The MAST Journal

Multi-Cultural Identity and Multi-Lingual Reality

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Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends of Mercy,

This dual-language issue is a first for The MAST Journal, an accomplishment coordinated by Katherine Doyle, R.S.M., and supported by a grant from the St. Louis Regional community. We acknowledge that Mercies speak many more languages than we represent here. The Spanish text, provided by the Mexican American Cultural Center in Texas, respectfully mediates the different idioms of Spanish-speaking populations. We are never finished with acknowledging our multi-cultural diversity.

Thus, I want to speak here about another dual-language culture which does not lend itself so easily to translation. This is our mother-tongue “Compassion” which does not naturally correspond to “Justice.” Comfort and habit with Compassion can actually prevent us from speaking Justice, cutting us off from our multi-cultural reality. This is not a personal fault, but only an effect of speaking a single language rather than both regularly.

Compassion is a wonderful family language. It provides words to respect each other, promise each other affection within community, celebrate personal successes, sympathize with sorrows, console one another in time of trouble, treasure confidences. With Compassion, we regard one another in light of our histories, talents, and possibilities rather than memorialize foibles or mistakes. Compassion gives priority to spiritual growth, protects time for retreats, encourages opportunities for personal healing, inspires professional development. It uses poetry, journaling, and processing for affirming each person’s inner voice. Compassion labors unceasingly to foster primary loyalties and to preserve an individual’s sense of harmony with God and others. Conflicts are a sign that a person needs reflection to recover the rich source of peace within, and such a task is each person’s sacred responsibility. The path to external social change begins with conversion of each person’s heart. Compassion provides space for each member to circle the labyrinth back into her spiritual center to find forgiveness and freedom. As we speak Compassion person to person, we translate its culture of respect, listening and response into the world of action through our ministries.

Justice cannot really be translated into Compassion. It has a different culture, intonation and grammar. Justice is not a calming, reassuring, familial language like Compassion. Justice is publicized, non-intimate speech that focuses on what Compassion instinctively avoids. Justice protests the injury of resentful ill-will, discrimination, privilege-protecting institutional myths and policies, and woman-damaging traditions. The basic grammar of Justice is political, analytical, questioning, interrupting, and demanding. Its semiotics is, “I have come to bring fire upon the earth.” Justice is not the comforting, friendly language of counseling, spiritual direction, or prayer. Justice cries out against the status quo and beats against the door for change because too many people have gotten hurt for too long. Justice doesn’t search for the shadow in dream-drenched Jungian analysis to balance the psyche. It complains to a lawyer. Justice doesn’t send a person to a psychologist to correct what’s wrong. It sees what’s wrong with the system, and criticizes its protectors who bury their heads in the sand, craving peace instead of truth. Justice refuses to blame people for their suffering, and is the first to lay responsibility at the door of victimizers, not the victims.

The Institute Direction Statement requires us to become bilingual. This doesn’t happen through translation. Compassion doesn’t equal Justice. We speak Compassion, though we commit ourselves to systemic change. We will not grasp what systemic change entails until we speak fluent Justice, not pidgin-Justice.

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.
One Small Step,  
One New Moment  
The Editor’s Reflections

Katherine Doyle, R.S.M.

It isn’t often that one is graced with being part of a new moment. It is privilege and challenge, blessing and learning. When the MAST membership, at its meeting just before our Institute Chapter last year, chose to devote the coming journal to address the theme of multiculturalism, we had not yet experienced the richness of our cultural diversity expressed throughout the Chapter or heard the challenge of Maria Elena Gonzales and Jane Hotstream. We only knew that Mercy has many faces and speaks many languages.

As theologians and teachers of spirituality, the MAST membership is keenly aware that wisdom begins in human experience. The meaning of that experience is interpreted through many screens. We bring to it our familial experience and learnings from our shared Mercy life as well as the interpretive screen of our cultural heritage. Those present can never forget that moment in our Dayton Chapter when Sister Caritas from Belize asked us to “cover the bread.” Her plea to reverence what was for her a symbol of life itself challenged our understanding and expanded our vision. The installation ritual of our Third Institute Chapter proclaimed our reality in dance, symbol, gesture, and song. The non-verbals of each culture told us what leadership means, what breath of scope it holds.

As theologians and teachers of spirituality, the MAST membership is keenly aware that wisdom begins in human experience.
In this edition of MAST, we have made just a little step in expanding our understanding. We were blessed to have a variety of voices reflecting upon culture and Mercy life. Marian Arroyo provides us a window into the Chamorro culture and its unique story. Bernadette Little asks us to reflect upon what it means when we are a combination of cultures, each intertwining and shaping our values and attitudes. What happens to a people when outside forces impose values and practices upon them to the detriment of indigenous cultural values and priorities?

Judy Soares’s reflection upon Hagar as a biblical model for black women places the experience of cultural marginalization in a womenist context. Pat Ryan invites us to actively seek to expand our understanding through poetry and literature. Using current novels and poems, Pat graphically shows how cultural exploration can be done right in one’s own room.

In speaking with our sisters in South America, it was clear that writing and talking about multiculturalism is not sufficient.

Our fifth article is a reprint of an address given by Sister Maria Elena González on restructuring parish communities. The Institute Action Plan calls all of us to be more welcoming of cultural diversity, more inviting of women from many cultures and backgrounds. Maria Elena speaks to this reality in the context of parish, but the norms and principles articulated are those which apply to religious community as well.

In speaking with our sisters in South America, it was clear that writing and talking about multiculturalism is not sufficient. What we were about had to be made real by a commitment to open this reflection and conversation to all the Institute by providing the articles in both English and Spanish. Maria Elena speaks to this reality in the context of the parroquia pero las normas y principios articulados se pueden aplicar tambien a una comunidad religiosa.

Al hablar con nuestras hermanas en América del Sur, es evidente que el escribir y conversar sobre el multiculturalismo no es suficiente. Lo que estábamos tratando hay que hacerlo realidad con el compromiso de proporcionar esta reflexión y conversación a todo el Instituto teniendo los artículos tanto en inglés como en español. Estamos muy agradecidas a la Comunidad regional de San Louis por darnos los fondos para la publicación de esta edición bilingüe de MAST. Sin su ayuda y apoyo este esfuerzo no hubiera sido posible.

La realidad multicultural no está inmune a la realidad internacional. Había sido nuestra esperanza el incluir dos artículos más, escritos por nuestras hermanas teólogas de América Central y del Sur. Quizás la mejor manera de ilustrar esta falta que existe entre la realidad de los países ricos del mundo y los países económicamente oprimidos de la tierra es que las necesidades urgentes del pueblo no dan oportunidad a nuestras escritoras para terminar su tarea. Como Cecilia Heduan lo expresó en una carta a la editora en abril de este año: «No tenemos esperanza de ningún cambio. Y entonces ¿cómo mantener la esperanza viva? Esto hace una llamada a
Multicultural reality is not immune to the realities of internationality. It had been our hope to include two articles by our Sister theologians in Central and South America. Perhaps the best way to illustrate the gap that exists between the reality of the affluent countries of the world and the economically oppressed countries of the earth is that the pressing needs of the people provided no opportunity for our writers to complete their task. As Cecilia Heduan wrote in a letter to the editor in April of this year, “We have no hopes of any change. And then how to keep hope alive? This calls to our Mercy being and creativity, witnessing and commitment... So... we keep on going in spite of tiredness and evident signs of despair in our people.”

Such a reality gives birth to its own understanding and vision. It is vital for the Institute as a whole to hear the message of that vision. It contains within it the voice of challenge and radical commitment to Gospel values. Sister Julie Matthews of Guyana, in an address to Regional Leadership Teams and Designated Leaders gathered in Laredo in January, 1999, put passion and face to that message. She said:

I want to see, experience, taste, touch and share life with women who truly love God, who have a passionate relationship with God, who know God’s tremendous love, who experience God’s beauty, companionship, presence, attraction and seduction in their lives. This experience brings us, brings me, to the point where “I can do no other.” My only choice is to choose God because “only in God could I be truly fulfilled.”

I do not worry too much about membership. I worry about our older sisters who will die soon. I worry because they have witnessed and continue to witness, to this total commitment to God. We may knock the phrase “the will of God” (some of it is not good), but, under all that I see women who kept their eyes on God. Women who would go anywhere, endure all hardships because they had and have a strong conviction that God would sustain them. Sometimes, I am sorry to say, I do not see this in our sisters in their late forties, fifties, and sixties. Do not get me wrong. I see good women, women who are faithful to ministry, justice, and to the Sisters of Mercy.

I listened yesterday to some of the reasons why people would not choose leadership. These were all valid and important reasons, but one struck me: “When one is finished with leadership, one would not be marketable—only direct service afterwards.” I understand that. It is a reality, but a part of me screamed “so what?” We gave our lives to God and God will provide at that time. I would like to share nuestro ser y creatividad de la Merced, para dar testimonio y estar comprometidas. Por lo tanto, seguimos adelante a pesar del cansancio y de los signos evidentes de la desesperación en nuestro pueblo».

De tal realidad tiene su propio conocimiento y visión. Es vital para el Instituto, en su totalidad, escuchar el mensaje de esa visión. Contiene en sí la voz del desafío y de un compromiso radical con los valores evangélicos. La Hna. Julie Matthews de Guyana en una conferencia a los Equipos de liderazgo regional y a algunos líderes reunidos en Laredo, en enero de 1999, puso pasión y rostro a ese mensaje. Dijo:

Quiero ver, sentir, saborear, tocar y compartir la vida con mujeres que verdaderamente aman a Dios, que tienen una relación apasionada con Dios, que conocen el tremendo amor de Dios, que sienten la belleza de Dios, gozan de su compañía, de su presencia y se ven atrapadas y seducidas en su vida. Esta experiencia nos dice, me lleva, al punto donde «no puedo hacer otra cosa». Mi única decisión es escoger a Dios porque «sólo en Dios podría yo ser verdaderamente realizada».

No me preocupo demasiado por los miembros. Me preocupo por nuestras hermanas mayores que pronto morirán. Me preocupo porque han dado testimonio, y lo siguen dando, de esa entrega total a Dios. Podremos usar demasiado la frase «es la voluntad de Dios» (algo de eso no es bueno), pero, en todo lo que veo, esas mujeres mantienen sus ojos fijos en Dios. Son mujeres que irán a cualquier lugar, sopor­tarán todas las dificultades porque tuvieron y tienen la fuerte convicción de que Dios las sostendrá. Algunas veces, me da pena decirlo, no veo esto en nuestras hermanas que tienen cuarenta, cincuenta y sesenta años. No me lo tomen a mal, veo a buenas mujeres, a mujeres que son fieles a su apostolado, a la justicia y a las Hermanas de la Merced.

Escuché ayer algunas de las razones por las cuales algunas no escogerían el liderazgo. Fueron todas razones válidas e importantes, pero una me llamó la atención: «Cuando uno termina de estar en el liderazgo, ya no es una persona a quien se puede emplear en su profesión—sólo servicio directo des­pués de eso». Lo comprendo. Es una realidad, pero una parte de mí grita ¿y qué?. Le dimos nuestra vida a Dios y Dios proveerá en esa hora.

Me gustaría compartir dos hechos, dos áreas de mi vida en este momento, que pueden ser una lucha algunas veces pero que me llaman a un nivel más profundo de compromiso. Decido quedarme en Gu­yana sabiendo que de alguna manera nunca seré capaz de sentirme realizada intelectualmente. No tenemos todos los equipos de mucho poder ni a los profesionales que pueden dar muy buen servicio.
two events, two areas in my life right now, that can be a struggle at times but that call me to a deeper level of commitment. I choose to stay in Guyana knowing that in some ways I will never be able to be intellectually fulfilled. We do not have all the high powered teams and professionals who can give very good service. Yet, in the letting go of those desires I find a greater sense of fulfillment. Secondly, when the sisters asked me to be Regional Coordinator, I said I was too young and I still think that I am too young. But I still said yes (again knowing that my “career” will change course for now) because I believe that if God is calling me to leadership right now, I will get the graces that I need to see me through. In any case at the end of the four years, I may not even want to do what I am holding on to.

I am sometimes disillusioned when I hear that we find community deadening; when we do not want to pray together, share conversations and our lives together. People say that young people come from such dysfunctional families that they want structure and community. Yes, it is true. Although we come already experiencing God’s mercy in our lives, we need you to model that to us. We need you to give us roots in who and what is a Sister of Mercy. We do see that in ministry. When we come, you invite us to walk with you but many times you are never there. We are accused of being conservative, of wanting to take you back to the old days. My sisters, we do not know pre-Vatican II, so there is no need for fear; we cannot take you back. We are just asking if together we can create something new.

If this issue of MAST is to bear fruit in our lives and ministry, perhaps it is by opening our eyes to see beyond our limited experience. Julie’s challenge is at the heart of our future. Can we create something new, something that witnesses to a people of one heart, many cultures. If one more person commits herself to working for unity for all peoples or writes one more letter giving voice to the concerns of those who have no voice, it will have accomplished its hope.

Si este número de MAST va a tener fruto en nuestra vida y apostolado, quizás será porque nos abre los ojos para ver más allá de nuestra experiencia limitada. El desafío de Julie está en el corazón de nuestro futuro. ¿Podemos crear algo nuevo, algo que dé testimonio de ser de muchas culturas pero con un solo corazón? Si una persona más se compromete a trabajar por la unidad de todos los pueblos o escribe una carta más expresando las inquietudes de aquellos que no tienen voz, habrá cumplido lo que se esperaba.
The Experience and Practice of Faith by the Chamorro People in Guam

Marian Thérèse Arroyo, R.S.M.

Entering the twenty-first century gives pause to reflect on the ways the Chamorro people in Guam have practiced their faith through several millennia of developing a civilization. This article will highlight the origins of the ancient Chamorros and their forms of worship, the impact of Christianity when contact with the western world was thrust upon them, and the continual evolution of their religious understanding.

Until recently, information about the origins of the Chamorro people has been limited. Archeological research in the past fifty years has offered some light to the mysteries of their origins buried in centuries upon centuries of a much silenced history.

Geography

Guam (originally Guahan: “we have in abundance”), the largest of the fifteen volcanic and raised islands that make up the Mariana Islands, is located within the northernmost region of Micronesia in the Pacific Ocean. This archipelago nestles at the edge of the Philippine plate that together with the Pacific plate forms the Marianas Trench, the deepest marine trough in the world. The Micronesia Islands also include the Caroline, Marshall, and Kiribati archipelagos scattered over millions of square kilometers of ocean.

The first settlements in Guam appear to have resulted from the greatest period of mass migrations that began around 2,000 BC and ended by 500 AD. Ethnolinguistic and anthropological studies show that the first settlers most probably migrated from Island Southeast Asia.

The first contact with the Europeans, led by Ferdinand Magellan, was on March 6, 1521. Magellan initially named the archipelago, Islas de las Velas Latinas (Island of Lateen Sails) for the triangular shape of the sails of their fast moving outrigger ca-

La experiencia y la práctica de la fe en el pueblo Chamorro de Guam

Entrar al siglo XXI nos brinda una pausa para reflexionar sobre las maneras como el pueblo Chamorro de Guam ha practicado su fe a través de varios milenios de una civilización en desarrollo. Este artículo resaltará los orígenes de los antiguos Chamorro y sus formas de culto, el impacto del cristianismo que se les impuso al contacto con el mundo occidental y la continua evolución de su comprensión religiosa.

Hasta recientemente, la información sobre los orígenes del pueblo Chamorro ha sido muy limitada. La investigación arqueológica de los últimos cincuenta años ha ofrecido algo de luz sobre los misterios de sus orígenes sepultados bajo siglos y siglos de mucha historia silenciada.

Geografía

Guam (originariamente Guahan: «tenemos en abundancia»), la más grande de las 15 islas volcánicas que componen las Islas Marianas, está ubicada dentro de la región septentrional de Micronesia en el Océano Pacífico. Este archipiélago se encuentra al este de la plataforma marina de las Filipinas que junto con las plataformas del Pacífico forma la Fosa de las Marianas, la depresión marina más profunda del mundo. Las Islas de Micronesia también incluyen los archipiélagos de Carolinas, Marshall y Kiribati desparramados por millones de kilómetros cuadrados de océano.

Los primeros habitantes de Guam aparecieron como resultado del mayor período de migraciones masivas que empezaron alrededor de 2,000 AC y terminaron antes de 500 DC. Los estudios etnolingüísticos y antropológicos muestran que los primeros habitantes probablemente emigraron de la Isla Sureste de Asia.

El primer contacto con los europeos, encabezados por Fernando de Magallanes, fue el 6 de marzo.
noes. While replenishing his supplies, Magellan failed to compensate the natives for the provisions. The Chamorro traders therefore helped themselves to a skiff on his ship and brought it ashore. Magellan then sent a party of soldiers to shore, burned a village, killed seven men, took additional provisions and sailed off to the Philippines. He left behind a new name for the islands: Islas de los Ladrones (The Island of Thieves).4

In 1565, the Spanish formalized the acquisition of the Chamorro archipelago by claiming it under the dominion of Spain.5 In 1668, the first permanent Roman Catholic mission led by Padre Diego Luis de San Vitores was established in Agaña, Guam. San Vitores and his companions of the Society of Jesus began their mission of Christianizing the Chamorros. Padre Francisco Garcia, S.J. (1683), companion of San Vitores, observed: "I will not fail to say that although they were given the name Ladrones for the theft of a few pieces of iron which occurred on one of our ships, they do not merit the name, for all houses are left open with rarely anything missing." Padre San Vitores renamed the archipelago Islas Marianas (Mariana Islands) in devotion to the Queen of heaven and in honor of the Queen of Spain.6

The seventeenth-century Chamorros were described as a handsome and well-built people who remained in good health and lived to an advanced age of ninety or one hundred years.

