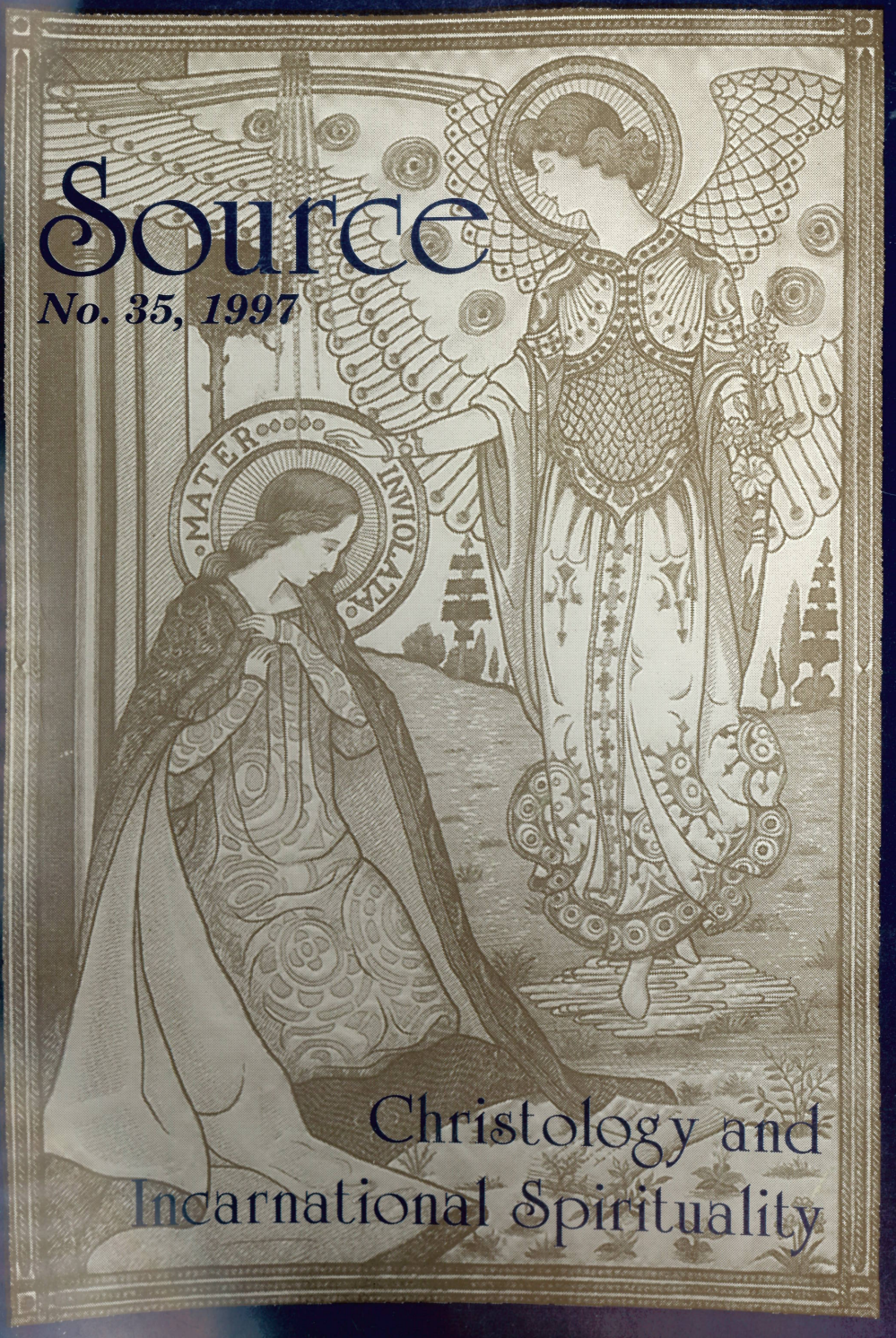


Source

No. 35, 1997



Christology and Incarnational Spirituality

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Changing Images of Christ: A Christological Journey 1846-1996

Anne Murphy, SHCJ

[*Revised version of a talk, illustrated with slides, given at the three SHCJ christology workshops, Summer 1996.*]

"WHOM DO YOU say that I am?" Jesus' question to his disciples elicited Peter's famous reply: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Matt. 16:13-17). Christ, the anointed one or messiah, was an important christological title. Jesus also referred to himself as Son of Man, Son of David, the good shepherd, the door of the sheepfold, the vine, the way, the truth and the life. The gospel narratives are full of vivid images and metaphors which nourish faith. Each generation of Christians appropriated biblical and liturgical images to affirm their belief in Jesus Christ, true God and true man. They also added some of their own choice: for example, the early Christians saw Jesus as good shepherd, strong athlete, and nursing mother. Medieval Christians had a strong preference for the suffering humanity of the Lord, the Renaissance for his nobility and dignity. Sometimes a 'high christology' was preferred, starting with the divine Word of God, 'who became flesh and dwelt among us' (Jn. 1:14). Sometimes a 'low christology' was selected, starting with the crucified man Jesus, whom the centurion came to recognize as the Son of God (Mk. 15:39). Each generation articulated a lively and creative faith, shaped by its own experiences and preferences.

At this time of celebrating 150 years of our corporate life as SHCJ, how do we and our associates and friends express our loving belief in the Holy Child of God, the foundational christological model of our Society? Do we still find this model helpful, or have we discarded certain aspects of it without being quite sure why we have done so? Can we change our approaches to christology and remain faithful to Cornelia Connelly's vision for her little Society? Very little attention has been given to changing images of christology in the life of the Society since the death of Cornelia (1879). With the help of slides, this talk hopes to gather some evidence of shifts in our corporate understanding, as we moved with the

church through 150 years of our history. The key moments chosen are the golden jubilee of the Society (1896), the centenary (1946), Vatican II (1962-5) and the present 150th anniversary (1996).

Cornelia's Vision: Our Christological Roots

Cornelia did not see Jesus primarily as the Christ, the anointed one, but as the Holy Child of God. We know that this preference was shaped by the experience of the loss of her own children, firstly her baby daughter Magdalene then John Henry in tragic circumstances, and finally by Pierce's abduction of Mercer, Addy, and Frank. Cornelia's christological choice for the name of her Society can be traced back to 31 January 1840, when John Henry, aged two and a half, fell into a vat of boiling sugar. Cornelia held her suffering child in her arms for 43 hours until his death on 2 February, the feast of the Presentation. This experience forged in her a life-long devotion to Mary, the suffering mother of the child in the temple and on the cross. There is a sense in which the future ministry of the Society was born of Cornelia's steadfast, compassionate holding of her child, in circumstances similar to those we witnessed recently in the deaths of innocent children in Dunblane, Scotland. This suffering opened her heart to others, and gave her a profound insight into the redemptive, merciful love of God towards humankind.

Can we change our approaches to christology and remain faithful to Cornelia Connelly's vision for her little Society?

Cornelia's mature christology, especially in relation to the Exercises of St. Ignatius, has been very deeply researched by Ursula Blake, Elizabeth Mary Strub, and others.[1] Cornelia focused on the boy Jesus (not the baby Jesus), on his growth and development as the pattern for our own growth, human and spiritual. In an age before the discovery of developmental psychology, Cornelia paid attention to the stages of human growth, and to the fact that the child Jesus passed through each phase of human maturation 'step by step'. In the SHCJ tradition statues of the Holy Child were usually of a boy, possibly two to five years old, or even more. This corresponds to what Raymond Brown has called a 'boyhood christology' based on one or two events in the gospel narratives.[2] My brief here is to try to understand how the SHCJ corporately received and appropriated our founding christology down the generations, and what it might mean to articulate it anew for today, in the changed circumstances of our own time.

Christology After Cornelia: Golden Jubilee 1896

What information have we about the christology of the SHCJ after Cornelia's death? The golden jubilee of our foundation was celebrated in 1896. That year, on 15 August, a Mass of thanksgiving was held at Mayfield and in the afternoon the foundation stone of the red brick school building was laid. In the evening the SHCJ present were given Society medals to take home to each member of their community <S1>. The medals were struck especially for the occasion, and were to be attached to the end of each sister's rosary beads, replacing the more usual crucifix. The designs used originated with Cornelia, who several times had attempted to express her charism in symbolic form.[3] On one side the medal bears the SHCJ crest, with a royal crown at the center; on the obverse side the Holy Child stands in front of the cross, within a mandorla with rays of the sun and clouds. His arms are outstretched both in welcome and in anticipation of the future crucifixion. The words "learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart" were inscribed in Latin around the edge.

In theological terms the jubilee medal represented a 'high christology' or 'christology from above:' the child is divine, royal, wise and all knowing. While childhood indicates his vulnerable humanity, this little king is aware of his future redemptive death because of divine foreknowledge. The well known hymn "Little King so Fair and Sweet," sung in many SHCJ schools, asked him to be "monarch of our school;" we prayed to be his 'loyal subjects' living under his 'sweet rule'. Our sisters were comfortable using hierarchical and regal language to express belief in the kingdom of God. The Society crest was already in use as a visible sign of corporate unity and was seen on school uniforms, exercise books, badges, and banners: a christological logo. The SHCJ crest or emblem was to undergo several changes in the next hundred years, up to and including the current logo designed by France White for the 1996 celebrations.

In the Society we have a long tradition of 'finding the child with Mary his mother'; mariology has accompanied christology. This is well illustrated by a recent 'discovery' of thirteen panels of exceptionally fine needlework, worked on cream satin in gold and silver thread, by the nuns at Mayfield c.1900.4 The panels illustrated the Litany of Our Lady of

Our sisters were comfortable using hierarchical and regal language to express belief in the kingdom of God.

Loreto. Two of them — the Annunciation and Mary with her child — have been reproduced as a Medici Card <S2>. They represent a 'high' christology and mariology: Mary is formally robed as the queen mother of a royal child. The studied naturalism and romantic details of this Pre-Raphaelite design may not appeal to us today, but it represented the very best in Victorian design. (The work of the Pre-Raphaelites has been retrieved and re-evaluated in a recent commemorative exhibition in London.) This unexpected discovery of our 'hidden history' illustrates the loving devotion to Mary and her child, as well as the exacting and demanding standards of excellence put into liturgical needlework, undertaken after a full day's work, at the turn of the last century.

Some well known Victorian paintings provide other indications of nineteenth century christology. Holman Hunt's popular *Christ the Light of the World* was a deeply devotional but individualistic painting illustrating the text "Behold I stand at the door and knock" (Rev 3:20). Jesus stands at the door of a cottage with a lantern. There is no outside handle to the door of the cottage, which represents the human heart; it can only be opened from the inside <S3>. John Everett Millais' *The Carpenter's Shop* shows the Holy Family at work, with a faint outline of the cross on the floor behind the boy Jesus <S4>. Some paintings illustrate a 'weaker christology' which the more artistic hoped would not be adopted by the SHCJ. Frederick Sheild's *Good Shepherd* was one of many depicting a pale, wan Jesus, whose hands had never seen hard labor <S5>. (This model of Jesus was often chosen for first communion cards). Many nineteenth century paintings of Mary show her without her child, standing on a pedestal, a quasi-goddess figure elevated above ordinary human concerns <S6>. This was not the preferred mariology of the SHCJ, though devotion to the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady (defined in 1854) most certainly was.

A neglected source for our christology is the annual Epiphany letter from the Mother General to the whole Society, a tradition which continued from the time of Cornelia. Those from M. M. Amadeus (1924-46) shed much light on a comparatively neglected period of our history. I suspect that a study of the Christmas/Epiphany letters, from Cornelia



The Annunciation (c. 1900)



John Everett Millais, Christ in the House of his Parents: The Carpenter's Shop (1849-50)

to the present, would be a significant guide to tradition and change in the Society.

The Centenary of the Society: 1946 and After

The centenary of the Society was marked by Ursula Blake's marvelous christological hymn, woven from biblical and liturgical imagery, "Thou art the Light, the bright and morning Star," which became a favorite with the SHCJ in Africa, America, and Europe, though different musical settings were adopted. Favorite hymns and carols are also clear indicators of christological preferences. Those of us familiar with the contents of older SHCJ choir cupboards will be aware that our choice of Christmas music did not always escape the sentimental and the nostalgic in either words or music. But a tradition, which can be traced back to Cornelia, urged us to learn to discern and choose the very 'best' for liturgical celebration. She had known instinctively that art, music, and liturgy shaped belief as much as it gave expression to it.

