

winter 2016



pursuing justice, we
seek god's gift of peace.

Living peace

congregation of the sisters of st. joseph of peace



Letting go



in this issue



Living peace

winter 2016

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We owe the beautiful mandala pictures in this issue to Tim Keller, photographer, writer and musician. Tim lives with his wife at the base of Bartlett Mesa on the northeast outskirts of Raton, New Mexico. You can read more about Tim and find more of his work here: TimKellerArts.com

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The mission of *Living Peace*, a free biannual publication of the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace, is to build community with a diverse audience by engaging our readers in contemplation and action for justice and peace through informative and reflective articles, poetry and prayers.

An Undreamed of Freedom

by Melinda McDonald, CSJP

First as an AIDS nurse, then as a hospice nurse, most of my professional life has involved helping people to let go. I've been privileged to accompany people as they transition from this life to the next. It is a time of intimacy and sacredness.

Before leaving, some people appear to live between two worlds for a time and occasionally share glimpses of the beyond with those nearby:

"Honey, you just can't imagine the colors, the incredible beauty..."

"My God how beautiful you are!" (this from an angry man who seemed to take pleasure in making others suffer)

"I hear the angels' voices – it's the most beautiful singing I've ever heard."

"The road is one. We are all one."

The distant delight that can glow on the face of a person in transition, nearly shouts the message that whatever comes next is very, very good. Arriving in that world of beauty, light and peace, though, requires an ultimate letting go of this world and all that we love. It requires a trust that letting go is followed not by a crash but by an

undreamed of freedom. Peaceful smiles on the faces of many who transition to death can reassure us of that truth. Holding on to the deep truth that we are a part of a reality much greater than ourselves can help us to let go of more immediate concerns, when necessary.

When I lived in Central Africa several years ago, surrounded by hunger, poverty and the scars of war, I felt helpless before so much despair. I emailed one of my sisters in our Congregation, a Zen master, who had taught me sitting meditation many years earlier. I asked her advice on how best to be present. Her response is one I remember and practice today: "Breathe in pain and suffering. Breathe out loving-kindness."

It is such a simple but challenging response to the misery we encounter. It helps me to remember that a person's pain is not just their own, but a part of the great pain inherent in living, the same pain we all share. In the same way, breathing love out to the world is not my own little love, but part of the great Love of existence.

Across congregations, many of us entered religious life with

the expectation that an attitude of personal letting go would become a practiced way of life. Our post-Vatican II understanding of vows included not grasping too tightly: to possessions, to time, to power, to surroundings, to relationships.

Today, in leadership ministry, I find we are challenged to prepare to let go on a larger scale. Now, a collective letting go seems to be required. We religious are no longer a highly visible young workforce of Catholic institutions. Ministries and lands that we have called our own are becoming part of the common good. It seems to be less a question of how many we can educate, house or heal, and more one of how we can hold, and be present to, the hurts of our world.

Here too, the assurance that we are a part of a charism larger than each of us individually can help us hold lightly the specific ways we live out our charism. I breathe in. I breathe out. I let go.

Sister Melinda McDonald provided patient care in multiple aspects of HIV/AIDS nursing for 25 years and was a hospice homecare nurse. She currently serves on the five-member Congregation Leadership Team.

Unlocking the New

by Jan Linley

From the cutting of the umbilical cord to the last gasp of breath, life is filled with letting go, and if we are lucky, a constant process of learning how to do so with grace. It is no easy practice, and no matter how many times we must go through it—and we must—there will always be losses that bring us to our knees. Not all letting go is painful. Sometimes it is a relief—a good riddance, a freeing of spirit. Addictions, bad habits,

unhealthy relationships, unreliable cars, and unreliability in general, are but a few that land in that category. Ultimately, even when it's hard, letting go always unlocks the new and holds promise of conversion, large or small.

Like so many religious orders at this time, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace are faced with a nearly unimaginable amount of loss and letting go. At this writing, three

associates and 22 sisters (10% of the vowed population) have died in the last two years. The median age for vowed members is 79. Yet, it is a given in religious life that nothing is permanent, that life is held lovingly and lightly, that sisters go where they are needed and called; thus there is an expectation of constantly being willing to let go. This is an aspect of the sisters' lives that I find inspirational.

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Letting Go, Letting Come

by Terrence J. Moran, CSJP-A

Long before an infant is conscious of her own, or anyone else's existence, her tiny hands reach out and will grasp, with surprising tenacity, the adult finger. How many of us have sat at the bedside of dying relatives or friends and whispered that it's okay to let go, even while they hold on to a life they are barely aware of? Grasping seems to be our default mode as human beings. Our reflex is to hold on. For most of us learning how and when to let go is a lifelong challenge - a challenge which Mary Oliver voices well in her poem "In Blackwater Woods": *To live in this world, you must be able to do three things: to love what is mortal; to hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it; and, when the time comes to let it go, to let it go.*

There is much wisdom about letting go at the heart of the founding story of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. Margaret Anna Cusack was the child of a broken home and had to let go of the child's dream of the perfect family and learn to love both her parents without blame. The shock of the death of her fiancé plunged her

into a long depression from which she emerged with the conviction that the limits of a woman's life in a Victorian household were not for her. Her journey into, and then out of the Roman Catholic Church, forced her to let go of many illusions about human institutions but trained her in an unwavering trust of the God of surprises. Some founders of religious orders were like the steady hearth fire that warmed their communities for years. St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, founder of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, was superior general of her Congregation for 65 years! Margaret Anna was forced out of her community by an intransigent bishop in less than four years. She was a brief but brilliant meteor on her community's horizon. This wrenching letting go was a heart wound for the rest of her life. But she never allowed even her most devastating losses to close her off to joy and to the possibility that every letting go was an opening to an unimagined future.