The seventeenth-century Chamorros were described as a handsome and well-built people who remained in good health and lived to an advanced age of ninety or one hundred years.7 They lived in thatched houses supported by latte (stone pillars indigenous to the Marianas) and sailed finely made outrigger canoes called proas.8
Pre-Christian Beliefs and Practices

At the time of contact with the western world, the Chamorros of Guam were found to have a system of customs and beliefs that had their roots in four thousand years of pre-recorded history. The missionaries observed that they were at the center of the world and that there were neither people nor land other than their own. An ancient story of creation follows:

Puntan and his sister, Fu’uña, were born of space and had neither a father nor a mother. They existed before the sky and earth. When it was Puntan’s time to die, he instructed his sister to make a place for humans by using his chest and back to make the sky and earth, his eyes to make the sun and moon, and his eyebrows to make the rainbows. Puntan has been referred to as a god, but he is better understood as a venerated ancestor of ancient origin.9

The Chamorro ancestors, also known as taotaomo’na, were deeply revered and feared. When they died it was believed that the anite (spirits) of the ancestors remained in the midst of the living and attended to their well-being. Their skulls were protected and anointed with coconut oil. They were used to invoke the anite to action, and were used for singing thanks and praise, and for making devotional offerings and sacrifices to the anite.10

The funerary practices of the ancient Chamorros tended to be quite elaborate. When the person was at the brink of death, relatives and clan members gathered around the dying person and kept vigil. When the person died, more relatives and
friends were informed. They would bring chenchule’ (tortoise shell money or food) and relieve the close relatives of having to take care of those gathered. A basket was placed near the person’s head as an invitation to remain at home. If the person died peacefully, it was believed that the person went to paradise in the underworld. If the person died violently or with suffering, it was a sign that the ancestral spirits did not choose to protect that person from harm and would thus be cast away eternally from their land. The person was mourned for six to eight days with storytelling, singing dirges, and wailing. A techa (prayer director) led the mourners in a chanted prayer.11

The Bloodied Waters of Baptism

Christianity came with a heavy price to the Chamorros of Guam. San Vitores catechized and baptized the Chamorros in the spirit of love and respect for his people, the Marianos. He was clear about his mission, which was to “take them to heaven, for which it would be necessary for them to believe the Divine Mysteries, the Commandments of the Law of God.”12 A non-native, however, who was washed ashore from a shipwreck years earlier misled the people by saying the water of baptism was poisonous. This superstition incited clashes between some of the village maga’lahi’s (chiefs) and the missionaries, which eventually took the lives of many Chamorros, missionaries, and Padre San Vitores himself, who was martyred on April 2, 1672.13

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In his work of evangelization, San Vitores had been determined to show the natives the way to salvation through the Sacraments, Christian prayer, and religious stories put to songs in the native language, and the example of peacemaking and forgiveness. For instance, when the Chamorros fell back to their old ways of turning to their anceste using the skulls of their ancestors, San Vitores gave them pictures and images of Jesus, Mary, and the saints contando historias, cantando himnos fúnebres y gimiendo. Un techa (director de oración) guiaba a los que se lamentaban con una oración cantada.11

Las aguas ensangrentadas del bautismo

El cristianismo llegó con un alto precio a los Chamorro de Guam. San Vítores catequizaba y bautizaba a los Chamorro en un espíritu de amor y respeto para su pueblo, los Marianos. Tenía muy clara su misión, que era «llevarlos al cielo, para lo cual era necesario que ellos creyeran los Misterios divinos y los Mandamientos de la ley de Dios».12 Sin embargo, un indígena que había llegado a la orilla proveniente de un naufragio hacia varios años les enseñó mal al pueblo diciendo que el bautismo de agua envenenaba. Esta superstición causó choques entre algunos maga’lahi’s (jefes) de la aldea y los misioneros lo cual al fin les costó la vida a muchos Chamorro y misioneros incluyendo a mismo padre San Vítores que fue martirizado el 2 de abril de 1672.13

En su trabajo de evangelización, San Vítores se había empeñado en mostrar a los nativos el camino de la salvación a través de los sacramentos, de la oración cristiana, de historias religiosas cantadas en la lengua indígena y del ejemplo, haciendo las paces y brindando el perdón. Por ejemplo, cuando los Chamorro regresaban a sus usos antiguos de acudir a su costumbre de usar las calaveras de sus antepasados, San Vítores les daba estampas e imágenes de Jesús, de María y de los santos y les enseñaba cómo orar a Dios para todas sus necesidades. Cuando llegaban las lluvias en medio de una sequía extremosa después de una oración ferviente, se afirmaba su fe. En otros casos, cuando los misioneros caltaban los choques sangrientos con los Chamorro, repetidamente invitaban a los indígenas a regresar para aprender aún más sobre el modo de vivir cristianamente.14 El 2 de febrero de 1669, él fundó la primera iglesia católica en Agaña y la nombró Dulce nombre de María.

Para cuando murió San Vítores, él y sus compañeros habían bautizado a más de 50,000 personas.15 Para el censo de 1710, la población, que contaba alrededor de 100,000 habitantes en todas las Marianas en los años cuando llegó San Vítores, había disminuido a unas 4,000 personas.16 La guerra entre los Chamorro y los soldados españoles, los severos tifones, la epidemia de la viruela y las migraciones de islas vecinas casi exterminaron al pueblo...
and taught them how to pray to God for all their needs. When the rains came in the midst of extreme drought after fervent prayer, their faith was affirmed. In other instances, when the missionaries subdued the bloody clashes with the Chamorros they repeatedly invited the natives to come back to learn more about the Christian way of life. On February 2, 1669, he founded the first Catholic Church in Agaña and named it Dulce Nombre de Maria (Sweet Name of Mary).

By the time San Vitores died, he and his companions had baptized over 50,000 individuals. By the census of 1710, the population of about 100,000 people in all the Marianas at the time of San Vitores’ arrival had diminished to about 4,000 people. The war between the Chamorros and Spanish soldiers, severe typhoons, a smallpox epidemic, and migrations to neighboring islands almost exterminated the Chamorro people during the first thirty-two years the missionaries began their work there.

Through the years, liturgical celebrations and devotional prayer became an integral part of the Chamorro daily life. Churches and chapels were established at each village and became gathering places for novenas, patronal feasts, and processions. The meaning of guopot (party, celebration) around church and sacramental celebrations was also enhanced and became known as a fiesta. Festas centered on the communal celebration of patronal feasts, the sacraments and solemnities with the Mass, devotional prayer, processions, singing, story telling, dancing, and food. These religious celebrations punctuated the daily routine in Guam and became a vital part of the social, religious and economic life of the extended family.

The oldest, most priceless and revered possession of the Catholic Church in the Mariana Islands is known to be the statue of Santa Marian Kamalen (Mary of the Barracks), an image of the Mother of God and patroness of Guam and the Marianas. Based on oral history and archival evidence, the statue is thought to be at least three hundred years old. She was found afloat in the lagoon of the village of Malesso (Merizo) and is said to have emerged from the Spanish galleon, Nuestra Señora del Pilar, which sank in that proximity in 1690. It is also believed that she was sent to protect the Chamorro in the treinta y dos años en que los misioneros empezaron su trabajo allí.

A través de los años, las celebraciones litúrgicas y las devociones llegaron a ser parte integral de la vida diaria de los Chamorro. Se establecieron iglesias y capillas en cada aldea y llegaron a ser lugares de reunión para novenas y fiestas patronales y procesiones. El significado de guopot (fiesta, celebración) en la iglesia y en celebraciones sacramentales también se fomentaba y llegó a conocerse con el nombre de fiesta. Las fiestas se centraban en la celebración comunitaria de las fiestas patronales, de los sacramentos y de solemnidades con Misa, devociones, procesiones, cantos, historias, danzas y comida. Estas celebraciones religiosas marcaban la rutina diaria en Guam y llegaron a ser parte vital de la vida social, religiosa y económica de la familia extendida.

El objeto más antiguo, de mayor aprecio y estima de la Iglesia Católica en las Islas Marianas se conoce como la estatua de Santa Marian Kamalen (María de los barracones), una imagen de la Madre de Dios y patrona de Guam y de las Marianas. Basándose en la historia oral y en las pruebas de los archivos, se cree que la estatua tiene por lo menos 300 años. Se le encontró flotando en la laguna de la aldea de Malesso (Merizo) y se dice que salió de un galeón español, Nuestra Señora del Pilar, que se hundió en 1610 por esos lugares. También se cree que fue enviada a proteger a los habitantes de las calamidades naturales y de cualquier otro daño.
protect the inhabitants from natural calamity and any kind of harm.

Twentieth-Century Stability

In 1898, following the Spanish-American War, Guam became a possession of the United States under the Treaty of Paris. With the new American government came administrative personnel and their religious beliefs and practices. The turn of the twentieth century brought many challenges: a multiplicity of "change of ownership" by superpowers, WWII, the postwar reconstruction, the rebuilding of infrastructure after numerous super-typhoons, and perhaps more so today than ever—a search for deeper meaning in life.

The postwar reconstruction of Guam brought religious communities of men and women and thus the establishment of Catholic schools and a host of human services on the island.

Guam, like the United States, experienced the tumult of the '60s with the changes that came out of the Second Vatican Council. The domestic church became a diocese at the ordination of its first local bishop. Pope John Paul II graced Guam with the historic visit of 1981. In 1985, he bestowed a new title of Minor Basilica to the Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral. His visit also resulted in the raising of the diocese to archdiocese at the elevation of the first local archbishop, and advanced the cause of the beatification of Diego Luis de San Vitores (1986) and the catechist Pedro Calungsod (2000).

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the “questions” of those already baptized who wish to be catechized further; it is instrumental in bringing many of the faithful to deeper conversion.

Daily Masses, coupled with patronal devotions and Sunday Mass celebrations, are a part of the routine for present day Chamorros. The Liturgy of the Hours is also practiced in a number of parishes. Choirs and good music are most sought after for liturgical celebrations and the seasons throughout the liturgical year are observed with dignity and exuberance. There also seems to be a growing interest in composing and using music written in the (Chamorro) vernacular for these celebrations.

The practice of mourning the dead for six to eight days before burial has evolved to praying publicly for the dead during a novena (nine days of prayer) of rosaries and Masses and privately with family for another nine days. The celebrations of the first anniversary of death and All Souls Day have become an integral part of Guam’s culture.

The honor bestowed upon the Mother of God in the image of Santa Marian Kamalen continues to inspire the faithful. Each December 8th, the miraculous statue is brought down from her niche at the Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral-Basilica for the grandest of processions through the historic capital of Agaña. Thousands flood the streets of Agaña with youngsters dressed in angel, archangel, and maiden costumes along with uniform clad school children, clergy, religious, parishioners, and church organizations with banners and regalia from throughout the island. They sing, recite the rosary and intercessory prayers for the continued care of the Blessed Mother and her Son. This is a tradition that marks a faith expression unmatched in the Marianas.

Guam’s Fifth Millennium

This overview of the Chamorro people’s ancient past through the present experience of God sheds light on how far this people of amazing resilience has come and where it has yet to go. A question arises: What of our four thousand years of history do we wish to maintain and develop? In entering the third millennium, Guam’s fifth in its existence, opportunities abound this Jubilee Year for deeper spiritual experiences that involve forgiveness, reconciliation, the healing of and respect for the earth, liberation from all that binds, and pastoral planning for the future.

Las celebraciones del primer aniversario de la muerte y el Día de los muertos han llegado a ser parte integral de la cultura de Guan.

La veneración de la Madre de Dios bajo la imagen de Santa Marian Kamalen continúa inspirando a los fieles. Cada 8 de diciembre, se baja a la milagrosa estatua de su nicho en la Catedral-Basilica del Dulce Nombre de María y se le lleva en una grandiosa procesión a través de la histórica capital de Agaña. Miles de personas invaden las calles de Agaña con jóvenes vestidos de ángeles, arcángeles y damas junto con los niños portando el uniforme de su escuela, clérigos, religiosos, miembros de las parroquias y de organizaciones eclesiásticas con estandartes y trajes de toda la isla. Cantan, recitan el rosario y oraciones de intercesión para que la Santísima Virgen y su Hijo los sigan cuidando. Es una tradición que marca una expresión de fe sin igual en las Marianas.

Quinto milenio de Guam

Este resumen del pasado antiguo del pueblo Chamorro hasta la experiencia de Dios en el presente hace ver qué tan lejos ha llegado este pueblo de notable resistencia y hasta donde todavía debe llegar. Se presenta una pregunta: ¿Qué pasa con nuestros 4,000 años de historia? ¿Queremos mantenerla y desarrollarla? Al entrar al tercer milenio, el quinto en la existencia de Guam, las oportunidades abordan este Año Jubilar para experiencias espirituales...
It is clear that the future will be shaped by the quality of relationships that people hold locally as well as globally. The descendants of the ancient Chamorros can no longer say that Guam is at the center of the world, as did their ancestors. Rather ask: How will we grow to become a vibrant part of the world, ever conscious of a gracious and merciful God?

Notes

5 Laura Thompson, p. 58.
7 García, p. 43.8 Russell, p. 13.
9 Cunningham, p. 102.
10 Cunningham, p. 127-128.
11 García, p. 56.
12 García, p. 152.
13 García, p. 119-120.
14 Don Felipe de la Corte y Ruano Calderón, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Marianas and Adjoining Islands: Their present organization together with an analytical study of their physical, moral and political factors and proposals for improvements in all areas which would advance them to the state of well-being which they merit* (Madrid: National Printing Office, 1875). English translation.
16 Carano and Sanchez, pp. 5-6.

Notes

5 Laura Thompson, p. 58.
7 García, p. 43.8 Russell, p. 13.
8 Cunningham, p. 102.
9 Cunningham, p. 127-128.
10 García, p. 56.
11 García, p. 152.
12 García, p. 119-120.
13 Don Felipe de la Corte y Ruano Calderón, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Marianas and Adjoining Islands: Their present organization together with an analytical study of their physical, moral and political factors and proposals for improvements in all areas which would advance them to the state of well-being which they merit* (Madrid: National Printing Office, 1875). English translation.
15 Carano and Sánchez, pp. 5-6.
Mercy Within the Context of Caribbean Spirituality

Is there a Caribbean Spirituality? And if so, how would it be defined? It is my opinion that one cannot understand the spirituality of the Caribbean without some knowledge of the story of the people who live there—the story of their struggles and aspirations, their culture and their creeds. In short, there must be an understanding of all those happenings and influences that have conspired to forge into a whole a commonwealth of Caribbean nations, and that are still at work in the fashioning of a people.

As a Jamaican who has spent most of my life on this island of Jamaica, I must admit at the outset that my approach to the topic will be limited to my day-to-day experience on the island. Most of my observations will derive from this experience, although in a few instances, I will make reference to some of the commonalities we share with our sister islands.

The Past

History tells us that the original inhabitants of these islands, the Arawaks, were decimated by the Spaniards, and that the more aggressive and fierce Caribs survived in the mountainous areas of St. Vincent and Dominica where one may discover faint traces of their cultural and ethnic heritage. So whom do we find inhabiting the Caribbean territories today? The dwellers of these islands are the descendants of the “conquering” European colonizers and of the peoples who were dragged into slavery or forced servitude. That sounds simple enough, but when one considers that the first group, the Europeans, hailed from England, Holland, Portugal, Spain and France, one begins to understand why Caribbean people feel that their islands have been balkanized! Even today, there is no such thing as a common language for this region; instead we have the English...
speaking islands, the French, Dutch, and Spanish speaking islands with the additional brand of patois that emanates from each of these languages. The second group, those who came to the Caribbean as mere “chattel”; were stripped of all personal possessions, deprived of personhood and of mother tongue, had their family ties disrupted and destroyed, even as members of their kin were scattered and communication with loved ones was no longer a possibility. With such a setting, the stage was open for conflict, and conflict there was! In the words of one of the island’s leading historians:

Europe brought Africa to the Caribbean early in the sixteenth century. Europe came as victor, dispos­essor, exploiter. Africa came as victim, dispossessed, exploited. For five centuries the two shaped Caribbean history, Europe through the sugar-and-slave plantation, colonialism, the doctrine of white superiority, and Africa through the African-Jamaican’s rejection of slavery, his triumphant struggle for freedom and justice, his resilience of spirit and his creativity. From the start the story of the Jamaican people is one of a stubborn defiant courage that would not be denied the final triumph.¹

The slave uprisings and rebellions that followed conflicts were just a hint of the devastation that would ensue if the oppressed were denied their basic rights. Good sense prevailed and, beginning in 1838, each so called “Mother Country” granted freedom to those held in bondage. It was because of the promulgation of the Emancipation Act and the consequent loss of assured “free” labor that land­owners began importing laborers from Germany, Scotland and Ireland. Real Indians from India and Chinese also, were encouraged to immigrate to these lands to be indentured laborers in the place of the African people. Their situation was not as difficult as that of those who came from Africa since their freedom to be independent architects of their own destiny would commence at the end of the pe­riod they had been contracted for. The Portuguese Jews had come earlier with the Spaniards, but it was otras! Aún hoy día no hay tal cosa como un lenguaje común para esta región; al contrario tenemos islas donde se habla inglés o francés, alemán o español con una mezcla adicional de patúa que surge de cada uno de estos idiomas. Al segundo grupo, los que vinieron de los caribeños como simple «chattel» se les despojó de todas las posesiones personales, se les privó de su personalidad y de su lengua nati­va, se les rompieron y destruyeron sus lazos fa­miliares; aún más, los miembros de una familia fueron separados entre diferentes lugares y la co­municación con sus seres queridos no fue ya posi­ble. Con tales actos se abrió camino a toda clase de conflictos, y ¡hubo mucho conflicto! En palabras de uno de los mejores historiadores de la isla:

Europa trajo a África al Caribe al principio del siglo dieciséis. Europa vino como victoriosa, desposeyendo a todos, explotando. African vino como víctima, sin posesiones, explotada. Por cinco siglos las dos dieron forma a la historia del Caribe, Europa a través de las plantaciones de caña de azúcar con esclavos, el colonialismo, la doctrina de la superioridad blanca, y África a través del rechazo afrojamaicano de la esclavitud, su lucha triunfante por la libertad y la justicia, su resistencia de espíritu y su creatividad. Desde el principio, la historia del pueblo jamaicano es uno de valor testarudo y desafiante al que no se le negará el triunfo final.¹

Los levantamientos y rebeliones de los esclavos que siguieron a los conflictos son simplemente un vis­lumbre de la devastación que empezaba si se les ne­gaba a los oprimidos sus derechos básicos. El buen sentido prevaleció y, empezando en 1838, cada una de las llamadas «Madre patria» concedió la li­bertad a aquellos que tenían en cadenas. Debido a la promulgación de la Ley de emancipación y a la pérdida consecuente del trabajo gratuito asegura­do, los propietarios empezaron a importar trabaja­dores de Alemania, Escocia e Irlanda. A los verda­deros indios de la India y a los chinos también se les animó a emigrar a estas tierras para ser trabajado­res contratados en lugar de los pueblos africanos. Su situación no fue tan difícil como la de aquellos que vinieron de África pues su libertad, para ser ar­quitectos independientes de su propio destino co­menzaría al final del período para el cual habían sido contratados. Los judíos portugueses habían venido antes con los españoles, pero sólo fue a fines del siglo diecinueve que los árabes y sirios (la mayoría de Líbano) llegaron como vendedores

When one examines how Christianity came to these shores, one is reminded of the Lares or the household gods of the Romans.