In art, statues and pictures of the 'boy Jesus' were evident in school corridors and chapels. A favorite was Fra Angelico's picture of *Our Lady and the Holy Child* from San Marco, Florence <S7>. This depicts a royal child, right hand raised in blessing, bearing an orb in his left hand. A card given on the occasion of first profession from c.1950 onwards in the (then) English province shows the Holy Child, arms outstretched against the cross, the Alpha and Omega signs, and the words "Love knoweth no measure...." chosen for Cornelia's tomb at Mayfield by M. M. Amadeus <S8>.

Our spiritual reading was nourished by devotional, meditative books such as *The Imitation of Christ* (Thomas a Kempis), *Christ the Ideal of the Monk* and *Christ the Ideal of the Soul* (Abbot Marmion), *To Know Christ Jesus* (Frank Sheed), *The Lord* (Romano Guardini), and *This Tremendous Lover* (Eugene Boylan). These books emphasized a profound one-tone relationship with Jesus, focusing on his interior attitudes of humility, obedience, meekness, and docility, which were to be replicated in the lives of his followers, especially those consecrated to him in the religious life.



Card given at First Profession

All the indications are that from the time of our foundation to just before Vatican II (1846-1962), our christological preferences changed very little. Our christology was mostly a-historical, mystical, and devotional.[5] Pre-Vatican II christology was most usually a 'high christology'; while we believed in Jesus Christ, true God and true man, we paid most attention to his divinity. This often obscured the reality of his humanity. For example, if Jesus had divine fore-knowledge of his death from childhood onwards, he did not share in one of the most poignant experiences of being human — the uncertainty and insecurity of not knowing the future.

Current christology is deeply interested in Jesus' growing human self-awareness and his gradual understanding of the will of his Father as his life unfolded. An older christology tended to pay great attention to the Incarnation, the interior mysteries of the hidden life and the passion of Jesus. It paid much less attention to his public life, or to the resurrection

and ascension. Today we focus more on Jesus' ministry and the life that shaped the circumstances leading to his death. Traditionally we had a strong sense of Jesus as 'our divine master, our model and our spouse,' and readily (sometimes naively) used nuptial imagery for SHCJ clothing ceremonies. This had to be revised in the light of the ecclesiology of Vatican II. In a religious culture which tended to isolate us from the problems of a world in need of redemption, we spent long hours in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

Two classic exceptions bridged the gap between a more traditional and a contemporary christology, and pointed the way forward. Epstein's *Madonna and Child* was commissioned c. 1950, for the bridge linking Nos 11 and 12 Cavendish Square, bombed during World War II <S9>. The story goes that the superior of Cavendish Square wanted the artist to show Mary looking at her child. Epstein replied that Holy Child sisters, most of all, should understand that the mother reveals and offers her child to and for the world. The Epstein *Madonna and Child* was to be a prophetic symbol in more ways than one: it pointed away from older modes of christology in art, theology, and spirituality and invited us to explore newer forms of iconography. Many of us took some time to get used to the contemporary style of the Epstein, though its symbolism had been part of our SHCJ tradition. This was most clearly articulated by the writer Laurie Lee:

> The Christ Child is not the customary babe but a lean lad of some five or six years. ... The robe that wraps his narrow body is also the robe of the tomb; the arms outstretched to embrace the world also assume the attitude of crucifixion; and the face with its large wide eyes and serene brow looks out with love and knows what love will cost him.[6]

And so it was that some twelve years before Vatican II, a work commissioned by the Society edged the SHCJ forward to re-express and re-articulate its own tradition. Over forty years later, in 1993, we had to 'let go' of both our property at Cavendish Square and of the Epstein; we no longer own the statue, but it is there for others, one of the great works of 'modern' religious art permanently on display in London. A second classic expression of christological art was the statue by Willi Soukop, commissioned in the 1960s for Cavendish Square, but now at Mayfield



In the Society we have a long tradition of 'finding the child with Mary his mother'.

Jacob Epstein, Madonna and Child, 1951-2



Willi Soukop, Madonna and Child, (c. 1960)

<S10>. The artist portrays a very human and vulnerable holy child (modeled on his own young son) cradled by his mother. He wanted to represent the child in a fetal position in the womb, or as the precious pearl in the oyster. This is a 'christology from below,' a child dependent on his mother for nurture and survival, who would fulfill one day the promise of maturity.

Vatican II and Christology: Window on the World

The Second Vatican Council (1962-5) opened a window on the world calling us to recognize and understand the world in which we live, its expectations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics (*Gaudium et Spes* 4). We came to understand more deeply that the church, the body of Jesus Christ, was necessarily incarnated or embodied within history, not isolated and apart from it. The full meaning of incarnation, initially for Jesus and then for his disciples, meant precisely inculturation. We are all born into a particular culture at a particular time in its historical development. In becoming 'one of us' Jesus did not take to himself some abstract human nature, but rather chose to be born into a particular Jewish environment. His formative years were shaped by Jewish custom, religious belief and practice, as well as by political unrest of a country under Roman occupation. His human faith and prayer — the way he responded to his Father — were shaped by Mary and Joseph, friends and relations. And he assumed not just a human nature, but a human history.

The biblical and liturgical renewal which followed Vatican II enabled us to read the gospel narratives with new eyes. Gradually a biblical understanding of Jesus ministering to his own people, calling them to recognize the kingdom of God in their midst, took priority over an older/dogmatic or a mystical/spiritual approach. In reading the gospel narratives, it followed that more attention should be given to Jesus' public ministry, to his preaching of the kingdom, and the consequences of that preaching which led to his redemptive death and resurrection. The priority of the full paschal mystery (birth, mission, death, resurrection, ascension) was restored to us in theology, spirituality, and a renewed Easter Triduum. The SHCJs focus on incarnation was to be considerably enriched, not marginalized, by these newer approaches.

For many, the gap between older forms of spirituality and newer biblical and theological insights were bridged by the 'new' approaches to giving the *Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

> ...In weeks II, III, and IV, Ignatius has the retreatant focus upon the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as portrayed in the scriptures. He has the retreatant take the side or place of the first disciples as they came to know love and follow Jesus, and eventually commit their lives to Jesus as the Christ and Word of God.[7]

Ignatius probably never knew he had chosen a 'christology from below' but his approach, pruned of the long practices of Jesuit custom which obscured his original aims, fitted in well with the newer biblical christology. The exercises of St. Ignatius were regarded by Cornelia as one of the most formative influences for her sisters. The part played by the directed Ignatian retreat in our SHCJ renewal since the 1960s, deserves a special study of its own. The convergence (yet distinctiveness) of Ignatian and Cornelian ideals, retrieved for contemporary living, has been expressed beautifully in *A Retreat by All Means* by Elizabeth M. Strub (1996); this should be an important guide to our preferred SHCJ christology.

Political and Liberation Theologies

The importance recognizing the Jewish background of Jesus was made clearer for us by the events of the Holocaust in Europe (1938-45) which highlighted the terrible consequences of anti-Semitism within the Christian tradition. Marc Chagall's *White Crucifixion* (1938) illustrates Jesus the Jew on the cross, surrounded by the devastation of contemporary Christian programs against the Jewish people <S11>. Jesus' loin cloth is the traditional Jewish prayer shawl, Jacob's ladder leans against the cross, and the seven branched candlestick at its foot remains firm in the shifting world round about it. The message is stark and simple: by

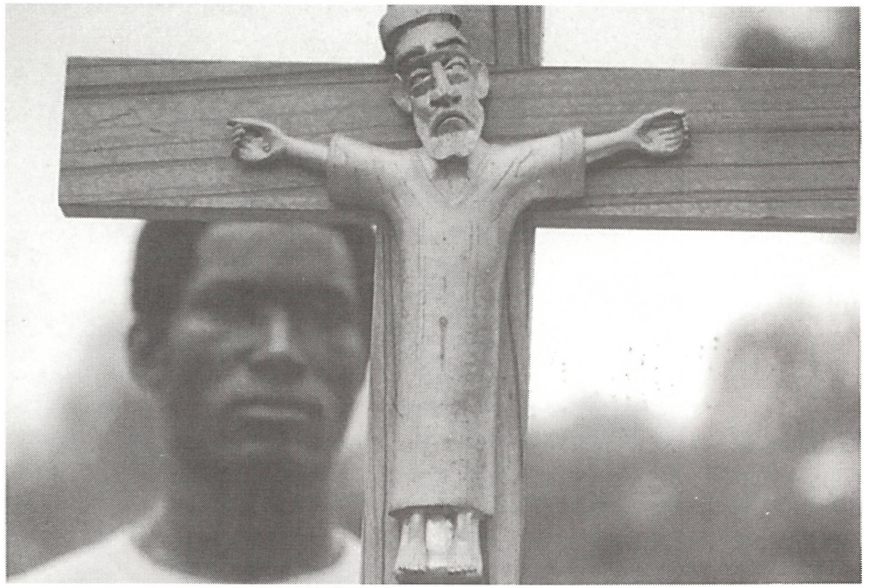
persecuting contemporary Jews, Christians have crucified Jesus again. The Jews are his people, his human family. He and they are the suffering just ones of the psalms who cry out to God to save them.

We need to retrieve a theology of the cross for today's world.

Some thirty years later the German Lutheran theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, had a painting by Chagall before him as he wrote *The Crucified God*, one of the great contributions to 20th century christology.[8] Moltmann drew attention to the fact that 'Jesus was crucified between two thieves on the cross, not between two candles on the altar.' He argued that familiarity with the crucifixion story had domesticated and 'spiritualized' the stark, political circumstances of Jesus' death. Moltmann simply could not 'do theology with his back to Auschwitz,' that is in isolation from the terrible events of the Holocaust and the questions it raised about God, Christ, and human suffering. Jesus' passion and death must somehow have a connection with modern passion stories. Jesus was the God who descended into the 'God-forsakeness' of much of the human condition. That is the meaning of the cry from the cross (Mk. 15:34). He redeemed the darkest places and the deepest recesses of human suffering. We need to retrieve a theology of the cross for today's world <S12>. Moltmann's Catholic contemporary, Johannes Metz, spoke about the "dangerous memory of Jesus Christ," one which can subvert our comfortable expectations and shake our complacency, especially in the bourgeois, private world of so much European christianity. A new understanding of political christology was emerging in the Europe of the 1960s and 1970s.

In Latin America, and in the context of third world poverty, a further influential theology took shape in response to Vatican II. By 1969 the Peruvian theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez, tentatively suggested that "you might call our theology, a theology of liberation."[9] If Moltmann could not 'do theology with his back to Auschwitz,' that symbol of the absence of God, liberation theologians could not do theology with their backs to poverty, that symbol of death and injustice endured by so many human beings created by God for life. Jesus the Liberator had come to bring the good news to the poor and marginalized (Lk. 4:18).

Liberation theology first became well known in the South American context. But it has also flourished, in differing forms, in the soil of



Crucifix from Efok, Cameroon, Jesus the Ancestor

Africa and Asia. The presence of third world bishops at the Synod of Bishops in Rome (1971) contributed to the call of the church to Justice in the World, and to a new orientation for apostolic religious life. New perspectives helped many to see that christology as presented in both theology and art, had envisaged Jesus most usually as white and European. Historically Jesus had been a Jew from the Middle East; to portray him as white and European is just as inaccurate as to portray him as black and African. Yet Jesus Christ is for all nations; his message has universal significance and iconographically the face of Jesus can be presented in many ways and by artists in and for their own particular contexts.[10]

The face of Jesus in Latin American iconography takes many forms. The Peruvian artist, Edilberto Merida, portrays a crucifixion of intense realism, the cry of forsakeness <S13>. Guido Rocha shows us a Christ, crying out from the cross, identified with a tortured prisoner from Brazil <S14>. Mexican artist, Jose Orozco, shows a militant Jesus Christ

The women's issue is one of the signs of our times; as SHCJ we are called to engage with, not to retreat from, such issues.



