowledge and an Extended Essay. Then came the letters of recommendation for seniors. The daily routine also includes assigning coverage for absent teachers, entering data, and generating all kinds of reports for teachers and administration. I also spent a month living in Gerard Hall as security contact for the 10 students who remained over Christmas vacation between Dec 3 and Jan 3.

The surprises still continue each day. I feel truly blessed to be in this vibrant ministry and in such an idyllic location so dear to all of us in the Eastern American Province. ■



GOD IS LIKE

From Students
Around the RSHM World

God is like a way for humans to find belief in themselves and the world when they cannot find this belief on their own.

Josephine Shetty, Grade 12
Marymount High School
Los Angeles, CA

God is like all of the people you love combined into one.

Sarah Dolan, Grade 8
Marymount School of New York
New York, NY

God is like a hand warmer. Everyone can see it, but only you can feel its warmth.

Joseph Menna, Grade 9
Archbishop Stepinac H S
White Plains, NY

God is the best friend anyone could have. You can take all your cares to him and never worry about being judged. He said, "Cast your cares upon me" because I care for you.

Marci Dillon, Grade 12
Aquinas High School
Bronx, NY

For me God is the spirit of life, God is endless love, God is somebody who keeps my hands and guides me on the right way. God is somebody who gives me strength and courage, who gives me faith and happiness.

Ida Cosentino, Grade 11
Marymount International School
London, England

God is like a source of water in a desert, a pen for a writer, a heart for lovers and a father for children. He is the light that lights up our lives.

Valentina Di Gianvito, Grade 7
Istituto Marymount
Rome, Italy

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surprised that they didn't answer right away. Finally, one girl said, "I think it is the wet season." This was quite a surprise as I was used to the four seasons. I spent 18 blessed years there. I learned so much of the mystery of life from being with people of different cultures who had so much to teach me. In 2000, I was asked to go to England; my experience in Africa prepared me well to be open to the many cultures in our school in London.

Life continues to be a mystery tour because at my age, the major part of the mystery tour will be the last part of my journey, whenever

that comes: "...I seem to be in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone." (T. Merton) ■

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school to earn her B.A. from Fordham University. She has always been an active Catholic, and also involved in literacy programs. She remarried in the 1990's and lives in New Jersey.

Some mysteries today are quite salacious. I presume this is a technique to sell the book. I don't reject these but do gloss over the risque

parts to get to the meat of the plot.

Mystery readers tend to find one another and share books. We know what one another likes, so when I receive a book from one of these friends, I assume I will like it. No need for a formal book club and no mystery either—casual conversations reveal who is a kindred spirit and we instantly bond over the books. ■

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