This issue of Soundings, with the theme “Imagination” seems a fitting one to announce a new plan for RSHM Communication in the Eastern American Province.

Looking back to the early days of Soundings, the Spring 1996 issue gave an overview of RSHM in the world of that time: Sisters from widespread geographic areas wrote about how they love what they do. Children did drawings to illustrate what the sisters are like, and friends expressed their hopes for the RSHM.

Paula Mayhew, then Academic Dean at Marymount Manhattan College, wrote, “You sisters have a history of being women whose primary identity is to be “other” — other than wives and mothers, that is — and to gather strength to do good work as a closely bound community.”

Judy Pacitti, Marymout College, Tarrytown ’92 wrote, “What impresses me most about the RSHM I know is the way women with very different ministries come together to support one another”.

Lynette Joseph, then a teacher at St. Catharine of Alexandria School in Brooklyn, said “RSHM have big hearts and wide arms reaching out to many.”

A fifth grade student at Istituto Marymount in Rome brought these words to life in the illustration below, imaging warmth and hospitality with the all the joy and exuberance of childhood.

Today, while RSHM are living the same mission on four continents, each geographic region has a smaller population of sisters with varying communication needs and channels. The Eastern American Province has welcomed a new Director of Communications, Paola Castillo, who will introduce an updated EAP publication with a new logo and format. It will replace Soundings, while continuing its best practices, highlighting RSHM mission and ministry and inviting your response.
PRAYER USING THE IMAGINATION
by Catherine Bennett, RSHM

For Morning prayer I pray using Lectio Divina. The text I wish to pray with you is John 21: 4-8. One day last year, as I prayed these verses, I had a beautiful experience. I saw the Resurrected Jesus approaching Peter’s boat, saying to the Apostles, “Have you any fish?” and when they answered “No”, He said “Cast your net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, for the quantity of fish. The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he put on his clothes, for he was stripped for work, and sprang into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land.

When He invited them to come and have breakfast, none of them dared to ask Him, “Who are You?” They knew it was Jesus and, as I prayed, I could feel their joy and could see their excitement as they were eating with Jesus, Who looked so happy to be with them. I am pondering now, “Does Jesus feel that same joy when I am fed each day by Him in the Eucharist?” I must share a powerful extra grace I received during this prayer where my imagination was so active, I had a new and very good learning.

I am almost embarrassed to tell you this. As a child, my dear mother, who taught me so much, always kept telling me that if I were GOOD Jesus would love me. This stayed with me for decades. Jesus told me during this prayer time, I was on the wrong side of the boat! All my life, I kept trying to be good so that God would love me. I tried and tried to be a good child and a good nun.

During the meal with His disciples, Jesus spoke to me... He said, “Catherine, you don’t have to keep trying to be good so I will love you. I love you AS YOU ARE, the way I created you in your mother’s womb. Keep this in your heart and keep aware of my love...it is REAL. Keep my love for you in your heart – it is REAL and I want you to remember it each day.”

What joy I felt and feel each day to realize that God loves me at this moment, exactly as I am.” Wow!

TRUTH THAT SETS US FREE
by Bea McMahon, RSHM

TARRYTOWN, NY  RSHM and friends, including some members of the Keane family, were treated to a truly inspirational lecture at Marymount, Tarrytown on Saturday, May 11. “The Truth That Sets Us Free” was presented by Dr. Susan Calef, a New Testament scholar teaching in the Theology Department and Christian Spirituality Program at Creighton University. Introducing this event dedicated to the memory of Sr. Ellen Marie Keane, Sue said, “With this presentation, based on my study of St. John’s Gospel, I hope to honor my teacher, my mentor, my friend, and to the-end my model in the life-long search for that “truth that sets us free.”

There was far too much content to summarize in one brief article, but I want to share just a few thoughts and images that have stayed with me in the days and weeks following Sue’s heartfelt and heart-touching words.

