

VOICES of Hope



CHRISTIANITY, SPIRITUALITY, ECONOMY

. . . BRINGING HOPE TO THE HUMAN JOURNEY.

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INQUIRIES/COMMENTS

We are continually looking to improve our publication as well as for topics/themes suggestions for future issues. We encourage you to forward any questions/comments or suggestions.

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Letter from Sr. Mary Ellen Moore



Why would a small magazine published by an even smaller group of nuns choose the economy as a topic of reflection? Shouldn't we stick to more appropriate subjects such as prayer and the sacraments?

The fact is, economy concerns all of us. We, as religious, take a vow of poverty, yet within the context of this vow, we have to use money as members of the local community. We, like you, are also faced with

choices about how we spend our small amount of personal money, how we save and share our money as a community, how we think about money and the economy and how we think about the thousands of people who are less fortunate than we are. We, too, have witnessed the "great recession" which has been building over that past several months and continues to affect many. We have been touched by the loss of jobs, homes, income and security of our friends, family members and colleagues.

As sincere and committed Christians, you probably think about money and the economy, too. You may not have made a vow, but you have the responsibility to make your economic choices consistent with your concrete Christian life of Faith. Your money, your relationship to money, who you share it with, how you get it, what you do with it, how you spend it and where you invest it all say a lot about you. We appreciate the depth of your own personal reflections on this theme, which is so core to our Christian way of being in this world. Your generosity challenges us and others, your knowledge and understanding pushes us to reflect further, and your wisdom guides us in our own choices.

As our spring issue of *Voices of Hope* goes to press this Lenten-Easter season, we thank you for taking the time to write and/or read these contributions to the on-going Christian dialogue on economic life in our world.

"This late Lenten Sunday is one in which we enter into the mystery of pain and brokenness, both our own and the world's, to discover that we are not alone, that what seems hopeless is in fact hope-filled, that what appears dead can spring forth into life. It happens because we are embedded in a wider, more sustaining matrix of love than we can possibly imagine." Wendy M. Wright

Letter from the Editor

Sr. Jean Kielty, SH.
Chicago, Illinois
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As Christians, we face many challenges in living out our faith in today's world. Today's economy brings additional challenges as we try to balance tending to our own needs with responding to the needs of others. In this issue, we hear eight different reflections on how spirituality and our Christian faith influence our attitudes toward economics and the economy. As the *Voices of Hope* Publication Committee pondered this theme, we developed questions for our contributors to use for reflection. They are questions that stretch us and challenge us as we attempt to clarify for ourselves the value of letting our faith guide our daily living. These same questions may be helpful to you in your own personal reflection after reading these articles:

- How do Christians play out their beliefs with the economic decisions that they make?
- What do you feel is the impact of the economic crisis on Catholic school closings and Church closings?
- How does our economy impact spirituality and Christianity?
- How does our economy impact your own spirituality?
- How do you decide what charities to give to?
- How do you live out your vow of poverty (or awareness of not living above ones means) in a society of consumerism?
- Where is God during times of economic crises?

On a different note, I would like to thank those of you who sent feedback about our last issue on the Communion of Saints. We continue to value your feedback so that we can improve our publication to make it more readable and meaningful. Unfortunately, we inadvertently left out a portion of the article written by Sr. Anna Marie Baldauf. We are sincerely sorry for this omission and have included it in its entirety in this issue.

On behalf of the Helpers, I would like to once again express my deep appreciation to the Publication Committee. I thank the editorial team, Nora Gruenberg, Theresa Viramontes, and Leigh Hartley and our layout and design person, Ramiro Hernandez for their talent, time and commitment to the Helpers Publication Committee.

I invite you to consider writing an article for our next issue which has as its theme: *Who goes to Church? Why? Who doesn't go to Church? Why not?* If you would like to submit an article for consideration, please e-mail me. You will be contacted with article specifications approximately two months prior to publication.

The Widow's Coins

Reassessing our Christian Identity

F. Javier Orozco, SFO, PhD.



For many of us accustomed to living in abundance of one form or another, the current economy has left its mark. Whether we define ourselves as “those who have” or “those who have not,” we can easily note how life has changed for us; now, we have to reach a little deeper into our pockets in search of a few extra coins. In this reflection, I want to propose that the parable of the poor widow is an invitation to look at our deepest Christian identity, especially in light of our current circumstances when what we have to give may not seem like much to the eyes of the world.

“Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on” (Luke 21: 1-4).

Without wanting to speculate where each one of us may fall on the spectrum of abundance or scarcity, it is fitting to ask the following question: *what does it mean to contribute out of our own poverty?* Perhaps the question can seem strange; or perhaps the question can come across as misguided when paired with our Christian narratives that speak of ‘abundance of grace’ and ‘richness of gifts.’ However, the more we sit with the question, the more we can realize that our own ‘poverty’ (in whatever way we experience it) is itself the gift.

Indeed, we can already recognize in this parable a much deeper meaning; one that points to the loving act of God in and for creation. If we dare to open our imaginations, we can quickly see that the widow is the Christ-figure found in all of us: a *Christ-figure* that empties herself in self-sacrifice for others; the *Christ-figure* that gives herself/himself for the good of the other. Moreover, like the *Widow-Christ*, we are invited to “put in all we have to live on.” In this *Widow-Christ*, then, we reassess not only our material possessions, but our very personal being—the character or spirit of our lives. In a sense, “to put in all we have to live on” goes deeper than to give out of the “extra stuff” that surrounds our lives. We can say that to “put in all we have

to live on” is to put ourselves into the waters of baptism, anew. In other words, it is to plunge ourselves into the deep waters of Mystery where we discover more than the two coins.

In this identity of the *Widow-Christ*, then, we are consoled because it no longer matters how much money or material possessions we have; rather, what does count is how we empty ourselves for the good of others. Stated differently, in the *Widow-Christ*, the measurement of our identity is not the two coins we may have, but the sacrifice-in-love we make. In her, our poverty finds redemptive value.

F. Javier Orozco, SFO, PhD is a chaplain for inter-religious ministry at DePaul University. He also teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in theology at other Catholic universities in the Chicago area. Javier and his wife, Theresa, live in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. His appreciation for the Helpers stems from his collaborations with Sr. Dominga Zapata’s ministry and their friendship. Email: JOROZCO@depaul.edu



*Sculpture on display at St. Theresa of Avila Parish in Lincoln Park.

Parable of the Talents

Improving our Lot

Ken Meyer



Jesus' parable of The Talents (Matthew 25: 14-30) provides good insight into the Lord's view of men's and women's day-to-day commercial life on Earth and their Christianity experience. Like it or not, we live in a world in which currency, material possessions, and skills all play an important role. Jesus seems to acknowledge that and encourages us to

improve our lot as best we can with the talents that we have.

Financial markets, technology, and governmental regulation have all combined to extend these worldly talents (and material wealth) to people of all walks of life worldwide. Enormous amounts of wealth have been created in this process; particularly in the past twenty-five years or so. But the world's economic system is hardly perfect. Huge gaps in wealth have developed between the wealthy and the poor, among races, countries, and religions. Christianity demands that we share our good fortune, our talents, with those less fortunate and those with fewer talents. Haitians, our poor, our elderly, and our disabled all come to mind.

In our material world, the best way to solve some of these problems is to see to it that we educate ourselves and our families, work hard with whatever talents we have, participate in financial markets, and improve our lot. A prosperous private sector can move quickly to provide the very basics of a dignified life; food and water, medical care, and shelter. But we also need to provide our underprivileged with education, employment, security, and personal pride. A successful population with talents to spare will likely get this done sooner and more efficiently than government intervention.

Our Catholic school system offers a perfect example of how the private sector and those with talents can intervene. Schools are being closed by the hundreds, particularly in the inner cities. Funds are not available to keep them open, nor can parents offset this lack of funding. We as taxpayers pay our share to public schools, but Catholic schools receive no financial help from the state. The good news is that creative individuals and groups have stepped in to financially "adopt" parishes and to develop charter schools in inner cities. We have a long way to go, but we are off to a good start.

Personally, I was fortunate to found and build a successful company with three wonderful, older partners. The four of us made a lot of money along the way, so did more than 100 employees who have worked with us over the years.

Those three partners taught me through example to be generous. We came from very different social and religious backgrounds, but our main focus was to build a successful business and make some money doing so. We did, indeed, create a wildly successful and profitable business. That business, in turn, enabled us to create jobs and provided each of us the means to help a wide swath of disadvantaged people. We used our talents to generate more talents.

For me personally, these charitable interests have evolved over time as I suspect they do for most people. My own personal interests now focus on helping the mentally and physically challenged (both children and adults), the elderly, and providing better educational opportunities for minority children.

