

summer 2020

ihmpact

sisters, servants of the immaculate heart of mary

Living the Beatitudes during a global pandemic

On Nov. 10, 2020, the IHM congregation will mark 175 years since our founding in Monroe. Throughout these 175 years, we have served the people of God through a variety of ministries, always focused on our mission. Unfortunately, as a result of the global pandemic, our celebrations and gatherings have been cancelled. During this unprecedented time our roots as educators are still evident. We learn from each experience and teach through our lives in myriad ways. Our sisters and associates were invited to reflect on God's call as we continue to respond to the needs of today.

Covid-19 brings enormous suffering and deep loss around the planet. It wreaks havoc. It exploits racism. It also demonstrates that everything is interconnected. If we embrace the best within us, Covid-19 cannot stop us from caring for each other. It cannot prevent us from protecting each other as we voice discontent. It cannot diminish the love of our family, the compassion of our friends, the kindness of the stranger, the bonds of community.

—Elizabeth Walters, IHM

It is imperative to reflect and act upon the transformation of structural and institutional racism, sexism, ageism, all types of classism, that are affecting the most marginalized with greater impact during this pandemic. As time passes, leaving a footprint of uncertainty, breathless nights, stress, pain and mourning, it also leaves a footprint of centered spirits, caring for one another, a deeper sense of connection, and particularly a sense of hope and Life sprouting from the least expected. We do not have the luxury to lose hope.

—Lisandra Pedraza Burgos, IHM

Covid-19 put a spotlight on glaring societal injustices especially for marginalized people. It spreads in prisons, factories and nursing homes. Hungering after justice means to me better wages for “essential workers” – food handlers, farmers, security, custodial and sanitation workers, health care, grocery and transportation workers. Being thirsty for righteousness is to end overcrowding in prisons, improve conditions in nursing homes and factories, give health care to all. These are “essentials of life.”

—Sharon McNeil, IHM Associate

Our frightened suffering world calls me to “go into my own heart and hear the whole world weeping.” (Rumi) I hear the call to live a more compassionate life: listening to others, expressing gratitude, appreciating the awesomeness of creation and responding to social justice actions. In solitude, I listen to my call to make compassionate choices and move forward together with others to think globally and act locally to bring justice, peace and healing to our fragmented world.

—Anne Wisda, IHM

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Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice

The coronavirus pandemic has affected all of us in some way. We remember the heart-wrenching stories of COVID-19 victims, the generous responses of those who cared for them and those who supplied essential needs as we followed “stay at home” orders. So many have lost their jobs; so many lack medical insurance; and the situation of vulnerable communities has worsened. This pandemic has had a devastating impact on our brothers and sisters who were already living in poverty, war and violence.

By Patricia McCluskey, IHM
IHM Leadership Council



Throughout the pandemic, we’ve heard the phrase “We are all in this together.” Pope Francis continually reminds us that we are all brothers and sisters and responsible to care for one another.

This Beatitude takes on new urgency as efforts are made to deal with the long-term consequences of the pandemic. We have a responsibility to ensure that the efforts will enable our brothers and sisters to receive what they need. To hunger and thirst for justice is to seek justice in all its dimensions. We are to seek justice as if it were our food and drink, our bread and water, as if it were a matter of life and death, which it is!

Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

By Julie Vieira, IHM

When I first began to explore becoming a religious sister, I got to know many different kinds of sisters and got a sense of the spirituality of each: Franciscans had Francis and Clare and a commitment to the poor and Earth; Dominicans had Dominic and Catherine and a commitment to preaching. In IHM, I saw the fire of founders Theresa and Louis. I saw the commitment to education, justice and Earth. What was the heart of their

charism? I got my answer from Mary McDevitt, IHM, my point person to the congregation. After plying her furtively with many questions, she finally said of IHMs — “It’s the dynamic of how we are with one another. It’s how we love.”

Twenty years later, I am still discovering deeper meanings of Mary’s words of wisdom. In all our work — as educators, advocates, companions, contemplatives in action — we are women with Mary’s heart. We love tenderly and fiercely, both within the IHM community and beyond. It is a love that unites us across distance, worldviews, cultures and time — just as Mary is to us in our IHM community and to so many throughout history and the world: Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Notre-Dame de Lourdes, and the Black Madonna.



Ecological Consciousness: 21st Century Imperative

Since our founding in 1845, the IHMs have been known as educators, which has challenged us to continue growing in our understanding of the liberating mission of Jesus within the evolving context of our time. Today we claim ecological consciousness as an expression of our charism.

Everything is connected. An ecological consciousness knows that the well-being of humans is directly related to the well-being of Earth. Without an ecological consciousness, one fails to see the importance of making or choices that may not immediately benefit one's self or one's local community. To choose the common good for our common Earth home is the challenge facing the 21st century generation.