African Madonna and Child, Benin Late 20c.

breaking the false crosses constructed by Christians <S15>, while El Salvador has given us the beautiful and brilliant colors of a cross of hope in a country near despair <S16>. African christology has been expressed in strikingly moving images. A bearded, robed, and crucified Christ from Efok, Cameroon, portrays the dignity and wisdom of Christ our ancestor/brother, who bears responsibility for his family <S17>. Wood carvings from the University of Ibadan, show scenes of the passion with African participants <S18>. The cross as the tree of life comes from Toffo, Benin <S19>. A beautifully carved African Madonna and child also comes from Benin <S20>. African Christian art (and theology) has become 'inculturated' rather than 'colonized' from Europe.

Womanist/Feminist Christologies

The raising of women's consciousness to an awareness of sexism and the marginalization of women in Church and society, is of particular importance to women religious. For some, the movements are still threatening, aggressive and adversarial. For most a gradual 'conversion' has made us aware of how important these issues are for those engaging in contemporary ministry. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's work *In Memory of Her*[11] highlighted the fact that a woman in the gospel story, who exercised ministry by anointing the feet of Jesus, was marginalized and forgotten in our choice of Sunday liturgical readings. She introduced us to the idea of an early 'discipleship of equality' between the men and women who followed Jesus. This was displaced by the gradual acceptance of a theology of the subordination of women within the Christian tradition. Contemporary arguments for and against the ordination of women, are essentially about who may, or may not, officially represent Christ. They raise christological questions about the nature of ministry, the so called 'special nature of women,' how women relate to, and are saved by, a male savior. Despite the pain, division, and controversy, these questions will not go away. In any case they are part of our ecumenical dialogue with other Christians. Pope Paul VI wrote that "The hour is come in which women... acquire a power never attained until now." The women's issue is one of the signs of our times; as SHCJ we are called to engage with, not to retreat from, such issues.

In artistic representation the *Christa Figure* or female Christ provokes intense controversy <S21>. "A symbol invites thought" (Paul Ricoeur); the *Christa Figure* is not trying to say that Jesus should have

A fully contemporary christology will engage in both women's and ecological issues.

been a woman — that would be unhistorical; it is not intended to be blasphemous, or sexually suggestive, though the nude, female, crucified body may appear to be such in the gaze of some onlookers. Women's bodies have been raped, mutilated, abused, disgraced, and degraded down the centuries. Such women from Perpetua and Felicitas (3rd century Carthage, Africa) to Sheila Cassidy (tortured in 20th century Santiago, Chile), have borne the passion and death of Jesus Christ in their bodies. Women's sexuality and embodiment have to be retrieved from pornographic and exploitative symbolism and deliberately imaged as graced and Christ-like. Many women who have been exploited need to be assured that in God's eyes they are precious and of great worth. The SHCJ, a congregation of religious women dedicated to the mystery of the Incarnation, could renew in a special way its belief in God's grace as embodied grace, most of all in marginalized bodies of women of all nations and classes. Furthermore women's issues are often linked with ecological issues — an awareness of the raped, exploited resources of the planet earth which God has given to us to hold in trust and stewardship <S22>. A fully contemporary christology will engage in both women's and ecological issues.

Return to Charism: the Preferential Option for the Child

My final christological reflection returns to Cornelia, holding the suffering John Henry in her arms until he died, forging a bond with Mary Mother of Sorrows. The sufferings of women, especially mothers, are very great. They suffer most because their vulnerable children are abused and exploited, often as a consequence of real evil in society.[12] "What kind of man would kill a baby?" wrote Fergal Keane, the distraught BBC journalist who had to report the killings in Rwanda (1994). The many forms of the sufferings of children throughout the world have been expressed in a frightening painting called the *Echo of a Scream* by the Mexican artist, David Alfaro Siqueiros <S23>. It represents the repeated cries of children abandoned in the debris of the streets of Latin American cities.

The UN International Year of the Child (1995) drew attention to the many forms of child abuse in our contemporary world: the sexual abuse of children in families and care homes, child prostitution promoted by sex-tourism which finds it 'safer' than adult prostitution; child soldiers in many war zones from Liberia to Cambodia; children maimed by land-mines or orphaned by war, disease, or poverty; children overworked in crowded sweat shops supplying western fashions markets; children abused by drugs or alcohol. An abused and damaged child grows up to be an abused and damaged adult. The compassion which called Cornelia to minister to deprived children in the Seven Dials district of Dickensian London is still needed today, whatever our formal ministry. Are there ways in which we could refocus our original call to steadfast compassion, by a preferential option for the suffering, abused child? This need not mean that we all directly work with children, but that whatever we do may somehow facilitate the greater human dignity of the child, and greater awareness of the root causes of child abuse or neglect. Our focus would then be less on our own survival, but on the survival of the child, the future hope of the human race, in whose form God became embodied in our world.

Are there ways in which we could refocus our original call to steadfast compassion, by a preferential option for the suffering, abused child?

End Notes

(References to the slides are listed separately below as S1, S2, etc.)

1. Ursula Blake and Elizabeth Strub, *Positio* (Rome 1983). Also *A Retreat by All Means* (Second week), 102-116. Caritas McCarty and Radegunde Flaxman have also made significant contributions.
2. Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*, Geoffrey Chapman/or Paulist Press 1994, 126.
3. See *Positio*, Vol. III, Notes, Appendices, Archival Sources, Bibliography, Index. (Rome 1983), plate xxxii. Early designs for crest.
4. The panels were found in a cupboard in Mayfield convent c.1970. Their exceptional quality was recognized and they were either loaned or donated to The Royal School of Needlework, Hampton Court, UK, where they are occasionally on display. Each panel measures 12" by 19".
5. See a most helpful article by Janet Ruffing, "If Christ is Growing in Us: The Role of Religious Leadership." Given at LCWR Region II Meeting, USA October 26 1993.

6. Laurie Lee cited in *Sacred Art in A Secular Century*, Horton Davies and Hugh Davies ed., The Liturgical Press: Minnesota 1978, 70.
7. J. Peter Schineller, "The Newer Approaches to Christology and Their Use in the Spiritual Exercises," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 4:1980, 2.
8. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, SCM: London 1974. Also Jesus Christ for Today's World, SCM: London 1994.
9. G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, SCM 1973, recently revised and enlarged. See also Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, SCM 1994.
10. See *Images of Jesus: How Christ is Perceived in Non-European Cultures*, A. Wessels, SCM 1990. *The Faces of Jesus: Latin American Christologies*, ed J.M. Bonino, Orbis, 1984; *Faces of Jesus in Africa Today*, ed R.J. Schreiter Orbis, 1991; *The Black Christ*, K. Brown Douglas, Orbis, 1994.
11. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, SCM: London 1983.
12. See "Little Children Suffer;" *Concilium* 1996/2. Whole issue.

Slides

(A selection from those actually shown)

S1. Jubilee Medal, SHCJ 1896.

S2. *The Annunciation* and *the Madonna and Child* (c. 1900), reproduced from panels at the Royal School of Needlework, Hampton Court, by The Medici Society 7 Grafton St., London WI, 1995.

S3. William Holman Hunt, *Christ the Light of the World* (1853), Keble College Oxford.

S4. John Everett Millais, *Christ in the House of his Parents: The Carpenter's Shop* (1849-50) Tate Gallery London.

S5. Frederick J. Sheilds, *The Good Shepherd*, 19c, City Art Gallery Manchester.

S6. *Mary on Pedestal*, from a statue in Granada, Spain, late 18c.

S7. Fra Angelico, *The Virgin and Child enthroned with Saints*, San Marco, Florence, 1418-29. Reproductions often show only the child.

S8. Card given at First Profession printed in UK.

S9. Jacob Epstein, *Madonna and Child*, cast in lead, 160 inches high, 1951-2, Cavendish Square London.

S10. Willi Soukop, *Madonna and Child*, (c. 1960) now in school, Mayfield.

S11. Marc Chagall, *White Crucifixion* (1938) Oil on canvas. The Art Institute of Chicago. Collection Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Babin.

S12. Graham Sutherland, *Blue Crucifixion* (1946), Church of St. Matthew, Northampton, UK

S13. *Christ on Cross*, Edilberto Merida, Peru, mid 20c.

S14. *The Tortured Christ*, Guido Rocha, Brazil, 1975.

S15. *Jesus Breaking the Cross*, José Clemente Orozco, Mexico, 1930s?

S16. Cross from El Salvador, CIIR, London.

S17. Crucifix from Efok, Cameroon, *Jesus the Ancestor*.

S18. *Procession into Jerusalem* and *The Carrying of the Cross* (1954), panels from the chapel of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria by Lamidi Fakeye.

S19. Tidjani Agona, a Muslim artist, *The Cross as the Tree of Life* at Toffo, Benin c.1970. See also altar at Bujora, Tanzania (1972), shaped like a chief's stool, with a hut like tabernacle.

S20. *African Madonna and Child*, Benin. Late 20c.

S21. Edwina Sandys, *Christa Figure* (1983), for a time in Anglican Cathedral New York.

S22. Destruction of Amazon forest: slide from collection *The Stations of the Forest*, CAFOD, London 1992.

S23. David Alfaro Siqueiros, a Mexican artist, *Echo of a Scream* (1937), Museum of Modern Art, New York.

The Will to Arise: Jesus and Women in the Gospels

Teresa Okure, SHCJ

THE PURPOSE OF this presentation was not to give a course in christology, but rather to offer an opportunity for us to share with one another our personal and corporate insights and experiences of who Jesus is for us personally and as a community of women religious designated as the Society (or Company) of the Holy Child Jesus. We were happy to share our reflections with our associates, alumnae, friends, and colleagues in the ministry. Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" is addressed to each of us. It requires a personally committed answer. Hence in writing this for Source, it seemed good to me to maintain the format used during the christology workshop in the three provinces. The reflection on this question was not intended to end with the workshops or with the end of the 150th jubilee year of the Society. Rather, Jesus' question requires that we give a new answer that is ever old as we come into new situations each day. For this reason, the exercise in listening and other random questions which were intended to help us to appreciate the reality and importance of Jesus' question as the first disciples did, have been retained.

Exercise in Listening: Getting in touch with ourselves

Exercise 1: Ask your partners in turns the following questions about yourself:

i. "Who do people say that I am?"
ii. "But you [my dialogue partner: SHCJ, member of my community, friend], who do you say that I am?"

Get in touch with how you felt about the exercise:

- feel the reality of the question: did you find it easy to ask?
- feel your vulnerability in asking the question.
- feel the fear in the expected answers, "what if..."
- feel the inadequacy in the answers, "yes, but...," or "really...?"
- feel the surprise in the answers: "Am I really like that?"
- feel your own inadequacy as you try to answer the question about your partner.

As a human being Jesus must have felt the same as you did in asking the questions. But he risked asking them all the same. The disciples must also have felt inadequate. The above questions presuppose another fundamental or more basic question: "Who do I say that I am?" These other questions will make full impact on me to the extent that I have grappled with this basic question in all honesty and simplicity.

Exercise 2:

i. Who do I say we are as SHCJ?
ii. Who do others say we are?
iii. Who do we, SHCJ, say we are?

We need now and again to take time out to ask about ourselves as individuals and about our corporate self as SHCJ. The answer given may or may not be satisfactory. It is not a matter of building our individual or corporate self-understanding on what people think of us. Rather these questions invite us to genuinely evaluate whether in our corporate and individual persons we have succeeded in communicating the message about who we believe we are to our friends and foes. This communal evaluation would also help us to plan realistically for our life and mission. Who we say we are in terms of our human, spiritual and material resources will affect our relationship with one another in the community, the province and across provinces; it will also determine how we carry out our mission together in today's world. The question needs to be asked ever anew and could form an integral part of our preparation for each provincial and general chapter.

Who we say we are in terms of our human, spiritual and material resources... will also determine how we carry out our mission together in today's world.

Getting in touch with our beliefs about Jesus

Exercise 3:

i. Who do people that I have taught, or ministered with say Jesus is?
ii. Do they live according to the christologies that they profess?