"Nun on the Bus," Sister Simone Campbell, writes that the two greatest enemies of a fully engaged life are fear and grasping.

Grasping often prevents us from engaging in the holy work of grieving. Grieving well means that we acknowledge both the pain and the necessity of letting go - and not deny either one. Grieving requires time and attention. It is neither automatic nor quick. Grieving is especially difficult for those of us who live in cultures of the 24 hour news cycle with attention spans no longer than a mouse click. When everyone else has moved on, we still need to sit with and hold our losses tenderly until they open as gift to us. We need to learn the wisdom of Jesus who called the time of mourning blessed, (Matthew 5:4).

Breathe and smile! Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh tells us that there is no loss, no matter how profound, that cannot be improved by these two simple actions. Deep abdominal breathing releases us from grasping at the past, and anxiety about the future, by anchoring us in the only reality there is - the present moment full of infinite possibility. Smiling opens us to joy. Try doing it while you look at yourself in the mirror.

Even the ultimate letting go of



Photos: John Baswell (Woods) and Susan Whitsell, CSJP (Wildflowers)

death is not without its blessings. Scientist Connie Barlow invites us to reflect on “the gifts of death.” “Without the death of stars, there would be no planets and no life... Without the death of cells in woody plants, there would be no trees. Without the death of forests by Ice Age advance, there would be no northern lakes. Without death, there would be no ancestors. Without death, time would not be precious.” The great mystic Saint John of the Cross, when asked about the afterlife, would say, “All I know about the next world is that a Great Love awaits us.” And so, when he was dying, he asked his religious brothers to stop muttering the traditional prayers and asked, “Read to me from the *Song of Songs*.” The *Song of Songs* – the biblical celebration of sensual love in soaring imagery, these were the words John of the Cross wanted to carry him into eternity.

At every moment of letting go, in every loss, in every time of crisis, let’s try to hear the call of the future

in the words of the *Song of Songs* (2:10-13).

*Arise, my friend, my beautiful one, and come!
For see, the winter is past,
the rains are over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of pruning the vines
has come,
and the song of the turtledove is
heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines, in bloom, give
forth fragrance.
Arise, my friend, my beautiful one, and come!*

Father Terrence Moran is the Director of the Office of Peace, Justice and Ecological Integrity for the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth and a CSJP Associate.

Suggested Reading

John O’Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings*

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment*

Joyce Rupp, *Praying Our Goodbyes*

Rabbi Rami Shapiro, *Embracing the Divine Feminine: Finding God through the Ecstasy of Physical Love-The Song of Songs Annotated & Explained*

Facing the Future with Gratitude and Hope

by Susan Whitsell, CSJP



Photo: Susan Francois, CSJP

Sea Cliff Villa, as it was called by architect Edward T. Potter, was described as a Bavarian style chalet and was built in 1868 for James B. Brown of the New York banking firm, Brown Brothers. One year later, it was sold to George W. Childs, publisher of the *Philadelphia Ledger*. It was Mr. Childs who was responsible for President Grant's tenancy in the area. In 1894, the house was sold again to Adolph Lewison, a copper magnate, who used it as his summer home until his death in 1938.

Sea Cliff Villa, 981 Ocean Avenue, Elberon, New Jersey, was purchased by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace in 1941. A year

later, it opened as a vacation house for the sisters for use only during the summer. The sisters named it Stella Maris (meaning Star of the Sea) in honor of the Virgin Mary. Stella Maris Retreat Center was later open all year and became a welcoming place, not only for the sisters and associates, but also for various people who participated in programs, retreats, conferences, and meetings.

In 1963, the adjoining property, formerly President Grant's summer home, was purchased by the Congregation. I remember this because I was in the novitiate. We were told to pray that the sale would go through, because there

was a proposal for a night club to be built on the land, which meant it would not be proper for the sisters to have a vacation house next door!

Since 1999, Stella Maris has also been the home of WATERSPIRIT, a ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. WATERSPIRIT is committed to educating, inspiring, and enabling people to deepen their consciousness of the sacredness and interdependence of all creation, with a focus on the role of water as critical in sustaining all life.

That same year, the leadership of the Congregation commissioned a land assessment of three of

our properties; Stella Maris was one of them. The purpose of the assessment was to identify and make known the environmental resources of each property. After the assessment, the Congregation was faced with a very difficult set of facts. The fragile sand dunes could easily be washed away by a direct hit, if not in 1999, at least in the next decade. (In 2009 state engineers said that within 5-10 years the ocean would be up to the pavilion, and within 12-20 years, it would be up to the house.) The assessment group presented us with two options: sell while the land was extremely valuable and move the ministry inland, or remain and improve the environment.

We chose the second option. Our leadership created the Stella Maris Environment Project to make the suggestions of the assessment group come alive. An Earth-friendly attitude served as the umbrella for every action and change. The 10-year plan proposed by the assessment group began to be enfolded: a large area of grass was converted into a wild grass meadow using a solarizing method that did not use any herbicides to kill the present grass. Native plants were brought in, which provide food and shelter for various local animals and birds, as well as for transient birds. Vegetable, flower, and herb gardens were created as places of beauty, as well as teaching tools for those visiting Stella Maris.

Many retreats, conferences, and workshops given by various presenters, including the staff of WATERSPIRIT, provide education sessions on the importance of respecting and treating Earth as our Mother, instead of the prevalent view of a place to take all we want without regard to the effect on the future of Earth itself, or for generations to come. Our 2008 Seeds of Peace Chapter Act, Care of Creation and Climate Change

states: *Earth is a revelation of God and the sustainer of all life. We recognize that the exploitation and destruction of Earth's air, water, soil and species is a sacrilege. We are committed to a spirituality of peacemaking which compels us to live in right relationship with the entire community of life.*

Then, in October 2012, came Superstorm Sandy. She was not the first storm that raised havoc with Stella Maris, but she was the most horrific. Sandy fulfilled all of the predictions the land assessors had given us 13 years earlier: the cliff, which separated the sandy beach level from the pool and house level, was washed away completely along with all of the vegetation. And the pavilion, except for a small section of its foundation, was washed into the ocean. The only part that was visible was a small section of white railing.

