

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

rshm soundings

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THE BEAUTY OF A CHILD

by Brigid Murphy, RSHM

PARIS, FRANCE Little glimpses of beauty in nature can capture and fill our senses. We want to make the experience last by taking photographs. Then we are overwhelmed by the vastness and variety that confronts us in the ever-changing beauty of nature.

When we come face to face with a little child, or a group of children, we must step back and say, "Here is God's masterpiece!" There is something here that commands our respect and reverence. This is creation in which the Creator has chosen to dwell, a beauty that lasts forever.

One of the first things that strikes me about little children is the beauty of their innocence and simplicity. They are empty of worldly riches, power and fame. They are always open to receive. When gifts are offered they do not choose, they open their arms wide to receive all.

In a small school in Zambia one day, I saw a little boy who sat alone without a pencil or paper or book. I went over to him and smiled. He looked up at me with hope that I would fill his emptiness with something. Then he saw me open a big bag of candy and put a handful of sweets in front of him. Suddenly a great smile like the rising sun lit up his face. He began to clap. His

whole being showed such joy and gratitude that he did not need to find words. It was as though he had just received the kingdom of heaven.

It was a wonderful experience to meet the little orphan children on the streets of Choma in Zambia. They lined up for food while carrying their smaller sisters, brothers or friends who were unable to walk. They loved each other and found ways to help those who were sick or handicapped. After they had eaten, they turned the tails of their shirts or skirts up to make a pocket to fill with the fragments of food that were left over. How they longed for you to stay a little while to play with them or just to give them a big hug! The beauty of their dependence and acceptance of life made me want to

stay with them always.

Little children are filled with the most marvelous sense of wonder. They draw your attention to the tiniest miracles of nature that most of us may pass by as not worthy of our time. "Look at what I found!" you may hear many times a day... a caterpillar on a leaf, a ladybug crawling on a tiny hand or a little white feather floating down from a nest. They stop, watch and wonder.

There is no greater beauty in little children than the beauty of their love. Their love is so real, so clear, so deep and overflowing. They express their love with gifts of little treasures that they have found in nature. Two little hands reach up to you with a bunch of autumn leaves, horse chestnuts, tiny colorful stones that they dug up, daisies or blades of grass. Whether you have room in your arms to hold them all or not, you must gather them to keep because two big eyes are looking and searching your face. They are looking for an expression that will show them you can see the beauty they saw in each tiny gift and that you can feel the great love of the little giver.

How beautiful the beauty of little children! Each one is unique and unlike any other.♦



ASSUMPTION HALL

by Diane Cahill

PITTSBURGH, PA Assumption Hall, a stately magnificent historic four storey mansion, formerly called BRACEHOLME, was built in 1906 by Charles and Mabel Brace.

Visitors were discharged under the Porte Cochere. Inside they were welcomed by a four-sided fireplace, the only one in Westchester county. This took center stage and was surrounded by three luxurious large rooms with bay windows and a fireplace. These probably served as parlors and a dining room, as the kitchen was adjacent to one of the rooms.

To get to the second floor, they would go up the majestic curved wooden staircase to a balcony surrounded by what were most probably bedrooms, each with its own fireplace. There were also five or six spacious rooms on the third floor, perhaps for the servants.

In the 1950s Braceholme was bought by the RSHM and transformed when Marymount Junior Day School for grades K-6 moved from Pelissier (where I started out in 1947) to Assumption Hall.

Sister Catherine Stauderman was the Principal and she watched over her "prepsies" with loving care. When parents and students arrived at their new palatial school they could not believe the beautiful setting. Another added feature was the apple orchard which brought an added charm to the grounds.

During the holidays and summers this diamond of a building provided a luxurious ambiance for proms, receptions, and Christmas celebrations.

In the mid-sixties the school moved back to Pelissier and Assumption Hall became a Retreat Center. Later it was transformed once again to provide more space for the retired sisters. This final ministry in the beautiful stone house ended when the retired sisters moved to Marymount Convent and the building was eventually sold.♦

FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

by Pierre Dullaghan, RSHM

BARROW, ENGLAND While preparing to respond to the theme of BEAUTY these words sprang to my mind as I recalled a recent experience. Three of us from our Community were driving home to Barrow through the beautiful Lake District. We decided to avoid the Motorway and take the scenic route, treating ourselves to a feast of natural beauty. The words of an English poet came alive for me, surrounded as we were by mountains of varying heights, valleys and lakes;

*All nature has a feeling: woods,
fields, brooks*

*Are life eternal – and in silence
they*

*Speak happiness – beyond the
reach of books.*

Indeed as we drove along they spoke to me. No words can express how my heart was lifted in silent praise to God for such breath-taking beauty. Perhaps these words of a modern poetess say it for me.