The Good Shepherd calls the sheep by name. They know his voice and they follow him. “I know mine and mine know me.” There’s a mutuality there. Bide in my love care of them. This is love. It’s not a matter of warm, fuzzy feelings (though nice when present) but rather of self-gift for the good of the other. To be created in the image of God is to be created for this way of loving and being loved.

John 3:16 “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but shall have eternal life.” Sue’s reflection on the words ‘believes in’ was enlightening to me. In the text, she finds the Greek words to mean ‘believes into’ The gospel of John never uses belief as a noun. It isn’t primarily intellectual assent but believing into a relationship. Some of her further reflections on this verse: God who loved the world gave his son, not just on the cross, but in the word becoming flesh, sharing our humanity. And that ‘eternal life’ he promises is not just for after death, but for now: fullness of life in this world, culminating in resurrected life-to-come.

The Vine and the Branches: “I am the vine. You are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit.” Sue’s reflection on the word ‘abide’ is compelling. ‘Abide’ can mean to remain or to stay, but she finds the best translation of its meaning in the text to be “make your home in.”

(continued on page 6)
Dear Sisters:

I had the privilege of attending Marymount grade school during the 1960s. At that time, the grade school was based in Assumption Hall, an elegant mansion that provided an idyllic setting for a superb Catholic education.

During the 1960s, the women religious of Marymount—led by Sister Catherine Stauderman—helped me develop a solid spiritual and moral foundation. This foundation served me well as I grew into adulthood. The sisters, the lessons, and the religious education of my youth mean everything to me. I carry with me the teachings of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary, which were taught in the classroom and brought to life via daily mass attendance. The RSHM sisters led by example. They are my Christian role models.

My years at Marymount taught me to embrace all people with understanding, charity and kindness. I received the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion (Eucharist) and Confirmation in the convent chapel. I learned what it means to be a true Christian. There is no greater gift to give to a young person.

As a young adult, I spent much time with career and family. I regret not having had the good sense to find Sister Catherine and tell her how important Marymount was to me. I’m older and wiser now and so pleased to have reconnected with RSHM.

It’s likely that each of the RSHM sisters touched and impacted hundreds of people during their years of service. I have come to understand that for every one student who sends a note of thanks, there are many, many more who share the same loving thoughts about the wonderful women who make up the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. I am certain that you made a meaningful difference in many lives just as the women religious did before you. They were, and you are, a true inspiration.

Thank you for your kindness and generosity of spirit.

Warmest regards,
Mary Ann Power

BELIEVE, AND YOU WILL RECEIVE
by Pamela Penkert, RSHM

“Dream, imagine, believe and you will receive it! It is proved by scientists that our thoughts have a special and very strong energy, and we receive in life those things in which we believe.”

(Author unknown)

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA I think the whole world should know about “Phenomenal Youths”…a group of youth in Zambia who are all HIV positive. Precious is the young woman who founded this group. She was very ill herself and had no will to live. But, as her health improved, she dreamed about the many HIV+ children and youth who, for one reason or another, may never get to a hospital, or, who may not have the encouragement from home to take their medication.

“In my imagination, I saw all these children/youth getting treatment for HIV and getting stronger every day. I love them all and want them to grow up happy people. Having HIV should not stop anyone from living a good life.” says Precious.

Her dream came true when she started the small group, “Phenomenal Youths” Their ‘mission’ is to go around a HUGE compound looking for HIV+ children and youth, many from broken homes, to encourage them to go to the clinic. When any one of them is referred to the hospital, “Phenomenal Youths” take them themselves. They pool the little resources they have, and also buy some food, eg. bananas/bread for the patients. This is all voluntary work.

It is so seldom that we hear about the good things the youth are doing in our society.

Precious is lively, big hearted and a beautiful young woman. Her hope is that, one day, “Phenomenal Youths” will be recognised and will get funding to carry on the great work they are doing.
Since Sr. Hélène Louise found God in the beauty of music, remembrance of her adds a special dimension to this issue of Soundings themed “Imagination.”