This catastrophic event, the cost of necessary repairs and upgrades to the facility, as well as the realization of our aging and diminishing numbers, led the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace to the difficult decision that we must let go of Stella Maris. This decision is not without pain, but we are grateful for the 75 years we have

been privileged to enjoy the beauty, peace, tranquility, and nourishment of Stella Maris and to share it with the multitude of individuals and groups who have come through our doors.

"Our hope is to perpetuate the natural state of the property, rather than selling it for profit...we are investigating options that will continue to preserve the land as a sacred place to be appreciated and used in such a manner as to honor the natural elements of land and ocean and continue our Congregation's commitment to care for creation." (Sr. Margaret Byrne, CSJP in her letter to the Congregation on June 20, 2014)

We, the associates and sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, face the future with gratitude and hope. (Constitution 12)

Sister Susan Whitsell has ministered in various Congregation educational institutions for over 50 years. She is currently retired, volunteers at two Congregation ministries, and is a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace Associate Core Group.

Sisters tend the garden, circa 1962.



We Emerge with New Wings

by Bridgetta Rooney, CSJP

For nearly 70 years, Sacred Heart Convent has been the home and regional center for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace in the United Kingdom, as well as a retreat center for local groups. The estate was originally purchased to handle the region's growing population. A few years ago, the Congregation determined that, due to diminishment, it was now time to let go of beloved Rearsby. Those of us lucky enough to have experienced the gracious, generous hospitality of the sisters there know that a new word should be created to describe hospitality, and don't even get me started about Sister Lucy's scones. Here Sister Bridgetta gives us an inside glimpse of the Jubilee celebration held last June. – JL

Jubilees are a time of thanking God for the gift of sisters who have lived their religious lives faithfully and joyfully through the years. In Rearsby, on June 27th 2015, we celebrated the Jubilees of Sisters Anne Maria Doyle and Celestine Carroll, who had served for 75 years in the Congregation, and Sisters Kathleen Delaney and Margaret Byrne, who were celebrating their Diamond Jubilees (60 years).

This year was different, however, as it was also likely to be the last time that Jubilees would be celebrated in Rearsby. We decided to make the history of the house part of the celebration.

We began in the chapel with a lovely prayer service composed by Sisters Rosemary Reilly and Mary McLeod. A short sherry party followed in the parlour, and then in the refectory, a magnificent lunch, which was prepared by the

Rearsby staff and several of the sisters in the region.

We then moved to the assembly hall, where the pageant telling the story of Rearsby house unfolded. All the habits and headdresses worn that day were modeled after the Congregation's early habits. In the opening scene Mother Berchmans Horgan, played by Sister Katrina Alton, described the purchase of the house in 1946.

A slide show included photos of the first day of reception into the novitiate with sisters wearing bridal dresses, some of whom were in the audience. These were followed by slides of all the changes in the habit over the years, including the habits with "jockey caps." We sang the hymn, *Come Thou Virgin Happy Bride*.

We moved from the slide show to another scene that was acted out by Sister Ann Crawley, playing Sister Annie Kane as a postulant



tolling the bell which Mother Evangelista, one of our founders, used to ring to bring the children to school in the Congregation's school in Blue Bell Hill, Nottingham. Sister Annie rang the same bell for the interment of Mother Evangelista's body in Rearsby cemetery after exhumation from Wilford Hill Cemetery, Nottingham.

We learned that when Mother Philomena had no money to pay for an iron fence round the cemetery, as requested by the Superior General in America, she had a photograph taken and added the fence in ink herself. Mother Patricia was none the wiser. Lastly, there was a scene about the eight who made Final Profession in Nottingham Cathedral in 1970.

We had a lovely finishing prayer service incorporating symbols from the past, present and future. There was a time for sharing memories, and then the service concluded with the song "We go forth."

*We stand here together
Hand in hand, side by side.
We walk into mystery
For the sake of all
We go forth as one
As one we stand strong
Letting go, letting in,
we emerge with new wings.*

