

ihmpact

sisters, servants of the immaculate heart of mary

Seeing the face of God

Throughout the centuries, God has been imaged in many ways. In the Christian and Hebrew Scriptures, we encounter many images of God, both feminine (God as a woman who comforts) and masculine (God as a bridegroom). There are even images of God using analogies to animals (God as the Lion of Judah or a Mother Hen) and other forms of creation (God as rock and fortress). As Christians, we also have Jesus the Christ to look to as “the image of the



invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” (Colossians 1:15) It is through the Christ that we truly see God and also see the world.

We asked Elena Herrada, a former adjunct instructor at Marygrove College who works with the Mexican Community in Detroit, about her experience of God.

ihmpact: How would you describe your image of God?

EH: I do not remember my first image of God, but I will say that God never seemed separate from the world.

I learned from an early mentor, Sister Joannette Nitz, OP, (Racine Dominican Sisters) about the importance of experience. We did jail ministry together; I was starting and she was finishing. She took me with her on court watch and jail visits, legislative hearings, home visits, bus rides and church. Everywhere she went, I went.

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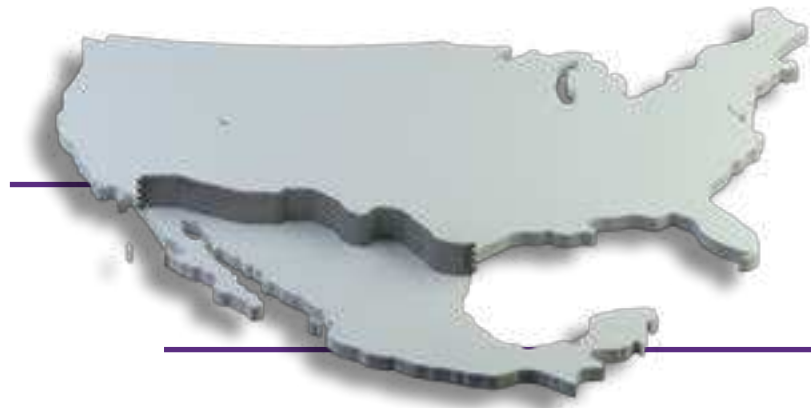
“It is necessary, Juan Diego, that you be the one ...” (Guadalupe)

By Carmen Armenta Lara, IHM,
and Maria Antonia Aranda, IHM

Racism is a social pandemic that infects us all. In Mexico, we are still experiencing the effects of the conquerors and missionaries, when a fear of confronting diversity caused contempt, hatred, human devaluation. Our people were considered inferior, devaluing our dignity and leading to a loss of identity. This reality continues in Mexico’s indigenous groups in particular.

It is evident in a prejudiced system of social structure, with a history of Colonialism, and

European cultures that made their mark trying to impose a “superior race.” In our ministries the patriarchy and hierarchy affect all relationships. Between the United States and Mexico, there have been positive moments, but mainly negative in unfair and racist treatment. The natural resources of the two countries are exploited by the country with more power.



We hear the echo of Pope Francis affirming the value of all. “... In the dynamisms of history, despite the diversity of ethnic groups, societies and cultures, we see the vocation to form a community made up of brothers [and sisters] who welcome each other and care for each other.” [FT 96]

The Church and spirituality

By Ellen Rinke, IHM
IHM Leadership Council

The Second Vatican Council expanded our understanding of the Church as “The People of God” who are called to holiness. A Christian’s lifestyle is as diverse as there are people who live the values and mission of Christ.

Paying attention to God’s presence in our lives deepens our spirituality. We receive inspiration from Scripture, guidance from the evolving understandings of the Church and the world. The Church teaches that Christians are responsible to make decisions



according to their conscience. Considering all these areas in our discernment, we act according to an informed conscience.

It is a daunting task to be responsible for one’s spirituality because it’s hard work to be alert to God’s invitations. May we remember that God calls us to companion one another in a community of faith. It is together that we evolve into holiness as “The People of God.”