Like the first disciples, we are called to be the ears of Jesus, listening for Jesus to hear what our closest friends and contacts say about him. This is an aspect of our mission. If we are to lead others to believe that God lives and acts in them, we need to know how they themselves see God and Jesus, that is, we need to be in touch with their theologies, their christologies and their beliefs about the Holy Spirit (i.e., their pneumatologies).

Exercise 4: Who do I say Jesus is, to me personally? Who do we as SHCJ say Jesus is? How did I/we come by that knowledge? Is the answer experiential or theoretical, relational or purely doctrinal? Are the philosophies, the theologies or the ideologies of our modern society a barrier to the knowledge? Can I/we in this jubilee year return to the Christ of the gospels, of our creeds, and SHCJ traditions and give our confessions new meaning and substance?

Exercise 5: Who do I think Jesus says I am? as a person, as a woman, as an SHCJ? How did I come by that knowledge? How does that knowledge affect my view of myself, my outlook, my attitude to others; my relationship with God, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit; with Mary and the saints, living and dead? Am I one of those whom Jesus loves?

Exercise 6: Who do we think Jesus says we are as SHCJ? What difference does this knowledge make to us as a Society, a province, a given local community?

Other Personal Questions

1. What does Jesus mean to me personally?
2. What is my personal relationship with him?
3. What in me is Jesus? In me as a person and as a woman?
4. How have I met him in my living and working contexts?
5. How have I shared Jesus with others?
6. How have others shared Jesus with me?
7. Have I any problems relating with Jesus in today's world and church? If so, what are these problems and where do they come from?
8. Can the gospels help me to resolve these problems or are the gospels themselves part of the problem?
9. Can my own SHCJ traditions, my spiritual and cultural traditions help me to resolve these problems?
10. Can the lives of the people I have met, about whom I have read, help me to resolve these problems?
11. What more do I need to know about Jesus? What more would I like to know about him?

Reflecting on Jesus' Question in its own Context

"But you, who do you say I am?" (Matt 16:15 in context)

This question set in its historical and geographical context required a personal answer. Jesus asked his disciples this question in Caesarea Philippi, i.e., away from the normal crowd of followers in central Galilee. This geographical setting (also of political significance — in a Hellenistic-Roman territory), indicates that Jesus wanted the disciples to answer the question away from the crowds, but at the same time to reflect on what they had heard these crowds say about him. The implication is that he expected them to have been listening to the views of the crowds about his identity but also to have formed their own personal opinion about him. He expected to hear a difference between their view of him and that of the crowds.

Peter, inspired by God, answered for the rest of the disciples: "You are the Christ of God." The word 'Christ' comes from the Greek *Christos* (the Anointed One, or the Messiah). The term is essentially one of hope for deliverance (cf. Lk. 24:21) and of great expectations (Matt. 11:2-6; Jn. 4:25). Our task today is to identify the hopes which we as women, as SHCJ, as members of families, look with expectation to Jesus, "the Christ of God," to fulfill for us.

1. Jesus' question has two parts: i) who the people, the crowd, say this human being ("son of man"), Jesus, is; ii) who the disciples themselves say Jesus is. Both aspects of the question are equally important for us today.
2. The question is asked about the Jesus whom the people and the disciples knew as a human being, not about a divine and heavenly figure. Jesus' contemporaries had no problem with the humanity of Jesus. They knew him only too well as one of them (cf. Jn. 1:45; 6:42; 7:41; 10:33; Mk. 6:3). His divine messianic identity needed to be revealed to them by God (cf.

The grace of the revelation operated within the context of their daily companionship with him.

Matt. 16:17; 11:27). Unlike his first disciples, we first knew Jesus as God and as a risen exalted Lord. We have great difficulty seeing him as a human being, like one of us. Today we badly need his humanity to be revealed to us. The Incarnation is a process of becoming human. As a Society committed to the mystery of the Incarnation we need to know and relate to Jesus as a human being, the only perfect human being who has ever existed. "He became like us in all things except sin."

3. The question is put to the disciples after they had spent some time with Jesus. They were expected to have learned about him from their personal experience and daily contacts with him. The grace of the revelation operated within the context of their daily companionship with him. It is also in the daily experiences or concrete events of our lives that we will discover who Jesus is in our relationships and ministry; it is there too that we will discover who others say Jesus is.
4. The correct answer to the question is a revelation from God, not just personal opinions. Though good in themselves, these opinions are inadequate. The crowds saw Jesus as Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets, but "No one knows the Son except the Father" (Matt. 11:27b) who alone can reveal him as he did to John the Baptist and Simon Peter. We need God and God's Holy Spirit to reveal to us who Jesus really is.
5. Christologies are meant to serve as a program for life. Who we say that Jesus is has life-long implications for each of us (e.g., John the Baptist knew that since he was not the Christ, it was his destiny to decrease, and that of Christ to increase [Jn. 3:30]). Wrong christologies function wrongly for the one who holds them. Do we, for instance, think with the servant who was given one talent that Jesus is "a hard master"? (cf. Matt. 25:14-30; Lk. 19:11-27). Conversely, correct christologies that do not form a program for life are equally useless (e.g., Peter: "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you." "Get behind me Satan" Matt. 16:22).
6. Our correct identification of Jesus is accompanied by Jesus' own identification of us: no longer "Simon son of Jona" but "Peter-Rock." Who does Jesus say that I am? Does Jesus have a personal name for me as he had for Simon? Am I trying daily to live up to my new name given by him?
7. So Jesus' question to us remains: "Who do you say that I am?" He wants a committed and personal answer from us, as individuals and as a Society with an extended family of Associates, alumnae, and friends.

A Need for Re-interpretation

Who did women in the scriptures say that Jesus was to them? Who did Jesus say that these women were in themselves and to him?

We note that Jesus did not give women new names in the gospels as he gave to men, e.g., Simon = Peter, James and John = Sons of Thunder; he simply called them "woman." This was a mark of greatest respect especially when used of his mother (cf. Jn. 2:4; 19:26; 20:15). In my view, the designation woman here recalls the "woman" of Gen 3:15, or God's promise to Eve that her seed would crush the head of the serpent, i.e., that victory for our fallen race would come through the seed of the woman.

1. The mother of Jesus (Jn. 2:1-11; 19:25-27; cf. Lk. 1:26-38,39-56), launched him on his mission in John's gospel. The sign at Cana in Galilee at which she plays a decisive role even in spite of Jesus' protest, is the Johannine version of Jesus' inaugural sermon in Lk. (4:16-30).
2. Mary Magdalene (Jn. 20:1-18), was entrusted with the Easter message (v. 17), namely, that through the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus, or his glorification, we are all now God's children in, with, and through Christ. Jesus loved her enough to interrupt his journey to God and commissioned her to be an "apostle of the apostles" according to Augustine and the Fathers of the Church.
3. The Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:7-26, 39-42) was converted by Jesus into an apostle and became the mother of the Samaritan faith. She served as an example to the disciples on how the true disciple should imitate Jesus' method of proclaiming the good

news by rousing the curiosity of the audience. Compare, for instance, 4:10 and 4:29-30.

4. The woman with the issue of blood (Lk. 8:40-56; Mk. 5:21-43; Matt. 9:18-26) knew in whom she believed and defied all conventions and taboos and through her sheer determination to be healed, she received her long sought cure from Jesus. After her encounter with Jesus, she was no longer "a woman with hemorrhage," an outcast of society, but a dear "daughter" of Abraham, praised by Jesus for her healing faith.

5. The women who followed Jesus the whole way from Galilee, through Samaria, Jericho, and Judea to Jerusalem, the cross, death and resurrection (Lk. 8:1-3; 23:49, 55-24:11; Matt. 27:55-56; 28:1-10; Mk. 15:40-41, 47-16:8) stuck by Jesus through thick and thin. Jesus did not need to call these women, for they were there all the time. One only calls those who are not present and makes all kinds of promises to keep them, as Jesus made to the Twelve (cf. Lk. 18:28-30). While Peter and the other male disciples asked what they would receive from Jesus, given that they had left all things to follow him, the women disciples, like Jesus himself, ministered to the community from their own resources (Lk. 8:3). As these women accompanied Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem in his preaching tour, they would have retained most of his teaching as "eyewitnesses" which they would then have communicated to such writers as Luke (cf. Lk. 1:1-4). It is not unlikely that most of the stories about women in Luke's gospel, not only that of the infancy narratives, were communicated to him by women, or at least came from tradition handed down by the women concerned.

6. The Syrophoenician woman (Mk. 7:24-30; Matt. 15:21-28) respectfully refused to take no for an answer; in the process she helped to broaden Jesus' own missionary scope beyond the boundaries of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. She told Jesus in her own way that he was sent to all races of humanity and that he could not refuse on racial or religious grounds any one who went to him for help.

7. Martha and Mary of Luke 10:38-42 and John 12:1-8 had the better and best parts! Traditional interpretation of Martha's and Mary's encounter with Jesus have tended to focus almost exclusively on the Lucan account. In that interpretation, Mary becomes the model of the contemplative, Martha that of the active religious. Others have pointed out that Martha and Mary were first and foremost sisters, hence one should guard against separating contemplation from action in one's relationship with Jesus. The Johannine account of Jesus' relationship with the two sisters shows that each played a key role in the life and teaching of Jesus. The teaching about Jesus as the resurrection and the life is given through Martha's intervention and faith in Jesus as "the Christ Son of God." Incidentally, the content and formula of her christological confession (11:27) is identical with the whole purpose for which John's gospel was written (20:30). She is the only person in the entire gospel who employs this formula to confess Christ. This is worth reflecting upon. Mary in John's gospel is not only a beloved disciple like her sister Martha and her brother Lazarus; she leads the event which opens John's week of the Passion by anointing Jesus in preparation for the burial (12:1-8) as an example of service which in a few days time he will imitate in the washing of the feet and which he will command his disciples to copy (13:1-17). A close study of the anointing of the feet and the washing of the feet shows that the two episodes are a diptych. In this instance, Jesus not only admired what a woman did, he thought it fit to imitate her action in his own context.

Jesus not only admired what a woman did, he thought it fit to imitate her action in his own context.

Who do others in the New Testament say that women are?

1. In the pastoral letters (1 Tim. 2:11-12; Tit. 2:2-3) fear and subjection of women sets in. Yet for Jesus, women's concerns served as models of the kingdom of God itself (cf. Matt. 13:33; Lk. 13:20-21). These passages in the pastorals also need to be read against the background of the actual involvement of women in the early church.

2. Paul's unsuccessful efforts to deal theologically with pastoral problems are often wrongly interpreted out of context as the norm for women's involvement in the life of the Church, especially in liturgical settings (1 Cor. 11:2-12; 14:33-36). But those passages (e.g., Gal. 3:26-29, esp. v. 28) which give Paul's theological breakthroughs in his thinking about women and christology, their being "one person in Christ" (Gal. 3:28) are often ignored or played down. It is up to women to reclaim their rightful place in Christ and in the church, for the sake of the gospel.

Who or what were women in the early church?

1. For the participation of women in the life of the early Church and the different roles which they played, see, for instance, the list of women in the Church of Rome (Rom. 16:1-16): Phoebe, a visiting deaconess from the church at Cenchreae; Prisca, a teacher even of Apollos, the famous rhetorician and scholar from Alexandria; Junias/Julia(?), listed among the apostles; Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord, etc. To this we may add Evodia and Synteche in Philippi (Phil. 4: 2) who "labored side by side" with Paul "in the gospel" together with Clement and the rest of his fellow workers, and Chloe whose household in Corinth took action against the divisions in Corinth to heal the divisions (1 Cor. 1:11).
2. Women in the Acts of the Apostles: Mary the mother of John Mark, offered her house in Jerusalem as the meeting place of the first believers (Acts 12:12-17); the mother of Timothy, Eunice, a believer, passed on the faith to her son, a faith which she had received from her own mother, Lois (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5); Lydia, the first convert in Europe, offered her house as the headquarters of Paul's ministry in Philippi (Acts 16:11-15, 40). Before then they met at the riverside (v 13). We can compare house to mother churches or parishes during the missionary era in Nigeria, e.g., Onitsha, Calabar, Anuna. Priscilla or Prisca was among Paul's close missionary companions from Corinth to Ephesus and a teacher of Apollos in Ephesus (Acts 18:2, 18, 4-26; cf. 2 Tim. 4:19; Rom. 16:3). She is most often placed ahead of her husband indicating her rank and importance in the missionary work (as in the ranking: "Paul and Barnabas" or "Peter and Paul").