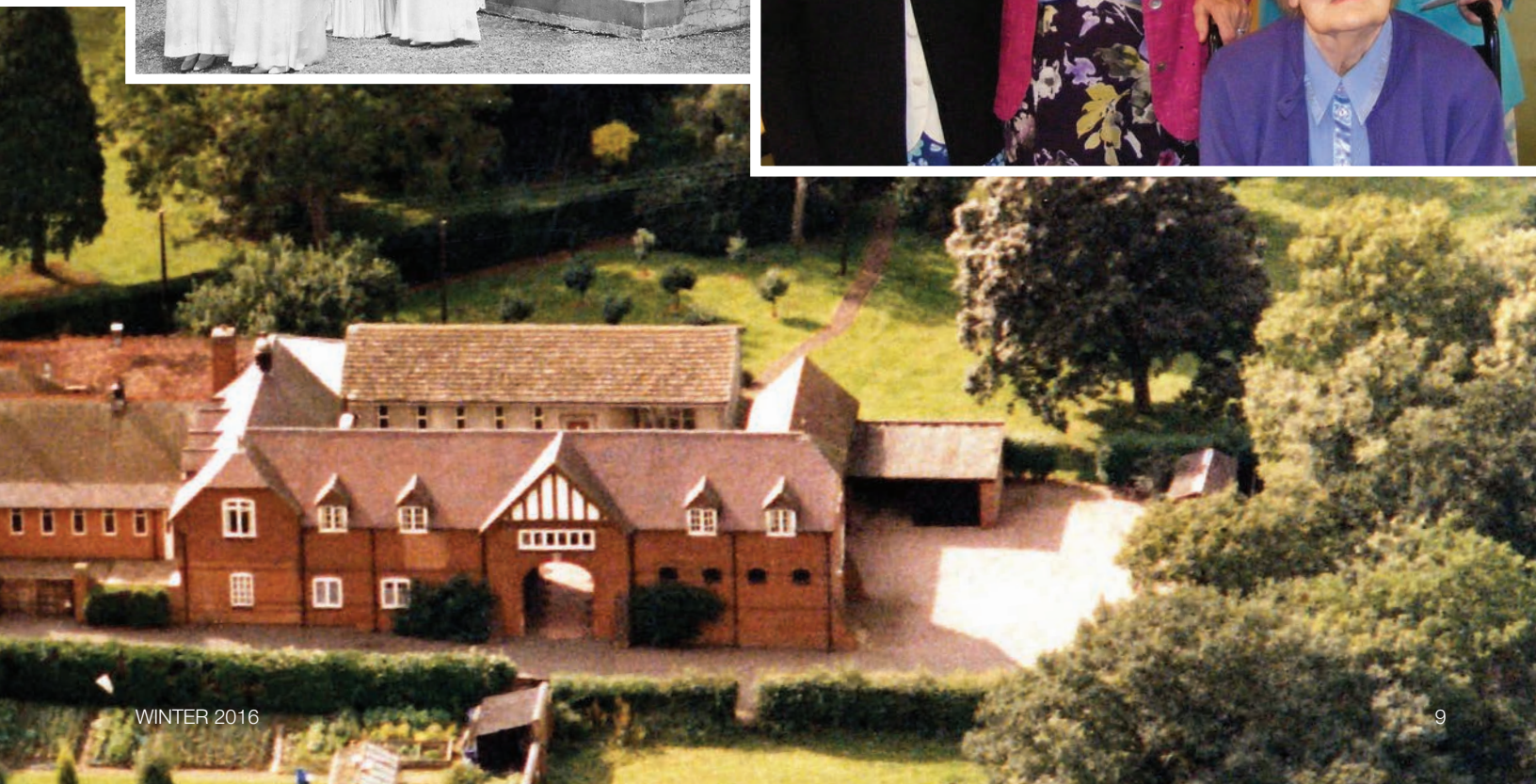
Sister Bridgetta Rooney worked with people with special needs for many years and is at present working in Rearsby, our main house in the UK. She is a member of the pastoral and health committee for the UK region.

PHOTOS:

Bottom: Aerial view of Rearsby.

Left: Vow ceremony, 15 August 1948

Right: Jubilarians, L to R: Sisters Anne Maria Doyle, Margaret Byrne, Kathleen Delaney; seated, Sister Celestine Carroll



Let It Go

by Brian Doyle



I'll tell you a story. Some years ago I sat at the end of my bed at three in the morning, in tears, furious, frightened, exhausted, as drained and hopeless as I have ever been in this bruised and blessed world, at the very end of the end of my rope, and She spoke to me. I know it was Her. I have no words with which to tell you how sure I am that it was the Mother. Trust me.

Let it go, She said.

The words were clear, unambiguous, crisp, unadorned. They appeared whole and gentle and adamant in my mind, more clearly than if they had somehow been spoken in the dark salt of the room. I have never had words delivered to me so clearly and powerfully and yet so gently and patiently, never.

Let it go.

I did all the things you would do in that situation. I sat bolt upright. I looked around me. I listened for more words. I looked out the window to see if someone was

standing in the garden talking to me through the window. I wondered for a second if my wife or children had spoken in their sleep. I waited for Her to say something more. She didn't speak again. The words hung sizzling in my mind for a long time and then faded. It's hard to explain. It's like they were lit and then the power slowly ebbed.

Let it go.

She knew how close I was to absolute utter despair, to a sort of madness, to a country in which many sweet and holy things would be broken, and She reached for me and cupped me in Her hand and spoke into the me of me and I will never forget Her voice until the day I die. I think about it every day. I hold those words close and turn them over and over and look at them in every light and from every angle.

For more than a year I told no one about this, not even my wife whom I love dearly and who has a heart bigger than a star, but then I told two friends, and I told them because they told me that they too had been Spoken to in moments of great darkness. A clan of the consoled, and there must be millions of us.

Billions.

We say a great deal about the Mother. We speak of her in Mass, in schools, in magazines and newspapers and newsletters and bulletins, in seminaries and schools, colleges and web sites, and we know nothing of Whom we speak. All we know is a handful of stories from two thousand years ago, shreds and shards, tattered threads from what must have been even then an unimaginable fabric. Miriam, she was named, מרים in the Hebrew, and She lived, married,

Bore Him, endured, wept over His icy corpse, died. When She died Her body rose into the heavens and vanished from earthly view.

But I tell you that She spoke to me one cold wet night in western Oregon and Her words are burned on my heart as if She reached down with a finger like a sweet razor and traced them there at three in the morning and I cannot explain how Her words changed everything and how there was the first part of my life and now there is the part after She spoke to me.

Let it go.

I still have a job and kids and my mysterious wife and a bad back and a nasal mutter and too many bills, nothing's changed outwardly, I didn't drop everything and hit the road hunched over in mooring prayer and song, and there are still all sorts of things quietly muddled and loudly screeching in my life, but something astonishing happened to me two years ago and it changed everything. Something broke and something healed, something so deep and joyous that I cannot find words for it, hard as I try.

We say a great deal about the Mother and we know nothing of Whom we speak. That is what I want to say to you. But She knows us. Trust me when I say that I know this to be true. Whatever else you hear today, whatever else you read, whatever else happens in your life, whatever way your heart is bruised and elevated today, remember that.