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She taught me with her own life—her calm silence when we went to prisons and jails—about the ministry of accompaniment, that is, the presence of another human being so one does not have to be alone. It was everything I would need to know in my life going forward. I was so fortunate, so blessed to have mentors when I was young so that I would know what to do now that I am older. She showed me the face of the Divine.

I experience prayer when I receive a call from a youth detention on the border; it's the ability, given by the Divine to hold out hope for others in despair and to not succumb to my own despair in times such as these. This is the Divine intervention that allows us to help carry others' burdens.

ihmpact: What helps you connect with God when you feel challenged in your life?

EH: This requires me to tell a story. In the midst of experiencing many struggles in my family and at work, I was at a conference in Cincinnati. I was angry, tired and constantly in a hurry. A curio shop owner selling semi-precious stones saw me walk by several times a day, always motioning me to come inside. Finally, I stopped

even though I had no interest in his merchandise. He asked me what ailed me. I was impatient and angry, but I was polite and sat down with him. As we talked, I began to weep. And then he said, "What do you do to heal yourself?" I said that I garden. He said, "Get into your garden and stay until you feel better."

I came home and dug up my front lawn. I put in native plants and filled my front yard with flora and fauna that never need water from the hose. I planted and planted and

went on to the backyard and planted more. When the seasons changed, I was satisfied that the Earth embraced my sorrow, which was made of many events and tragedies and turned them into compost for next year's garden. I think back to that odd man and his curio shop. That man would not stop inviting me in until I stopped and listened to him. I bought nothing from him, but he gifted me with gemstones. That man, at that time, was the face of God, directing me to the God's gift of Earth, and I have never abandoned his guidance.



Save the date

Theresa Maxis Award Honoring Elizabeth A. Burns, MD, MA

Thursday, Oct. 14, 2021

The Theresa Maxis Award recognizes community leaders who embody the values and vision of the IHM community: deep faith, pioneering spirit, service to the poor, commitment to justice. This year, we are pleased to honor Elizabeth A. Burns, MD, MA, the ninth president of Marygrove College. Dr. Burns is a magna cum laude graduate of Marygrove College and earned a medical degree from the University of Michigan Medical School. She served as professor and chair of the Department of Family Medicine at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences and



Detroit Athletic Club

founded and directed the UND National Center of Excellence in Women's Health Region VIII Demonstration Project. Please join us for a special evening as we celebrate the legacy of Theresa Maxis and recognize Elizabeth Burns for her leadership.

Sponsorship opportunities are available. Tickets are \$200 per person and seating is limited. Proceeds benefit IHM ministries and the retirement needs of the congregation. Contact the Development office at 734-240-9860 for more information.

In South Africa, White people have been convicted of the *crime* of racism—specifically of using a derogatory word to refer to Black people—and have been sent to prison. But is racism a *sin*? And if so, how do you commit the sin of racism?

We do not often speak of sin these days, but we know it when we see it and experience it. Sin builds and strengthens barriers; it alienates us from God and one another. Sin and love are polar opposites.

As a White person, I was brought up in the poisonous atmosphere of the systemic racism of the United States. My parents taught us to be kind

to “colored people” (the term used in the 1950s) but we experienced White privilege as normal. The pastor of my parish strongly encouraged parishioners to belong to a “neighborhood association” whose purpose was to keep “them” out. None of the prayer books I used to prepare for confession before Vatican II ever mentioned this sin. And since Vatican II, no communal reconciliation service I have attended has included racism in the list of possible sins.

How is racism a sin? Sinful thoughts, words and actions are the opposite of

love. They build barriers and injure human dignity. Racism takes many forms: negative thoughts about Black and Brown people; using words to maim a person’s dignity; strengthening structures of exclusion; and actual physical violence. Racism grows in human hearts whenever we judge “the other” to be less human compared to a White person. Societies build racist structures that support racist attitudes.