Who does Jesus say that he is with respect to women?

1. Born of a woman (Gal. 4:4), like mother like son/child; woman behold your son/child (Jn. 19:26-27). Jesus committed his new born child (the church) to the care of his mother, as happens in African cultures. Anselm saw Jesus as a mother who gave birth to us on the cross and nourished us with the milk of his body and blood.
2. Jesus imaged women: in humble service as Mary of Bethany (Jn. 12:1-8, 13:1-20); gave his life like the widow who offered her livelihood to the temple treasury (Lk. 21:1-4); lived among his disciples as one who serves (Lk. 22:27; Jn. 13:4-14; Mk. 10:45; Matt. 20:25-28); weeps over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37-39; Lk. 13:34-35; 19:41-44) and counsels the women of Jerusalem to do likewise (Lk. 23:27-31); cooked and served food to his disciples whom he called "children" (Jn. 21:5), even after his resurrection (Jn. 21:9-13).

The rediscovery of who Jesus is ... serves as a source of empowerment for us women today...

Who do we say we are as SHCJ in the light of the above reflections?

Our reflections on the above scripture passages and the answers they inspire in us to Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" should help us to revisit our own identity as women religious dedicated to living and making known the mystery of the Incarnation. These reflections invite us to rediscover our SHCJ identity and revisit our constitutions for the same purpose. The rediscovery of who Jesus is in himself and who he is for women in his life and in the early church serves as a source of empowerment for us women today, who often are treated as second class citizens in church and society. The correct understanding of who Jesus is rules out any feelings of inferiority and impels us to live our lives boldly in Jesus both in church and society.

Reading Material Given During The Workshops

It was emphasized before the workshops, that the bibliography which individuals have read, discovered and found helpful in preparing for the workshops is the best. Since the reading materials listed below were displayed during the various workshops, they are reproduced here as part of the presentation.

_____ Okure, Teresa, SHCJ. "Biblical Perspectives on Women: Eve the Mother of All the Living (Gen 3:20)." *Voices from the Third World*, Philippine Edition VIII/2 (1985) 17-24.

_____ "Women in the Bible." *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology*, pp. 47-59. Edited by V. Fabella and M. A. Oduyoye. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989.

_____ Okure, Teresa, SHCJ. "Men and Women Called to Image Jesus." Published in German as "Jesus der Mann in der Art der Frauen Wirkte." *Jahrbuch Mission* 1993, pp. 53-62. Hamburg: Missionshilfe Verlag, 1989.

_____ "A Theological View of Women's Role in Promoting Cultural/Human Development." *African Ecclesiastical Review* 31/6 (1989) pp. 362-367.

_____ "The Will to Arise: Reflections on Luke 8:40-65." *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*, pp. 221-230. Edited by M. A. Oduyoye and M. R. A. Kanyoro. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992.

_____ "The Significance Today of Jesus' Commission to Mary Magdalene." *International Review of Mission*. LXXXI/322 (1992) pp. 177-188.

_____ "ΑΦΕΣ ΑΥΤΗΝ: The Challenge of the Anointing of Jesus in Bethany for the Contemporary Church." *Universalisme et mission dans la Bible*, pp. 137-146. Panafrican Association of Catholic Exegetes. Nairobi: Katholische Jungschar Oestereiches et BICAM, 1993.

_____ "The Role of Women in the African Church." *SEDOS* 25/6 and 7 (1993) pp. 167-173.

_____ "The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament: Implications for Women in Mission," *Journal of Inculturation Theology* 2/2 (1995) pp. 196-210.

The Reign of God: Jesus and Ethics

Barbara Linen, SHCJ

IN PREPARING FOR the SHCJ Renewal Program "Christology and Incarnational Spirituality" we theologians had many choices to make. From the beginning we were to be inspired by the three themes that were meant to inform the whole of the jubilee celebration:

- forgive one another, be reconciled and united
- proclaim good news to the poor and release the oppressed
- return to our 'land', 'family', our roots, i.e., to our heritage.

Keeping these in mind, we then opted for addressing christology from the viewpoints of our respective disciplines. The 'return to the sources' called for in Vatican II having restored scripture to the center of the theological enterprise made Teresa Okure's work clear. Theology, according to an old definition, is faith seeking understanding. Systematic theology looks for a coherent view of the world in which faith knowledge can be integrated with other things we know. Anne Murphy would show the theological contexts within which the Society's life has been lived. Moral theology, concerned with what we do with what we know, how we live our faith, would be my assignment. There were further choices within each discipline of what to include. I felt particularly pressed in moral theology because of the vitality and the diversity of approaches present in contemporary moral theology.

It was here that I hit upon the idea of quilting as a way of conveying the richness, the artistry that has been at work in the field. Moral theology has helped to retrieve the richness of the artistry in the lives of people who live the mysteries of our faith in many different contexts. Quilting is an American phenomenon with roots that extend into both our European and African heritage and so seemed particularly appropriate as an image of the unity that is already there and that continues to grow.

A key reason for the vitality of moral theology has come from the recovery of mystery in theology. That recovery of mystery has been taking place in an age beset by evils of great magnitude. Theologians may not

ignore the evil and suffering which our age has witnessed in creating their works, lest they lose the point — "the point of facing with hope the horror while still speaking and acting at all by naming and thinking the God of genuine hope."[1] The God of genuine hope is the God of Jesus whose preaching was focused on God's imagination for humankind, i.e., on the reign of God among us.

In recent times moral theology has helped to:

1. return us to mystery as a theological category through the analysis of human action;
2. retrieve Jesus' concerns for the world in terms of the overcoming evil; and
3. retrieve Jesus' vision of God's imagination for our world, namely, the reign of God.

Part I: The recovery of mystery in human action

The analysis of human action in moral theology until fairly recently was done in Thomas Aquinas' terms. The *Summa Theologiae* was the sourcebook for Catholic theology. The curriculum for moral theology remained consistent right into the 60's and 70's. Why moral theology became stagnant and what happened when Vatican II called "in a special way" for its renewal is my concern here. Renewal occurred when Jesus and his life and work among us became central.

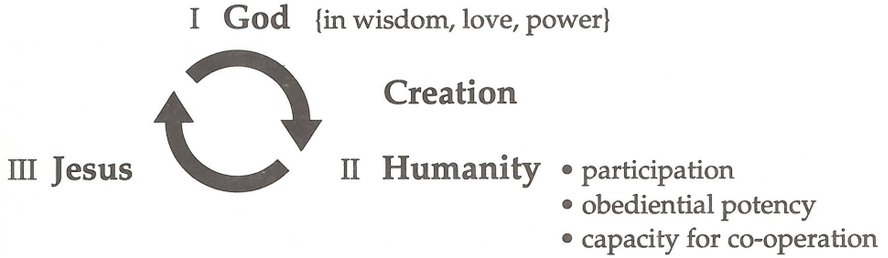
In the earlier part of this century moral theology was taught in seminaries. "Manuals" communicated the basics to men who would hear confessions and mediate forgiveness to penitents. Just how dominated moral theology was by this need to train confessors is well documented by Fr. John Mahoney in his masterful book, *The Making of Moral Theology*. There Mahoney related how seminarians learned theories from the manuals which were distillations of the *Summa*, using clear and distinct ideas, "and very few of them," as Lonergan used to say. Priests were then judges of people's actions on the basis of the principles they learned in the manuals. That was moral theology.

It is important that what Aquinas was doing and what the manualists were doing be distinguished here. What Aquinas was doing in the *Summa*, using all his human gifts and grace, was to take all possible sources for theology in the 13th century and weave them together in a massive synthesis. It was a quilting job on a grand scale. His sources included the scriptures, commentaries on the scriptures by the

Fathers of the Church who were usually bishops, as well as commentaries on the Fathers' commentaries, and then commentaries on the commentaries. Prayer and mystical experience were also integral parts of Aquinas' teachings.

Aquinas used the then recently rediscovered works of Aristotle for their coherence and power in analyzing human action. Aquinas also recognized their possibilities as vehicles for helping to convey the meaning of revelation. Aristotle's works were not theology, but they were a major accomplishment in explaining the human project. Aquinas' integration of Aristotle's work into his theological project provided an instrument for interpreting God and humanity that was used by the church for centuries as a primary text.

The following graphic is meant to illustrate the dynamism, the movement in Aquinas' work.



Regarding Aquinas' synthesis, I will highlight a few brief points. First, Aquinas himself viewed the *Summa* as 'all straw' compared to the gift of knowing God. Karl Barth, another important synthesizer, once suggested that the angels were probably laughing at his theology! Augustine had suggested long before both men that if what he had said made God understandable and comprehensible, then it was important to remember that what we understood was not God. The mystery of God cannot be contained or controlled by human minds through human language.

Secondly, early reactions by authorities to Aquinas' work was condemnation. New ways to put things together are often suspect and for good reason. If the previous synthesis is working, then why change? Historians of Vatican II continue to express wonder about the shift which the Council effected, given the seeming health that the church was enjoying at the time.

The mystery of God cannot be contained or controlled by human minds through human language.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly for our purposes, the life of Jesus, the vitality of the gospel story was lost to most people in the intricacies of scholastic theology.

The manuals of moral theology showed what happens when dogmatic theology became separated from moral theology. The context of mystery was lost, cut off as it was from the pattern of participation in God's wisdom and love given in creation. That pattern was reduced in the manuals to an ability to recognize laws planted within each person. First the natural law, given as a share in God's wisdom and love became the source from which was derived the moral law, then human law, then positive law. The analysis of breaking the law, or sin, was judged by conscience. Thus is given the general outline of the moral theology textbook.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council called in a special way for the renewal of moral theology in the document on priestly formation. They had seen moral theology become more and more removed from other theological sources. The Council document also suggested the means to be used for renewal: "livelier contact with the mystery of Jesus Christ and the history of salvation, nourishment in scriptural matters, and an appreciation of the nobility of the Christian vocation and their obligation to bring forth fruit in Christian charity." (*Decree on Priestly Formation*, #16)

The lively contact with the mystery of Christ has generated a great variety of spiritualities. Peter Schineller in a recent article in *America* contrasted two such spiritualities: a negative spirituality concerned with avoiding sin, reminiscent of the older moral theology and another that sees that we are part and parcel of the groaning of all creation for new and improved life.[3] As actively participating in this type of spirituality, contemporary moral theology is taken up with recognizing our role in creation, the same search Jesus was involved in — the search for God's reign.

That search has been occurring through scriptural studies, cultural analyses, and historical studies. These have revealed that Jesus struggled with purpose, betrayal, opposition, doubt and failure all in relation to God and the arrival of God's reign. In seeking our way in creation, in groaning with all of God's creatures we respond to our God who continues to act in history. We seek the patterns in Jesus' activity and make 'creative transfers' to our own situations. With his mind and heart and courage we act to overcome evil wherever we see it.

An example of coming into contact with the mystery of God in one's current context is the Trappist, Christian de Chergé, who was murdered in his monastery in Algeria, May of '96. He lived in a context of violence, in a situation that was fraught with dangers. His moving 'testament' included an acknowledgment of what he had learned from Islam, "finding there so often that true strand of the Gospel learnt at his mother's knee."[4] He prayed for the ability 'if God wills' to "immerse my gaze in that of the Father, to contemplate with him his children of Islam, just as he sees them, all shining with the glory of Christ." This could happen, de Chergé believed, because the Spirit shares a 'secret joy' with us that helps to establish communion and to refashion our likeness to one another and causes us to 'delight in the differences.' His life was already turned over to God, his killer already forgiven (he had obviously thought it might happen) when he wrote the testament a month before his death.