*I look eagerly and listen,
And note each softly singing
sound;*

*The sun on waters glint and
glisten,
And I delight in the new life
found*

*Oh, Lakeland, happy haven,
treasure
Of beauty, and all-embracing
peace:*

*My grateful heart you fill with
pleasure*

*And from all my cares you bring
release.*

I began with the words, From Darkness into Light. That day, quite suddenly, we experienced the reverse. We found ourselves moving from Light into Darkness—the sky became overcast, heavy rain and flooded roadways turned driving into a nightmare. What a contrast! Instead of calm and peace there was chaos and turbulence. Following diversion signs, we manoeuvred cautiously through flooded areas. Visibility was almost nil because of torrential rain. Round and round we went, completely lost. To our great relief a welcome signpost pointed to a way out of the confusion. It led us through one more menacing pool and we found ourselves on a clear uphill road, with a warning sign saying, dangerous for coaches! We were on our way out of the darkness, no more rain, and with the reappearance of the sun we began to recapture the message from the poem 'Here sweet Nature opens inward eyes to tranquil ,new-discovered joys...'. On that high road well above sea level my heart was lifted again in silent praise. As we headed homewards I felt again that peace I mentioned in my first quotation. 'All nature has a feeling

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Thank you to all who made Assumption Hall a beautiful reality . . . a wonderful memory.

BEAUTY REMEMBERED AND SHARED

Of all the patriotic songs I learned in grammar school the one I cherish most is "America the Beautiful." Its lofty praise of the beauty of our land: "the spacious skies, the amber waves of grain and purple mountains majesties" fill us with pride along with the remembrance of: "heroes deeds and patriots dreams and alabaster cities gleams" and all this beauty is seen from "sea to shining sea."

Irene Cody, RSHM
Tarrytown, NY

When I was in Alaska some years ago, one sunny day our bus stopped. The driver told us to exit and look at the view ahead. There in the distance, before our eyes stood Mount McKinley! (now called Denali) It was clear and brilliant, its peaks disappearing into the clouds and seemingly reaching towards heaven. It was an awesome sight!

The view nudged me to think, that there is something about a mountain that inspires our human hearts. That day, standing there, my thoughts pondered on all the mountains connected with Jesus and his ministry. I thought about Sliabh Bán, the mountain that I grew up beside (which I thought as a child, was gigantic) and of which I had so many great memories. I thought about Jesus saying of spiritual mountains, "If you have faith the size of a grain of sand, you can say to the mountain move, and it will move."

I realized then sadly, how little faith I had!

Be well, be blessed.

Ethna Egan, RSHM
Paris, France

Victoria Falls (Tokaleya Tonga: Mosi-oa-Tunya, "The Smoke that Thunders") is a waterfall in southern Africa on the Zambezi River at the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe. When you hear these Falls you simply stand in awe and wonder. Even though many tourists come to visit, there is a sense of reverence among the many people walking around and looking at the Falls. You see the mist rise up from the bottom of the Falls and hear the noise and you know why Victoria Falls is called the "Smoke that Thunders". What a beautiful creation of our loving God!

Mary Heyser, RSHM
Yonkers, NY



Ever since childhood I have treasured the word 'beauty' as I grew up with a family horse named Black Beauty. I love this Prayer of the Native American People:

May I walk with Beauty before me,
May I walk with Beauty behind me,
May I walk with Beauty all around me
As I walk the Beauty way.

Margaret Ellen O'Connell, RSHM
Los Angeles, CA

Encountering magnificent jackaranda trees for the first time in Zimbabwe took my breath away. Tree lined streets of glorious lavender jackaranda trees were everywhere. During September and October they blanket the country in a carpet of lavender and they give new meaning to beauty. Truly they are a big part of the laughter of our fragile planet and they contribute greatly to the beauty of our earth. And joy of joys this beauty can be experienced over and over again.

Margaret Treacy, RSHM
Harare, Zimbabwe

In October of this year, I spent a week with another RSHM at our Sunset Beach House. One evening as I stood on the golden sand, I was awed as I watched the setting sun spread its golden and reddish rays like a heavenly dome over the rippling waves, the tiny boats tucked in Long Beach Harbor, the barely visible edges of Catalina Island in the distance, I couldn't help but think, how can I have "All this and heaven too". Surely this glimmering scene whispered to me "A thing of beauty is a joy forever".