From childhood, we are formed in “us and them” attitudes and so racism is the not-so-hidden bedrock of people’s relationships. “Systemic racism” is a lethal poison in our societies. It increases through every individual act of racism, but it also takes on a life of its own as “social sin.” It is not sufficient to repent of a personal sin of racism; our penitential call is to help dismantle the structures of racism, brick by brick, sodden with the blood of our Black and Brown sisters and brothers.

Racism is a sin



By Sue Rakoczy, IHM

An “examination of conscience for White people” could include questions such as these:

**When have I used White Privilege to assert myself? Why?
When have I harbored “secret” racist thoughts I would never dare say aloud? When have I kept silent when Black and Brown people were being “othered?”**

We plead for mercy and forgiveness!

The arc is a long one

By Mary Ellen Sheehan, IHM

In an 1850 sermon, Theodore Parker—a Massachusetts Unitarian pastor, abolitionist and women’s rights advocate—proclaimed: “A democracy that is a government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people; of course, a government of the principles of eternal justice, the unchanging law of God; for shortness’ sake I will call it the idea of Freedom.” In another sermon in 1853, he declared: “I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice.”

While today hardly anyone ever cites Parker, these two statements are well known. The first one influenced Lincoln who used it to close his 1863 Gettysburg Address. Martin Luther King Jr. compacted the second one in several of his powerful speeches, declaring that “The arc of the moral universe bends toward justice.” In 2009,

The Hebrew prophets critiqued this practice and Jesus and Paul ranted against it. In fact, they preached a countering practice, the inclusion of all in the community of God.

Living from love of God and neighbor made some progress in intervening



United States President Barack Obama had both statements woven into a carpet he placed in his West Wing oval office.

Indeed, the arc bending toward justice is a long one! Limiting this short reflection to the evolution of Western culture, the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures bear witness to the existence of slavery and patriarchy and caste as far back as 12 centuries before the common era. Empire-building exists generally only through conquering, creating “power over” people, positioning them from higher to lower and most often, placing non-White people at the bottom.

centuries, and yet in 1493, a papal declaration authorized subjecting the people and taking their lands in the “new continents.” In 1787, when the U.S. Constitution was ratified, a male Black slave was 3/5ths of a man and no one but propertied White males could vote! Today, slavery persists as sex trade, forced marriages, debt bondage, domestic servitude and non-living wages.

Sidebar:

See the Council on Foreign Relations information regarding modern slavery <https://on.cfr.org/3aTXITN> and the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center <https://bit.ly/3xCmKLy>.

As committed Christians, we have lots of work to do to shorten the arc toward justice.

Faith and social justice

By Julie Vieira, IHM

In my senior year of high school, one of the classes that left the deepest impression was on faith and social justice. The Basilian Fathers who ran the school always made sure to weave Gospel values in all we learned and experienced throughout our four years. The class, for me, was a tangible landmark in my ongoing search for God and my desire to align myself with the most vulnerable.

Over the years, I have found not only my commitments change because of this, but also my image of God and how I pray. I am learning more and more to see Christ Crucified and Risen in the people and the Earth around me. At times, I am even aware of a small still voice reminding me that in my own small

dying and rising, Christ Crucified and Risen is powerfully connected to me too.

I found an icon recently and it has given me something else that is a tangible reminder of the need to redouble my efforts at my relationship with God and others. This icon is called “Mama” and it was written by Kelly Latimore after he and the rest of the world witnessed the murder of George Floyd. Latimore says that in his original sketch of the icon, Mary was looking at Jesus, but later he shifted her gaze to the viewer. He says, “That subtle shift was powerful. It wasn’t focusing on

the death, which was horrible, but the viewer, and guiding us to communal thought and prayer and action.”

I cannot know that horror, especially as a White person. I can and do grieve for Mr. Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Daunte Wright and the hundreds of years of violence against Black people through systemic racism. But for those of us who are White and continue to benefit from a society built on the oppression of others, ours is not to grieve. Ours is to dismantle racism in all its forms – from racism

in our own hearts and actions to systemic racism woven into our institutions and culture. We must, as the icon “Mama” illustrates, turn to communal thought,



prayer and action. We must work together, and those of us who are White must repair what we have done and benefited from, and we must amplify the voices of Black people.