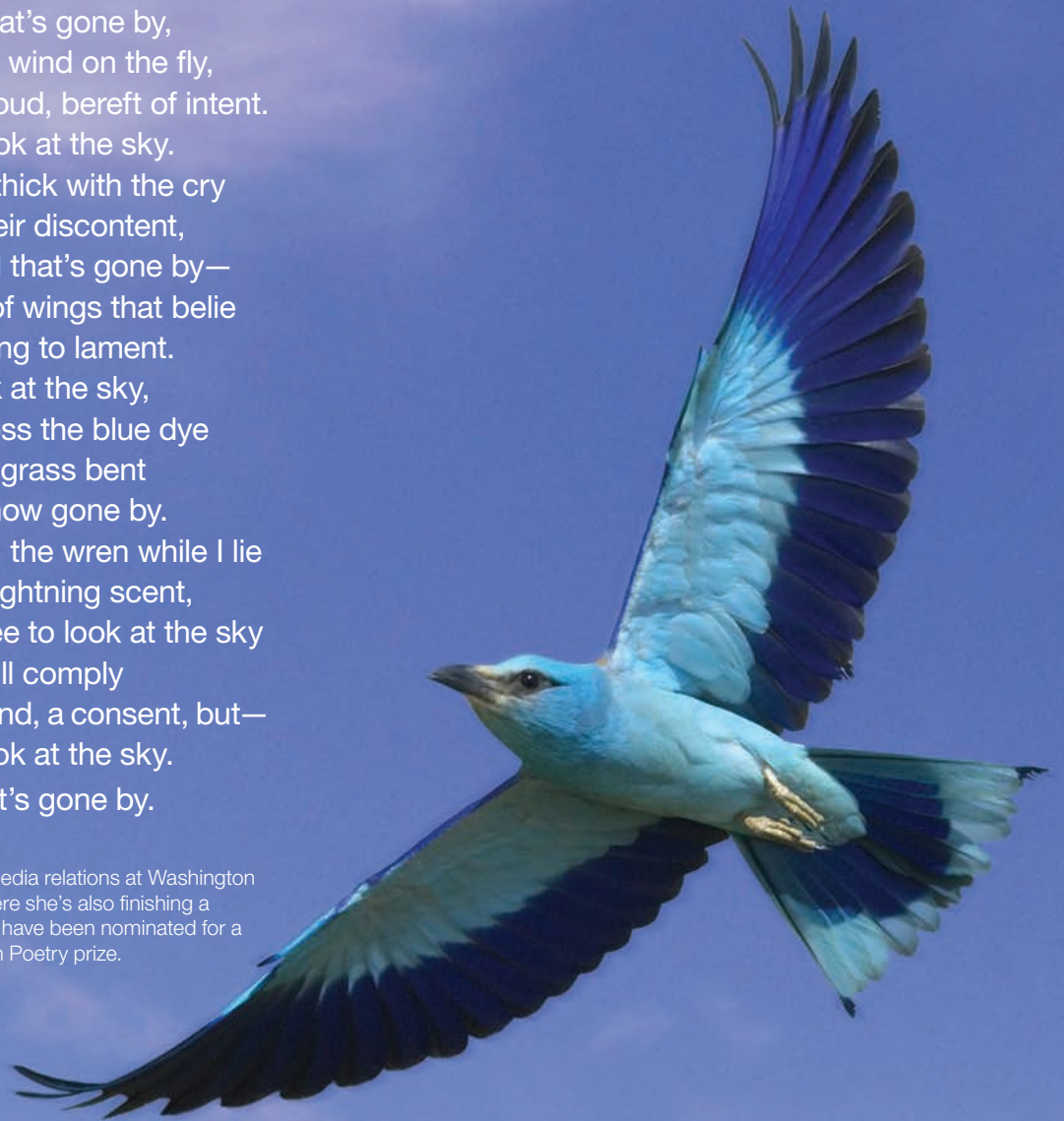
Brian Doyle is the editor of *Portland Magazine* at the University of Portland, and the author of many books of essays, "proems," and fiction, notably the novels *Mink River* and *The Plover*.

Passage

by Wendy Mitman Clarke

Please don't ask me to look at the sky
in the evening when the storm is spent.
I don't want to know all that's gone by,
all the cumulonimbus and wind on the fly,
ragged sheets, twisted cloud, bereft of intent.
Please don't ask me to look at the sky.
All day the air has grown thick with the cry
of birds who relinquish their discontent,
too restless to dwell on all that's gone by—
a mate, a moth, a fluster of wings that belie
this long twilight, deepening to lament.
They don't ask me to look at the sky,
just their names cast across the blue dye
of its edge, rubbed plum, grass bent
by the palm of the wind, now gone by.
The swallow, the bluebird, the wren while I lie
in the field wet with rain, lightning scent,
bound to earth, merely free to look at the sky
as it fades. Let them go. I'll comply
with the clouds and the wind, a consent, but—
please don't ask me to look at the sky.
Let the night fall on all that's gone by.

Wendy Mitman Clarke is director of media relations at Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland, where she's also finishing a master's degree in English. Her poems have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and won the Pat Nielsen Poetry prize.





Deglamorizing the Symbols and Trinkets of Militarism

by Katrina Alton, CSJP

On a beautiful summer's day in central London three men walked down Whitehall. They stopped directly outside 10 Downing Street, the seat of the UK government. Their silence was broken with this statement:

"We are members of Veterans For Peace UK, an ex-services organisation of men and women who have served this country in every conflict since the second world war. We exist in the hope of convincing you that war is not the solution to the problems of the 21st century. We have come here today to hand back things, given to us as soldiers, that we no longer require or want," said Ben Griffin, founder of Veterans For Peace.