¹
not until the late nineteenth century that the Arabs and Syrians (mostly from Lebanon) came as itinerant peddlers and shopkeepers. When one examines how Christianity came to these shores, one is reminded of the Lares or the household gods of the Romans since the colonists brought “their own God” who was really an extension of what they knew or worshiped at their place of origin. “The English brought their “Church of England” with them, while the other Europeans brought the “Church of Rome.” It would appear that the deity at that particular time could not accommodate itself to the needs of others, least of all to the African, so in its earliest expression, the people were here and the church was there, and the function of the church was to maintain the status quo. In this respect, it functioned more like a power structure whose authority was not to be questioned as it kowtowed to the powerful and in a sense legitimized the injustices of the age.

By the time that Africans were led to embrace Christianity, they had already established their style of worship to honor the deity and spirits they too had known in their continent and whose presence they had invoked through ritual. Rather than abandon their household gods they creatively constructed a form of worship that blended the desired elements of the two religions into new cults and so today the Christianity that has emerged as the religion of many of the rural folks is mixed with vestiges of the worship forms of Africa. These expressions have given rise to styles of worship that may be described as Pentecostal because of the movement, color, dance, and vibrancy that characterize these celebrations, and the creativity in music, speech, and song that support their ritual.

The preceding, rather sketchy, account of the ethnic origins of those who peopled the island of By the time that Africans were led to embrace Christianity, they had already established their style of worship to honor the deity and spirits they too had known in their continent.

Cuando se examina cómo llegó el cristianismo a estas costas, se recuerda a los Lares.

Para cuando se llevó a los africanos a abrazar el cristianismo, ya habían establecido su estilo de adoración para honrar a la deidad y a los espíritus que ellos también habían conocido en su propio continente y cuya presencia habían invocado a través de un rito. En lugar de abandonar sus propios dioses del hogar, creativamente construyeron una forma de adoración que entreteje los elementos deseados de las dos religiones en cultos nuevos y así, hoy día, el cristianismo que ha surgido como la religión de muchos en las áreas rurales es una mezcla con vestigios de formas de culto de África. Estas expresiones han dado origen a estilos de culto que podrían describirse como pentecostales por el movimiento, color, danza y entusiasmo que caracterizan estas celebraciones, y la creatividad en la música, el discurso y el canto que apoya sus ritos.

La narración anterior, aunque muy escueta, de los orígenes étnicos de aquellos que poblaron la isla de Jamaica y, en verdad, las otras islas caribeñas le dará al lector una idea de la complejidad que se tiene cuando uno dice, ¿“quién es el hombre o la mujer caribeña”? Es verdad que una notable mezcla étnica
Jamaica and indeed several of the other Caribbean islands will give the reader an idea of the complexity one faces when one says, "Who is the Caribbean man or woman?" It is true that a remarkable ethnic blending has taken place over the years with the result that most of the population can rightfully claim descent from more than one set, and frequently more than three or four sets, of ancestors. This cross-fertilization has produced some of the most beautiful people on earth. How many times has a Jamaican or Caribbean woman won the coveted Miss World title! In athletics, and at the Olympics in particular, the performance of the Jamaicans in field events have led some sports commentators to ask if Jamaica is the training ground for Olympic sprinters! And how is it that a small nation of no more than two and a half million inhabitants can produce such spirited and outstanding performers. Their daring and ambitious enterprise has been the motivation of the popular and moving movie production, "Cool Runnings."

The richness, originality, and versatility of Caribbean music can be described as almost legendary. Reggae, Calypso and Steel Band—all musical forms and expressions that were created in the Caribbean—have spread to all parts of the world. *Time* magazine chose Jamaican Bob Marley's *Exodus* as Album of the Century not merely because he is one of the most popular performers of all time but because of the wide range of themes embodied in his songs which address social, political, relational, religious, and even counter-cultural issues in his music of protest, and which represent the voice of the nations of the South speaking clearly and powerfully to the industrialized and technologically advanced nations of the North. And as though that were not recognition enough, Marley's song, "One Love," which many regard as an anthem with its message of love and peace, was voted by the BBC as the best song of the century. Nor is Marley an isolated example of the musical talent in the Caribbean; Trinidad's Calypsonians Lord Kitchener and the Mighty Sparrow; Jamaica's Peter Tosh and Monty Alexander are just a few of many, many more who are prominent in the field of music.

**Problems**

These are some of the success stories; but if the truth be told, they are not indicative of a general se ha llevado a cabo a través de los años con el resultado de que la mayoría de la población puede decir con todo derecho que desciende de más de un grupo, y frecuentemente de más de tres o cuatro grupos de antepasados. Esta fertilización cruzada ha producido algunas de las personas más hermosas de este mundo. ¡Cuántas veces una mujer jamaicana o caribeña ha recibido el título tan codiciado de Miss Mundo! Entre los atletas y, en particular en las Olimpíadas, la actuación de los jamaicanos ha llevado a los comentadores de los deportes a preguntar si Jamaica es el lugar donde se entrena los corredores olímpicos! ¿Y cómo es posible que una pequeña nación de no más de dos millones y medio de habitantes pueda producir deportistas tan sobresalientes y entusiastas? Su actuación tan atrevida y ambiciosa ha sido el motivo de la producción cinematográfica tan popular y emotiva de «Cool Runnings» (Jamaica bajo cero).

La riqueza, originalidad y versatilidad de la música caribeña se puede describir casi como legendaria. Reggae y Calypso y la Banda de tambores de ace­ro, todas formas y expresiones musicales que se crean en el Caribe, se han esparcido por todo el mundo. La revista *Time* escogió *Exodus* del jamaicano Bob Marley como el Álbum del Siglo no sólo porque fue uno de los artistas más populares de todos los tiempos sino por la gran extensión de los temas que se encuentran en sus canciones y que hablan de lo social, político, relacional, religioso, y aún de temas contra la cultura dominante en su música de protesta, la cual representan la voz de las naciones del Sur hablando clara y fuertemente a las naciones del Norte, industrializadas y avanzadas tecnológicamente. Y si eso no fuera un reconocimiento suficiente, la canción de Marley, *One Love* (Un Amor), que muchos consideran como un himno con su mensaje de amor y paz, fue propuesto por la BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) como el mejor canto del siglo. Tampoco es Marley un ejemplo aislado del talento musical del Caribe; músicos de calypso de Trinidad, Lord Kitchener y de Mighty Sparrow; Peter Tosh y Monty Alexander de Jamaica, son sólo unos cuantos de los muchos, muchos que se han destacado en el campo de la música.

**Los problemas**

Ésas son algunas de las historias exitosas, pero si se dice la verdad, no indican la condición general del
condition of well-being in the Caribbean or in Jamaica in particular. Too many of the ill effects of colonialism persist: fragmentation in all its forms, exploitation and domination, and this in spite of the fact that most of the territories that comprise the Caribbean have achieved political independence. Economically, the islands remain in the vise of overseas domination, and leaders often find themselves unable to control the forces that adversely affect the people. This, together with some degree of mismanagement and corruption, account for much of the persistent poverty experienced by a large per cent of the people.

Too many of the ill effects of colonialism persist.

Dependence is another large hurdle to be overcome by the masses in the Caribbean. It is yet another of the evil legacies of the colonial past. Colonialism has been succeeded by neo-colonialism, which some sociologists have judged to be even worse than colonialism. Here again, although island territories are nominally independent, mismanagement and bureaucratic structures siphon off much of the resources that should be used to create viable employment and development for the people and create instead a political framework that would perpetuate and maintain the party that remains in power.

One of the greatest evils that dog our peoples is related to rejection, self-hate, and a sense of inferiority that shows its ugly face in attempts to ape others, to think that all that is produced locally is not as good as that which comes from abroad, that one's color of skin and hair needs to be lightened so that one can be more readily accepted by significant others, that one has to speak with a touch of a foreign accent if one is to be regarded as "cultured" or important; that one has to be a resident in this or that neighborhood in suburbia, or be employed in this or that particular profession, to be of consequence, and so on and on.

As one looks again at the multiplicity and complexity of ethnic origins of the people who inhabit these islands, the class structures that surfaced bienestar en el Caribe ni en particular en Jamaica. Demasiados de los efectos nocivos del colonialismo persisten todavía; la fragmentación en todas sus formas, explotación y dominación, y esto, a pesar del hecho que la mayoría de los territorios que componen el Caribe han logrado su independencia política. Económicamente, las islas permanecen bajo la mano fuerte de la dominación del otro lado del mar y con frecuencia los líderes mismos se encuentran incapaces de controlar las fuerzas que afectan con adversidad al pueblo. Esto, junto con un grado de mala administración y de corrupción, es responsable de la gran pobreza persistente en la que vive un gran porcentaje del pueblo.

La dependencia es otro de los grandes obstáculos que las masas tienen que vencer en el Caribe, pues es también otro de los legados nocivos del pasado colonial. Al colonialismo ha seguido el neo-colonialismo que algunos sociólogos han juzgado ser aún peor que el mismo colonialismo. Una vez más aquí, aunque los territorios de las islas son nominalmente independientes, la mala administración y las estructures burocráticas absorben muchos de los recursos que deberían usarse para crear empleos viables y desarrollar al pueblo, pero crean al contrario un marco político que perpetuará y mantendrá al partido que permanece en el poder.

Uno de los más grandes males que oprimen a nuestros pueblos se relaciona con el rechazo, el autodesprecio y un sentido de inferioridad que muestra su feo rostro al tratar de imitar a otros, al pensar que todo lo que se produce localmente no es tan bueno como lo que viene del extranjero, que el color de la piel y el cabello necesitan aclararse para ser más fácilmente aceptados por los importantes, que uno tiene que hablar con un poco de acento extranjero para que se le considere como muy "culto", educado o importante; que uno tiene que ser residente en ésta o aquélla colonia de los suburbios, o estar empleado en ésta o aquélla profesión particular para poder tener influencia, y así sigue y sigue.

Cuando uno se fija una vez más en la multiplicitad y complejidad de los orígenes étnicos de los pueblos que habitan estas islas, las estructuras de clase que surgen de aquellos que gobernaban y de los que eran gobernados; la multiplicidad de religiones: hay cristianos (y el cristianismo tiene sus muchas subdivisiones o sectas) y judíos, hindúes y
from those who ruled and those who were ruled; the multiplicity of religions: there are the Christians (and Christianity has its many sub-divisions or sects) and the Jews, the Hindus and the Muslims, and the many manifestations of the African cults, to say nothing of the Jamaican phenomenon, the Rastafarian movement which as a semi-religious and semi-political cult addresses the longing of many who look to their ancestral home, Africa, for spiritual nourishment, inspiration, and refreshment. As a movement, Rastafarianism sought to “gather ancestral Africans from a diaspora unmatched save by the scattering of the Jews.”3 In spite of the presence of many religions in Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean, Christianity is undoubtedly the predominant religion. But in the face of the foregoing, how would one describe the spirituality of the Caribbean peoples?

Perhaps the most striking element present in Caribbean spirituality is the ready interpretation of daily occurrences as signs from God. In the words of West Indian theologian Kortright Davis:

The traditionally Western dichotomy between sacred and secular spheres of life is so often alien to the Caribbean mind, chiefly because the realities of life are so closely integrated for them and also because it is impossible for them to conceive of the divine absence from any aspect of human affairs.4

Another very important quality that the Caribbean person evinces in her relationship to God is the peace, assurance, and comfort she experiences in knowing that God is always at hand, always present at her side. She is as confident of God’s love and care as she is that the sun will rise tomorrow; and whether she is in joy or sorrow, whether at work or rest, she quietly hums or sings hymns or sacred songs that tell of her trust in the love and promises of the Savior. There is a song that befits her every
mood and experience. These two elements are very much a part of the life of all our people, and because the ecumenical dimension of our life together is exceedingly strong, we find peoples of all faiths thanking God:

for the wonderful gifts of creation, for our Caribbean waters so blue and sparkling, and all the creatures that live in them, for the majesty and beauty of our hills and plains, for the abundance of fruit and flowers.

Loving God, we thank you for calling us together from many lands and cultures: for the courage and love you gave our ancestors to endure the painful intermingling which has enabled us to grow into a nation of one people under your rule.

By our agonies and sorrows, you have let us share in the passage of your Son and His people from death to risen life.

We thank you for your saving actions in our history, for your passage from slavery to freedom, from colonial days to nationhood.5

The people of the Caribbean see a remarkable parallel between the Exodus—the passage of the chosen people from the condition of slavery in Egypt and the difficult journey through the desert to the Promised Land—and the sufferings their ancestors endured in the painful middle passage.6

As a people, we are still growing in the understanding of the fact that the “traditional conspiracies, which have historically attempted to keep the Caribbean in bondage and abject dependence on external forces for its survival, will never succeed.”7 This is to say that, in spite of all the injustices, fragmentation, uprootedness, and wickedness that have been visited upon this people, the inhabitants of these islands firmly believe without question in a God whose love, protection and preference is for them. This is not a fatalism that says, “We must endure every hardship that comes our way because at the end of life we will have rewards waiting for us up there.” Rather, it is a trust that believes in God’s divine providence that is working out a plan in which they are all called to take an active part. It is this trust that encourages the people to maintain dignity and fidelity in all walks of life, to refuse to cooperate with those who would have them compromise values and ideals and, above all, to strive to grow in the knowledge and respect of self as God’s glorious work of art.

sobrellevar el mestizaje penoso que nos ha hecho capaces de formar la nación de un pueblo bajo tu ley.

Por nuestras agonías y tristezas, nos has permitido compartir con tu Hijo y con Su pueblo en el paso de la muerte a la vida resucitada.

Te damos gracias por tus acciones salvadoras en nuestra historia, por nuestro paso de la esclavitud a la libertad, de los días de la colonia a los de la nación.5

Los pueblos del Caribe ven un paralelo notable entre el Éxodo, el paso del pueblo elegido de la condición de esclavitud en Egipto y el difícil camino a través del desierto hacia la Tierra Prometida, y los sufrimientos que sus antepasados soportaron en el penoso paso intermedio.6

Todavía estamos creciendo como un pueblo en el conocimiento del hecho que las «conspiraciones tradicionales que han tratado históricamente de mantener al Caribe en la esclavitud y en la dependencia humillante de las fuerzas externas para sobrevivir, nunca han tenido éxito».7 Esto es decir que, a pesar de todas las injusticias, fragmentación, desarraigamientos y maldad que se han impuesto a este pueblo, los habitantes de estas islas creen firmemente, sin cuestionarlo, en un Dios cuyo amor, protección y preferencia es por ellos. Esto no es ese fatalismo que dice: «Debemos sobrellevar toda dificultad que encontremos en el camino porque al fin de la vida tendremos recompensas que nos esperan allá arriba». Al contrario, es una confianza que cree en la providencia divina de Dios que está llevando a cabo un plan en el cual todos somos llamados a tener una parte activa. Es esta confianza que anima al pueblo para mantener su dignidad y fidelidad en todos los estilos de vida, a rehusar cooperar con aquellos que les piden abandonen sus valores e ideales y, sobre todo, a luchar por crecer en el conocimiento y respeto de sí mismos como una obra de arte gloriosa de Dios.

Otra característica de la espiritualidad caribeña es su fuerte calidad comunitaria. Esto es particularmente verdadero entre las masas, particularmente aquellas de descendencia africana, que viven en comunidades donde los niños crecen y se desarrollan en la presencia de adultos cariñosos y cuidadosos que son, o pueden no ser, parientes de ellos. Muchas veces cuando una tragedia o un desastre ha privado a los niños de sus padres, las familias y las comunidades se han unido a su alrededor para brindarles
Another characteristic of the Caribbean spirituality is its strong communal quality. This is particularly true of the masses, mostly those of African descent, who live in communities where children grow and develop in the presence of warm, caring adults who may, or may not be related to them. Many have been the times when tragedy or disaster has struck to deprive children of parents that families and communities have rallied around to give shelter, love, and support to hapless ones and so blunt the sharp edge of adversity.

Another characteristic of the Caribbean spirituality is its strong communal quality.

Caribbean spirituality has always struggled with the question of authenticity in expressions or forms of worship. Songs, music and dance, rhythm and movement are deeply rooted in the African psyche and, not surprisingly, in the Caribbean persona as well. Mainline churches have lost membership because of the staid forms of worship that were required of those who participated. Renewal in the second half of the twentieth century has brought about some accommodation that would embrace the culture of the people.

Mercy and Caribbean Spirituality

In the light of all the foregoing, what influence does all this have on Mercy? How is Mercy incarnated in this very complex social and religious scene? It seems to me that every Caribbean person should grow in awareness of her complexity, of the cultural diversity to which she is heir, and thereby come to know the magnitude of the gift that is hers and the inherent possibility for wider vision than others can claim as their separate identities. As Caribbean Nobel awardee Derek Walcott has said, “Maturity is the assimilation of the features of every ancestor.” The Caribbean woman of Mercy claims and embraces the exuberance that is very much a part of her very being and that longs to express itself in music, dance, color, joie de vivre and to channel these through appropriate forms to give abrigo, amor y apoyo a los desdichados y así amon- rar la agudeza de la adversidad.

La espiritualidad caribeña siempre ha luchado con la cuestión de autenticidad en expresiones o formas de culto. Cantos, música y danza, ritmo y movimiento están profundamente entrelazados en la psique africana, y no es sorprendente que en los ca­ ribenos también lo estén. Iglesias bien reconocidas han perdido miembros por las formas rígidas para el culto que se requerían de los que participaban. La renovación en la segunda mitad del siglo XX ha logrado algunas adaptaciones para aceptar la cul­ tura del pueblo.

La Merced y la espiritualidad caribeña

A la luz de todo lo anterior, ¿qué influencia tiene todo esto en la Merced? ¿Cómo se encarna la Mer­ ced en esta escena social y religiosa tan compleja? Me parece que todos los caribeños deberían crecer en la conciencia de su propia complejidad, de la diver­ sidad cultural que han heredado, y por lo tanto llegar a conocer la magnitud del don que es suyo y la posibilidad inherente de una visión más amplia que otros puedan reclamar como sus identidades separadas. Como ha dicho el caribeño receptor del Premio Nobel, Derek Walcott: «La madurez es la asimilación de las características de todos sus ante­ pasados». La mujer caribeña de la Merced reclama y abraza la exuberancia que es parte integral de su propio ser que busca expresarse en la música, la danza, el color, en joie de vivre (en la alegría de vi­ vivir), y los canaliza a través de las formas apropiadas para dar expresión a la persona que ella es y a la que desea ser en la Merced.

Las mujeres siempre han tenido un papel im­ portante en la vida y en el mantenimiento de la so­ ciedad caribeña. Son ellas las que alimentan a la ju­ ventud y las que incondicionalmente han amado, educado y formado cada generación del pueblo ca­ ribeño. La parte que ellas han tenido es fundamen­ tal; no sorprende, por lo tanto, que los sociólogos hayan descrito la región como matriarcal. Las mu­ jeres han sido, y son, las principales portadoras de la cultura y las primeras formadoras de la concien­ cia de nuestro pueblo, sin embargo poco se les ha reconocido en la Iglesia y en el campo político. Las Hermanas y los Asociados de la Merced continúan sus esfuerzos por levantar y capacitar a esas mujeres cuyas vidas tocan.
expression to who she is and who she would become in Mercy.