How often, especially in this horrible economic crisis, do we wonder what is God's plan? How can He inflict this on us, particularly the poorest and the weakest? You can assure yourself that I don't have the answers! But you can also assure yourself that He expects those of us with extra talents to do whatever it takes to help our fellow brothers and sisters.

Ken Meyer retired after 40 years in the asset management business. He met the Society of Helpers and Sr. Mary Ellen Moore roughly three years ago when asked for investment advice on their endowment fund. He is a graduate of Notre Dame and the Wharton School of Finance. Ken lives with his wife of 41 years in Winnetka and has two grown sons. Email: krm42@mac.com

Spiritual Unity

Brightening a Darkened Economy

Erica-Lyn Saccucci, PhD.



The past year has been a tumultuous time economically in the United States. Everyone seems to be feeling the effects of our economic strife in one way or another. With so little to spend on day-to-day necessities, it is a blessing for religious institutions to receive gifts of time and treasure from their congregations. This is not the first time, however, that Americans have had to decide where to best donate their gifts.

The United States has seen its fair share of rocky economic times. The late 1920s brought with them a fierce depression. At that time, a Benedictine priest, Fr. Virgil Michel, brought hope to his congregation teaching that, as the Mystical Body of Christ, the Christian community could work together to help one another through these difficult times. Spirituality can flourish in a bad economy.

Fr. Virgil Michel's emphasis on the Mystical Body of Christ can help congregations today through their tough decision-making and economic strife. The Mystical Body of Christ is the organic and mystical connection between Jesus Christ, Head of the Church, and all His people. We are united with Christ and as such united fully with one another. The union with Christ is not a one-on-one experience but rather one where Christ is infused into the whole body of the Church and people worldwide. The Doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, which finds its roots in St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, is a way to communicate to the Christian communities the need to be responsible for one another in difficult times.

The Mystical Body is essential to social reform and social justice. The very role of the Mystical Body in the liturgy is not only that of the Eucharist but also a two-fold image. While on the one hand, the Mystical Body creates an image of the communion of Christ and the people, it also creates a mirror image in the "organic" world of the people acting in the likeness of Christ and going out to help those in the community. The imagery is a very real and

beautiful vision of people participating together in the Eucharist, and acting as stewards in the image of Christ. Thus, there is a connection between worship and public life, between receiving Eucharist and being that Eucharist to one another, and between having your own needs met and seeing to the needs of those requiring assistance.

We are people in need. We are not only in need of a better economy, but perhaps more importantly, in need of each other's support. The economy does not have to cut us off from one another as there are plenty of ways to reach out to those in need in our own communities. In fact, perhaps these difficult times will bring us closer together. Whether we are in 1920 or 2020, we are the arms of Christ, part of His Mystical Body, reaching out to embrace our brothers and sisters worldwide.

Erica-Lyn Saccucci is currently a Ph.D. student in Theology specifying in Christian Ethics at Loyola University Chicago. She has come to know the Society of Helpers through working at St. Teresa of Avila Parish in Chicago for the past two years. When she is not working or at school, she enjoys spending time with her husband Robert, her family, and friends. Email: esaccucci@gmail.com

Solidarity

Responsibility Towards All

Sr. Geneviève Guenard, SH.

"The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common" (Acts 4: 32).

It is in this way that the Acts of the Apostles presents the relationship that the first Christian community had towards their goods. It is also the way in which those in



religious life try to live. This putting all in common is not easy, and it puts into practice a very particular economic system, which creates solidarity.

As with the Society of Helpers and other religious orders, each religious renounces the administration of her own goods and puts in common all of her resources from her work, her patrimony or her retirement. Therefore, the challenge she chooses to live is that of not possessing anything for herself but rather of putting in common her goods so that each member of the congregation to which she belongs, including herself, may receive what is necessary in her life and mission in combination with the needs of the congregation as a whole.

This putting in common of all goods together with an exigency of simplicity of life is profoundly revolutionary, since it radically challenges the capitalist accumulation for one self, which penetrates us through societal values at a level of which we are probably not aware. It moves from the logic of “each one for herself,” in which I pay attention to the other only as chance or risk for me, to a logic of “each one for all,” when I recognize the other as a human person with the same rights and duties as myself -- a logic of solidarity.