What de Chergé captured in his moving words, but even more in the works of his life (as attested especially by his Abbot) is described by Elizabeth Johnson, referring to Jesus' life:

> Contingent historical narrative tells the story of the joyous, Spirit-filled ministry of Jesus, his unjust suffering and death, and his rising to new life in such a way that God can be seen to draw near in the midst of historical discontinuities, rather than in bypassing them. Historically there is no discernible pattern that makes either Jesus' life or its outcome either preordained or absolutely predictable. It happens. Indeed it happens amid the confluence of historical forces as all lives happen. But this narrative generates such hope because it signals divine mystery unpredictably present in the very midst of contingent events of suffering, community, struggle, and joy, present where least expected, even with the disinherited and brokenhearted, irrepressible in vitality.[5]

Johnson also refers to "human acts which allow fragments of well-being to gain a foothold amid historical meaninglessness and suffering." Such acts "make persons co-partners with God in the coming of salvation."[6] In contrast with the doers of such acts are those who refuse to accept responsibility.

Too many of the world's peoples, too many of our neighbors have fallen through the cracks as we argued about the fine points of theology.

These writings are new ways to talk about the mystery of God-with-us. We are no longer in the medieval search for the grand synthesis. Too many of the world's peoples, too many of our neighbors have fallen through the cracks as we argued about the fine points of theology. The real evils in our time call for an exercise of our freedom in actions that reveal God's continuing presence to our world. This is contemporary moral theology's concern. This is the Society's concern. Our lives are pieces of the quilt God is weaving.

Part II: Evil and Hope

The contemporary theological approach, I am suggesting, takes history very seriously. Since Auschwitz especially, theology has been different. The evils of the 20th century have brought more questions than answers, more wonders about humanity's inhumanity to its own, and now more of a realization of what has been done to the earth also. Theology is not irenic or boring or easy in our day. It is demanding. It demands work and prayer and imagination. It demands that we look evil squarely in the face, especially in the face of the other, the ones who suffer. Where in the world is our redeeming God? This is the challenge and invitation to each of us where we are.

In his opening address to the Catholic Theological Society of America celebrating its 50th anniversary (New York, 1996), David Tracy suggested that "all thought must be interrupted by the great counter-experiences of suffering, especially the suffering caused by the horrifying historical evils whose echoes no serious thinker can avoid."[7] The 20th century has been considered one of the worst in human history. Many people see a huge gap between the extremity of suffering and the triviality of our symbolic and conceptual worlds. It is precisely these gaps, these interruptions in our systems, that have moved moral theologians back to Jesus, back to the New Testament and the stories of Jesus and about Jesus. What these stories do is help us to see the world in new ways, ways that encourage our engagement with Jesus in overcoming the evils in our own situation.

On the world stage one can turn to the nightly news or the daily newspaper for a current listing of evils: human rights violations, wars and rumors of wars, biases of many kinds. On a more local level two comments helped to focus some of my concerns about evil. Stephen Toulmin, the philosopher, when asked in an interview what about the subject of human consciousness still puzzled him, answered with another question: "Why are we so nasty to one another?" E. J. Dionne, a young Catholic journalist offered the second comment. Dionne described "the politics of sneering" which saw no good coming from Washington, no choice, for example, between Democrat or Republican. "Sneering," he said, "requires no action and little thought. It blames all problems on politicians as a group, leaving just about everyone else — ourselves notably — off the hook."[8] These comments capture for me some of the everyday evils in which we are complicit. They give reasons for our racism, sexism, classism and the like. Can our year of jubilee be a time of forgiveness, when nastiness and sneering are rejected, when resentments are let go, when reconciliation recalls us to our roots?

Former ways of understanding the 'religious' aspect of life no longer satisfy many of us. The primary locus of our spiritual life is our daily existence. If we do not expect to find God at the office or in our neighborhood or at the school board meeting or in our loving, then indeed, for all practical purposes, God will not be there. We need to face evil and suffering: the evils we live with every day — from injustice to ourselves and those close to us, to misunderstandings that lead to rifts, to the structural situations where dominative power is at work in school situations, prisons, the church, family, community. Any place where there is systematic exclusion of certain voices, any place where there is anger, rage, petrifying fear, and hurt as experienced by many of us at one time or another, is place for alternative action.

There is no cheap hope just as there is no cheap grace.

Whence comes our hope? Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we had hoped for things to be different in our world, in our families, in the Society. Are all our hopes to be deferred to another world even though intellectually we know that the new order, the new heaven and new earth are meant to have begun. Still, ours is not a religion of optimism. There is no cheap hope just as there is no

cheap grace. Hope comes through the cross, not so much ours as the crosses of those others whose lives we may share in solidarity.

Theologies of the cross are a source of hope in our time. Susan Ross, a feminist theologian has spoken of three moral responses to the fragments of hope found in the passion narratives of the gospel.

> First, evil calls for a moral response of *presence and witness.... Second*, evil calls for a *commitment to struggle and resistance*..., (both of which) require a community and a context within which to work.... The third fragment of hope in the passion narrative is *forgiveness*... forgiveness as an alternative response to violence that has the power to break the cycle... Forgiveness involves "the de-absolutization of the self and therefore the transcendence of the self by knowing the self as one center among many centers."[9]

Transformation involves hope for a new future

Forgiveness also involves an act of courage to put the evil act in the past. "In the case of forgiveness, one remembers in order to transform; in the case of vengeance, one remembers in order to destroy. Transformation involves hope for a new future...."[10]

It is the indwelling Spirit of Jesus, the spirit of forgiveness which keeps us hoping with the hope which does not disappoint, which helps us to manage the pain and the resentment caused by the shortcomings and failures, the iniquities and injustices of church and world.

Part III: Jesus' Imagination for Humanity: the Reign of God

Who do you say that I am? is a question that needs to engage our imagination and our feelings if it is to receive a full answer. For the full answer is not just a speculative question. Its answer is being worked out in history, in our history — in the patterns of our lives. Each day we can be — and are drawn into the life and work of Jesus. Jesus is someone who faced evil and suffering as a man like us in all things, one who addressed the evil he saw. The evils of our time, and perhaps of all time (including that of Jesus), are the evils of domination, of our wanting to be like gods, of lording it over others, individually and socially. Jesus helps us to understand this and shares a different vision: "Do not judge...," "Pay attention to the weightier matters of the law...," he said. His parables describe the situation where God reigns: it's attractive (like the pearl); it includes everyone especially because it is hard for us to tell the good and the bad (wheat and weeds); it welcomes workers whenever they show (the vineyard); it may surprise you who wins and who loses (the judgment story).

Jesus' stories of God revealed that God had a different view about people and about what was important. It was a view that Jesus learned not only in his prayer but also in his life from family, tradition, friends, religious people, and even those who rejected his message. Jesus' meaning is inseparable from his story. It resides in the full range of encounters, personalities, and deeds which the gospels relate. God's reign is there to engage us at every level of our being, not only our intelligence. The new moral theology is still in the making as we learn to tell our own stories. Those stories are the fabric of the quilt God continues to work on.

Finding ways to inculturate the message of the gospel in today's terms is a challenge to the creativity of people everywhere. "The excuse for doing theology," according to Rosemary Haughton, "is to discover or to rediscover a language that can convey the riches of the tradition to those who live a different reality."[10] There are many efforts in many different places where people are trying to find ways to evoke "the dangerous and repressed memories of Jesus" (Johannes Metz) so as to enable the community of disciples (ourselves) to respond in actions and in hope to overcome the evils in our world.

Conclusion

Bill Spohn speaks of Jesus as a "concrete universal", as one who lived in this world as we do with human limits, facing massive evil. Yet, we are drawn by God as Jesus was to see the hope of new life, not just in some unknown future, but in our time and place. We are piecing together our own lives, with artistry and humor, in union with God, with each other, and with the wider church and world.

We are piecing together our own lives, with artistry and humor in union with God, with each other, and with the wider church and world.

Our image of the quilt is a more feminine notion attempting to convey a similar message. The message of

Jesus, the ongoing life of Jesus in the church calls us to see the good wherever it can be found, to keep seeking it with imagination in all the places where God is in our world. Someone has pointed out that Plato and Aristotle were contemporaries of the prophets, yet these philosophers did not see the moral significance of the poor and women and slaves. They did not have the imagination which the prophetic tradition has kept alive for us.

Are we living conscious of God's presence, aware of evil and violence? Are we bringing God's image, as Jesus teaches it, to our world? This is moral theology's quest. This is our mission: to help others....

Notes

1. David Tracy, "Evil and Hope: Foundational Systematic Perspectives." *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 51 (1996) 16.
2. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.
3. See "What Are We Here For— Trials or Work in the Vineyard," *America* (June 22, 1996) 20-21.
4. See *The Tablet* (June 8, 1996) 749. See also *National Catholic Reporter* (May 16, 1996) 16.
5. In "Jesus and Salvation." *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 49 (1994) 9.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 13-14.
7. David Tracy, *idem*.
8. In *The Washington Post*, June, 1996.
9. See "Evil and Hope: Foundational Moral Perspectives" *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 51 (1996).
10. *Idem*.

An Invitation to a Study of Heroic Virtue

Marlene Brownett, SHCJ

ASKED TO FILL in for Caritas McCarthy, who had gone home to God, and to give a mini-workshop on Cornelian incarnational spirituality I panicked and blurted out a resounding "No!" After all, neither an historian nor a theologian, I felt ill-equipped to do justice to so lofty a theme, even with Caritas' already prepared notes. However, after some thought, more prodding, and much prayer I realized that I might share what I do know and so was born "An Invitation to a Study of Heroic Virtue." As an English teacher I use the play *Connelly vs. Connelly* in courses on the biblical Job and the Drama of Human Courage. The play succeeds in acquainting young women with a very real Cornelia Connelly.

Having just seen the TV presentation "Searching for God in America" I was encouraged to revisit this 1961 play, to reread it with the workshop participants, and to test its truth against the *Informatio*. Rabbi Harold Kushner had observed on the telecast that there are two ways to perceive truth. First, a thing is true because it happened and that is historical, documented truth. Then there is a deeper, more profound truth, the kind found in poetry, novels, and drama — the truth that reveals the soul. We all know that for Cornelia Connelly truth was a centerpiece of life. The idea for the workshop was born!

The program began with the participants willing to devote two full sessions to a brief presentation by me and a longer reading of the script by a variety of players. In the spirit of Cornelia Connelly we seemed to see the dramatic presentation as a valuable tool to reveal and to help to shape character. The play engages the whole person because it involves "actions not words" alone as it moves mind and heart "step by step and line by line," scene by scene.

My contention was and still is that this play seen by many of us in the 60s and read by students in the 90s proves an excellent way to the truth of Cornelia for young women, for their mothers, and their mentors, for those who know Cornelia just a little as well as for those who know her well.

The author, Father Brendan Larnen, OP, only recently deceased, took the documented legal brief of the case of Connelly vs. Connelly from the Harvard Law Library as his only source. Then in the late 50's without benefit of *Positio, Informatio*, or *A Woman Styled Bold* and without any SHCJ interviews he painted a picture of anti-papist England in the 1850's and 60's; of Victorian mores; of the Holy Roman Catholic Church in England, America, and Rome; of the personalities of Pierce and Cornelia. He allowed audiences to sense the spiritual development of a Cornelia who was called by Elizabeth Mary Strub "susceptible to grace" (*Informatio* 108). Papers by several Oak Knoll School students documented for me the worth of this play as an introduction to Venerable Cornelia — woman of heroic virtue. As Cornelia surely believed, I learned again that theater is a true teacher.

End Notes

1. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, (New York: Crossroad, 1993) p.13.
2. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Experience of Jesus as Lord* (New York: Seabury, 1980) p.76.
3. Johnson, *She Who Is.* p.18.
4. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983) pp.18-19.
5. Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power*, (New York: Crossroad, 1988) p. 7.
6. Ibid., p. 41.
7. Ibid., p. 25.
8. Ibid., p. 25.
9. Ibid., p. 41.
10. Ibid., p. 52.
11. Ibid., p. 68.
12. Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) p. 32.
13. Ibid., p. 27.
14. Ibid., p.27.
15. see Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Redeeming the Name of Christ," *in Freeing Theology*, ed., Catherine Mowry LaCugna (New York: Harper Collins, 1993) pp. 118-120.
16. Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Redeeming the Name of Christ," in *Freeing Theology*, ed., Catherine Mowry LaCugna (New York: Harper Collins, 1993) p. 121.
17. Johnson, *She Who Is...*, p.95.
18. Ibid., p. 95.
19. Ibid., p. 97.
20. Ibid., p. 99.
21. Ibid. pp. 157-161, also see Johnson, "Redeeming the Name of Christ," in *Freeing Theology*, pp. 123-127.
22. Johnson, "Redeeming the Name of Christ," in *Freeing Theology*, p. 127.
23. Ibid., p. 131.
24. Ibid., p. 131.
25. Ibid., pp. 132-133.