Women have always played a leading role in the life and maintenance of the Caribbean society. It is they who have nurtured youth and unconditionally have loved, reared, and trained each generation of Caribbean people. The part they have played has been pivotal; it is not surprising, therefore, that sociologists have described the region as matriarchal. Women have been and are the primary bearers of culture and the earliest shapers of the conscience of our people, yet little is the recognition given them in the church or in the political arena. Mercy Sisters and Associates continue efforts to uplift and empower those women whose lives they touch.

Women have always played a leading role in the life and maintenance of the Caribbean society.

The first band of Sisters of Mercy to set foot on the shores of Jamaica sailed from Southampton, England, and landed in Kingston on December 12, 1890. The openness of these Sisters to receive as members to of their community the three Jamaican ladies who, ten years earlier, had pioneered an undertaking that was to have far-reaching influence and success is at once a credit to their vision, common sense, and wisdom, as it is a tribute to the selfless generosity and humility of the three ladies.

With a spirit of cooperation and unity that could come only from the Spirit of God, the young community set about alleviating the distressing conditions which were the lot of the destitute sick and poor. They visited the prisons, and offered home and shelter to those, especially children, who had "nowhere to lay their heads." Two years after their arrival, they opened institutions that provided education and training for youth and a high school for young women. Two decades later, a commercial college to prepare young women for the business world was established. Amidst all these activities, the Sisters never lost sight of their vocation to serve the poor for, as the foundress Catherine McAuley had instructed, the example of Jesus whose...
preference was the poor was to be kept continually before their eyes.

The Present

This emphasis—the option for the poor—underlies all that Mercy achieves and continues to do in these territories. Although most of those served are still in the schools which the Sisters administer or sponsor, and education is still an important thrust, the scope of their activity has been broadened to embrace adult education and training among the adult poor with the goal of having them prepared to help themselves and others in the process. The Sisters have been pioneers in establishing skill and trade training centers for the raising of poultry, cattle, and pigs, for pursuing butchery and meat processing which supply fine quality meats and products to hotels, supermarkets, and other institutions while at the same time offering employment and providing an income for those involved. The centers also offer catering services, one center operates a full-fledged bakery, and others conduct sewing operations that produce uniforms for industry, businesses, and schools. Underlying all this productivity is the principle of self-reliance that not only diminishes the cancer of dependence mentioned earlier, but also inculcates values of self worth and pride. The workers in these establishments are encouraged to cooperate with each other to establish meaningful relationships of unity and harmony among themselves that contribute to the healing of the spirit of alienation generated by fragmentation and divisiveness.

Mercy in the Caribbean sees itself as a symbol of hope as it continues with others, religious and lay, to weave the varied light and dark strands of our life together into a fabric of Caribbean life and wholeness. To do this, we must draw on the natural tendency of our people to see and affirm that the hand of God is present in all of life, its joys, its celebrations, its sorrows and vicissitudes. Mercy respects the meaningful traditions of a people, their folk tales of Anansi, their stories, myths, and even the significance they attach to their dreams. All these are a part of the culture from which they should not be alienated.

Mercy is called to remember at all times that the dying and rising of Jesus Christ is an integral component of our lives together. Our call to community ofrece servicios de alimentos a domicilio, un centro tiene una panadería completa, y otros ofrecen trabajos de costura que producen uniformes para industrias, negocios y escuelas. Lo que subraya toda esta productividad es el principio de mantenerse a uno mismo y que no sólo disminuye el cáncer de la dependencia mencionada anteriormente, sino que también inculca valores de autoestima y orgullo. Se anima a los trabajadores de estos establecimientos a cooperar entre sí para establecer relaciones importantes de unidad y armonía entre ellos mismos que contribuyen a sanar el espíritu de enajenamiento generado por la fragmentación y la división.

La Merced en el Caribe se considera a sí misma como un símbolo de esperanza al continuar junto con otros, religiosos y laicos, entretrejando los hilos diver-
is a call to witness to our entire population in our milieu that the gospel is lived out more fully through caring for others than through selfish or individualistic pursuits. In Mercy, we continue to educate our people, and especially our women in practical ways so that they arrive at the understanding of their giftedness personally and as a nation.

Perhaps it is the sea and sun, perhaps it is the mountains and valleys or the noisy, brawling streams that punctuate our hills. Who knows? But Caribbean people are a happy, vibrant people who love a celebration, who smile even when the going is rough, and even count blessings when they are almost too few to number. Mercy in the Caribbean? A reaching out to empower, a warm hospitality, a prodigal spending of oneself to uplift others, and an attitude of praise and gratitude to God!

Notes

4 Davis, p.53.
5 Excerpt from Preface of the Liturgy used in Jamaica for celebrating Independence Day and the National Day of Thanksgiving.
6 In 1962, Trinidadian author, V.S. Naipal spent time in Jamaica while he wrote the classic *Middle Passage*. Historians have used this phrase middle passage to denote that part of the “triangular” trade operating in the Atlantic at the height of the traffic in human lives. The first phase (the eastern side of the triangle) saw ships sailing from Europe to Africa for the purpose of luring or purchasing Africans; The second stage (the middle), was used exclusively to transport the “human cargo” from Africa in the east to the Americas and the Caribbean in the west, and the third stage, which completed the triangle, found these ships, now empty of human cargo, laden with the fruits, spices, sugar, and rum of the west to supply the markets of Great Britain and Europe.
7 Davis, p.72.
8 Dreams hold a very significant place in the lives of Caribbean people. In Jamaica, loved ones or relatives who have died are expected “to visit” or return to the living in dreams. The sharing of dreams is a common experience especially in rural Jamaica where folks are expected to attend to their dreams and learn their significance.

p.72.
8 Los sueños tienen un lugar muy significativo en la vida del pueblo caribeño. En Jamaica, se espera que los seres amados o los parientes que han muerto "visiten" o regresen a ver a los vivos en sus sueños. El compartir los sueños es una experiencia común especialmente en la Jamaica rural donde se espera que las personas se fijen en sus sueños y aprendan su significado.
As I was preparing this reflection, I found that I kept experiencing some internal resistance to completing the task. Finally, I took the time to pray with this resistance and discovered that to share my thoughts, the stirrings of my soul, in such a public arena was to place myself in a vulnerable position and so I hesitated. Yet, in the midst of this hesitation the words of Audre Lorde welled up within me. Audre writes in her Litany of Survival:

And when we speak we are afraid
Our words will not be heard
Nor welcomed
But when we are silent
We are still afraid
So it is better to speak
Remembering
We were never meant to survive

I allowed her words to call me out of myself and join in the voices of my ancestors, my elders, on whose shoulders I stand. For the people of the African diaspora were never meant to survive—and yet we did. We survived the middle passage and migration into unknown lands. We survived slavery and colonization. We survived despite alienation, separation, and depreciation. Not only did we survive, but our seeds became firmly planted in the soils of many lands.

I am a child of that African diaspora. My ancestral roots are in the Cape Verde Islands—a small African country off the coast of West Africa. My ancestral ties connect me to many others of the African diaspora. For, as black people, our cultural heritage is woven into a tapestry that entwines many colorful threads of people from Africa, Cape Verde, the Caribbean, West Indies, Central America, South America, and the United States.

I don’t know how my mother walked her troubles down.
I don’t know how my father stood his ground.
I don’t know how my people survived slavery.

Agar ha «hablado» a las mujeres negras de generación en generación.

Dejé que sus palabras me llamaran fuera de mí misma y me unieran a las voces de mis antepasados, mis mayores, en cuyos hombros descanso. Porque nunca se pensó que la gente de la diáspora sobreviviera—y sin embargo sobrevivimos. Sobrevivimos el paso intermedio y la migración a tierras desconocidas. Sobrevivimos la esclavitud y la colonización. Sobrevivimos a pesar de la alienación, separación y anodamiento. No sólo hemos sobrevivido sino aún más, nuestras semillas se plantaron firmemente en tierras de muchos lugares.

Soy una hija de esa diáspora africana. Mis raíces ancestrales encuentran su hogar en las Islas de Cabo Verde—un pequeño país lejos de la costa del
I do remember, that’s why I believe.  
My God calls to me in the morning dew.  
The power of the universe knows my name.  
Gave me a song to sing and sent me on my way.  
I raise my voice for justice, I believe.  

I grew up in New York and Massachusetts and consequently lived, played, worshiped, and was educated in typical predominately white communities. It wasn’t until I entered college that I began to learn about the richness of my black cultural heritage. In the learning process, I was able to make connections as I began to name my lived experience. The South African proverb “I am because we are” is a lived reality in our community. It finds its expression in our extended families that fosters a sense of belonging. Throughout my childhood and growing up years, I witnessed an extended family helping other members with both economic and human resources.

The South African proverb “I am because we are” is a lived reality in our community. It finds its expression in our extended families that fosters a sense of belonging.

My experience of God has been shaped within the context of this larger black community. The stories of my elders were testimonies of a reliance on God, their lives a reflection of a deep and simple faith that knew that God was with them each step of the way. They revealed a gratefulness of heart for having been blessed by God and in return sharing the blessings with others. The greatest sin was to be apathetic to the needs of others. The strength of the community was the ability to share together in times of deep sorrow and joyous celebration.

One of the most profound scripture passages that has had an impact on me is the story of Hagar. When I first heard the “voice” of Hagar I wondered—How come in all my years of religious education I had never heard of Hagar? It was only after I
searched for more information about Hagar that I discovered that Hagar was a significant symbol in the black community. The story of Hagar and her encounter with God in the wilderness is a story in which her encounter with God reveals God’s intervention in making a way where there is no way. Black theologian, Delores Williams states:

God’s response to Hagar’s story in the Hebrew testament is not liberation. Rather, God participates in Hagar’s and her child’s survival on two occasions. God provided Hagar with a resource. God gave her a new vision to see survival resources where she had seen none before. Liberation in the Hagar stories is not given by God, it finds its source in human initiative. Thus it seemed to me that God’s response to Hagar’s (and her child) situation was survival and involvement in their development of an appropriate quality of life (Gen 21:8–20). 

The story of Hagar has been passed down to generations of black folks. Delores Williams continues:

The African American community has taken Hagar’s story unto itself. Hagar has “spoken” to generation after generation of black women because her story has been validated as true by suffering black people. She and Ishmael, together, as family, model many black American families in which the lone woman/mother struggles to hold the family together in spite of the poverty to which the ruling class economics consign it. Hagar, like many black women, goes into the wide world to make a living for herself and her child, with only God by her side.

Crucial to Hagar’s story is the concept of being in the “wilderness.” To define wilderness from a black perspective is to acknowledge that sacred space where one is ultimately alone and in that aloneness encounters the healing touch of Jesus. To encounter Jesus in the wilderness is to experience transformation. The African-American spirituals attest to this belief. “How did you feel when you came out the wilderness, came out the wilderness? Did you love your brother when you came out the wilderness, came out the wilderness? Did you love your sister when you came out the wilderness, came out the wilderness?”

Crucial to Hagar’s story is the concept of being in the “wilderness.” 

La respuesta de Dios a la historia de Agar en el testamento hebreo no es de liberación. Al contrario, Dios participa en la sobrevivencia de Agar y su hijo en dos ocasiones. Dios le proveyó a Agar con recurso. Dios le dio una nueva visión para ver recursos de sobrevivencia donde no había visto ninguno antes. La liberación en las historias de Agar no es dada por Dios; encuentra su recurso en la iniciativa humana. Así me pareció que la respuesta de Dios a la situación de Agar (y de su hijo) estaba en la sobrevivencia y en la participación en su desarrollo de una cualidad apropiada de vida.

La historia de Agar se ha transmitido por generaciones de gente negra. Delores Williams continúa:

La comunidad afroamericana ha tomado la historia de Agar como la suya propia. Agar ha hablado de generación en generación a las mujeres negras porque su historia ha sido validada como verdadera por el sufrimiento de los pueblos negros. Ella, junto con Ismael, como familia, es modelo de muchas familias negras americanas en las cuales la madre-hija sola lucha para mantener a la familia junta, a pesar de la pobreza a la cual la economía de la clase dominante la somete. Agar, como muchas mujeres negras, sale al amplio mundo para ganarse la vida para sí misma y para su hijo, teniendo sola mente a Dios de su lado.

Muy importante para la historia de Agar es el concepto de estar en el «desierto». El definir el desierto desde la perspectiva negra es reconocer que es espacio sagrado donde una está totalmente sola y que es en ése estar sola donde se encuentra el toque salvador de Jesús. Encontrar a Jesús en el desierto es sentir una transformación. Los cantos espirituales afroamericanos atestiguan esta creencia. ¿Cómo te sentías cuando saliste del desierto, saliste del desierto? ¿Amabas a tu hermana cuando saliste del desierto, saliste del desierto? ¿Amabas a tu hermana cuando saliste del desierto, saliste del desierto? ¿Cuentenme hermano y hermana, ¿encontraron a Jesús en el desierto?\n
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the wilderness? Tell me brother and sister, did you meet Jesus in the wilderness.\(^5\)

The call to discover the essence of my blackness coincided with the discernment of my call to religious life. During my discernment process, I was drawn to the Sisters of Mercy through the “voice” of Frances Warde. As I read Kathleen Healy’s book, *Frances Warde: American Founder of the Sisters of Mercy*, I wanted to learn more about Mercy. The courage of Frances to journey into unknown lands in response to the call of struggling people resonated in my heart. Frances’s passion inflamed my passion. Although the call to religious life is a personal commitment, the discernment process would have been incomplete without the involvement of my black community. My faith community of Our Lady of the Assumption (a predominately Cape Verdean parish) supported, encouraged, and prayed for me throughout this time. This affirmation was ritualized during the last liturgy that I attended prior to my formal entrance into Mercy. As part of the benediction, the faith community called me forth from the congregation then blessed and commissioned me to go forth into unknown lands—the Sisters of Mercy. Thus I took my first steps into my journey of Mercy—a journey that has been both challenging and rewarding, a journey that has experienced detours on the road and encounters in the wilderness. It is a journey in which I am continually discovering and rediscovering what it means for me to be a black woman religious and a Sister of Mercy.

My discoveries have led me to name my experience of God through a womanist perspective. Diana L. Hayes elaborates on this womanist expression of faith:

*La manera mujerista de ser en el mundo evoca la experiencia negra de un Dios personal, tanto transcendente al traer la justicia y la liberación como inmanente al caminar y hablar con nosotros y al decirnos que somos propiedad de Dios. Ser mujerista significa caminar en fe—no una fe ciega que alguien o algo quizás intervenga a tu favor, sino con una fe cegadora que revela a un Dios que derriba las puertas de las prisiones donde se tienen cautivos a los justos y les da su libertad, pero solamente con su propia participación para lograr esa libertad. Es estar preocupados no tanto del “más allá” sino del “aquí y ahora”—dar de comer a los hambrientos pero también enseñarles a alimentarse por sí mismos; vestir a los desnudos sino también abrir escuelas donde aprendan a hacer sus propias ropa; abrir los ojos de los ciegos proveyendo recursos y materiales educativos que los hagan capaces*
learn to make their own clothes; to open the eyes of the blind by providing educational resources and materials that enable them to learn of themselves and their past, better their present, and prepare for a better future of their own making; to set captives free by breaking their minds open to a consciousness of themselves as a people who have survived and who will continue to survive, walking forward, unfettered, into a world of their own creation, if they believe not just in a "wonder-working" God but in themselves, God's creations, a people of power, creativity, intellect and hope.6

The voice of Hagar, the voice of Frances Warde, the voice of my ancestors, the voice of Mercy all dwell within me. It is the articulation of these voices that I give as gift to our Mercy community. They are the voices that call us to live Mercy as one who enters the wilderness, confident that God is in the midst of it all. They are the voices that wait our response to the closing invitation of our Mercy constitutions "to seek justice, to be compassionate, and to reflect mercy to the world."

From the words of my ancestors I gain strength
I will learn the chants and the ancient meanings of their myths and legends . . .

Or as Mama would say,
I have found my voice and in it grace.7

Notes
2 Bernice Johnson Reagon recording "I Remember, I Believe" Sacred Grounds, Earthbeat.
4 Williams, p. 33.
Sacred scripture describes the peaceful kingdom as a time when wolves and sheep will live together in amity and leopards will lie down with young goats. It goes on to foresee lions, cows, and bears eating together in peace. The point here is not to hybridize the animal kingdom, but to exemplify the harmonious existence of all earth’s diverse creatures. There is great concern today about the continuing loss of species on our planet, because biodiversity is necessary to sustainable life on earth. An example of this “diversity factor” can be found in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California, where healthy growth depends on the symbiosis of six different types of trees. If any one of the six is absent, the whole forest suffers from the loss. The importance of diversity can be applied to the human species with regard to multiculturalism. It is more than just nice to have many cultures around on the planet. The interaction among cultures can be stimulating, growthful, and enriching as well as life-giving.

It is more than just nice to have many cultures around on the planet. The interaction among cultures can be stimulating, growthful, and enriching as well as life-giving.

The history of war on earth is indicative of the commonality of races, but in conflict rather than in mutuality. Daily we read in our newspapers of the ethnic strife going on in many parts of the world. Understanding the causes of these divisions requires an analysis of the cultural components which

La historia de las guerras en la tierra indica lo común de las razas, pero en conflicto en lugar de en mutualidad. Diariamente leemos en los periódicos de luchas étnicas en muchas partes del mundo. Entender las causas de estas divisiones requiere un análisis de los componentes culturales que constituyen un pueblo. Resolver tales conflictos también exige una habilidad sofisticada para apreciar y valorar las diferencias. Muchas personas, debido a las circunstancias y a la situación de sus vidas, no tienen la

La Literatura puede proveer una introducción fácil a las culturas desconocidas.
constitute a people. Solving such conflicts also demands a sophisticated ability to appreciate and value differences. Many people, because of circumstances and their life situations, do not have the opportunity to mix with those of different cultures. Others prefer to associate only with those who are like-minded and of similar economic, political, religious, ethnic, or social positions. Literature can provide an easy introduction to unfamiliar cultures. It is a good first step toward understanding and appreciating the customs and life styles of other cultures. If more people deliberately chose to expand their horizons by reading novels and biographies about “foreigners,” appreciation of multiculturalism would improve on a world-wide scale.

Literature can provide an easy introduction to unfamiliar cultures. It is a good first step toward understanding and appreciating the customs and life styles of other cultures.