At various parts of the eulogy, Sr. Betty Kolb invited us to sing with her the refrain You are so beautiful to me.

...Beautiful, genuinely human, dedicated, gentle, simple (in the best sense of the word), loyal, kind, a deep listener, and “full of fun”. Hélène Louise was all of that and much more. Most importantly, she was a woman of deep faith who lived her love of God.

One of my early encounters with Hélène Louise was in a prayer group that met in the convent many years ago. It was during those encounters that I began to get to know this woman of deep faith. I was deeply touched by her sharing and her insights. Years later, we were talking about those times of prayer and she said to me, “You know, Betty, St. Benedict had it right. “One must listen with the ears of the heart.” She said “We have to use the ears of our hearts to really listen and to really hear.” She expanded on this, “I cannot appreciate music if I just listen with my ears. It is just sound. But if I open my heart, and really listen with the ears of my heart, I hear music, I hear God in the beauty of the music. The same is true when I listen to another person. It is just words and ideas I hear, unless I listen with the ears of my heart. Then I hear the person. Benedict had it right.” What a challenge she left us. “We are to listen with the ears of our hearts.”

Hélène began tinkling those piano keys as a very little girl. She said she was playing, not pounding the keys, by the time she was 6. She loved the music. She loved making music. And years later, through the inspiration of Sr. St. John Casey, Hélène realized that she could be a religious and a musician. She said, “For the first time, I understood that teaching music would be a good way for me to use my performance background more specifically for God.”

And from what I have heard, many times over, her gift of music was grateful relief to struggling students and novices alike, who were helped to by Hélène’s love of and gift for music, her lighthearted spirit and her desire to have fun while making music!

Sr. Hélène Louise used the gifts God gave her. She used the gift of her intelligence and her listening to learn and to teach; she used her gift of music to bring LIFE to the world. She served in RSHM leadership, as a local superior in the 60’s and in Province leadership in the 80’s. She taught at Marymount College Tar- rytown and Marymount Manhattan College; at the Ursuline School, New Rochelle; and at the Mozardina Conservatory. She directed countless choirs and was the music director of the Old Mill Singers. She directed plays and musicals. She accompanied choral groups, operettas and musicals. Hélène’s gift for music and song added so much to our community Liturgies. In her spare time, she taught individuals to sing. All of this she did with great joy.

On the occasion of her 60th jubilee Hélène wrote, “As a student, a performer, a teacher and a religious, my life has been permeated by the joy, understanding, the deep peace that music brings.” She found great meaning in her own personalization of Leen Bloy’s statement: “Music equals joy equals the infallible sign of the presence of God.”

...Hélène, as you begin your new life in God, the heavenly choir is rejoicing. A woman who listens with the ears of her heart and loves deeply is sharing her gifts to bring harmony and deeper richness to that choir. We will surely miss you here. When my days on this earth are done, I look forward to singing God’s praises with you once again. ♦
ROME, ITALY  When I was a child, I wanted to be many things. I dreamt of becoming an astronaut. I wanted to be a marine biologist, or a lawyer, or a dessert chef. I never stopped thinking about the possibilities my future would hold. When I was younger, I used to turn the cardboard boxes in my garage into airplanes for my stuffed animals and fly them around my room. I used to set up chairs in my living room for friends and family and perform the dance routines I had created. As a child, I used to draw different *pokemon* with my friends, assigning them new powers and missions. When we are young, we never stop imagining what our future will hold; what we will do the next day; we never stop being creative. Then, why do I perceive a dearth of imagination in today’s world?

It could be argued that children grow up faster than they used to. Seven year olds are now gifted phones instead of cardboard boxes. Of course, as a generation Z child myself, I can see how this argument is valid. Instead of talking and spending time with each other, we choose to stay on our phones, texting others or showing each other funny videos. We choose to take selfies for our social media platforms, rather than spending time marveling at the beauty of nature without a filter and a hashtag ready.