Glimpses of Christ Incarnated and Communicated in West Africa

Ms. Lorna Bowman

IN THE FALL of 1994 twenty-four Holy Child past students, twelve each from Nigeria and Ghana, participated in oral history interviews about their educational experiences in schools developed and administered by the Society in West Africa. These HOPSANS told how their educations had influenced their lives and accomplishments as women of Africa.

The work of the Society in West Africa dates to 1930. Cardinal Arinze has pointed out that

> the Catholic Church does not identify itself with any culture. It is open to all cultures. To them it gives and from them it receives. It meets the various cultures in dialogue. It serves also to purify, to elevate, and to ennoble elements of a culture and to put several cultures in communication with one another.[1]

This insight is over 270 years old. In 1659 the Church had instructed missionaries sent to Indochina and China to

> Put no obstacles in their way, and for no reason whatever should you persuade these people to change their rites, customs, and ways of life, unless these are obviously opposed to religion and good morals. For what is more absurd than to bring France or Spain or Italy or any other part of Europe into China. It is not these that you should bring but the faith which does not spurn or reject any peoples' rites and customs, unless they are depraved, but on the contrary tries to keep them....Admire and praise what deserves to be respected.[2]

Yet, Catholic missions in the former British West Africa were part of what has been described as "the three M's" — missions, merchants and the military.[3] Mission centres were established in cooperation with colonial administrations in the hope of establishing better trading conditions. Thus, in the early years and up until independence (Ghana 1957; Nigeria 1960), the Society's schools followed and adapted the educational policy established for British Tropical Africa.[4]

"Inculturation is the incarnation of the Gospel message in a culture" (Arinze 1986, 19). As the Holy Child past students interviewed spoke of their lives, the values, commitments, and priorities which give

Inculturation is the incarnation of the Gospel message in a culture.

form to the service they live, it was possible to discern how they, both as individuals and as communities of women, incarnate the Gospel message. This they do within the complex cultural matrices of nation states, made up of diverse ethnic groupings, established by foreign powers out of former colonial territories. These women have taken the educations they received and run with them, so to speak. The perspectives of two women, Miss Mary Edet of Nigeria and Ms Hannah Quarm of Ghana, illustrate this.

Mary Edet, associate member of the African Province, lives in Calabar, Cross River State. The life of this former Chief Education Officer provides a purview of the Society's educational and spiritual legacy in this region of Nigeria. She recounted:

> I'm a Holy Child, an "Old Girl" to the core, as they are called. [laughter] Because I have been with the Holy Child, in the schools, since I was about four years old.

She went on to explain:

> They used to have a Nazareth [infants' school] here in Calabar. And in those days the sisters went round, collected the children of teachers and catechists, and their wives sometimes, to help the wives acquire some sort of educational background. I know at one time my mother was with the Holy Child sisters for one or two years before she went back home. And at that time I was here with her and I went to school. I started Nazareth school. When I finished I went on to the primary school with the Holy Child sisters and then after that I went to the Holy Child Teacher Training College, [Ifuho]. (Edet 1994)

Speaking with great warmth, laughter came easily as did her joy and love of life.

In the course of the interview I became aware that the adjective "Holy Child" referred to any woman who had been educated at any point in her life by either members of the Society or the African teachers schooled in one of the Holy Child teacher training colleges. One was not less Holy Child for not having been taught by the European and American Mothers or Sisters. I also learned that, if for familial, economic or political

reasons (such as the 1966-69 Biafran Civil War) a woman had not been able to complete her education at a Holy Child School, she was still "Holy Child" — the reason the term "past student" has come into use. Holy Child also covered all the kinds of education women received. Some of the older women in Calabar were past students of the marriage training centre with its focus on "Hygiene, Homecraft and Horticulture."[5] These elders are highly respected in the community and a shared communal identity is evident.[6]

The interview with Mary Edet preceded a zonal meeting of the Holy Child Past Students Association held at Marian Hill, Calabar. On the eve of this gathering I asked: What is it, do you think, that holds the alumnae together? Her response set the tone for what I was to hear in future interviews:

> I think it is the spirit that the Holy Child Sisters laid; it keeps us together. For instance, we have the motto "Actions not Words" which I am sure you know. "Actions not Words." And I think we value the motto very much and try to live by that, by the motto. And there are other things. The spiritual life of the Holy Child Sisters permeated our own life...the happiness we got. They didn't only try to make us people with high spirituality, they made us happy too. There was the spiritual accent and the human accent mixed. As you are going to see in the paper, I have given examples of what the sisters did to make us so happy. (Said with laughter in voice)

I'm a Holy Child, an "Old Girl" to the core, as they are called.

She continued:

> Yes. And they loved us. By that I mean, they helped us in the way that a real, a natural mother would help a child. From the time you were six or from the time you did anything wrong, well, they thought of something. They had that way of making you feel that they were real mothers. They accepted, accepted us unconditionally. They gave us that unconditional love, whether you did something wrong or right, they still loved you. And they tried to help you and accept you. They accepted us.... I can't describe what the Holy Child Sisters were to us.

The importance of a mother's love, joy, and acceptance became recurring themes both in Nigeria and Ghana.

The importance of a mother's love, joy, and acceptance became recurring themes both in Nigeria and Ghana. Central to the lives of these women and their shared identity was the motto "Actions not Words." In Ghana the Latin "*Facta non Verba*" is used.

Another theme also emerged in the interviews. The first time I (LB) heard it was when Mary Edet (ME) described the relationship between the associate members of the Society in Nigeria and the Society's African sisters:

LB: I saw among the sisters a great affection and respect for you.

ME: They have. And they come in to see me when they haven't seen me for a long time. They think about me, in short. Just as I think about them. They call in and they are free to call whenever they like. But unfortunately, I think that sometimes I'm not available because of travel....

LB: For yourself, does your relationship as an associate have its roots in your early education?

ME: I think so very much. Very much so.

LB: Sharing the vision....

ME: That's it! It brings back memories of the past and then we do tell the younger sisters what it used to be in the past. And then we try to ask questions to find out what they are doing to preserve certain types of relationships. And they are doing so much.

LB: That's very important....

ME: It is important!

LB: Because you know the story for the younger sisters.

ME: That's it, that's it! And some of the sisters, you know, were not brought up in Holy Child Schools. So it is always a history for them.... There are some who haven't been brought up or trained in the Holy Child schools or colleges. So we have got to let them know. And you know that some of the sisters who were not in Holy Child Schools [that] I know, one of them said to me, "You are running around when the old sisters come from America or England." Word goes round. They let us know and we all go out to meet the older sisters who have come back to visit. And they are always so surprised. They don't understand because they were not members of the schools. I mean, the Holy Child Schools and Colleges... that was a relationship all along. Yes.

At the zonal meeting the next day Mrs. Josephine K. Ukah, in speaking of "Holy Child Women in Nation Building in Nigeria," commented

> Once I met a lady for the very first time, I will not mention names. Something in her comportment and expression gave me the feeling that she *was brought up by the Holy Child Mothers* (emphasis mine). I was to discover I was dead right.[7]

Again, in Ghana, when talking with Ms Hannah Quarm about discipline in the schools she commented

> Very strict. And yet we had our liberties, if I can put it that way. We were brought up to know that we must be ladies (Quarm 1994).

Earlier she had spoken of the headmistress, Mother Colum [Mary Conneely] saying "apart from being a nun, she was a mother and we had a lovely time" (Quarm 1994).

. . . she was brought up by the Holy Child Mothers.

These women spoke of being brought up[8] by the Holy Child Mothers and Sisters in cultures where they are accustomed to being nurtured by all the women of the community. They became the "holy children." The relationship that developed between themselves and the Holy Child sisters continues today. In Accra, Ghana, Hannah Quarm told me of her fortieth birthday celebration.

> Yes! (laughter) I had my birthday, my fortieth birthday — though I look so young according to people — on the twelfth of October. And just the weekend before, seven to ninth, as a prelude to the luncheon of the Golden Jubilee the HOPSANS moved to Holy Child Secondary School Cape Coast to have a sort of retreat and prayerful mood to prepare for the luncheon. And, we had a pontifical high mass

... the most important thing is that you have been Holy Child trained so you are a sister and you are welcome anywhere.

on the ninth by Archbishop Turkson and I was so happy because that man is so well-versed in secular and religious affairs and the preaching was so good. And the music was beautiful so I danced my heart out. Everybody was asking "Why? Why?" So I said I've started celebrating my birthday and it's my fortieth so I want to celebrate it the whole month. And one of the Old Girls, she is within the 50 group — she's about 54. She's our National Secretary. She said "Okay, I'm going to give you four chickens, one for each decade." I said "Oh, lovely, Auntie, thank you!"[9]

So I thought why don't I then call all of you to help share in the chicken? So I thought I'd tell them the Wednesday evening at 6 p.m. We have a clubhouse at Nima, that would be in Accra. 'Meet me there at 6 p.m. from your office and then it's just cocktails, nothing but just to come and wait my day.'

I got there in the afternoon. A friend took me out for lunch and I had a good wine. And I was wondering whether I could make it because I was all eyes glazed and everything. But I was very happy. I got there at 5:30 p.m. and people were already there. By 7 p.m., I was expecting about 20 people but someone said, "Oh, I called that one" and I said, "Oh, how nice." Before I knew [it] that person was there before me. I had as many as about 55 people. And I didn't spend anything. My friends brought everything. And it turned out to be a real party instead of cocktails. We sat down, we chatted, we played music and it was beautiful.

And somebody said it's given me a new respect from my office colleagues. They look at me in a different light. Because I was forty they were expecting younger people to come to my party. But from 60 down to 21 and 18 — they were all there. And I told them, "That is the basis of HOPSA. There is no discrimination; the most important thing is that you have been Holy Child trained so you are a sister and you are welcome anywhere." (Quarm 1994)

This vignette speaks powerfully of the manner in which the Christian values fostered by the Holy Child education these Ghanaian women received is expressed through their own cultures. For Hannah Quarm the experience of affirmation by her HOPSAN sisters was the most important part of her birthday celebration.

How is one to understand the manner in which these Holy Child past students have received the gospel within their own cultures? In *Daughters of Anowa* Mercy Amba Oduyoye, an Akan married to a Yoruba, focuses on three interlocking circles in the lives of African women — language; culture, which she describes as "the continuing process of action and reflection that goes on in any historical moment"; and "tales of us as women — who we are and what we dream to become."[10] She uses the phrase "religio-cultural corpus" to include the vast sources of traditional influences on life, and more specifically, the language and imagery of proverbs, folktales, and myths" (ibid., 19). Her concern is "their impact on life" (ibid.). Speaking of myths, folktales and proverbs as "folktalk," she writes:

> This religio-cultural corpus that I call folktalk, then, is the social history of our people as the collective memory wishes to have it remembered. A mirror on life, it also functions as an authoritative source for decision-making, even in the present.... Culture as manifested in folktalk, serves a regulatory and preservatory [sic] function for what is dear to people (Oduyoye 1995, 20).

Mary Edet emphasized:

> It is the spirit that the Holy Child Sisters laid; it keeps us together. We have the motto Actions not Words.... Actions not Words. And I think we value the motto very much and try to live by that, by the motto.

This was not a royal "we" but was spoken as part of a communal identity. For the Holy Child past students of Nigeria and Ghana their mottos have become a form of "folktalk" which "serve a regulatory and preservatory [sic] function for what is dear to" them from their Holy Child education and formation.