A recent reading of The Poisonwood Bible put me in touch with Congo African culture. Although Barbara Kingsolver is not African, she has lived and worked there. In her historical novel, which continues on the New York Times Bestseller list for over seven months, she describes among other things the enormous cultural adjustment imposed upon the family of a Baptist missionary to the Belgian Congo in 1959. The story is narrated by the wife and four daughters of Nathan Price, a fierce and tyrannical evangelist. At the end of the novel, the three surviving daughters comment on the effects of having lived in a foreign culture during the impressionable period of their youth.

Rachel, the eldest, has taken up permanent residence in Africa; however, she inserts her southern American culture into her surroundings wherever possible.

Do I ever think about the life I missed in the good old U.S.A.? Practically every day, would be my oportunidad de mezclarse con otras de diferentes culturas. Otros prefieren asociarse solamente con aquellos que piensan igual o tienen posiciones similares en cuanto a lo económico, político, religioso, étnico o social. La literatura puede darnos una introducción fácil a las culturas desconocidas. Es un buen primer paso para entender y apreciar las costumbres y los estilos de vida de otras culturas. Si más personas eligiesen deliberadamente ampliar sus horizontes a través de la lectura de novelas y biografías sobre «los extranjeros», el aprecio por el multiculturalismo mejoraría en una escala mundial.

La reciente lectura de La Biblia de Madera Venenosa me puso en contacto con la cultura africana del Congo. Aunque Bárbara Kingsolver no es africana, ha vivido y trabajado allí. En su novela histórica, que ha seguido en la lista de los mejores libros de New York Times por más de siete meses, describe entre otras cosas el enorme ajuste cultural im puesto sobre la familia de un misionero bautista en el Congo Belga en 1959. La historia está narrada por la esposa y las cuatro hijas de Nathan Price, un evangelista feroz y tiránico. Al fin de la novela las tres hijas sobrevivientes comentan sobre los efectos de haber vivido en una cultura extranjera durante el periodo tan impresionable de su juventud.

Raquel, la mayor, se ha vuelto residente permanente de África; sin embargo, impone su cultura estadounidense sureña en todo su entorno siempre que le es posible.

¿Piensas alguna vez de la vida que añoro en los buenos y antiguos Estados Unidos? Prácticamente a diario, sería mi respuesta. ¡Oh! las fiestas, los coches, la música—todo el desenfadado estilo de vida estadounidense. Cuando finalmente conseguimos un televisor aquí, por mucho tiempo mientras pasaban los programas «Dick Clark» y la «Plataforma americana» todas las tardes a las cuatro, cerraba la cantina, me preparaba un «Singapore Sling» doble, me acomodaba con un abanico de papel y prácticamente me desmayaba de pena. Yo sé cómo peinarme de esa manera. Realmente podría haber sido alguien en América.

Aunque es propietaria de un hotel próspero, Raquel se mantiene distante del pueblo de ese continente oscuro. Cuando se le pregunta por qué nunca regresó a Estados Unidos, describe todas las experiencias «horripilantes» de la vida en el Congo, y explica que ella ha cambiado y no se encontraría ya a gusto en Estados Unidos: «No se puede llegar simplemente a
answer. Oh goodness, the parties, the cars, the music—the whole carefree American way of life. When we finally got TV here, for a long while they ran Dick Clark and the American Bandstand every afternoon at four o’clock. I’d lock up the bar, make myself a double Singapore Sling, settle down with a paper fan and practically swoon with grief. I know how to do those hairstyles. I really could have been something in America.

Though she owns a prosperous hotel, Rachel keeps herself distant from the people of the Dark Continent. When asked why she never returned to America, she describes all the “weird” experiences of living in the Congo, explaining that she has been changed and would no longer fit in. “You can’t just sashay into the jungle aiming to change it all over the Christian style, without expecting the jungle to change you right back.”

In the beginning of the family’s sojourn in Africa, Leah, another daughter is adamantly defensive of her father and committed to his mission of baptizing the natives. Gradually circumstances force her to see differently. Of all the sisters, she is the one who becomes most acculturated, and learns from her African husband that the Portuguese colonizers considered the natives to be primitive and fit only for slavery. She learns from her experience of floods, famine, and other natural hardships:

Maybe in the long run people will persist happily here only if they return to the ways of the ancient Kongo, traveling by foot, growing their food near at hand, using their own tools and cloth near the site of production. I don’t know. To be here without doing everything wrong requires a new agriculture, a new sort of planning, a new religion. I am the unmissionary, beginning each day on my knees, asking to be converted. Forgive me, Africa, according to the multitudes of thy mercies.

Adah, Leah’s twin, leads such an interior life that it does not much matter where she lives. However, she is impelled by the multiplicity of diseases in Africa to become a research doctor in search of viruses. Adah sees air travel, roads, cities, prostitution, and the congregation of people for efficient commerce as gifts of godspeed to the virus. Regarding the problematic birth rate, she analyzes:

families have spent millions of years making nine in the hope of saving one, they cannot stop making nine. Culture is a slingshot moved by the force of its past . . . Overpopulation has deforested three quarters of Africa, yielding drought, famine and the
probable extinction of all animals most beloved by children and zoos. The competition for resources intensifies, and burgeoning tribes itch to kill each other. For every life saved by vaccination or food relief, one is lost to starvation or war.  

Although the reaction of each of the daughters to being immersed in a foreign culture is quite different, the novel presents the reader with a vivid portrayal of the significance and power of culture in shaping lives. It also provides a vicarious experience of living in a different culture and can give a new perspective on one's own. If you grew up and received your values in a country where “big is beautiful,” you will find yourself in a strange land when reading Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things. The initial effort of keeping track of characters with unfamiliar names is made more difficult because the story is presented like a picture puzzle, in small, seemingly disconnected pieces which the reader must patiently assemble. As the tragic picture becomes clearer, the cause of great suffering is found to lie in the cultural division of persons into touchable and untouchable. A forbidden relationship forces the involved couple in the story to live for the moment taking only one day at a time. They concentrate on the small things in life and are restricted to the promise of meeting again, no further than tomorrow.

The land also seems bound by a caste system. In the chapter entitled “God’s Own Country” a young woman revisits the mighty river of her youth and finds “a slow sludging green ribbon lawn that ferried fetid garbage to the sea.” An influential paddy-farmer lobby has exchanged their votes for a barrier. The cause of great suffering is found to lie in the cultural division of persons into touchable and untouchable. A forbidden relationship forces the involved couple in the story to live for the moment taking only one day at a time.

La causa de tan gran sufrimiento se encuentra en la división cultural de las personas tocables e intocables. La tierra también parece encadenada por el sistema de castas. En el capítulo titulado “El propio país de Dios” una joven vuelve a visitar el poderoso río de su juventud y encuentra «una tira de césped de lento sedimento que arrastra basura fétida al mar». Un influyente grupo de cabildeo de los cultivadores de arroz intercambiaron sus votos por una barrera que regulara la entrada de agua salada de regreso al mar. Así se puede cultivar más arroz, pero pagando el precio de un río. El olor putrefacto del río no impide a los ricos empresarios el construir una cadena de hoteles de cinco estrellas en el corazón de la oscuridad sabiendo que «el olor, como la pobreza de otros pueblos, era simplemente una cosa a la que uno se acostumbra». Se anuncia el hotel como situado en «el propio país de Dios» porque los árboles todavía están verdes y el cielo azul, y los huéspedes llegan a un oasis artificial inconscientes de la miseria cercana. Se lleva a los lectores a ver el sitio donde el hilo se enfrenta a la penalidad.
regulating the inflow of salt water from the backwaters of the sea. Thus more rice can be grown, but at the price of a river. The stench of the polluted river did not prevent wealthy entrepreneurs from building a five-star hotel chain in the heart of darkness knowing that "smelliness, like other peoples' poverty, was merely a matter of getting used to." The hotel is advertised as being situated in "God's Own Country" because the trees are still green and the skies blue, and the patrons come to an artificial oasis oblivious to the destitution nearby. Readers are taken to view the site where luxury confronts hardship.

It is somewhat disconcerting for the reader to be inserted into an environment where his/her own religion provides a dark background for the light of another faith. However, reading the concrete details of life lived in another persuasion can be an enlightening experience.

Religion plays a dominant role in culture. The two novels cited above can be somewhat abrasive for Christians. In each case, institutional Christianity is portrayed through the weakest and most villainous characters. While major religions have many common values and beliefs, it is somewhat disconcerting for the reader to be inserted into an environment where his/her own religion provides a dark background for the light of another faith. However, reading the concrete details of life lived in another persuasion can be an enlightening experience for the mature believer and helpful in sorting out essentials from superficialities in one's own faith.

Poets are another source of insight into the challenges and riches of unfamiliar cultures. Toi Derricote, an African-American poet, introduces her book, *The Black Notebooks*, with a quotation from Jesus, in the Gnostic Gospels:

*If you bring forth what is within you, what is within you will save you.*

*«La humillación por la que pasan los niños les afectará su modo de pensar en toda la vida.»*
If you do not bring forth what is within you, what is within you will destroy you.  

Derricotte kept a journal for twenty years after moving into an all-white neighborhood near New York City. Her honest exploration of what it means to be a black woman living in a racially divided world takes the reader into her inner world where (as one reviewer notes)

It takes a special love to reveal the pain, the hurt, the questions that one must raise if one is to be a whole human being. Toi Derricotte’s The Black Notebooks is not a journal of some far away exotic place but of that internal journey of the soul.  

Reflecting back on the experience of being black in a dominant white society, Derricotte labels racism as “child abuse,” for it strikes at the perception of self, leaving scars which take a lifetime to erase. The internalizing of inferiority cannot be blamed on the victim. The memories shared in these notebooks belie the idea that a mature person can easily shake off the effects of racism. Black Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall said, concerning the effects of racism on children, “The humiliation that the children go through will affect their minds as long as they live.” Derricotte’s experience of being black is intensified by her being able to pass easily as a white woman. She struggles with estrangement from her self when she allows others to treat her as if she were white. While purchasing her home, she is aware that realtors show her houses in better neighborhoods if she goes alone, rather than if her obviously black husband accompanies her. She is able to make friends in her new neighborhood on a superficial level, but she will never be allowed to join the club which they all enjoy.  

It is very painful to read the account of her fear of not being trusted in the local drug store, where she constantly worries that her blackness will be discovered. For a long time she pays cash expecting that her credit card will be challenged if it becomes known that she is black. She imagines that she will be suspected of shoplifting. One day when she is shopping in the store, long after she has established herself as a responsible customer, she meets her best friend. This is a woman with whom she has been able to deeply share her deepest experiences and fears around trying to make a success of living in a white neighborhood. To her shame and self-

llama el racismo «un abuso de niños», porque maltrata la percepción de sí mismo, dejando cicatrices que tardan toda una vida para borrarse. No se puede culpar a la víctima por marcar su interior con la inferioridad. Las memorias compartidas en estos cuadernos representan falsamente la idea de que una persona madura puede fácilmente sacudir los efectos del racismo. El juez negro de la Corte Suprema, Thurgood Marshall, dijo, en lo que se refiere a los efectos del racismo en los niños: «La humillación por la que pasan los niños afectará sus mentes durante toda su vida». La experiencia de Derricotte por ser negra se intensifica al ser capaz de pasar fácilmente como una mujer blanca. Lucha con la separación de su propio ser cuando permite que otros la traten como si fuera blanca. Al comprar su casa, está consciente de que los corredores de bienes raíces le muestran casas en las colonias mejores si ella va sola pero no lo hacen así si su esposo, obviamente negro, la acompaña. Ella es capaz de hacer amigos en su nueva colonia en un nivel superficial, pero nunca se le permitirá ser miembro del club que todos gozan.  

Es muy doloroso el leer la narración de su temor porque no se confía en ella en la botica local, donde constantemente teme que descubran que es negra. Por mucho tiempo paga al contado creyendo que su tarjeta de crédito no será recibida si se sabe públicamente que es negra. Se imagina que van a sospechar que se roba cosas de la tienda. Un día, cuando estaba comprando en una tienda, mucho después de que se había ya considerado como una clienta responsable, encuentra a su mejor amiga. Esta es una mujer con la que ha podido compartir íntimamente sus experiencias y sus temores más profundos al tratar de tener éxito viviendo en una colonia de blancos. Para su vergüenza y disgusto consigo misma se da cuenta que quiere ignorar y evitar a su amiga, cuyo color de piel es oscuro. Este episodio subraya para Derricotte los terribles efectos internos de la discriminación cultural.  

En un reciente número de San Francisco Católico, el Padre Anthony McGuire tiene un artículo titulado: «Para comprender los niveles de la cultura». Compara la cultura con un témpano del cual podemos ver, escuchar, tocar, saborear solamente la punta: el idioma, costumbres, trajes, alimentos, color de la piel. Pero por debajo de ese nivel está un gran nivel inconsciente que afecta a través del nivel consciente: un sistema de creencias, valores, reglas
disgust she finds herself wanting to ignore and avoid her friend, whose skin color is dark. This episode underlines for Derricotte the terrible internal effects of cultural discrimination.10

In a recent issue of Catholic San Francisco, Father Anthony McGuire has an article entitled “Understanding Levels of Culture.” He compares culture to an iceberg, the tip of which we can see, hear, touch, taste: the language, customs, dress, food, skin color. But beneath that level is a whole unconscious level which is at work through the conscious level: the belief system, values, rules of behavior, the entire framework for interpreting the world.

Too often the new member is expected to conform to established customs without any dialogue. An opportunity to grow in openness to multiculturalism begins at home.

The literature of a people puts us in touch with both of these levels. It is possible to see only the tip unless we are willing to attend carefully to the underlying currents which are even more indicative of the reality of a particular people. To read with an eye for cultural innuendoes takes effort and practice. It means not just saying “How strange!” and moving on. It requires a respect for difference and a desire to embrace the whole of creation. A letter to the editor regarding “Understanding Levels of Culture” in a subsequent issue indicated a prevalent lack of openness: “Too many new immigrants want us to change to their ways, whereas they should realize that our ways, the American way, is now or should be their ways.”11

This seems to be a prevailing attitude in many of our religious communities. Too often the new member is expected to conform to established customs without any dialogue. An opportunity to grow in openness to multiculturalism begins at home. An additional challenge is to be sensitive to the actions of others that irritate us or make us uncomfortable; our reactions can provide good insight into hidden aspects of our own shadow that need to be brought to de conducta, todo el marco para interpretar el mundo. La literatura de un pueblo nos pone en contacto con estos dos niveles. Es posible ver sólo la punta superior si no estamos dispuestos a fijarnos cuidadosamente en las corrientes subterráneas que indican aún más la realidad de un pueblo en particular. Leer con los ojos que buscan características culturales exige esfuerzo y práctica. Significa no solamente decir: ¡"Qué raro"! y seguir adelante. Exige respeto por las diferencias y deseo de abrazar a toda la creación. Una carta del editor referente a «Para comprender los niveles de la cultura» en el siguiente número indicaba una falta constante de apertura: «Demasiados inmigrantes nuevos quieren que cambíemos a su modo de ser, cuando al contrario ellos deberían de darse cuenta que nuestro modo de ser, el modo de ser estadounidense, es ahora o debería ser su modo de ser».11

Esto parece ser una actitud constante en muchas de nuestras comunidades religiosas. Con mucha frecuencia se espera que un miembro nuevo se conforme a las costumbres establecidas sin ningún diálogo. La oportunidad para crecer abiertos al multiculturalismo empieza en el hogar. Un desafío más es ser sensibles a las acciones de los que nos irritan o nos hacen sentir mal; nuestras reacciones pueden darnos una buena idea de los aspectos escondidos de nuestra propia sombra que necesitamos reconocer conscientemente y aceptarla en lugar de proyectarla a los demás. Es interesante saber que en la literatura celta antigua el «extranjero» era frecuentemente el «diablo» y por lo tanto peligroso y digno de ser rechazado. Aunque esto no es una excusa para el prejuicio, nos ayuda a comprender algunas de las razones de nuestra propia conducta y de la de los demás. En lugar de despreciar a las personas que expresan opiniones que nos ofenden, es una práctica útil mirarlos como maestros. ¿Qué podemos aprender de ellos sobre lo más

La oportunidad de crecer abiertos al multiculturalismo empieza en el hogar.
consciousness and accepted, rather than projected onto others. It is enlightening to learn that in ancient Celtic literature the “stranger” was frequently the “devil” and therefore dangerous and to be spurned. While this is no excuse for prejudice, it does help us to understand some of the reasons for our own and others’ behavior. Rather than writing off people who express opinions which offend us, it is a useful practice to look on them as teachers. What can we learn from them about the depths of self? What can lead us to our true Self, for which we search?

The Action Plan of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, in directing us to take on the issue of multiculturalism, connects directly with our charism of ministering to oppressed and poverty-stricken peoples. We have dedicated ourselves to their service. Our current emphasis on multiculturalism comes from several perspectives: appreciation of and respect for the rich differences among ourselves, the opportunity for personal enrichment from exposure to other cultures and our ministry of service. Supplementing our community discussions and actions with personal reading can put us in touch with perceptive insights and intense feelings that are the gift of literature. Books provide the key to travel beyond our own familiar surroundings and customs and to encounter the great richness of this many-cultured planet.

Notes

1. Isaiah, chapter 11
3. Ibid., p.515
4. Ibid., p 525
5. Ibid., p. 528
7. Ibid., p. 120
9. Ibid., pp. 155-158
11. Ibid.
Parish Restructuring in Multicultural Communities

Maria Elena Gonzalez, R.S.M.

As I begin my reflection, I need to say that I do it as a Mexican-American woman. What I say about Hispanics can easily be said about our brothers and sisters of other minority groups.

I have been asked to address four points with you—four points in the context of cultural/ethnic barriers to restructuring parishes and rethinking boundaries. These four points are:

1. The importance of respecting the ethnic/cultural heritage of all demographic groups to be found in parishes today.
2. How best to involve these groups in parish restructuring.
3. Mind-sets that contribute to or hinder the mission of the parish.
4. Key issues about the ethnic/cultural values of parish life which, hopefully, will stretch our thinking as we address parish restructuring.

I will first make preliminary comments that will give us the common ground needed to explore cultural/ethnic barriers to full parish life. These comments are divided into four sections:

1. What is parish?
2. The role of Eucharist in the parish.
3. Culture.
4. Transformation and restructuring.

With these comments serving as a background, I will name the mind-sets in both the dominant groups and other cultural groups that seem to block the fullness of parish life; the attitudes that break through these barriers and the challenges resulting from our considerations.

Let us begin.

Reestructuración de la parroquia en las comunidades multiculturales

A l empezar mi reflexión, necesito decir que lo hago como méxico-americana. Lo que digo sobre los hispanos puede fácilmente decirse de nuestros hermanos y hermanas de otros grupos minoritarios.