Tourists looked on quizzically, and people began to take photos. Armed police awaited orders.

One of the veterans reached into his pocket and held up a piece of paper. *"This is my Oath of Allegiance, it is something I had to recite in order to get the job as a soldier. At 15-years-old I had little understanding of its true meaning. Now I fully understand the words, they have no meaning at all,"* said John Boulton, who then discarded his Oath of Allegiance.

Another Veteran took off his beret. *"This is my Army hat. This was given to me as a 16-year-old boy. I reject militarism. I reject war. And it means nothing to me,"* said Kieran Devlin who then discarded the beret.

Finally, a Veteran removed the row of medals displayed on his jacket. *"I was given these medals for service on operations with the British Army. This particular medal, here, was given to me for my part in the occupation of Iraq. Whilst I was over there, I attacked civilians in their homes and took away their men, off to be tortured in prison. I no longer want these despicable things,"* said Ben Griffin who then discarded his medals.

A crowd strained to see, to take more photos. Armed police awaited orders.



Veterans for Peace UK: L - R, Kieran Devlin, John Boulton, and Ben Griffin.

Veterans For Peace UK is a growing organization of men and women who have gone through, what I can only imagine to be, a long, and at times painful, conversion and transformation. They are letting go, not only of a job, a role, but of their identity, and trying to come to terms with the part they played in the military machine where civilians are killed and men are taken to be tortured.

In a culture where the military is systematically deified, it has become a blasphemy to criticise them. In this context, the work of Veterans For Peace UK in schools, and with young people, is essential.

In 2014 all schools in England and Wales received a copy of a book called, "The British Armed Forces". This was part of a wider militarising agenda by the UK government's Department of Education. Its goals are clear:

- Expansion of cadet forces in state schools (550 by 2020)
- Funding of projects in schools with a "military ethos"
- Partnering of schools and colleges with the military and arms companies
- Ongoing recruitment of under 18-year-olds.

Curiously, the words "death" and "killing" are nowhere to be found in this document; and while it refers to the victories of war, neither wars in Iraq or Afghanistan are mentioned. The book also states that, "Nuclear deterrents have saved millions of lives", and that, "Arms companies boost the British economy." With no differentiation between fact and opinion, this piece of propaganda attempts to sanitise war, push recruitment and exclude any voices for peace.

Against this backdrop, Veterans For Peace UK speak truth to power and hold to account those perpetuating the economy of war without regard to the cost of life, society or the environment.

So why did these three men give back their oaths of allegiance, berets and medals?

"We carried out the action in an attempt to deglamorize the symbols and trinkets of militarism," said Griffin. "The action had great personal significance for all three of us. Each of us felt that we had released ourselves from the grip of militarism by publicly disowning these items."

The three veterans then walked away from Downing Street leaving the oaths, berets and medals lying scattered on the floor.

John Boulton served in the Armoured Corps. He deployed on operations to Cyprus and Afghanistan.

Kieran Devlin served in the Royal Engineers. He deployed on operations to the Gulf War and Northern Ireland.

Ben Griffin served in the Parachute Regiment and the SAS. He deployed on operations to Northern Ireland, Macedonia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

They are all now members of Veterans For Peace UK.

To find out more, and see a video of this action, visit: www.veteransforpeace.org.uk

Sister Katrina Alton currently lives in Scotland where she is completing her training as a psychodynamic counsellor. As a peace activist, Katrina's main focus is on the arms trade and nuclear disarmament.

FrankSpeak

Indifference, Conversion, Solidarity, Hospitality

By Frank McCann, CSJP-A, Congregation Peace through Justice Facilitator

The anti-immigrant rhetoric in the American political campaign is shocking to many and the response of the UK to the Syrian refugee crisis is disturbingly inadequate considering the scope of the problem and what the refugee families have been through. And now, at this writing, we are told there is a growing new wave of children at the southern US border.

Unfortunately, the corporate media focuses on the shocking, therefore the anti-immigrant message is the one carried near and far. Whatever good efforts are being made to help house and welcome refugees are lost in the maddening cacophony of hate.

Sadly, many who would be supportive of immigrants remain silent in the anti-immigrant climate of hate.

Pope Francis said: *“Some people are well informed... they are vaguely aware of the tragedies afflicting humanity, but they have no sense of involvement or compassion.”*

It is this indifference, and our silence, that empowers evil. But it does not have to be that way.

Our Congregation’s Chapter Call to radical hospitality leaves little doubt how we should be responding both communally and individually to those whom Pope Francis describes as “living on the outermost fringes of society—fringes which modern society itself creates.”

Our arms are to be open to embrace the marginalized poor—Syrian refugees included. This means that by our personal interaction, encounter and outreach we can connect with those whom

others would have us fear. In doing so, we can recognize our common humanity which is, after all, the ultimate solution.

Years ago, I accompanied some participants from a JustFaith group to meet undocumented immigrants in the basement of an urban New Jersey church. Among the group was a friend, James, who was not a big fan of immigrants coming to the US, “taking American jobs and living off our taxes.” But he was at least open enough to attend the gathering. We spent the afternoon listening to the immigrants tell their stories while eating empanadas for lunch, provided by our hosts.

We learned that these young Salvadoran men had left wives and mothers and children home to come to the US. Two of them



James (far right) attends a demonstration at Elizabeth Detention Center in New Jersey. (Photo by Frank McCann)

“Whatever good efforts are being made to help house and welcome refugees are lost in the maddening cacophony of hate.”

had a small trucking business in El Salvador until the gangs stole their trucks putting them out of business. They could no longer feed their families and came to NJ seeking work. Even the spotty construction work they could find netted them enough money so they could send it home to feed their children.

Riding home in the car, James realized that they came here to feed their families, and that, if he were in their shoes, he could do no less (emigrate without papers) and still call himself a father to his children. The few hours we spent together in what was called “a border crossing” provided an opportunity to stand in another’s shoes, to recognize our common hopes and dreams for our families. A conversion moment.