Eileen Tuohy, RSHM
Montebello, CA

Beauty abounds
In people, in all of nature
My mind wanders to the beauty
Visible in the berries we see
around us
Rosehip, haw or sloe
On rosebush, hawthorn, and
blackthorn.
Bringing life to our autumn days

Anne Considine, RSHM
New York, New York

STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES

by Corrie Alvarado

AZUSA, CA Many of us heard the saying, Take time to "Stop and smell the roses". Its definition is as follows.... (idiomatic) **To relax; to take time out of one's busy schedule to enjoy or appreciate the beauty of life.** I take it to heart in my daily commute to work. My day starts off from home in Azusa, California. On opening my door I see the kids running to school. As I get to the freeway I see the most spectacular view of the foothills. Luckily LA traffic permits me to take the time to view the different towns and surroundings on my way to work. I pass by the quarries in Irwindale, the rocks becoming sand and dirt piling up, and later trucks moving them out. Next it's good ole' Baldwin Park my home town, built in a lake bed. There will either be fog, light drizzle or a thicker morning dew... traffic piles up there because that's where the freeways merge. Then it's the La Puente/El Monte border where there used to be the Woodland Farms duck farm. I remember the beautiful pure white ducks that used to cover the grounds. It's long gone as the owners moved up to Central California. Now, it's being transformed into a park. Then there's a nursery, golf course and a reclamation plant. Now we're entering El Monte and there you can see the San Gabriel River, although water levels vary throughout the year. There are bike trails and often you'll see horseback riders or a homeless encampment or two. Interesting fact about the river bed... it's actually quite warm at night for those in need of shelter. Driving along we pass Whittier Narrows, a huge park that borders El Monte, Whittier, Rosemead and Montebello. Early in the morning you can see people walking their dogs, jogging, and walking on the trails. The last town on my commute is Montebello. I drive over the hill to the Garfield Avenue exit. Garfield is a very busy street, sometimes more like a highway. I see people running around,



catching a bus, buying a donut, running to local schools. I pass another golf course and our neighborhood Catholic church Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. As I enter the driveway into work, with awe I say **Thank you God I've made it... into my sanctuary**, the RSHM Provincial Center property.

The beauty of life... yes, it is very important to enjoy and appreciate the beauty of life. With everyday news coming at us each day at such a high speed, we tend to forget how beautiful life can be. I am truly blessed to have always worked in enchanting surroundings with such gracious people. Not only here at the Provincial Center but throughout my life. The grounds inside are beautiful and very welcoming.

They remind me every day that God is with us. The trees change colors in their own time. We have squirrels that wander, crows that caw, birds surround us every day, wasps nesting in the walls and on occasion you'll see the butterflies returning. We have roses in the garden so we can literally stop and smell the roses. I'm thankful I heard that saying as a child and even more so that I do my best to live it daily. Beauty is found in all that surrounds us, from sunrise to sunset... sometimes we just have to stop and smell the roses to embrace it all. I've worked here at the WAP Provincial center for twenty years. I'm blessed to be witness to such a beautiful world.♦

INDELIBLE SUNRISE

by Joan Treacy, RSHM

SAN PEDRO, CA The day after Christmas a number of years ago, Mary Milligan and I set out from Los Angeles to drive to a conference in New Mexico. As we passed close to the entrance to the Grand Canyon, Mary said she had not seen it since she was in High School. It was already dark so we decided to spend the night and see it the next day.

All the places were full, but at a site right in the Grand Canyon Village the manager told us that if we waited long enough there might be a cancellation. After an hour or so he gave us a key to a little one room cabin. We were tired after the long drive so we "bunked in" right away.

As soon as the sun rose the next morning Mary opened up the shutters on the window. I could see she was speechless. I went over to the window and looked out. We were situated right over the edge of the Canyon with its ledges completely filled with snow that gave it an ethereal blue look. Neither of us could say a word. Mary picked up her bible and started reading one psalm after another which sang the praises of creation. Both of us were transfixed by the beauty and the surprise of it all. Whenever anyone speaks of beauty I go back to that indelible experience of God manifested in the beauty of creation and I relive it once more. It is also my favorite memory of Mary Milligan.♦

BLESSED ARE THE EYES THAT SEE

by Ursula Mahoney

BRONX, NY When we are lucky enough to be able to enjoy nature, we are blessed with the gift of beauty in many forms. We can see beauty in plants, flowers. We can be riding along and look up at a blue sky and see clouds in the sky, big, puffy clouds lightly tinted with pastel shading. We can walk down a street and see the varieties of tree bark to see various patterns where bark has fallen off or the limb is marked with various shades of grey that are beautiful to see.