Excerpted from
Ecological Consciousness: 21st Century Imperative,
by Paula Cathcart, IHM, and Mary McCann, IHM. ©2019



Experiences of kinship with Earth move us out of exploitive relationships with other life forms and into participative bonding. They open us to the beauty, resilience and interdependencies that characterize all life of our planetary home. Living in a web of life, interconnectedness, one sacred community of life all describe this growing awareness, which is as ancient as it is new. Every major religion has within its mystical tradition the belief that are all one. For the IHM community, ecological consciousness is rooted in our faith and in our spirituality.

The development of ecological consciousness is a process. In that process, the IHM community came to see eco-justice and social justice as one. Over the last 20 years, the IHM community has developed ways of anchoring our growing ecological consciousness through ongoing commitments. Humans are of

Earth, not *on* Earth. For those who follow Jesus, it may help to remember the words attributed to Jesus in John 10:10 “I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.” One may understand “they” as including all living things. In relation to this time in history, we can say humans act ethically when they contribute to the fullness of all life and unethically when they act primarily, or only, from an anthropocentric and individualistic view of life.

Ecological consciousness requires that we wake up to a new way of seeing and being. This awakening is neither simple nor fast. It is a process that is likely to challenge our values, beliefs and choices. Clearly, it questions the “business as usual” approach.

When I started writing this article, we had no immediate experience of Covid-19 in the United States.

Now, it is a devastating source of suffering. People are anxious and fearful as their lives and hopes have shifted with quantum momentum. We see with utmost clarity the impact the coronavirus is having on those who are poor and on Earth, itself.

There is significant disproportionate suffering affecting those who are most vulnerable. We see ugly racism seething beneath many of the decisions regarding who is tested for Covid-19, who is treated, who has access to food security, safe transportation and internet connectivity. We see clearly who the essential workers in our country truly are.

Many of us women religious are no longer able to be directly on the frontlines of the suffering. However, through our prayer we can be spiritual warriors positioned at the frontlines of desperation, loss, grief and hunger. For decades, we have learned how to listen, to pray, to accompany others, including Earth who is healing from the recent reduction in human activity. With awakened consciousness and compassionate hearts, we join with others in dreaming a future based on the reign of God that is shaped by a profound love and well-being

for the human and Earth community. Followers of Jesus have strived to live according to his Beatitudes for centuries. In 1971, the Synod of Bishops, Justice in the World, brought the message of the Beatitudes into fuller focus for a Vatican II people. It affirmed “action on behalf of justice as a constitutive dimension of the Gospel.” Within a decade or two, there was a momentum of international voices emerging who understood that the plight of Earth was directly linked to the suffering and marginalization of those who were most poor, particularly women and indigenous people. Academics and practitioners alike offered both critiques and alternatives to transnational economic and political systems that cause massive deprivation and suffering to those most without economic or political power. People marginated by systems of domination understood the intersectionality of unjust distribution of wealth, racism, elimination of indigenous peoples with the destruction of bioregions and ecosystems across the world.

The Cry of Earth is one with the cry of the poor

By Patricia Siemen, OP
Prioress, Adrian Dominican Sisters



As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, we find ourselves not only facing the coronavirus but also the “consumption virus” causing climate chaos. Many of the lessons we are learning from Covid-19 are applicable to how we need to reduce our human and carbon footprints that are escalating the climate emergency. Indeed, there is an inherent link between the sufferings of people with the suffering of Earth.

Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Sí*, speaks of an *integral ecology*. “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.” [139]

Pope Francis further reminds us “We need only recall how ecosystems interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, *controlling illnesses and epidemics*, (emphasis added) forming soil, breaking down waste,

and in many other ways which we overlook or simply do not know about.” [140] Once Earth is grievously injured, it cannot protect the health of others. As Thomas Berry often stated, “You cannot have well people on a sick planet.”

As we live into a new post-Covid-19 world, we face many choices. How we answer them can have significant bearing on relieving even more dire cries of the poor and cry of Earth.