The title of Mother borne by the Holy Child Sisters in the early years, together with the symbol of the Holy Child, found resonance within the traditional African cultures these past students represent. In African society "[n]urturing the next generation is a communal duty and all the women of the community become one's mother" (Oduyoye 1995, 26). The maternal emphasis, a legacy of Cornelia's influence in the Society's early schools, not only provided an educational climate in which young African women could feel "at home" but emphasized values and a world view

The title of Mother... together with the symbol of the Holy Child, found resonance within the traditional African cultures these past students represent.

congruent with their ethnic cultures. This value is carried forward in the commitment of educators such as Mrs. Elizabeth Ezan, principal of Sacred Heart Vocational Institute in Accra, who spoke of her acceptance of this position at a school for disadvantaged students in Accra.

> I haven't regretted it because at the end of the day I know I have helped someone who has no mother. Even though she has a mother but whose mother has never cared for her.... (Ezan 1994)

Oduyoye (1995, 201) also points out that "womanhood in Africa is almost synonymous with motherhood" and that "African women's priorities begin and end in relationships" (ibid., 131). These relationships are often expressed formally through "sisterhoods." As a matter of respect one addresses another woman as "sister."[11] Throughout Africa "sisterhoods (whether of market women, church women, or professional groups) have been the backbone of energy for women's economic and social change..." (ibid. 186).

It is apparent that HOPSAN is a sisterhood of Holy Child past students. This adds a particular dimension of solidarity across ethnic and cultural boundaries to the relationships among these African women educated through the Society's schools. In African society, for example, "younger people are expected to pay obeisance to their elders" (ibid., 102), another dimension in their relationship as described by Hannah Quarm on her birthday.

> It is the quality of relationships rather than power or prestige that informs the daily encounters of traditional African women.... (Oduyoye 1995, 132)

For Hannah this was found in the commitment of the HOPSAN women to their association and its works of service; she had taken a week off work to prepare for the launching of their fund-raising campaign for the Golden Jubilee of the Society in Ghana (50 years).

Through its work in West Africa the Society has put a number of cultures in communication with one another both within Africa, itself, as

well as more broadly. The motto as folktalk, the theme of mother, the importance of the symbol of the Holy Child, and HOPSA as a sisterhood speak movingly of how the Holy Child past students of Ghana and Nigeria incarnate and communicate Christ's presence and message through their respective cultures. They challenge us from other regions of the world to do the same.

End Notes

1. Francis Cardinal Arinze, "Globalization of Theological Education," *Theological Education,* XXII: 1 (Autumn 1986): 20.
2. Collectanea S.C.P.F., Vol.1, n. 135, p.42. Cited by Arinze, 20-21.
3. Stephen S. Kim, "Seeking Home in North America: Colonialism in Asia; Confrontation in North America," in *People on the Way: Colonialism in Asia; Confrontation in North America,* ed. David Ng (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1996), 1-2.
4. Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, "Education Policy in British Tropical Africa" (London: His Majesty's Office, March 1925).
5. Eileen Sweeney, "The Dance: The SHCJ in West Africa," *Source,* 24 (1992): 41.
6. As a result of this project Agatha Inkoom, SHCJ taped interviews of the elder African "mothers" (a term of respect) in the Calabar region.
7. Josephine K. Ukah, "Holy Child Women in Nation Building in Nigeria," Paper read at Zonal Meeting of Holy Child Past Student Association, 15-17 October 1993, Marian Hill Secondary School, Calabar, Nigeria.
8. This is a phrase commonly used in England by graduates of private boarding schools. I have also heard it used by a former officer of the British Foreign Service, Vivien Hughes, a boarding school alumna, when speaking of the formative influence of the training received in the Foreign Service. For the purpose of this paper its use by Holy Child past students draws attention to the formative influence of language vis-á-vis the goals of education in a culture where it is the responsibility of the community to bring up the children.
9. Note the address of respect—this is also how the younger African sisters of the Society often address the older ones. As the eldest African member of the SHCJ, Teresa Okure, SHCJ, is always addressed as "Auntie" by her younger African Holy Child sisters.
10. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1995), 13.
11. During the African Synod of 1994, while staying in Rome at Casa Cornelia, the superior general from an indigenous Nigerian congregation of women religious addressed me as "sister." Wanting to clarify that I was not a Holy Child sister, but a visitor, I replied that I was not a "sister." It was not until I was in Nigeria that I realized why women religious in Africa are identified as "reverend sisters" and that my response had been quite inappropriate.

Jesus and the Deprived

Kathleen King, SHCJ

TO FACILITATE DISCUSSION and understanding of Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" I described a typical day at the drop-in centre for homeless people in Salford. I talked about our clients, their backgrounds, and their needs and showed the group many photographs.

Questions poured in about people and problems. The group wanted to know

- what we do,
- what is on offer at the centre,
- how we do it,
- how many people use the centre, and
- who they are.

We explored too the problems we encounter, such as,

- lack of solutions,
- lack of time,
- difficult personalities,
- violence and aggression.

Personally I felt very supported by the participant's encouragement and interest, and I hope those who came to the workshop encountered Jesus in some way as they learned more about our clients.

Connections

Carol Ann Smith, SHCJ

I WANT TO begin by sharing my presuppositions for this session, the understandings which have guided me in its development. Knowing them may help you enter into the experience more easily.

1. Making connections between experiences is important for three reasons:
   a. It helps us to avoid the experience of absurdity/disbelief which can encroach upon us in the glut of experiences which we have;
   b. It helps us to appropriate material personally;
   c. It helps us to cut into the volumes of material presented so that the material works for us in practical ways.
2. Carl Rogers' belief that people have within themselves the answers to their own questions attracted me years ago and my work with the spirituality of adults daily convinces me of the truth of that. Ignatius' encouragement to pay attention to the desires/questions/insights/movements within says very much the same thing.
3. Hans Georg-Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, often used in the study of hermeneutics, showed me the importance of our identifying where we are as we approach any text — a book, a poem, a lecture, a day of ministry, a meeting — with which we begin, as it were, a conversation.

So, my remarks will be few. The bulk of our time will be given over to your reflection and some limited sharing — sharing which, in this instance, has as its value that it will give you the chance to name and articulate your reflection — a key part of appropriating it.

In her September 15, 1995 letter to the Society, when referring to the Jubilee Year celebrations, Mary Ann Buckley said some things which I find key to our making the connections between what we have heard so far in this workshop and our personal, ministerial and faith journeys.

> Like Cornelia we are first of all and above all disciples of Jesus — by God's call and grace, by our public profession, and the very name we bear.

Mary Ann goes on to speak of the changes in christology that are part of the development of our living tradition of faith and, therefore, we will answer differently than Cornelia did the question of Jesus, "Who do you say that I am?" Then she says:

> Still, we see from Cornelia's life what kind of power there was in her answer to that question. The Christ of her faith attracted, sustained and consoled her through a life of uncommon love, sorrow, fidelity and zeal. We too need to be driven by such power personally and as one body....

Her referring to us as disciples of Jesus recalled for me an earlier time when we — as a congregation or a province — did something on discipleship. I dug into my files and found something which appears to be from the mid-70s. I cite that only to point out that our taking time to

As I thought about what makes a disciple, the quality which came to my mind was that of a driving faith.

reconsider our discipleship has a history. Doing so may be part of our way of dipping into the Living Wellsprings. I also cite that because for some of us, making the connections during these days may mean recalling the history of our own understanding of Jesus and discovering within those memories some important and sustaining threads in our own faith development.

As I thought about what makes a disciple, the quality which came to my mind was that of a *driving faith* — faith in that which I experience as coming from beyond me, that which is other than myself while at the same time moving me intimately within myself. The word that said it for me was *compelling*. I think that is what Mary Ann was suggesting in describing "a kind of power there was in her (Cornelia's) answer to that question." So, the lead question becomes:

What is compelling me now in my belief in Jesus the Christ?

The story of Jesus that compels me at any given period of my life is the story that touches me where I am. Only from that point can new understandings form and shape me.

So, I need always to be conscious of where I am. Where am I?

I am going to give you time — just a few minutes — to name for yourselves where you find yourself. I will pose a question to focus your reflection, give you a minute or two to reflect and then pose a second question and give you time to reflect. I am not going to ask you to share your reflections — I tell you that so that you can be free to let surface what will surface.

1. *In the community of disciples which is the Society, this web of SHCJ relationships, where are you / how are you?* Happy, sad, confused, hurt, lonely, exhilarated, overwhelmed, frightened, peaceful, content?
2. *Given your answer to that question, what story of Jesus draws you?*
3. *In ministry* — your share in the mission of Jesus — in your place of ministry *what is God doing? How is God acting? What part of the gospel message is unfolding there?*

Today, we are a community of disciples watching Jesus act and trying to be faithful to staying with him as his message unfolds.

4. *What light has today's events / words shed upon your attempts:*
   a. *To be a disciple within a group of disciples?*
   b. *To stay faithful to Jesus and his unfolding message?*

Time for Reflection

Sharing in groups of 3 or 4 — Listen for *common threads*

Large group sharing of *common threads* as noted by participants in what they heard in their small groups.

Finally this afternoon, I would like to invite you to do one more thing. I invite you to reflect quietly and briefly on the experience which you have had in this hour. After a moment or two, I will ask each of you to say briefly in a phrase or an image or a comment what the experience has been for you. Doing this will help us not only to notice what God did for us in this experience, but to notice, as well, how others were touched by God. Doing this is part of building up our shared sense of who we are and how God acts with us and within us.

What is compelling me now?

What has this experience — of this hour — been for you?

A Prayer of Transformation

A woman named Timid met Jesus at the well.
He told her to ask for a drink.
She learned to share her feelings, her joy, her life.

All: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

A woman named Grief recognized Jesus at a well.
He filled her with living water.
She found compassion and told others of salvation.

All: Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

A woman named Harsh challenged Jesus at a well.
He answered her questions.
She left her anger and listened to all he said.

All: Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

A woman named Weary questioned Jesus at a well.
He reassured her.
She was fulfilled.

All: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

A woman named Bitterness saw Jesus at a well.
He told her all of her life, her struggles, her failings.
She knew his forgiveness.

All: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

A woman named Doubt encountered Jesus at a well.
They talked of worship and the true God.
She was filled with faith.

All: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

A woman named Conflict argued with Jesus at a well.
He heard all she said and helped her understand herself.
She went with determination to preach the Good News.

All: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called people of God.

A woman named Outspoken found Jesus at a well.
He sat with her and offered her kindness and gentleness.
She was not afraid and found courage.

All: Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of justice, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

A woman named Hurting came to Jesus at a well.
She asked for a drink.
Jesus gave her comfort and peace.
She was healed.

All: Blessed are we who live our earthly life,
encountering each day's difficulties and joys.
In all we do, let us remember God's constant presence with us.
May we rejoice and be glad
as we continue to live life to the fullest.

[adapted from *WomanSong* by Miriam Therese Winter]

Contributors

Eileen Algeo, SHCJ, serves as a Provincial Councilor in the American Province. She is also a certified chaplain and has worked in hospice and oncology.

Josephine Anto, SHCJ, teaches education at Holy Child Training College, Takoradi, Ghana. She also does counseling at the College.

Lorna Bowman, is a professor of religious education on the Faculty of Theology, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto School of Theology, Ontario, Canada. Her research interest is the apostolic expression of the Society's charism as found in Holy Child education.

Marlene Brownett, SHCJ, is a member of the Mission Effectiveness Committee for Holy Child Network of Schools and is an English teacher at Oak Knoll School in Summit, New Jersey.

Judith Delaney, SHCJ, teaches adult scripture classes, is active in the Sarasota Pro-life organization, and volunteers at the Venice Hospital in Florida.

Ogochukwu Ekwedike, SHCJ, is School Buser at St. Anne's, Otukpo, Nigeria.

Elizabeth Gorvin, SHCJ, did formation work for 13 years and was a Director of Religious Education in Florida for 14 years. She is presently retired and doing volunteer pastoral work at the local hospital.

Karen Gosser, SHCJ, lives in Washington, DC, and is currently Novice Director for the American Province. She also does counseling, spiritual direction, and facilitates a theological reflection seminar at the Washington Theological Union.