In religious life, the putting in common takes place not only at the level of a local community but also at the domestic and international level. We then speak of another type of globalization.

The putting in common of goods is a source of security. It is rare to have large salaries among the members of a Community, so the fact of putting everything in common assures a level of living far superior to that which each one would have, if she had to live solely from her own salary or retirement. Additionally, each member of a congregation rests assured that her community will provide for her essential needs should she lose her job as a consequence of illness or of being laid off. In today’s world, many would like to have that assurance.

The challenge for religious is not a question of losing this richness and this security in order to be like the millions of people in the world who are in misery, but of doing her best so that this richness and this security benefits the greatest number of people possible.

I believe that the challenge of religious life is the same as that of all women and men of good will and in particular that of all believers:

1. To search, both in ourselves and in our world, for what it is possible to do in order to commit ourselves on a road of solidarity and responsibility towards all.
2. Not to be ashamed or afraid of our gifts, of our money, or of our security. But on the contrary, to consider our gifts, our power, our money or our security as a responsibility towards all of our brothers and sisters.

The economic system under which we live is perhaps that which gives us a greater sense of powerlessness.

However, I believe that contrary to this, we must search for whatever it is possible to do in order to build a solid chain of finances that will offer those who are excluded from our banking systems and who have no financial guaranties, the opportunity to start their own economic projects. I know that this work in microfinance is only a drop of water in the ocean of international finances, but I am convinced that if we continue to work together, we possess a force which is capable of making a small change in our world leading to greater changes in our future.

Geneviève Guenard is a religious and a member of the Society of Helpers since 1977. After working as Chaplain to university students, she served as General Bursar of her congregation for eleven years. Since October 2007, she has served as the Administrative and Financial Director of the Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development – Earth Solidarity (CCFD – Terre Solitaire), the first French non-governmental organization ever to work for the development of countries in the Southern Hemisphere. Email: g.guenard@fr.oleane.com

Note: Sr. Geneviève’s native language is French. This reflection was written in French and has been translated into English by members of the Society of Helpers. We offer our gratitude to Sr. Mercedes Reygadas, Sr. Teresa Cole, and Sr. Victoria DiBrizzi for assisting with the translation.

The Work of Popes and Economic Theorists

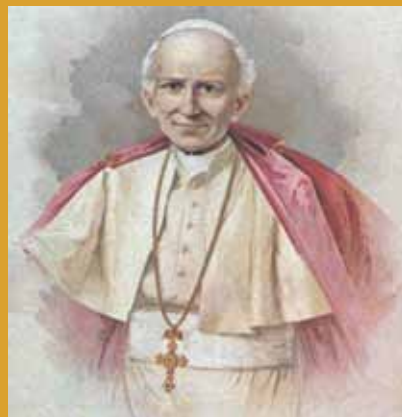
Dolores K. Roman, PhD.



widely applied by governments and businesses and is responsible for the significant alleviation of the most pressing problems continuously facing a world with limited resources and human frailties. It will be seen that these same conceptions can be cited as the inspiration for a myriad of social movements around the world today that are indispensable to continued progress toward a more equitable and, therefore, a more peaceful world. Please enjoy the following abbreviated look at these scholars and their ideas.

THE POPES

POPE LEO XIII



In *Immortale Dei* (1885)

Leo XIII asserted that any form of government may be considered legitimate if it serves the common good. This statement is of singular importance because it marks the first time that democracy was given tentative approval by the Vatican. This ancient Greek concept was revived by western philosophers in the 18th century. Today, a mere 120 years after the issuance of this encyclical, it has become the world's preferred form of government. Democracy's theoretical framework provides for rule by the consent of the governed with freedom secured by rights guaranteed by a constitution under which citizens are equal before the law. Pope Leo's pronouncement in 1885 must be considered revolutionary in light of the fact that the Church had, for centuries, upheld the "Divine right of Kings."

Leo XIII is most remembered for his pronouncement on *the rights of labor, contained in Rerum Novarum* (1891). In it, he stated that wealth brought with it profound and unalterable social obligations that went far beyond the whims of personal "charity." Furthermore, he declared workers have the inherent right to be paid a living wage and to form unions to insure that right.

POPE PIUS XI



Publication of *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) brought attention to the principle of subsidiarity, which is a corollary of the Principle of the Common Good. Subsidiarity holds that a higher entity in the social order should not exercise functions which can be carried out efficiently by a smaller or lesser unit, but the higher unit should support the latter and help to coordinate its activities with the activities of the whole community. This principle is related to the concepts of decentralization and empowerment. Both the United Nations and the European Union were explicitly founded on this principle.