Se me ha pedido que hable de cuatro puntos con ustedes, cuatro puntos en el contexto de barreras etnoculturales para reestructurar parroquias y volver a pensar las fronteras. Estos cuatro puntos son:

1. La importancia de respetar la herencia etnocultural de todos los grupos demográficos que se encuentran en las parroquias hoy día.
2. Cómo se puede hacer que estos grupos participen en la reestructuración de la parroquia.
3. Modos de pensar que contribuyen o obstaculizan la misión de la parroquia.
4. Temas claves sobre los valores etnoculturales de la vida parroquial, la cual, esperamos, ampliará nuestro pensamiento cuando hablemos sobre la re-estructuración de la parroquia.

Primero haré unos comentarios preliminares que nos darán la base común necesaria para explorar las barreras etnoculturales de una plena vida parroquial. Estos comentarios se dividen en cuatro secciones.

1. ¿Qué es una parroquia?
2. El papel de la Eucaristía en una parroquia.
3. La cultura.
4. Transformación y reestructuración.

Teniendo en cuenta estos comentarios, nombraré ciertas ideas fijas, tanto en los grupos dominantes como en otros grupos culturales, que parecen ser el obstáculo para la plenitud de la vida parroquial; las actitudes que rompen estas barreras y los retos que resultan de nuestra reflexión.

Empecemos.
1. What Is Parish?

John Paul II has told us that parish is a community of communities, a family of families. If this is so, then parish is a “home.” In any culture, home is a place where people have a sense of belonging, of personal worth, of giving and receiving from each other, of sharing the hard and beautiful things in life. Home is a place where we come to know God and to pray.

John Paul II has told us that parish is a community of communities, a family of families. If this is so, then parish is a “home.”

As simple as this sounds, I want to think of the parish in terms of home, a place where we can come together, knowing that we belong; knowing that we are related; that we can give and receive from each other; that we can share the hard and beautiful things in life; a place where we come to know God more fully; a place where we can pray.

Because we are a Catholic family, a universal family, all are welcomed into the family. In fact, the more diversity we have in our parish, the more catholic we are. To think of a Catholic parish in terms of a place where diversity is valued and everyone is welcomed because everyone belongs is not a new thought, but one which stretches our imagination. It is a thought, however, that stretches our hearts and touches our very being. Its very simplicity challenges every one of us to have hearts as large as Jesus of Nazareth. And it is this challenge, to be Jesus in today’s world, that we easily dismiss as idealistic. When we consider a challenge to be idealistic, we can excuse ourselves from the challenge. In this case, we can excuse ourselves from being the very person Jesus calls us to be.

A Catholic parish—a place where diversity is valued and everyone is welcomed because everyone belongs: This is not idealism. This is the call of the gospel.
2. The role of the Eucharist in the Life of the Parish.

The Eucharist is the focal point in the life of a parish community. It serves to remind us day after day, Sunday after Sunday, that our source of unity is Jesus Christ and that our common belief is the God about whom Jesus of Nazareth taught us. We gather around the table as a family, as brothers and sisters of Jesus and each other, to celebrate our hope in God and in each other; to break open the Word for our everyday lives; to be nourished so that we might be faithful to the Word in our everyday living. Eucharist is about family around the table.

The Eucharist, however, cannot be contained in the thirty minutes or the one hour in which we gather inside the church building. No, Eucharist is about being family, day in and day out. I cannot be family, I cannot be brother and sister around the altar on Sunday morning unless I am brother and sister during the week. Is Eucharist a countersign to the normal divisions of the society around us? Tolerance of those who are different because of ethnicity or cultural background for one hour on Sunday morning is not Eucharist. Peaceful coexistence among different cultural or ethnic groups is not the family of Jesus gathering around the table.

To be a eucharistic people on Sunday morning demands that we be involved in the process of becoming a eucharistic people all week long.

To be a eucharistic people on Sunday morning demands that we be involved in the process of becoming a eucharistic people all week long. Eucharist is being and acting in community with all peoples. To be a eucharistic people means to understand that Jesus and his Abba are the ones holding the banquet. The table belongs to them, and we are all invited guests. To be eucharistic is to be thankful with our whole being that we have received an invitation. To accept the eucharistic invitation is to accept shar-

3. Cultura

En la sociedad de hoy día, la palabra cultura tiene muchos significados. Así, cuando usamos la palabra cultura, ¿qué es lo que en verdad queremos decir? La cultura abarca todo en nuestra vida. No es sólo cómo somos, sino quiénes somos. Es nuestra historia, nuestra etnia, qué pensamos de nuestras familias, a quiénes incluimos como parte de nuestra familia, las fiestas que celebramos, cómo celebramos, los alimentos que comemos, con quiénes comemos. Es el idioma que usamos, las expresiones que sabe-
ing the banquet with all other invited guests of Jesus, regardless of their cultural/ethnic backgrounds. We do not control who receives an invitation. We can only control our own choice: to sit at the table with all others or to skip the banquet.

3. Culture

In today's society, the word culture carries with it many connotations. So when we use the word culture, what exactly do we mean? Culture is all-encompassing of our lives. It is not only how we are, it is who we are. It is our history, our ethnicity, how we think about our families, whom we include in our families, the feasts we celebrate, the food we eat, with whom we eat. It is the language we use, the expressions we know. It is how we think about God, how we feel about God, when and where and how often we relate to God. It is how we relate to the mother of God, to the saints, and to the faithful departed. It is how we pray when we are alone and how we pray when we are together. And it is the way we were taught to relate to each other and how we relate to the stranger. It is the way we think and judge. We are born into a culture and learn what is right according to our elders. In short, I am formed by my culture. Where I am, I bring my culture. It is not something separate from me. It simply is a core part of me.

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But culture is the particular way in which a human group interprets life and relates with nature, God, the world and other peoples. Culture is not accidental, but an integral part of human life. Culture is lived and expressed through traditions, language, relationships, food, music, and religious expressions. It embraces the totality of the life of the group and the life of each individual who belongs
Inculturation is an ongoing reciprocal process between faith and culture. It is a way of looking at the customs, rites, and rituals of people to discover in them the active and saving presence of God. Through inculturation, the church affirms what is good in a culture; purifies what is false and evil; strengthens what is weak; educates what is ignorant. Inculturation was mentioned for the first time in the official document “Message to the People of God,” produced at the end of the Synod of Bishops on catechetics in 1977. Pope John Paul II includes it in his apostolic exhortation Catechesi Tradendae and indicates its importance in the Final Report, Part II, D, 4 of the extraordinary synod of 1985. It is unthinkable to speak of a total holistic parish formation program without taking culture and inculturation into consideration, not just to “adapt” the culture to Christianity, but to make it flourish and help it develop its full potential with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Within the church, we talk in terms of culture and faith expressions. For our purposes, let me simply echo what church leaders tell us: There is no faith expression outside of culture. There is no way to authentically and deeply express our faith without bringing to that expression who we are, what we value, how we think about God, each other and the stranger, without bringing our cultural heritage. Without our cultural heritage, without ourselves in our very faith expression, we have

There is no faith expression outside of culture. There is no way to authentically and deeply express our faith without bringing to that expression who we are, what we value, how we think about God, each other and the stranger, without bringing our cultural heritage.

profundamente sin llevar a esa expresión lo que somos, lo que valoramos, lo que pensamos acerca de Dios, de los demás, del extranjero; in usar nuestra herencia cultural. Sin nuestra herencia cultural, sin nosotros mismos en nuestra misma expresión de fe, no tenemos nada más ni nada menos que palabras vacías y gestos sin sentido.

Se me ha ocurrido que cuando hablamos acerca de grupos y sus pasados culturales, generalmente hablamos de grupos minoritarios en Estados Unidos: los americanos nativos, los hispanos, los asiáticos, los africano-americanos. Es raro que hablemos con mucho sentido de la herencia cultural de la clase dominante. Creo que esto es también cierto dentro de la Iglesia. Y, me pregunto, ¿por qué? ¿Por qué se asocia la cultura y la expresión cultural predominantemente con los grupos minoritarios? Y ¿qué nos dice esto de la clase dominante?

¿Podría ser que la cultura dominante en una sociedad no esté consciente de la cultura como la hemos definido y que el grupo dominante llegue a entender lo que es cultura, no al conocer la suya propia, sino al ver y sentir la de otros? Si esto es cierto, y es lo que sospecho, esto nos clarifica obviamente que el grupo dominante no está consciente de su herencia cultural, sin darse cuenta de que la está viviendo realmente cada día de su existencia. Fácilmente se siente temeroso de cualquier grupo que esté consciente de su herencia.

El grupo dominante se puede sentir amenazado por las preguntas que hacen tales grupos, preguntas que desafían el modo como son las cosas. Cuando una persona o grupo de personas no está consciente de su herencia cultural ni cómo esa herencia influye su vida diaria, entonces esa persona o grupo de personas no tiene base con la cual puede entender la necesidad de orar y celebrar a través de las costumbres y en el idioma en que uno se siente más en casa. La lengua oficial de la iglesia ha cambiado del latín a la vernácula porque la Iglesia reconoció el valor de rezar y ofrecer culto en el idioma nativo.

Cuando el inglés es la lengua nativa y las celebraciones litúrgicas son siempre en inglés, ¿por qué debe preocuparle a una persona de habla inglesa la necesidad y el derecho de orar en el idioma nativo? ¿Por qué? Por el llamado del Evangelio.

El Segundo Concilio Vaticano reconoce que Dios está presente en toda nuestra vida y se revela
nothing more and nothing less than empty words and meaningless gestures.

It has slowly occurred to me that when we talk about groups and their cultural backgrounds we are usually speaking of minority groups in the United States: the Native Americans, the Hispanics, the Asians, the Afro-Americans. It is rare for us to speak meaningfully of the cultural heritage of a dominant class. I believe that this is also true within the church. And, I ask myself, Why is this so? Why are culture and cultural expression associated predominantly with the minority groups? And what does this say about the dominant class?

Could it be that the dominant culture in society is not aware of culture as we have defined culture and that the dominant group comes first to understand culture not by understanding its own, but in seeing and feeling someone else's? If this is true, which I suspect it is, what becomes obvious is that the dominant group not being in touch with their cultural heritage, not realizing that they are indeed dealing with their own cultural heritage every single day of their lives, can easily become leery of any group that is in touch with its heritage.

The dominant group can easily feel threatened by questions posed by such groups, questions that challenge the way things are. When a person or group of persons is not aware of one's cultural heritage and how that heritage influences one's everyday life, then that person or group of persons has no basis from which to understand the need to pray and celebrate through the customs and in the language with which one feels most at home. The official church language changed from Latin to the vernacular because the church recognized the value of praying and worshiping in one's native language.

When English is one's native language and liturgical celebrations are always in English, why would an English-speaking person be concerned about the need and the right to pray in one's native tongue? Why? Because of the call of the gospel.

Vatican II recognizes that God is present in all of our life and is revealed through ordinary things and events. What is important is to discover God's revelation, not that we are uniform in the way we come to the discovery of God present in our life. Do we accomplish this by using Latin, English, Spanish, or Vietnamese or any other language? By keeping some directives and regulations or adapting them?
Do we embrace persons that act like us or include those who express the same truth in another language with other symbols? Missionaries are exhorted to discover God’s presence and the seeds of the Word in the cultures to which they are sent. Are we in our dioceses and parishes exhorted to anything more or less than to discover God’s presence and the seeds of the Word in the people with whom we live and are neighbors? Or is this exhortation just for missionaries in foreign lands?

It is easy to understand why people who have the need to celebrate according to their cultural heritage are considered problems. They challenge how things are, what feasts are celebrated, how feasts are celebrated, how the community prays together, when and how often the church building will be used.

The truth is that all of us, regardless of our ethnicity, our cultural background, have a cultural heritage that we bring to the parish, to the banquet table. Some of us, however, are simply more in touch with our cultural heritage than others.

4. Transformation

Words are important. How we name someone or something is important. Are we speaking of restructuring our parishes or are we speaking of transforming them? A parish cannot be transformed unless the parishioners are transformed. For this we need evangelization: a parish that evangelizes and is evangelized. What do we understand by evangelization? Conversion to a closer following of Christ, to a deeper personal love of God, to a fuller living of our baptismal dignity.

Any significant change comes from the process of transformation. The chairs on the deck of the Titanic could have been rearranged 1,000 times, but the ship still sank. All the restructuring of parish structures, addition of positions, redefining roles, adjusting geographic boundaries will not assure that people’s hearts are open to those of a different race or culture or guarantee that an eucharistic people will be formed. Only personal and communal conversion to the good news of Jesus Christ can do that. The real issue of change is not about structures, but about how to facilitate personal and communal relationships to Jesus Christ. Anything short of that is not worth our time and effort. Only in transforming parishes or dioceses can we expect our true Christian identity to begin to take root.

Ideas fijas que son obstáculos

Estamos ahora listos para ver ciertas ideas fijas que son obstáculos para reestructurar la vida de una parroquia. Voy a empezar con las ideas fijas de la cultura dominante y luego hablaremos de las ideas fijas de los grupos minoritarios. Por favor entiendan conmigo que las ideas fijas no se aplican universalmente a todos. No se pueden aplicar a todas las personas de un grupo, ni están necesariamente conscientes en aquellos que tienen esas ideas fijas.

1. La primera idea fija puede describirse simplemente como ésta: «Los que tienen una herencia cultural son un problema». Son los que tienen que tener una Misa especial, tienen que usar su propio idioma y costumbres. Ellos son los que tienen que tener la Iglesia abierta en horas especiales y extrañas. Ellos deben aprender inglés. Es esta idea fija la que ignora totalmente cualquier idea de cultura y pronto divide la familia parroquial en «nosotros» y «ellos».

2. «La parroquia nos pertenece a nosotros». El «nosotros» en la primera idea fija avanza a apropiarse de la parroquia. Esta parroquia es nuestra. El modo como celebramos—cómo, qué y cuándo celebramos nos pertenece a nosotros. Si te quieres unir a nosotros, bien, pero, debes hacerlo a nuestra manera. La mesa Eucarística pertenece al «nosotros» del grupo y ya no pertenece a Jesús ni al Dios de quien nos habla Jesús. Y con esta idea fija, tratamos de pensar cómo incluir a estas personas, en lugar de comprender que la parroquia nos pertenece a todos nosotros y que el punto está en cómo llegamos a comprendernos y a apreciarnos unos a otros.

3. La tercera idea fija es creer que el ser católico es igual a ser estadounidense, en lugar de afirmar que decir católico es decir universal. Cualquier
light of how to facilitate conversion to the gospel should structures be studies.

**Mind-Sets that Are Barriers**

We are now ready to look at mind-sets that are barriers to restructuring parish living. I will begin with mind-sets of the dominant culture and then discuss mind-sets of the minority groups. Please understand with me that mind-sets are not universal in application. They do not apply to every person in a group, nor are they necessarily conscious in those who have certain mind-sets.

1. The first mind-set can simply be described as this: “Those with cultural heritage are a problem!” They are the ones who have to have a special Mass using their own language and customs. They are the ones who have to have the church opened up at special and odd times. They need to learn English. It is this mentality that totally ignores any understanding of culture and quickly divides the parish family into us and them.

2. “The parish belongs to us.” The us in the first mind-set moves to ownership of the parish. This parish is ours. The way we celebrate—how, what and when we celebrate—belongs to us. If you want to join us, fine, but you must do it our way. The eucharistic table belongs to the us of the parish and no longer belongs to Jesus and the God about whom Jesus teaches us. And with this mind-set we try to figure out how to include these peoples, instead of understanding that the parish belongs to all of us and the issue is how do we come to understand and appreciate each other.

3. A third mind-set equates Catholic to American, as opposed to equating Catholic to universal. Whoever doesn’t look American doesn’t easily find a home in our social or parish life. Within our American culture and within our American church—and both entities are becoming more and more synonymous—we find straightforward racism stemming from cultural stereotypes: “Mexicans are dirty,” “Hispanics are always late,” etc. We don’t want them in our church. It would be interesting to know how many Catholics voted for Proposition 187 in California and the reasons behind this vote.

4. “Religion is a private affair.” It is this mentality that allows a person to tolerate another from a different cultural heritage within the liturgy on Sunday for one hour and during the week completely shun this person that no parezca estadounidense no encuentra fácilmente un hogar en nuestra vida social o eclesiástica. Dentro de nuestra cultura estadounidense y dentro de nuestra iglesia estadounidense—and ambas entidades se están haciendo más y más sinónimas—se encuentra un racismo claro que surge de estereotipos culturales: «Los mexicanos son sucios», «Los hispanos siempre llegan tarde», etc. No los queremos en nuestra iglesia. Sería interesante saber cuántos católicos votaron a favor de la Proposición 187 en California y las razones detrás de ese voto.

4. «La religión es un asunto privado». Es este modo de pensar lo que permite que una persona tolera a otra herencia cultural diferente durante la liturgia del domingo por una hora, pero durante la semana evita completamente a esa misma persona. Cuando se considera la religión como algo privado, no va más allá de cumplir con un deber y quizás se limita a la oración privada y a la Misa de domingo. La manera como me relaciono con Dios no influye cómo me relaciono con mi prójimo.

5. «Unidad es lo mismo que uniformidad». En un nivel consciente sabemos que esto no es cierto. Pero inconscientemente, parece que definimos la unidad de la parroquia como rezar todos juntos y celebrar exactamente de la misma manera. O aceptamos que la forma en que el grupo dominante celebra como la norma correcta para las celebraciones. La diversidad cultural exige que el Evangelio penetre las diferentes expresiones culturales que están presentes en la parroquia; permitiendo que muchas expresiones culturales tengan la libertad de celebrar al Dios entre nosotros; esa diversidad nos lleva a la plenitud de Dios y a celebrar a Dios como nuestra verdadera fuente de unidad. No tenemos que parecernos ni que rezar de la misma forma ni cantar los mismos himnos para celebrar la misma Eucaristía.

Permitir la libertad de expresión es invitar a todos en la parroquia a ver y sentir los muchos rostros del mismo Dios. Ser una comunidad de comunidades, una familia de familias, es descubrir la fuerza de nuestra fuente común y celebrar la diversidad entre nosotros.

**Ideas fijas entre las minorías**

1. «Lo que diga el Padre...». Se nos enseñó a tener respeto a la autoridad de la iglesia presente en nuestro párroco local. Se nos enseñó a nunca pre-
same person. Religion, when privatized, does not necessarily go beyond performance of duty and is perhaps confined to private prayer and Sunday Mass. How I relate to God does not influence how I relate to my neighbor.

5. "Unity equals uniformity." On a conscious level, we know that this is not so. But subconsciously, we seem to define parish unity as all of us praying and celebrating in the exact same way. Or we accept how the dominant group celebrates as the norm for correct celebrations. Cultural diversity demands the gospel to penetrate the many cultural expressions present in a parish, allowing the many cultural expressions freedom to celebrate the God among us; brings us the fullness of God and celebrates God as our true source of unity. We do not have to look alike or pray alike or sing the same songs to celebrate the same Eucharist.