A couple of weeks ago, I initiated a period of self-reflection, and I chose to renounce social media. Instead of spending time scrolling through Instagram accounts or Snapchat stories, I had more time to look at the details of life. I found myself looking out of the window during car rides instead of at my phone and even having the time to paint!

Stress also makes us lose sight of our creative potential. We have the natural tendency to focus on the more regimented aspects of our lives, and our imagination is constrained. How refreshing it is to see students at school composing their own music, or students painting in their free time, or expressing themselves creatively through writing.

Imagination should play a large role in our lives. Many times I find myself stressed over school and my future; why can’t I go back in time to when I would be curious about everything? At least then I had an idea about what I wanted to be when I grow up. Why is it so much easier to answer questions as kids than as young adults?

I believe that we should build a better future for generations to come. We should find the creativity that is buried deep within us. We should lift our eyes from the screen and expose the inner child that is within all of us. ♦

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**IMAGINATION CIRCLES THE WORLD**

by Mary Leah Plante, RSHM

LOS ANGELES, CA  In the 1940’s many of us listened to a song, by Jimmy van Heusen and Johnny Burke, that began with the words: *Imagination is funny*…. One edition of Webster’s II dictionary includes the definition of imagination as …*the ability to confront and cope with reality by using the creative power of the mind: RESOURCEFULNESS.*

Some-times imagination can be considered unreal or preposterous, but it is those aspects that can lead to optimism.

The parables of Jesus invite us to study Jesus’ world, make parallel’s with the injustices of today and use resourcefulness to work for needed change.

Thankfully, for many years now, we, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, have had our imaginations fed by the great work of the members of our Institute Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Network alerting us to and offering ways to address great injustice.

Sr. Veronica Brand, our Non-Governmental Organization Representative in the United Nations keeps us informed of world conditions begging us to not only ask “What if…? questions, but to seriously imagine responses.

Imagination is funny…it can make a cloudy day sunny…. ♦
TRUTH cont. from pg. 2

So, ‘Abide in my love,’ then, shows the desire of Jesus’ heart that we be at home in the love he shares with the Father, ‘so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete.’

In the final section of the presentation Sue came back to memories of Ellie as she commented on Jesus’ words, “I have called you friends.” She noted the thoughts of ancient philosophers on the qualities of friendship: being freely chosen; rooted in equality rather than hierarchy; and sharing without reserve. How truly Ellie, the philosopher, the friend, would resonate with those words, I have called you friends.♦

THANKS! AND YES!

With gratitude to Sr. Rosamond Blanchet and her Councillors for their leadership these past six years, and trusting in the continuing light of the Holy Spirit, the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary joyfully announce that the 2019 General Chapter, which met in July in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, elected the congregation’s new leadership team for 2019-2025.

CONTRIBUTORS

Catherine Bennett, RSHM, retired at Marymount Convent, leads a book-study group at Transfiguration Parish, Tarrytown, NY
Betty Kolb, RSHM, spiritual director with private practice in psychotherapy, Sleepy Hollow, NY
Bea McMahon, RSHM, volunteer teacher at Marymount Manhattan College Program in Bedford Hills Correctional Facility
Pamela Pankert, RSHM, Pastoral Caregiver at Our Lady’s Hospice in Lusaka, Zambia
Mary Leah Plante, RSHM, archivist for the Western American Province, Los Angeles, CA
Mary Ann Power, attended Marymount Junior School, Tarrytown, NY, during the 60’s. She volunteers at the Ossining, NY Food Pantry, where several RSHM also volunteer.
Emanuela Scalia, 12th grader at Marymount International School, Rome, Italy

Dr. Susan Calef
Sr. Ellen Marie Keane

(r. to l.) General Superior: Sister Margaret Fielding, from the Northern European Province; General Councilor: Sister Ana Luisa Pinto, from the Portuguese Province; General Councilor: Sister Sipiwe Phiri, from the Zambezi Region; General Councilor: Sister Maria Aparecida Moreira, from the Brazilian Province.