- + What lessons of interdependency are we learning from Covid-19 as its global reach graphically confirms that we are a single, interconnected global community of life?
- + How might the consequences of the coronavirus create new pathways into

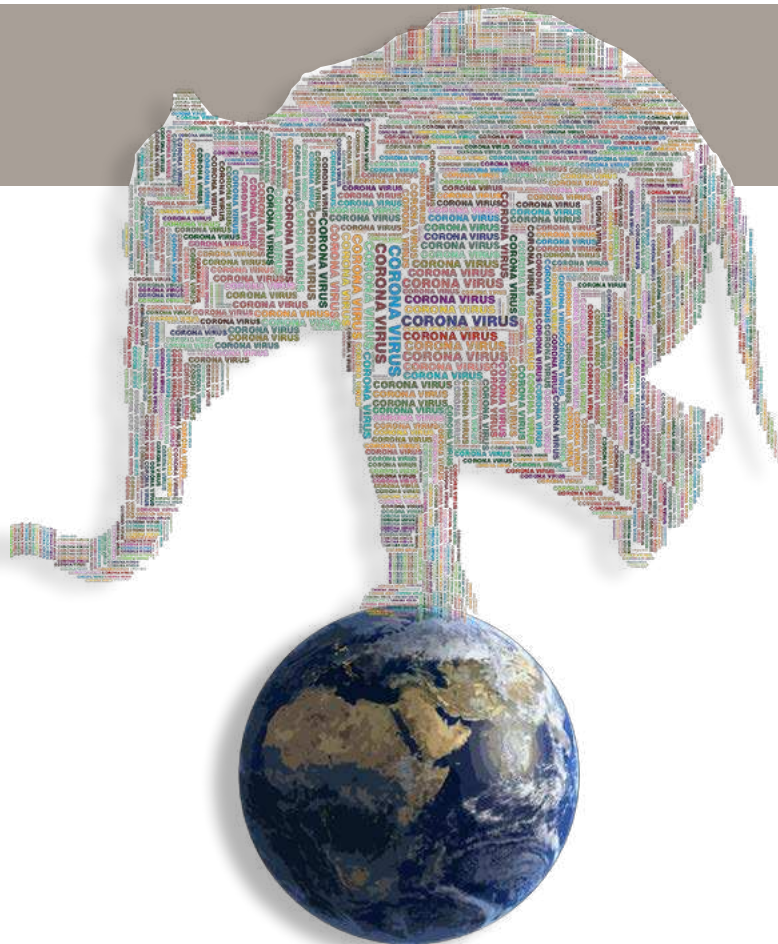
our communal consciousness that will deepen spiritual transformation?

- + What transformational work is uniquely ours to do as we live into a post-pandemic world?
- + What personal liberties of movement are we willing to curtail for the sake of the common good?
- + What new behaviors will we embrace that can alleviate the cries of the poor and of Earth?

As we ponder these questions, let us deliberately engage with others who are not usually at our table. The insights and relationships needed to bring forth the just reign of God may well be hidden within the responses of people whose experience is very different from ours, especially the wisdom of our indigenous brothers and sisters.

This epic time opens possibilities and opportunities for imaginative space. Deepening our relationships with those who suffer most may bring insights and vision that lead us toward the reign of God where the beatitudes flourish.

May the dual spiritual emergencies of both coronavirus and climate crisis awaken our dream for an Earth where the cries of those who are poor are turned into laughter and Earth is respected for its generativity and fruitfulness.



Border-Crossing Spirituality: Transformation in the Borderland

By Jung Eun Sophia Park, SNJM

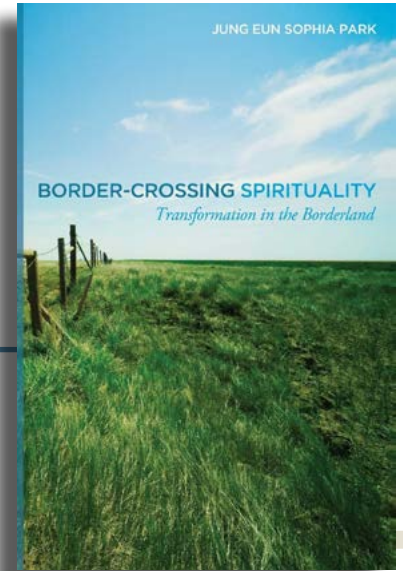
Reviewed by Julie Vieira, IHM

Each of us crosses borders, making transition from one thing to the next – from youth to adulthood, from illness to health, etc. Jung Eun Sophia Park reminds us that in every transition, there is a sacred “borderland,” an “in-between” moment where there’s more unknown than known and where even our sense of self may feel up for grabs!

Park emphasizes the deeply spiritual nature of borderlands and says it has the power to be transformative. She illustrates this with four stories beginning with “a border-crossing Gospel” in which she looks at what we can learn from Jesus as he constantly crossed borders in his ministry. She focuses on the healing of the hemorrhaging woman to show how in the borderlands, Jesus transformed conventional thought about gender, power and autonomy.

A key concept for Park is understanding the radical role of hospitality within borderlands. How might this affect us in our own times of transition? How does it enlighten major issues such as the pandemics of racism, the refugee crisis and COVID-19? What does radical hospitality mean in these borderlands?