To allow freedom of expression is to invite all in the parish to experience the many faces of the same God. To be a community of communities, a family of families, is to discover the strength of our common source and celebrate the diversity among us.

Mind-Sets in Minorities

1. "Whatever Father says..." We were brought up to respect the authority of the church present in our local pastor. We were taught not to question, to keep our place, to "do what Father says." This mind-set
guntar, a mantener nuestro lugar, a «hacer lo que el Padre dice». Esta idea fija nos permite estar poco atentos y, en cierta forma, ser irresponsables. Porque niega la acción del Espíritu en cada uno de nosotros; niega los muchos dones del Espíritu que se nos han dado a cada uno de nosotros para el bien de la comunidad.

2. Automenosprecio: Muchos de los grupos de los Estados Unidos que están muy conscientes de su herencia cultural han sido oprimidos o continúan siéndolo.

La opresión ataca la misma autoimagen de una persona y/o de un pueblo. Como resultado, se transmite generación a generación un profundo sentido de inferioridad que nos hace sentir que no somos capaces ni dignos de ser la diferencia en nuestra Iglesia. Ésta es una humildad falsa. Asumimos o llegamos a ser, desprecio pero con certeza, lo que la gente dice que somos. Abandonamos nuestros dones y talentos.

3. Fatalismo: Este sentido de inferioridad se profundiza en nosotros y nos lleva a un nivel consciente e inconsciente de creer que las cosas no pueden mejorarse. Las cosas son como son. Ésta es la voluntad de Dios y debo aceptarla. Este sentido de fatalismo es en sí mismo algo que mata porque me priva de toda motivación para tratar de mejorar mi propia vida, la vida de mi familia y de la comunidad.

4. «El estilo estadounidense de hacer las cosas es el mejor». Con el fin de recibir aprobación, de ser aceptada, estoy dispuesta a abandonar toda la riqueza de mi herencia cultural para mezclarme con la mayoría. En el Prefacio de la novela, Lluvia de oro, el autor Víctor Villasenor nos dice:

Al llegar a mi adolescencia, las historias del pasado de mis padres se alejaban más y eran menos importantes conforme me hacía más y más «estadounidense». Y a mis 20 años llegué, por desgracia, al punto en que no quería ni oír de nuestro pasado porque no podía realmente creer más en las historias de mis padres. Luego al llegar a los 30, y al encontrar a la mujer con quien deseaba casarme y tener hijos, de repente me di cuenta lo vacío que me sentiría si no pudiera decirles a mis hijos algo sobre mis raíces ancestrales.2

El estilo estadounidense llega a ser el mejor porque representa aceptación, trabajo, un hogar, prosperidad, éxito. Pero estilo estadounidense sigue sin ser examinado a fondo en todos los niveles. Esta mentalidad de parte de las minorías causa la pérdida de las
allows us to be mindless and, in ways, irresponsible. For it denies the activity of the Spirit in each one of us; it denies the many gifts of the Spirit given to each one of us for the sake of the community.

2. Self-depreciation. Many of the groups in the United States who are acutely aware of their cultural heritage have been oppressed and/or continue to be oppressed.

Oppression attacks the very self-image of a person and/or of a people. As a result, a profound sense of inferiority is passed from one generation to the next, a sense of inferiority that allows us to feel that we are neither capable nor worthy to make a difference in our church. This is false humility. We assume or we become, slowly but surely, what people say we are. We give up our giftedness.

3. Fatalism. This sense of inferiority deepens in us and brings us to a conscious and subconscious level of believing that things cannot get better. Things are the way they are. This is God’s will, and this I must accept. This sense of fatalism is in itself deadly for it takes away any motivation to work to improve how my life is, how the life of my family and community is.

4. “The American way is the best way.” To find approval, to experience acceptance, I become willing to let go of all the richness of my cultural heritage in order to blend in with the majority. From the foreword to Rain of Gold, the author, Victor Villaseñor, has this to say:

Reaching my teens, the stories of my parents past grew distant and less important as I become more and more Anglicized. And in my 20s, I reached the point where, regrettably, I didn’t want to hear about our past because I couldn’t really believe in my parents’ stories anymore. Then turning 30, and finding the woman that I wished to marry and have my children with, I suddenly realized how empty I’d feel if I couldn’t tell my children about our ancestral roots. 2

The American way becomes the best way, for it represents acceptance, jobs, a home, prosperity, success. But the American way goes unscrutinized on many levels. This mentality on the part of the minority causes a loss of one’s roots and one’s identity. Consequently, the church is denied a valuable source of critical evaluation. Diversity based on the same values adds to the richness of life; it does not subtract from it.

5. When a group of people carry within themselves a history of oppression and the resulting fatal-

raíces e identidad propias, consecuentemente se niega a la Iglesia una buena fuente de evaluación crítica. La diversidad basada en los mismos valores añade a la riqueza de la vida; no la disminuye.

5. Cuando un grupo de personas lleva consigo una historia de opresión y del resultante fatalismo, con frecuencia se fragmenta. No podemos cambiar el mundo exterior en el que vivimos. No nos atrevemos a expresar nuestra ira hacia la mayoría. Por lo tanto, lo que hacemos es expresar nuestra ira en el único lugar seguro que tenemos—en el hogar. Nos peleamos entre nosotros, con frecuencia nos matamos, si no físicamente, lo hacemos espiritual y sicológicamente.

6. Tendemos a pensar que el único lugar seguro es entre los nuestros. Por lo tanto, al buscar la seguridad nos retiramos para estar juntos y permanecemos entre los nuestros, dando la apariencia de ser los que somos exclusivos. Retirarnos para estar con los nuestros nos priva de la interacción con los demás que son distintos a nosotros. Nos volvemos un gueto (un grupo exclusivo o cerrado) y, una vez más, la riqueza de la diversidad se pierde.

Estas ideas fijas, no importa quién las tenga, impedirán la transformación de muchos pueblos en el Pueblo de Dios. Estas ideas fijas que pertenecen al grupo dominante o a una minoría nos llevan como parte nuestra herencia cultural. Nuestra cultura nos ha enseñado esto. Toda la reestructuración que hagamos en el mundo no resolverá los problemas en las parroquias de hoy día, a no ser que nosotros como pueblo cambiamos el modo de pensar sobre Dios, sobre nosotros mismos y sobre los demás. Debemos romper estas ideas fijas que nos impiden ser una comunidad de comunidades. Y la pregunta fundamental de toda reestructuración se convierte en ¿Cómo podemos superar esos obstáculos y ayudarnos unos a otros a superarlos para descubrir en unos y otros a nuestros hermanos y hermanas, no importando la raza ni la cultura? ¿Cómo podemos romper esas barreras?

La verdadera fuente de transformación para un cristiano viene de nuestra relación con Dios en Jesucristo. Porque es en Jesús que llegamos a conocer lo que es:

➤ La plena aceptación de nosotros mismos.
➤ El respeto por cada persona.
➤ La aceptación de cada uno de los invitados a la mesa del banquete.
ism, the group often breaks down within itself. We can’t change the outside world that we experience. We dare not express our anger toward the majority. So what we do is express our anger in the only safe place we have—at home. We do battle among ourselves, oftentimes killing one another; if not physically, then spiritually and psychologically.

6. We tend to think that the only safe place is among our own. So for security’s sake we retreat to each other and stay with one another, giving the appearance of being the ones who are exclusive. The retreat to our own takes us out of interaction with others who are unlike us. We become a ghetto and, once again, the richness of diversity is lost.

These mind-sets, regardless to whom they belong, will interfere with the transformation of peoples into the people of God. These mind-sets belonging to the dominant group or to a minority come to us as part of our cultural heritage. Our culture has taught us these things. All the restructuring in the world will not solve the problems of present-day parishes unless we as a people change the way we think about God, ourselves, and each other. We must break through these mind-sets that keep us from being a community of communities. And the foundational question of all restructuring becomes, How do we break through and help each other break through to discover each other as brother and sister, regardless of race or culture? How do we break through?

The true source of transformation for a Christian comes from our relationship with God in Jesus the Christ. For it is in Jesus that we come to know:

- Full acceptance of ourselves.
- Respect for every person.
- Openness to each of the invited guests at the banquet table.
- A hospitality based on the innate worth and beauty of each person.

And in contrast to the inclusive way of Jesus, we come to see and acknowledge our mistakes, our sinful history of exclusion. In Jesus, we find the courage to ask forgiveness and to forgive.

At the heart of parish life has to be our personal journey with Jesus, how we facilitate this journey with Jesus. How we facilitate this journey for each other, how we invite each other to share this relationship in community for the sake of the community

- La hospitalidad basada en la dignidad y belleza innatas de cada persona.

Y en contraste con el modo inclusivo de Jesús, llegamos a ver y reconocer nuestras faltas, nuestra historia pecadora de exclusivismo. En Jesús encontramos el valor para pedir perdón y perdonar.

En el corazón de la vida parroquial tiene que estar nuestro camino personalmente con Jesús, cómo podemos facilitar este camino con Jesús? En el centro de todas las preguntas para la reestructuración de una parroquia están éstas: cómo facilitamos este camino con Jesús para los demás? ¿cómo nos invitamos unos a otros a compartir esta relación comunitaria para el bien de la comunidad y para apoyar a cada persona según sus necesidades y deseos? Lo que compartimos tiene mucho que ver con nuestra herencia cultural.

Aunque, sin importar nuestra herencia cultural, hay algunas cosas que debemos todos de tratar de entender:

1. No hay una sola respuesta sobre cómo debe reestructurarse toda parroquia. Cada familia de familias, cada comunidad de comunidades, es diferente y deben trabajar todos unidos en cómo se tie ne que hacer esa reestructuración.

2. Si somos fieles a la conversión continua que nos pide el mensaje evangélico, seguiremos cambiando cómo se ven nuestras parroquias. Porque seguiremos descubriendo a nuestros hermanos y hermanas y los aceptaremos cuando nos acerquemos a la mesa. Toda influencia cultural nueva cambiará la vida de la parroquia. En lugar de permanecer atrapados en una cultura, formaremos una unidad más profunda entre más florezca la diversidad. Una vez más seremos un pueblo peregrino. Una vez más seremos una Iglesia inmigrante en lugar de la Iglesia de la clase media a la que hemos llegado.

3. Tenemos que recordar que el cambio de estructura no es lo mismo que el cambio de corazón ni garantiza la formación de un pueblo de Dios.

4. Todos necesitamos, bien sea que somos miembros de la cultura dominante o de una minoría, un lugar del cual sentirnos parte, un lugar más amplio de lo que somos, pero un lugar que nos invite a estar allí porque ya somos parte de él.

En su libro, *Cristianismo y Cultura*, Virgilio Elizondo hace una lista de características que ayudan a los que sirven entre los pobres y oprimidos. Se las
and for the support each individual needs and wants, is at the center of all restructuring questions. How we share has much to do with our cultural heritage.

Regardless, though, of our cultural heritage there are some things we must all try to understand:

1. There is no one answer to how parishes need to be restructured. Each family of families, each community of communities, is different and must work out together how restructuring is to happen.

2. If we are faithful to the ongoing conversion of the Gospel message, we will keep changing how our parishes will look, for we will keep discovering our brothers and sisters and inviting them to the table. Every new cultural influence will change the life of the parish. Instead of becoming stuck in one culture, we will create deeper unities while diversity flourishes. We will again become a pilgrim people. We will again become an immigrant church rather than the middle-class church we have become.

3. We need to remember that change of structure does not equal change of heart nor does it guarantee the formation of a people of God.

4. We all need—whether we are a member of the dominant culture or a member of a minority—a place to belong, a place bigger than we are, but a place that invites us in because we already belong.

In, Christianity and Culture, Virgilio Elizondo outlines the characteristics helpful to those who minister among the poor and oppressed. I submit them to you as qualities needed in all those who minister, especially those who are facilitating change in our multicultural church.

1. Confidence in the people’s abilities: “Those who are committed to the oppressed must have a willingness to trust the people’s power to think, to know what they want, to seek their own destiny. The oppressed must be trusted enough to allow them to make some mistakes and gradually to learn how to analyze their own situation. They will never learn as long as someone else tries to do it for them; they must be trusted even when human instincts push the missionary to ‘do it for them just once more.’”

2. Willingness to listen and learn from the poor: “The poor are the teachers, and one must be willing to learn from the needs and aspirations of the poor. Whoever wants to work with the oppressed and the poor must learn to be a good listener. To be willing to learn from the poor is already the first proclamation presented to you as qualities necessary in those who are committed to the oppressed and the poor.”

1. Confianza en las capacidades del pueblo: “Aquellos que están comprometidos con los oprimidos deben estar dispuestos a confiar en el poder del pueblo para pensar, saber lo que desean, buscar su propio destino. Se debe tener suficiente confianza en los oprimidos para permitirles cometer algunos errores y gradualmente aprender cómo analizar su propia situación. Nunca aprenderán si alguien siempre trata de hacerlo en su lugar; se les debe confiar aún cuando los instintos humanos le digan al misionero ‘hazlo por ellos sólo una vez más.’”

2. Disposición a escuchar y aprender de los pobres: “Los pobres son los maestros, y uno debe estar dispuesto a aprender de las necesidades y aspiraciones de los pobres. Quien quiera trabajar con los oprimidos y los pobres deben aprender a escuchar muy bien. Estar dispuesto a aprender de los pobres es ya la primera proclamación del Evangelio, porque aprender de alguien es una manera muy existencial de decirles que son importantes y que tienen algo que ofrecer. Esta afirmación de la dignidad fundamental de la persona es el principio de un renacimiento en la liberación y salvación. Empezar un verdadero diálogo con aquellos que han sido rechazados es empezar a tratarlos como iguales, y solamente desde esta situación de igualdad puede el proceso de liberación progresar verdaderamente.”

3. Disposición a sofrir con los pobres: “Los pobres no quieren lástima de nadie, porque puede ser destructiva. Si quieren compasión, alguien que pueda compartir sus sufrimientos y luchas para que de dentro de los dos puedan empezar juntos el trabajo para la liberación de ambos.”

4. Disposición a ser pacientes: “La disposición a ser pacientes es muy importante. Muchas veces las personas están acostumbradas a tener resultados rápidos. Con frecuencia los pobres no conocen muchas de las cosas que los que dominan toman por sentado—la política que encierra, el procedimiento común que hay que seguir, la persona indicada que hay que ver, la agencia correcta con quien hay que tratar y más y más. Aprender el proceso no es fácil, y se necesita mucha paciencia y tolerancia. Una de las tentaciones constantes de los que sirven será hacer las cosas por las personas a quienes sirven.”
Gonzalez: Parish Restructuring in Multicultural Communities

The main role of one who comes to work in the process of liberation and change is to bring out constantly and in diverse ways the beauty, greatness, dignity and richness of each culture.

Challenges

The challenges coming to us as a result of our considerations are several:

1. Be clear about why we feel the need to restructure parishes. What is motivating us? Unless we have clarity steeped in honesty, what we restructure

2. Discover the true unity and stop seeking uniformity. Ask ourselves honestly who serves the uniformity. Does it serve better the dominant cultural group in large, uniform parishes or the minorities to whom we ask them to conform? Does it serve anyone to whom we are comfortable?

3. Small Christian communities are primarily associated with Hispanics in this country. Can this model of communities within the community serve as a model for all of us? Paul VI made a list of the elements of such communities in Evangelii Nuntiandi.4
   a. Seek their nourishment in the word of God.
   b. Promote a spirit of cooperation.
   c. Remain firmly united to the local church (parish).
   d. Maintain a sincere relationship with the priest.

5. Disposition not to offend personally. «When there are frustrations and alienation, the persons tend to enrage with those closest to the oppressed doing the most for them. The oppressor-liberator must learn that this is actually a sign of love and not an insult. It is a sad human phenomenon that people often express their frustrations on those they love the most. It is not right, but it is the way people react. Learning to depersonalize will be an asset to all who are committed to the process of liberation.»

The main role of one who comes to work in the process of liberation and change is to bring out constantly and in diverse ways the beauty, greatness, dignity and richness of each culture.

Desafíos

Los desafíos que se nos presentan como resultado de nuestra reflexión son varios:

1. Tener claridad sobre el por qué sentimos la necesidad de reestructurar las parroquias. ¿Qué nos mueve a hacerlo? Si no tenemos esa claridad embebida de honestidad, lo que reestructuraremos podría terminar siendo igual a lo que tenemos ahora, aunque parezca diferente.

2. Descubrir la verdadera unidad y dejar de buscar la uniformidad. Preguntémonos honestamente a quién sirve realmente la uniformidad. ¿Se sirve al grupo cultural dominante mejor en parroquias grandes, uniformadas que a las minorías a quienes se les exige que se conformen? ¿Se sirve a cualquiera cuando nos sentimos cómodos?

3. Las pequeñas comunidades cristianas se asocian primordialmente con los hispanos en este país. ¿Puede este modelo de comunidades dentro de la comunidad servir como un modelo para todos nosotros? Pablo VI hizo una lista de los elementos de tales comunidades en Evangelii Nuntiandi.4
   a. Buscan su alimento en la palabra de Dios.
   b. Fomentan un espíritu de colaboración.
   c. Permanecen firmemente unidas a la iglesia local (parroquia).
   d. Mantienen una comunión sincera con el pároco.
might end up being equal to what we have now, although it will look as if it is different.

2. Let us discover true unity and stop settling for uniformity. Let us ask ourselves honestly who does uniformity really serve. Is the dominant cultural group served any better in large, uniform parishes than the minorities who are asked to conform? Is anyone served when we settle in?

3. The small Christian communities are predominantly associated with Hispanics in this country. Can this model of communities within the community serve as a model for all of us? Paul VI outlined the elements of such communities in Evangelii Nuntiandi. 4 Communities where the members:

   a. Seek their nourishment in the word of God.
   b. Foster a spirit of collaboration.
   c. Remain firmly attached to the local church (parish).
   d. Maintain a sincere communion with the pastor.
   e. Never look on themselves as the sole beneficiaries or sole agents of evangelization.
   f. Constantly grow in missionary consciousness, fervor, commitment and zeal. And,
   g. Show themselves to be universal in all things and never sectarian.

We do not need to go back to “national” churches as in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in the United States, but perhaps formation of small Christian communities that are alive and filled with the Spirit is a way to restructure. Getting together as a community of communities for multicultural celebration of the big feasts of the liturgical year: the sacred triduum, Easter, Christmas; celebrating as a particular community and inviting other communities for particular days: Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Patrick, etc.; being responsible for a particular issue within the large parish; reaching out to other members in the neighborhood that are away from the church; contributing as communities to the support of the parish, etc., etc., might be some ways to begin.