Sisters Margaret Jane Kling and Bridget O’Shea, and two associates, Diane Stoller and Sandi Pieroni, began visiting immigrants detained in the Bergen County Jail. In their half-hour visit, they were immediately struck by the injustices... long waits for court hearings, lack of access to funds to call attorneys or wives, inability to attend AA meetings offered in the jail, limited visiting hours, and for all of those we visited, detention at a good distance from family. The ugly reality struck home that companies profiting from immigrant detention have imposed minimum quotas for the number to be detained daily.

These first-time visitors could not imagine themselves cut-off from family and friends in that way. Despite the injustices they



Diane Stoller and Margaret Jane Kling visit Bergen County Jail. (Photo by Frank McCann)

encountered, they were elated that they could make contact and reach out to one person and hopefully make a difference in his life.

It is hard to be indifferent to the needs of a stranger, immigrant or refugee, when they are sitting right in front of you.

Recently, an associate called to suggest the congregation organize an interfaith prayer service with Muslims—as a sign of welcome—another way to live the Chapter Call.

As we ponder what it means to let go, keep in mind that our fears, our isolation from strangers and our misconceptions about

others are great things to let go. Breaking free of our indifference and doing some relatively simple things can make all the difference. Our lives will be richer, more human, and more peace-filled for the little effort it takes.

Frank McCann is a CSJP Associate and Peace through Justice Facilitator for the Congregation. Prior to his work with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, he worked 10 years with homeless families, eight years as a kitchen and bath designer and 20 years as a carpenter.



Staying Open to Be Renewed

by Susan Dewitt, CSJP

Once—100 years ago in 1916—we, Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, were called to open a hospital in Seward, Alaska. A year later a glacier-fed stream broke its banks and flooded the hospital. The Sisters reverently moved their patients and the Holy Eucharist to higher ground. Once the flood subsided, they dried out the hospital, reordered stores, and started again. A year later, almost to the day, a second flood on the same creek broke out, and in the midst of that disruption the Sisters had to cope with the 1918 flu epidemic. All the Sisters caught the flu. Sister Aloysius, one of the pioneers of the Western community, died from complications a few months later. The hospital was closed. Our mission in Alaska was over.

Then, three years later we were called to Alaska again, and while

the Seward experience made the Sisters reluctant, they could not resist the urging of Bishop Crimont, S.J., to become “the Apostles of Alaska.” They opened a new hospital in Ketchikan. We are there now as PeaceHealth Ketchikan General Hospital. A few months ago Sister Beth Taylor moved to Ketchikan to continue our long history of Alaskan health care ministry.

We have always been saying goodbye to someone dear to us and to some part of our past. We have always been saying hello, welcoming new possibilities and rejoicing or enduring in new realities. Our lives as community, like our individual lives, are always in movement, always being emptied out, shut down, mourned, so they can be renewed in unexpected ways.

At this time in our lives as Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace,

we have said many goodbyes, to beloved sisters and associates and friends, to ministries we founded that are now continued by others. As a community, we are fewer and older, but we say hello to new ways of answering our call to be people of peace and justice, to be radically hospitable.

And we have said hello to sisters and associates who will lead our community into new paths that we cannot now imagine fully. Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. (John 12:24)

Sister Susan Dewitt lives in the Seattle area and serves as one of the western region’s Community Life Ministers. She is currently writing a narrative history of PeaceHealth.

Sisters returning from a fishing trip in Ketchikan c. 1960.
L to R: Sisters Casimir Clements, Edger Pineau, Mary Keough,
Eugene Wood, Katherine Marie LeRoux

Ketchikan community with Bishop Crimont and Fr. McNamara, 1943

Unlocking the New, continued from page 3

In her 2014 address at the Communicators for Women Religious conference, Sister Annmarie Sanders, IHM, Associate Director for Communications for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, described the larger numbers of women religious from the 1930s through the '60s as an anomaly. She said, *"Today, religious life is in a process of right-sizing, so to speak. Religious life is more naturally small. And we see over history that religious institutes often rise up to fill a particular need in society, and those institutes reach their fulfillment when the society meets the need for which that institute was founded. So, the closing of religious institutes – which we are seeing with greater frequency at this time – is not to be unexpected."*

Through a process they call Comprehensive Community Planning, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace have been taking a close look at their properties and demographics and making decisions about letting go and moving forward in the most conscientious way, choosing paths

that will honor their charism of peace through justice. Currently, the Congregation is in the process of letting go of two significant properties: Stella Maris, the longtime vacation home and retreat center on the sea in Elberon, New Jersey, and Rearsby, the regional center and home of some of the sisters in the United Kingdom. Susan Whitsell and Bridgetta Rooney share some of the history of these beloved places.

In other contributions to this issue, Terry Moran, Susan Dewitt, Brian Doyle, and Wendy Clarke open us to the possibility of peace, salvation and even momentum in letting go. Katrina Alton's article about three men in the military exchanging their war "trinkets" for peace is one example of transformation in letting go. Associate Frank McCann challenges us to free ourselves of our fears and misconceptions. Fiona Mackintosh, in *History and Roots*, takes us back to the sisters' beginning in Nottingham and shows how sometimes letting go brings us full circle. Maureen D'Auria has shared a number of questions that

are particularly helpful to ponder for anyone grieving a loss.

Mandalas are often used in meditation, which is all about practice, letting go and being present where the greatest moments of transformation take place. Sand mandalas are patiently and intricately created by a group of Buddhist monks working together to form a beautiful symbol that represents many things, among them, transformation and impermanence. On our back cover is a picture of Tibetan monks creating a sand mandala; on the front cover is that same mandala swept down, before it is carried away to the nearest body of water to release the blessings it contains for the healing of the world.