As you gaze upon this icon, what stirs within your heart?

“Mama” © 2020, used with permission of Kelly Latimore.

Racial Justice and the Catholic Church

By Bryan Massingale, Reviewed by Paula Cooney, IHM

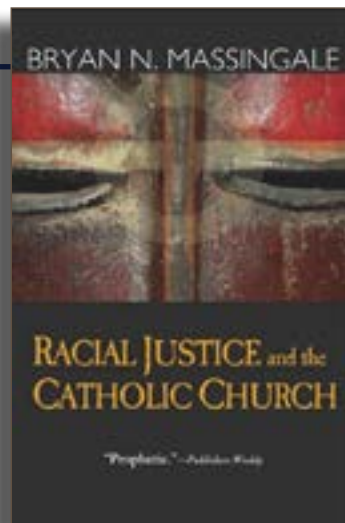
“Does Catholic faith have any relevance for the struggle for racial justice today?” That’s the question—and challenge—that Bryan Massingale explores in this thought-provoking, challenging look at the culture of racism in our country and in our Church.

As a Black Catholic priest and scholar, Massingale brings his own life experience to the interface of the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching and the experience of the Black community in the United States, particularly in the Catholic Church.

It was painful for me to read that the U.S. Catholic Church is a “white racist institution (with) its belief that only European aesthetics, music, theology ... these and only these are truly Catholic.” It needs to be different.

Rev. Massingale offers us insights into the rich spirituality the Black community brings to the Christian community. The “welcoming table” and “the beloved community” are two aspects of that spirituality he suggests would deeply enrich everyone’s experience of worship, prayer and, ultimately, the whole of our lives as followers of the Christ.

“The central message of Catholic Christian faith is this: The wounds of racism are real and deep, but healing is possible.” This is the vision and the hope that we are offered in this very timely book.



Read more about our remarkable sisters, please visit <http://bit.ly/2HWEOs9>.

In memoriam

(Feb. 1, 2021 — April 30, 2021)



Jane (John Fisher) Farrell, IHM
April 30, 1929 -
March 29, 2021



Katherine Blanchard, IHM
May 3, 1950 -
March 20, 2021



Dorothy (John Ellen) Nauer, IHM
April 12, 1927 -
Feb. 17, 2021



Margaret (Kevin Mary) Hughes, IHM
Aug. 3, 1940 -
Feb. 11, 2021

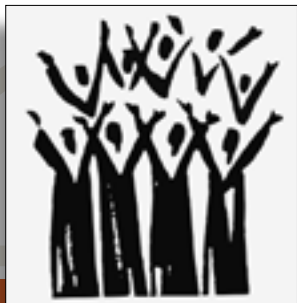


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Communications Office
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ihmsisters.org

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Pastoring a Black congregation

By Moni McIntyre, IHM Associate

The Church of the Holy Cross is the only African American parish in the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh; I was pastor from 2000 until 2016. As children in the 1930s and 1940s, some of our parishioners had to take two or even three buses to get to the church, while passing one or two “White” churches en route, because the Episcopal Church was a denomination that both included and segregated African Americans.

Riddled with racism in polity and practice since its inception, the Episcopal Church mirrored the society in which it was born and began to thrive. By the mid-1960s, “White” Episcopal churches began to welcome African Americans and many people left Holy Cross to join other parishes.

When I got to Holy Cross, it was, in many ways, a remnant of what it had been in days gone by. The same, incidentally, was true of many other denominations. Most young people had left to become unchurched, join a mega-church or another integrated parish. Those who remained at Holy Cross were much smaller in number and people of deep faith. They welcomed me and gave me a chance, and I will be forever grateful.

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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

MOVING?

Contact us with your ID# (found above your name on the mailing label) at:

734-240-9860 or develop@ihmsisters.org.