The parish Sunday Eucharist could be prepared by a particular community each Sunday or each time, and all other communities join to celebrate and worship as a parish. As each small Christian community develops its own “cultural” expressions and shares them with the other communities at
these parish celebrations, all parishioners are enriched instead of being in competition.

The parish will be truly Catholic, demonstrating respect and appreciation for the variety of cultures within it and always open to other ways of sharing the good news as baptized Christians.

4. As hard a challenge as this is, we need to name and confront the racism, the cultural stereotyping that exists in our parishes, in our dioceses. Only by naming can we acknowledge. Only in acknowledging can we face the truth. Only in facing the truth can we forgive and ask forgiveness. And in the process of conversion, we will change. Our parishes will change.

5. In planning, all groups need to be invited to the table. One group cannot own the planning process and then attempt to invite all to participate, expecting full support. All have a right to participate on every level of planning. A concerted effort should be made to have representation of all minorities in the parish in all levels of decision making. And here I am not speaking of mere tokenism.

In planning, all groups need to be invited to the table. One group cannot own the planning process and then attempt to invite all to participate, expecting full support.

6. Opportunities for leadership development need to be offered to members of all cultural groups represented in a parish. Each group has within itself recognized leaders who need to have the chance for growth, just as members of the dominant group do. This is a great challenge for the church in this process of restructuring for it is precisely the parishes with little or no leadership development that are being asked to fend for themselves because of a lack of personnel or a lack of finances.

7. Hospitality. People leave the Catholic Church because they are not welcomed, not invited, sometimes not even spoken to, much less greeted, at the moment for the sign of peace. May this quality of hospitality be the critical factor in all of our restructuring.

del proceso de planificación y luego tratar de invitar a todos a participar, esperando pleno apoyo. Todos tienen el derecho de participar en todos los niveles de la planificación. Se debe hacer un esfuerzo especial para tener representantes de todas las minorías de la parroquia en todos los niveles donde se tomen decisiones. Y aquí no estoy hablando de una simple probadita, o como decimos los mexicano-americanos de «dar atole con el dedo».

6. Se necesita ofrecer oportunidades para el desarrollo del liderazgo a los miembros de todos los grupos culturales representados en la parroquia. Cada grupo tiene en sí sus líderes reconocidos quienes necesitan tener la oportunidad de crecer, al igual que los miembros del grupo dominante. Éste es un gran desafío para la iglesia en este proceso de reestructuración porque son precisamente las parroquias con poco o ningún desarrollo de líderes a quienes se les pide que arreglen por sí mismas sus asuntos por falta de personal o falta de dinero.

7. Hospitalidad. Muchas personas se alejan de la Iglesia Católica porque no se sienten acogidas, ni invitadas, algunas veces nadie les habla, ni les saluda, aún en el momento de dar el saludo de paz. Esta cualidad de hospitalidad debe ser un factor muy importante en toda nuestra reestructuración. En el documento «Vayan y hagan discípulos», los obispos de los Estados Unidos nos desafían a «que cada institución Católica, especialmente nuestras parroquias, sea más acogedora». Se ofrecen estrategias en el documento que amplían nuestra familia parroquial más allá de la celebración dominical. ¿Serán los cambios que se van a hacer para reestructurar, al igual que pensar de nuevo en los límites de la parroquia, para que seamos una comunidad más acogedora? Si no es así, entonces tenemos mucho trabajo por hacer antes de hablar de estructuras. En la conferencia de apertura de la primera Conferencia Afroamericana Católica para la evangelización de hace unos meses, el obispo Terry Steib, SVD, de la diócesis de Memphis dice:

Les digo que nuestras parroquias urbanas se están cerrando en número nunca pensado especialmente porque no estamos alimentando espiritualmente a nuestros rebaños. He visto cerrar iglesias Católicas por tener sólo 50 miembros sentados en las bancas los domingos en la mañana. Esos mismos edificios se vendieron a congregaciones pentecostales y entonces llenan el recinto hasta con personas que se quedan de pie el domingo en la mañana. Es el mismo edificio, el mismo barrio, pero se ha vuelto una iglesia diferente.
In the document "Go and Make Disciples," the bishops of the United States challenge us to "make every Catholic institution, especially our parishes, more welcoming." Strategies are listed in the document that extend our being family beyond the Sunday celebration. Will the changes coming about because of restructuring and the rethinking of boundaries make us a more welcoming community? If not, then we have much work to do before we deal with structures. In addressing the opening of the first national African-American Catholic Evangelization Conference last month, Bishop Terry Steib, S.V.D., of the Diocese of Memphis says:

I submit that our urban parishes are closing at a record rate primarily because we are not spiritually feeding our flocks. I have seen Catholic churches with no more than 50 members sitting in the pews on Sunday morning have to close down. Those same buildings are sold to Pentecostal congregations and have standing room only on Sunday morning. It is the same building, same neighborhood, but it has become a different church. Today those same former Catholic churches have new names, new church leadership, new songs, new sermons, new members, new attitudes and as a result new life. 5

8. Let us remember that the table belongs to Jesus and his Abba. Instead of asking the question, How do we involve groups with cultural heritage within the processes of restructuring? let us ask ourselves, How are we and how can we be the church? Exclusion at the table at any level is not church.

Conclusion

I would like to close my remarks with a quote from the book, The Future is Mestizo by Virgilio Elizondo:

Jesus invites all to a conversion from their old ways to the way of the love of God, neighbor, enemy and one another. Any who are neighbors? In the story of the good Samaritan Jesus makes it clear: not necessarily those who share the same religion and the same culture, but those who act on behalf of the other in need. For Jesus, love of the other allows us to go beyond all our barriers. His only absolute is the universal love of all people.

In the conversion to the way of Jesus we are invited to enter into a new way of relating with others and with the ultimate other; all as children of the same God, and brothers and sisters of each other. But we do not have to cease being who we are in order to enter into the new fellowship; we do not even have to give up our religion, but only live it in a radically

Hoy día, las que eran iglesias Católicas tienen nombres nuevos, liderazgo eclesial nuevo, himnos nuevos, sermones nuevos, miembros nuevos, actitudes nuevas y, como resultado, una vida nueva. 5

8. Recordemos que la mesa pertenece a Jesús y a su Abba. En lugar de preguntar, ¿Cómo involucramos a grupos con herencia cultural dentro de los procesos de reestructuración? Pregúntémonos, ¿Cómo somos y cómo podemos ser Iglesia? El excluir de la mesa en cualquier nivel no es ser Iglesia.

Conclusion

Me gustaría terminar con una cita del libro «El futuro es mestizo» de Virgilio Elizondo:

Jesús nos invita a todos a la conversión de nuestros modos antiguos de vivir al camino del amor de Dios, de nuestro prójimo, de nuestros enemigos y de unos y otros. Y ¿quién son nuestros prójimos? En la historia del Buen Samaritano, Jesús nos lo hace ver claramente: no son necesariamente los que compartan la misma religión y la misma cultura, sino aquellos que obran en beneficio de los necesitados. Para Jesús, el amor por el otro nos permite ir más allá de todas las barreras y atravesar nuestros tabúes religiosos si es necesario para ayudar al necesitado. Jesús no destruye la religión sino que opone con fuerza sus limitaciones y barreras sacralizadas y absolutistas. Lo único que es absoluto para Él es el amor universal para todos.

Al convertirnos al camino de Jesús, se nos invita a entablar una nueva forma de relacionarnos con los demás y con el Otro fundamental: todos como hijos del mismo Dios y hermanos y hermanas unos de otros. Pero no tenemos que dejar de ser lo que somos a fin de entablar una nueva amistad; no tenemos ni siquiera que dejar nuestra religión, sino solamente vivirla en un modo radicalmente nuevo. Los judíos que siguieron a Jesús continuaron siendo judíos, pero ahora eran judíos de una manera radicalmente nueva. Los paganos continuaron siendo paganos, pero lo eran de una manera radicalmente nueva. Al convertirse, su propia identidad sociocultural, incluyendo su dimensión religiosa, no se destruyó. Lo que se destruyó fue su exclusividad. Los judíos como judíos y los paganos como paganos no hubieran podido enterarse juntos una nueva amistad.

La novedad universalizante y radical del camino de Jesús de Nazaret es la que les permite a las personas la posibilidad de una existencia con un guión en su identidad: judío-cristiano, pagano-cristiano, africristiano, asiático-cristiano, mestizo-cristiano. Así el camino de Jesús afirma la identidad local y al mismo tiempo la dispone a la amistad y a un intercambio libre con todos los demás. El camino de Jesús es lo
new way. The Jews who followed Jesus continued being Jews, but they were now Jews in a radically new way. The gentiles continued being gentiles, but they were so in a radically new way. In conversion, their own sociocultural identity, including its religious dimension, was not destroyed. What was destroyed was their exclusivity. The Jews as Jews and the gentiles as gentiles could now enter into a new fellowship together.

The radical universalizing newness of the way of Jesus of Nazareth is that it offers people the possibility of a hyphenated existence: Jewish-Christians, gentile-Christians, Afro-Christians, Asian-Christians, mestizo-Christians. Thus the way of Jesus affirms local identity while opening it up to fellowship and free exchange with all others.

It is in opening up to others, with all the risks and possibilities involved, that the particular, without ceasing to be particular, now becomes universal. And we cannot open up to others without offering to them some of what we are and receiving from them some of what they are. Yet in this process no one ceases to be, but all are enriched. All have to die to their exclusivity, but no one will simply die. On the contrary, all will become richer in the process.

My hope is that as all the restructuring of parishes and rethinking of boundaries continues to challenge our church, we not forget our roots as an immigrant church. Let us not forget that the richness of our church here in America has come to us precisely because of our being an immigrant church. We must welcome the immigrants now entering our country and becoming members of our church family. We must welcome them to the table of Jesus.

Notes

Contributors

Marian Thérèse Arroyo, R.S.M. (North Carolina-Guam) received her masters in liturgical music from the Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. She is director of the Office of Pastoral Planning for the Archdiocese of Agaña and the Office of Worship for the archdiocese and for the Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral-Basilica in Agaña, Guam. She also ministers to an elderly parent. She served on the steering committee for the Second Institute Chapter and was chair for the steering committee for the Mercy Vocation-Formation Conference (1992-1994). She was also congregational liturgist and director of vocation ministry for the Regional Community of North Carolina prior to her return to Guam in 1996.

Katherine Doyle, R.S.M., (Auburn) is a member of the Auburn Regional Community leadership team. She received her M.Ed. from the University of San Francisco and a masters in liturgical studies from St. John’s University, Collegeville, MN. Katherine has been a member of the editorial community developing Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and its companion volume. She is currently working on a study of Mother Mary Baptist Russell, California foundress of the Sisters of Mercy.

María Elena González, R.S.M. is a member of the St. Louis Regional Community. María Elena is the first woman president of the Mexican American Cultural Center in San Antonio, Texas. Active on a national and international level, María Elena is an acknowledged leader in the area of multicultural awareness and education. Her articles have appeared in numerous journals and publications.

Bernadette Little is a Jamaican Sister of Mercy currently ministering in Kingston, Jamaica. Bernadette has long been engaged in education and spiritual formation. She had previously contributed to MAST an article on Jessie Ripol. She is a member of the Cincinnati Regional Community.

Patricia Ryan, R.S.M. (Burlingame) has given several retreats and weekend reflection sessions on earth spirituality and deep ecology. She draws on her background in science, poetry, and Celtic studies to engage participants in reflection and prayer around the loss of the feminine values relating to the ecological crisis. Pat has ministered through secondary education, community leadership, and as the first director of Mercy International Centre in Dublin.

Judy Soares, R.S.M. (Providence) currently serves as director of community outreach at Amos House, a hospitality center that provides meals and temporary shelter. A crucial aspect is to network and advocate for Amos House guests in the social change conversation whenever and wherever it is necessary. “The Mercy charism of hospitality is the cornerstone of my ministry and reminds me to never lose focus, whether through direct service or advocacy, of the dignity of each person that I encounter.”
Colaboradoras


Katherine Doyle, R.S.M. (Auburn) es miembro del consejo regional de la Comunidad Regional Auburn. Recibió su maestría en educación de la Universidad de San Francisco y una maestría en estudios litúrgicos de la Universidad de San Juan en Collegeville, Minnesota. Katherine fue miembro de la comunidad editorial que desarrolló la Oración Matutina y Vespertina de las Hermanas de la Merced de las Américas y su tomo acompañante. Está ahora trabajando en un estudio de la Madre Mary Baptist Russell, fundadora de las Hermanas de la Merced en California.

La hermana María Elena González, R.S.M., es miembro de la Comunidad Regional de St. Louis. María Elena es la primera mujer presidenta del Centro Cultural México-Americano en San Antonio, Texas. Activa en el nivel nacional e internacional, se reconoce a María Elena como líder en el área de la conciencia y educación multiculturales. Sus artículos han aparecido en numerosas revistas y publicaciones.

Bernadette Little, R.S.M., es una Hermana jamaicana de la Merced trabajando hoy día en Kingston, Jamaica. Bernadette ha servido por mucho tiempo en el apostolado de la educación y formación espiritual. Anteriormente había contribuido a MAST con un artículo sobre Jessie Ripol. Es miembro de la Comunidad Regional de Cincinnati.

Patricia Ryan, R.S.M. (Burlingame) ha dirigido varios retiros y sesiones de reflexión de fin de semana sobre la espiritualidad de la tierra y la ecología profunda. Se basa en sus conocimientos de ciencia, poesía y estudios céticos para que sus oyentes participen en la reflexión y en la oración sobre la pérdida de los valores femeninos en lo que se refiere a la crisis ecológica. Pat ha ejercido su apostolado a través de las escuelas secundarias, en el liderazgo de la comunidad y como la primera directora del Centro Internacional de la Merced en Dublín.

Judy Soares, R.S.M. (Providencia) actualmente sirve como Directora del «Dar la mano a la comunidad» en la Casa Amós, un centro de hospitalidad que provee comidas y abrigo temporal. Un aspecto muy importante es el cultivar relaciones y abogar por los huéspedes en la Casa Amós en toda conversación para el cambio social cuando sea y donde sea necesario. «El carisma de la Merced de la hospitalidad es la piedra angular de mi apostolado y me recuerda que nunca debo perder mi meta, bien sea en servicio directo o abogando, de ver la dignidad de cada persona a quien me encuentro». 
Discussion Questions

Arroyo:

1. What does evangelization of mission territories mean to you?

2. While there was significant loss of life during the christianization of the Chamorros in the seventeenth century, how can their colonization be celebrated?

Little:

1. In Bernadette Little’s article it is noted that “Maturity is the assimilation of the features of every ancestor.” How has the collective face of Mercy shaped our current reality?

2. How do the learnings from the Caribbean experience speak to our desire to invite women from diverse cultures to membership in Mercy?

Soares:

1. In what way does Hagar speak to every woman’s experience?

2. Judy Soares speaks of gaining strength from the words of her ancestors. What wisdom have you gained from the words of your own cultural ancestors? ... from your faith ancestors?

Ryan:

1. In what way has poetry, music, and literature opened your understanding to the values and ways of people from cultures other than your own?

2. As you reflect on your own experience what has helped you to identify which practices are core to Mercy culture and which are the result of the dominant ethnic culture of the group?

González:

1. In what ways are the norms Maria Elena outlines for multicultural parishes applicable to religious communities?

2. Maria Elena identifies mind-sets that block true inculturation. In what way do you see these mind-sets functioning within Mercy life today?
Preguntas para comentar

Arroyo:

1. ¿Qué significa para ti la evangelización de territorios misioneros?

2. Aunque hubo un número considerable de muertes durante la cristianización de los Chamorro en el siglo XVII, ¿cómo puede celebrarse su colonización?

Little:

1. En el artículo de Bernadette Little se dice que «la madurez es la asimilación de los rasgos de todos los antepasados». ¿Cómo ha modelado el rostro colectivo de la Merced la realidad de hoy día?

2. ¿Cómo ayuda lo que aprendimos de la experiencia caribeña a nuestro deseo de invitar a mujeres de diversas culturas a que sean miembros de la Merced?

Soares:

1. ¿De qué manera muestra Agar la experiencia de toda mujer?

2. Judy Soares nos dice que adquiere fuerza de las palabras de sus antepasados. ¿Qué sabiduría has obtenido de las palabras de tus propios antepasados culturales? ¿De tus antepasados en la fe?

Ryan:

1. ¿De qué manera han ayudado la poesía, la música y la literatura a tu comprensión de los valores y modos de ser de las personas de culturas diferentes a la tuya?

2. Al reflexionar sobre tu propia experiencia ¿qué te ha ayudado a identificar las prácticas que están en el corazón de la cultura de la Merced y cuáles son resultado de la cultura étnica dominante del grupo?

González:

1. ¿De qué manera se aplican a las comunidades religiosas las normas que María Elena ofrece para las parroquias multiculturalas?

2. María Elena identifica ideas fijas que obstaculizan la verdadera inculturación. ¿En qué forma ves estas ideas fijas que son operativas dentro de la vida de la Merced hoy día?
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MAST, the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology, met for the first time in June 1987 at Gwynedd-Mercy College in Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania. Called together by Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M. and Mary Ann Getty, twenty Mercy theologians and Scripture scholars from fourteen regional communities formally established the organization to provide a forum for dialogue and cooperation among Sisters of Mercy and associates. The stated purpose of the organization is to promote studies and research in Scripture, theology, and related fields; to support its members in scholarly pursuits through study, writing, teaching, and administration; and to provide a means for members to address current issues within the context of their related disciplines.

MAST has been meeting annually since then, usually in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and the organization now numbers fifty, with members living and working in Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America, as well as in the United States. Julie Upton, R.S.M. currently serves as MAST’s executive director. MAST will hold its annual meeting at the Diocesan Retreat Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 3 to 6, 2001, prior to the CTSA, June 7–10, 2001.

Members work on a variety of task forces related to their scholarly discipline. Present task forces include: Scripture, healthcare ethics, and spirituality. In addition, the members seek to be of service to the Institute by providing a forum for ongoing theological education.

Membership dues are $20 per year, payable to Marilee Howard, R.S.M., MAST treasurer, 2223 L Street, Sacramento, CA 95816-4926. E-mail: mhoward@chw.edu.

If you would like to be on the mailing list, call or write: Julia Upton, R.S.M., Executive Director, St. John’s University, 8000 Utopia Parkway, Jamaica, NY 11439 (718) 990-1861, or email to Uptonj@stjohns.edu.

Since 1991, The MAST Journal has been published three times a year. Members of the organization serve on the journal’s editorial board on a rotating basis, and several members have taken responsibility over the years to edit individual issues. Maryanne Stevens, R.S.M., was the founding editor of the journal, and Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., currently serves in that capacity.