Park not only gives much to reflect on, but also lights a fire for us to be agents of transformation.



(Feb. 1 – April 30, 2020)

In memoriam

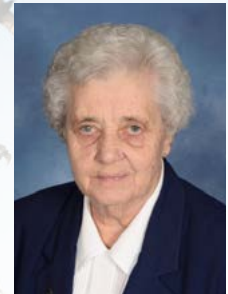
To read about the lives and ministries of our remarkable
IHM Sisters and Associates, please visit <http://bit.ly/2HWEOs9>.



Marylyn
(Peter Faber)
Russ, IHM
Jan. 7, 1936 -
April 5, 2020



Harriet
(James Edward)
Singelyn, IHM
April 29, 1933 -
April 3, 2020



Ann
(Agnes Cecile)
Currier, IHM
May 16, 1928 -
Feb. 13, 2020

By Maria Bieciuk
Marian High School,
Class of 2020



Fighting for the voiceless

My parents were from Communist Poland; censorship was rampant and people were silenced for speaking out. They taught me that it's important to shed light on injustices wherever they happen, such as those occurring in Kashmir.

India and Pakistan have fought over Kashmir since 1947 when the two nations gained their

independence from Great Britain. India controls most of the region, with the rest controlled by Pakistan and China. The tensions between India and Pakistan are at an all-time high.

Article 370 of the Constitution of India granted autonomy to the region, but India's actions did not translate. Conflicts transpired, which only led to more uprisings by the Kashmiri people. A turning point occurred in 2019 when Article 370 was revoked by the Indian Supreme Court. Following this, forms of communication, the internet and movement were highly restricted.

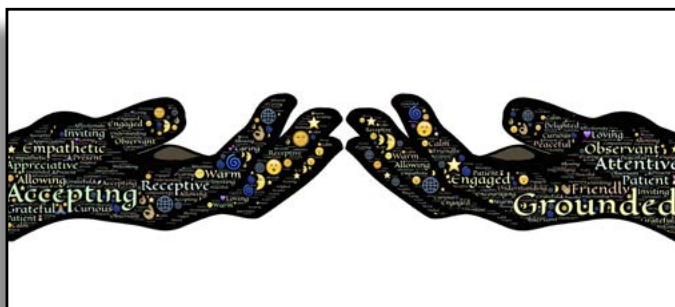
Many have shed light on the fact that India has committed abuses against the Kashmiri people, including extrajudicial killings, rapes, torture and forced disappearances of politicians and those who are outspoken against India. A finger is pointed at Pakistan although Pakistan has provided moral and diplomatic support while Kashmir faces continual unrest. Action must be taken or more lives will be lost.

Article 370 of the Constitution of India granted autonomy to the region, but India's actions

The Beatitudes as spiritual direction

By Rev. Tom Lumpkin

Growing up, I understood the blessedness Jesus speaks of as a reward that would come in the next life if, during this life, we suffered poverty, pain and being rejected. But now, I better understand Jesus' word as spiritual direction on how to be happy or blessed in this life.



What the Beatitudes offer is a "formula" for having satisfying relationships. With this understanding, we hear Jesus teaching us that our own happiness

depends upon having a "hunger and thirst for righteousness," i.e., that others have dignity and sufficiency. It doesn't come from seeking just our own personal comfort and convenience. "Hungering and thirsting" for others' basic needs is the way for us to be blessed and happy. What we feel and do for others deeply affects us because we are interconnected with them. Separateness is an illusion.

Jesus says that life is about deepening in communion with everyone and everything. A life-long effort to hunger and thirst for righteousness is an effort to drive out this unclean spirit that can so easily possess us and the others we seek to serve.



**Sisters, Servants of the
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Things I learned in the Covid-19 crisis:

That a deep prayer life can assuage loneliness and fear;

That “lock down” is possible only to those with adequate shelter, food, water and sanitation, but meaningless to the poor who are without;

That what I deem essential is frivolous in the face of overwhelming appeals of those in need;

That good leadership can transcend politics and draw a nation together;

That some things can only be answered by prayer.

—*Judith Coyle, IHM*

One of my learnings these past months is “uncovering the human face” within phrases said in relation to thousands of first responders and essential workers. I’ve known their working conditions, their pay and/or benefits, their opportunities for personal and/or professional advancement are often neither fair nor just. I know much of this happens because racial injustice permeates much of our culture. I will respond to what I am learning and advocate for just wages as well as equal opportunity for all minorities.

—*Mary Agnes Ryan, IHM*

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Urged by the love of God, we choose to work with others to build a culture of peace and right relationship among ourselves, with the Church and with the whole Earth community.

—***IHM Mission Statement***

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