INTRODUCTION

I believe the future that has been slowly and quietly evolving since the industrial revolution that began in the 1700s can be considered promising despite today's gloomy reality of wars and poverty. I also believe that a large measure of that promise can be credited to the intellectual work of six exceptional scholars: three Popes and three economic theorists who made their contributions between 1775 and 1936. The thread that connects them is their interest in promoting the concept of the common good, which is defined as consisting of all those conditions in a society that allow individuals to achieve human and spiritual flourishing. The sum of these men's ideas has been, and continues to be,

POPE JOHN XXIII



Mater et Magistra (1961) was issued in response to continuing severe imbalances between rich and poor in the world. In it, John affirmed the social teachings presented in *Rerum Novarum* and *Quaragesimo Anno*. He then expanded their application in light of the new developments in the spheres of economics, science, society and politics. He stated the need for greater cooperation through the use of new international organizations. These institutions, he said, should bolster the development of economically depressed areas while making clear that people would be responsible for their own progress.

John saw, in the development of emerging welfare states, the realization by society that the common good required the creation of extensive social services for the

poor and he encouraged governments to expand their efforts in this regard. At the same time he reaffirmed the right to, and value of, private property.

Pacem in Terris (1963) is considered by many in the social sciences to be the most profound and significant document of its time. It is so incredibly rich and complex that it is difficult to summarize it in any meaningful way. An overview of the document found on the Vatican website provides a helpful overview:

In *Peace on Earth*, Pope John XXIII contends that peace can be established only if the social order set down by God is fully observed. Relying extensively on reason and the natural law tradition, John XXIII sketches a list of rights and duties to be followed by individuals, public authorities, national governments, and the world community. Peace needs to be based on an order “founded on truth, built according to justice, vivified and integrated by charity, and put into practice by freedom.”

With its optimistic tone and development of a philosophy of rights whose applications have the purpose of leading to peace,

the document was welcomed and has been utilized by scholars worldwide. Furthermore, its plea for peace has yet to be equaled.

THE ECONOMIC THEORISTS

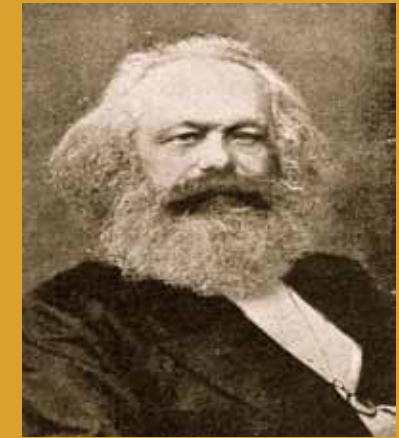
ADAM SMITH (Scotland)



In ***Wealth of Nations*** (1776) Smith described the economic system he saw developing in England and Europe in which a large number of sellers were competing with each other for sales. The competition among them, he saw, would determine not only the price of each product, but also how much would be produced and who could afford to buy it. He also foresaw that, given time, the brightest and/or the craftiest would succeed in pushing many competitors out of the market, thus restricting supply and driving up price. Therefore, he concluded that the system, which became known as capitalism, could be considered ethical only on the condition that

the government would regulate commerce to prevent this from happening. One vital function of government would be to maintain competition, which was always in danger of being diminished. He concluded that government had a vital but limited role to play in the economy: that of regulating commerce, as well as other social functions, for the common good.

KARL MARX (Germany)



By the 1840's, the capitalist system Smith had described had succumbed to the problem he had warned of: a severe lack of proper regulation resulting in an ethically unacceptable distribution of wealth because the laws in place favored the wealthy and socially well-placed, which helped them prosper at the expense of the lower classes. Marx, in ***Das Capital*** (1867), described what he called the “**internal contradictions**

of capitalism” which he believed could not, even in the long run, produce or maintain an equitable society. He proposed a system in which workers would have a meaningful voice and in which they would have control.

Through such an arrangement, he believed it would be possible to respond to the material needs of the whole population. He was condemned as a socialist and/or a communist for suggesting what sounds to many like a quite Christian idea: “From each according to his ability and to each according to his need.” Even so, he was disparaged and reviled, in his own time, as well as in our own, by most in authority. It was not that his economic analysis was incorrect, but rather his suggested method for getting to the goal he proposed; namely, violent revolution against established authority.