In every letting go, every cleaving of spirit from spirit, or soul from place, there begins a divine transformation that brings us closer to home, to light, and to Love with a capital "L." It is a journey made smoother without resistance, one that offers the possibility for each of us to heal ourselves, and in so doing, a bit of the world.





History and Roots Coming Full Circle

by Fiona J. Mackintosh

Life has many arrivals and departures, dead ends and roads less traveled, but it's remarkable how often it circles right back to where it started.

In 1883, Margaret Anna Cusack, the famous Nun of Kenmare, left Ireland for England looking for a place where she could establish a new order of nuns that would work for peace and social justice as well as for the poor. Her friend Cardinal Manning, the head of the Catholic Church in England, recommended the diocese of Nottingham in the East Midlands.

Since the late 18th century, Nottingham has been a textile town, and in the 1880s, it was suffering from the worst consequences of the industrial revolution. In the warehouses and factories of the city, "... children were worked like brute animals, drawing threads for lace machines from the age of 5, sleeping on piles of jackets on the floor. Working up to 17 hours a day ... they suffered from scrofula, defective eyesight, and a permanent stoop."¹ Many of the women did ill-paid piecework, scalloping, clipping, and mending bundles of lace late into the night, living off "soaky" (bread soaked in boiling water) and hiding from the rent man. Up to 20 percent of the city's population

lived in poverty and nearly 200 out of every 1,000 children died before they reached their first birthday.

From their first Motherhouse in Bluebell Hill, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace set out to respond to these many desperate needs. Believing passionately that education was key to improving the lives of the poor and disenfranchised, particularly women, Margaret Anna Cusack (Mother Francis Clare) set up a training school for poor girls in a stable and hayloft behind the convent. The Nottingham Guardian reported approvingly, "The inmates will be taught in a practical manner how to cook, wash clothes, sweep, [and] clean... and to inculcate habits of thrift, economy, and cleanliness."²

The sisters gradually extended their educational efforts across the city. In 1889, the Bishop of Nottingham asked them to run St. Augustine's parochial school in the neighboring parish where they encountered some hostility from the local population. Children would cat-call after the nuns in the street, "Catholic, Catholic, quack, quack, quack! Go to the devil and never come back!"³ Later, the nuns also took over the running of St. Mary's School in Hyson Green and The Good Shepherd School in Arnold, while also founding their own Sacred

Heart Independent School.

In 1947, needing more space for the novitiate, the provincial Motherhouse was moved to the much larger property in Rearsby. Over the years since then, the sisters' presence in Nottingham has gradually dwindled to two houses in Hyson Green and on Wollaton Road. However, their roots in the city remain and the sisters there continue in their ministry, including spiritual direction, hospital chaplaincy, visiting the sick and homebound and serving in Congregation vocations ministry, as well as serving on social service panels and boards.

Once Rearsby is sold, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace will relocate their regional center, and come full circle, returning to Nottingham, the place where they first established their presence in the world more than 130 years ago.

Fiona J. Mackintosh is a British-American writer living in Washington D.C. Her short stories and articles have been published on both sides of the Atlantic, and her flash fictions won the TSS and Ad Hoc Fiction contests in 2015.

¹ *Portrait of Nottingham*, Emrys Bryson, Hale, 1983

² Nottingham Guardian, September 23, 1884

³ *From Dusk Till Dawn*, Rev. P. R.

McCaffrey, Benziger Brothers, 1932

Questions to Help Recover from Grief and Loss

by Maureen D'Auria, CSJP

Adapted from the retreat *Journey to Emmaus – Into a Future of Hope*

1. Can you name what has helped you with feelings of loss in yourself?
2. What do you do to relieve pain?
3. After a loss, did you find that you experienced an accident or illness? Can you name them? Do you know why?
4. Can you name the important losses that you, your partner, spouse, family or community have experienced? Use both your heart and your mind in doing this.
5. Who accompanied you at the time of loss? Did they help you to grieve? Can you write or talk about the people you shared your grief with at the time?
6. What are some of the feelings of past losses that helped you find meaning? Can you use these to cultivate hope for now and into the future?
7. Can you say goodbye to the unfinished parts of the relationship with the person or event, while keeping the relationship, but not the emotional pain?
8. Death and loss make for permanent changes. Can accepting permanency help you to let go and move on from what happened?
9. Why not ritualize the closure? Perhaps keep before you a picture or memento of the person or event. Or write a letter to the person or event about your feelings.
10. Can you see the pain you have had in the past as an opportunity to find strength and courage in the now moments? Can you remember being able to do so in the past?

Sr. Maureen D'Auria has been a psychiatric nurse practitioner for over 35 years. Her focus has been with families and their children who are homeless and poor. She is a Community Life Minister for the sisters in our Eastern Region and an Adjunct Professor at Columbia University School of Nursing.

“When someone you love becomes a memory, those memories can become treasures.” -unknown



we invite you to
**connect &
participate**

consider becoming a sister

In the USA contact:

Sister Susan Franco, CSJP, Congregation
Vocation Director, sfrancois@csjp.org

In the UK, contact:

Sister Maureen Brennan, CSJP, Vocation Team
Member, maureenbrennancsjp@gmail.com

consider becoming an associate

Women or men who share our concerns and
charism. Contact:

Sister Coralie Muzzy, CSJP, Congregation
Formation Director, cmuzzy@csjp-olp.org

participate with financial support

Donate on line at www.csjp.org or use the envelope
included.

request prayer support

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything,
by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let
your requests be made known to God.*

—Philippians 4:6

Our Sisters and Associates pray daily for friends,
supporters, all who ask our prayers and those linked
with us through the Pious Union of Prayer. The
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of prayer for peace in homes and in families. Send
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