With flowers, we can see so many different shapes and wonder at the diversity of it all. Look at a geranium and see the whole flower and then see the little flowers that make up the whole and see the various little leaves that add to its beauty. Nature and its flowers give us

many combinations of shape, color and forms that please the senses, especially that of sight.

Nature is a surrounding of beauty but we only see it if we take the time to really look at it in detail and to let the variety soak in. We need to look at a plant from different angles, We need to change our focus at times. Such observation can be useful in seeing beauty in other places too, even in people or moments.

At a retreat recently, we asked many blessings but one in particular struck me. We prayed

Bless us with the gift of vision
To see your beauty around us
and within us,
To delight in the lavish gifts of
your gracious creation.
And so we pray.....
Bless us with vision.♦



Photograph by Ursula Mahoney



Photograph by Marilyn Ficht, RSHM

INTO LIGHT cont. from pg. 2

of life eternal' and in my heart I was singing those words of a well known hymn:

O Lord ,my God, when I in
awesome wonder,
Consider all the worlds Thy Hand
has made. . .
Then sings my soul, my Saviour
God to thee,
HOW GREAT THOU ART..
HOW GREAT THOU ART!♦

Post-Script from A Poet

In her 2016 book of essays, *Upstream* (Penguin Press), Mary Oliver writes:

One tree is like another tree, but not too much. One tulip is like the next tulip, but not altogether. More or less like people – a general outline, then the stunning individual strokes. Hello Tom, hello Andy. Hello Archibald Violet, and Carissa Bluebell. Hello Lilian Willow, and Noah, the oak tree I have hugged and kissed every first day of spring for the past thirty years. And in reply its thousands of leaves tremble! What a life is ours! Doesn't anybody in the world anymore want to get up in the middle of the night and sing?



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NEXT ISSUE:

ANTICIPATION

HAIR DRESSERS

by Marinna Kyriakidis and Barbara Spirelli

Marinna Kyriakidis and Barbara Spirelli, hair dressers who have served RSHM in Tarrytown for many years, firmly believe that if your hair looks right, you feel good.

Marinna:

I started working when I was 15 at my mother's beauty salon. My mother was my true mentor as I watched her care for her clients with such warmth and love. I happen to love working with the public, but especially the RSHM. I still remember the first time I met Sr. Ellen Marie Keane back in the 1980's. I had no idea how our friendship would grow over the years. Sr. Ellie had told me that she would "spread the word" and because of this I have made so many more wonderful RSHM friends.

I've worked with all age groups from less than 1 year to 105 years old!! Giving a first haircut to a child as the proud parents look on, usually taking pictures saving a lock or curl, is unforgettable. But I have found working with the elderly to be the most rewarding.

I had such a special relationship with my grandparents growing up. I loved to spend my extra time visiting with them and caring for them as

they grew older. That affection, I believe, has stayed with me to this day. I love to listen to my clients' stories from the past and their wise thoughts from many years of different experiences.

The unique thing about being a hair dresser is that your clients become like family. When you're with someone for so many years you go through all the ups and downs with them. I think that is a beautiful thing. I hope I have given my clients as much happiness as they have given me over the years.

Barbara:

I was meant to be a hair dresser. From the age of twelve I had an

interest in doing hair. I used to do my Mom's hair all the time. Then, when I was in high school, I decided to go to a vocational school to learn how to do hair. It must have been my calling because forty-five years later I'm still working at it. Working with my clients give me great pleasure. I'm caring and compassionate with them and I find great joy in our conversations. I actually look forward to getting up in the morning to go to work! We all know that beauty is very important to women and if their hair looks good it makes all the difference in the world. Working with the RSHM Sisters is very special to me. I love talking to them—they have so many experiences to share. I began at Marymount a little over thirty years ago, but it feels like just yesterday.♦

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Brief Reflections by RSHM: Irene Cody, Anne Considine, Ethna Egan, Marilyn Ficht, Mary Heyser, Margaret Treacy, Eileen Tuohy.

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