It could be said that he wanted justice at any price. This was the fatal error in his judgment that ruined his reputation and cast a pall over all the intense and correct descriptive work he had done--a true tragedy.

JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES (Britain)



By 1929, the economic marauding by big money had become so rampant that the economic system virtually collapsed. Businesses and governments of the United States and Europe, fearful of a socialist revolution, finally realized that some ground would have to be given if the system were to survive. In the US, President Roosevelt invited Keynes to help generate a plan which could mollify the masses by curbing some of the worst abuses of the system while providing jobs for the unemployed. A partial list of the reforms made is impressive. It includes the legalization of labor unions and the provision of government sponsored jobs. Furthermore, the establishment of the social security system and the imposition of a progressive income tax ameliorated some of the worst aspects of the existing misdistribution of income. Thus,

the foundation of a social safety net was laid. Keynes realized that the only way to save capitalism was to “socialize” it. The theories undergirding his prescription for economic recovery were published in *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* in 1936. In 2008, when the system was once more facing collapse, it was the use of Keynesian Theory that again was able to prop it up.

SUMMATION

Their interest in forwarding the common good binds the work of these six men, at least as I see it. It is now time to look at how their legacy is being utilized in the 21st century. There is, as I have already indicated, constant use made of their thoughts by nations and businesses around the world. And beyond this, the spiritual children of these scholars are the multitudes of

individuals, organizations and movements working to bring into being a better world. I will mention only a few of these many groups: United Nations, European Union, World Social Forum, Jesuits Preferential Option for the Poor, Doctors Without Borders, the anti-war movement, the ecumenical movement, the ecological movement and micro-lending. The efforts of all these groups, when added to the great and continuous advancement in religious studies and the social and hard sciences, bode very well for future development.

A closing sentiment that strikes me comes from John XXXIII, in *Mater et Magistra*, when he declared his belief that “*The new name for peace is development.*”

Dolores K. Roman is an academic who spent 34 years teaching primarily at St. Louis University where she also earned her Ph.D. in economics. While in academia, her major areas of interest were economic history and social development. She first became acquainted with the Helpers over 20 years ago via a friend who had spent time with the order in St. Louis during a difficult time in her life. Since then, Dolores has maintained contact with and interest in the work of the Helpers. Additionally, she has developed friendships which she cherishes. Not only does she find the sisters to be selfless women who give of their gifts, but she finds them to be a blessing in her life. Email: DKRPDR@AOL.com

Blessed are the Poor | *Love God and Love One Another.*

Sr. Catherine Tighe, SH.



“Blessed are the poor...” (Mark 5: 3) This Beatitude cries out against conventional wisdom which encourages the accumulation of money and material things. It also may not be what we want to hear at this difficult period of our history. Too many people are suffering the consequences of bad choices by the rich and powerful. People are justifiably angry at those who caused the financial crisis and are rewarding themselves with million dollar bonuses using bailout money that was funded by taxpayers. Whatever happened to moral values? We Christians have received a mandate which is summed up in the two great commandments – **love God and love one another.** It is all about choices and people. Contrary to what our culture propagates, our lives are not only about ourselves. As members of the human race we have responsibilities to share the goods of this earth with one another. We are our sisters’ and brothers’ keepers.

Our economic system needs to be re-evaluated. The free market, without regulations, only works for a few. The vast majority, which is becoming larger each day, have to struggle just to survive. There is something seriously wrong with a system that cannot assure all people basic means to live with dignity and some measure of comfort. This does not mean the absence of rich or poor but a more equitable distribution of the world’s goods. Unfortunately, the greed factor will always be there. For this reason it is imperative that we elect leaders who will give priority to the people, not huge corporations. It is also very important to invest in jobs, homes, health care, and education. Our future depends on it.



The Beatitude cited above seems to speak not of destitution but of a spirit of moderation. We can have a happy, healthy, and even prosperous nation when we recognize that we are all one people. The U.S. Constitution guarantees each person the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This can only happen when we work together to fulfill the basic needs of every human being.

Catherine Tighe, S.H. was introduced to the Helpers by a priest she met while on a retreat at the Cenacle in New Brunswick, New Jersey. A year later, in 1955, Catherine entered the novitiate at Chappaqua, New York. Her work as a religious has been mainly in parish ministry, until some years ago when she started working with the elderly sisters. Catherine currently works with the elderly sisters at Marian Village. Email: catherinetighe1@yahoo.com

Weathering the Economy |

Walking Together in Faith

Dan Anderson

Consider two of the recurring themes we continue to hear about during these tough economic times: the high rate of unemployment and the number of homes in foreclosure. These events seem to touch everyone in some manner, including local parishes. Years ago, when I would read articles about yet another beautiful church closing due to low attendance, I would think it more tragic for those beautiful churches to stand vacant than for a handful of people to have to find another parish. How hard could it be in a city the size of Chicago? Fast forward 15 years, and I now have a new perspective as a father and as an active participant in a truly diverse Catholic parish in Chicago.



Our modest congregation hovers around 800 people; the structure is not architecturally significant, since the original church burned down in 1959. We’re surrounded by six churches that could easily absorb our community. Some parishes are only able to “survive” month-to-month on their weekly collections, which are intrinsically tied to the economic stability of the community. Closing “underperforming” parishes may make sense from a business perspective, but the impact is often spiritually devastating to the families left without a parish home. Each parish comes with its own spirit, which guides the congregation on a unique spiritual path and creates a connected community.

In the last 18 months, St. Teresa of Avila faced an early education center moving out, had to replace a boiler/heater and dealt with an outstanding material loan from the archdiocese. Based on these hardships, there was speculation that the archdiocese would be better off closing the parish, that they could remove the debt by selling the property, and have neighboring churches absorb the members. That's when I realized how truly part of my family and livelihood my parish is and all I could think about was those people whom I had only read about in the past.

With careful consideration, I picked this parish to be my spiritual home, and in the face of possible closure, I wondered how my family and I would fit into a new community. What would happen to all of our spiritual brothers and sisters, people with whom we have collaborated on so many common parish concerns, like the food pantry, homeless dinners, parish missions, parish fundraisers, and all of the relationships we had formed over the years? Would we all find the new parish as appealing as this one? Would the new parish motivate me like this one has?

My spiritual journey led me to the parish that I have called home for over 10 years. My congregation is "real" to me. I feel we all relate very well in trying to accomplish God's goals by functioning as a community that fully embodies being the many parts of the one body of Christ. I can relate to the people left behind by church closings because they don't want to lose that "spirit" that attracted them to their spiritual homes in the first place. I know in the end it's about my personal relationship with Jesus Christ. But to me as a Catholic, my path to Jesus Christ comes directly from the people who sit in the pews with me each Sunday. I am hopeful that my parish, my community, can weather the storm of the bad economy and continue to be a people committed to their faith and to their support of each other.

Dan Anderson is a 41-year-old senior finance manager for Accenture, a global consulting company. He lives in Chicago's Bucktown neighborhood with his wife Kathi, and their sons, Quinn and Callum. He became acquainted with the Helpers through St. Teresa of Avila parish. Sister Joan Granzeier in particular has encouraged his involvement in parish activities and has become a beloved family friend. daniel.r.anderson@accenture.com

Gods Presence

A Companion in Challenging Times

Marlene Zebleckis

God's presence is what gives us the strength to get through these difficult economic times. We know better times lie ahead of us as long as we work hard, are honest and just, and keep believing and having faith.

During these challenging economic times, we may look at the world around us a little differently. Prior to the downturn, most of us probably went about our daily lives without giving much thought if we had a roof over our heads, food on the table, clothes on our back, and access to health care. We are very fortunate to have what many would deem as necessities. However, at any given moment everything can change due to job layoffs, unexpected expenses, and other unfortunate circumstances. God's presence can serve to remind us of the good we must do and the good we have received throughout our lives, and it makes it easier to keep things in perspective and to help those that are less fortunate.

Selecting which charities to support is a personal choice. We select charities and issues that are close to our hearts, and through which we feel we can make a positive difference. For example, animal rights organizations and shelters for women and children are important to me. At a personal level, Butch and Rusty were two dogs I adopted from a no-kill shelter, and even though they might have been a handful and had some "issues," they had a right to a good life.

Catholic schools are not exempt from feeling the effects of the economy. They are often the backbone of many families, formulating lifelong beliefs and values because of the curriculum and sharing of faith. It is sad to think that some children will not benefit from those lessons because Catholic schools are forced to close. These closings are equally indicative of the challenging economic times, but hopefully the strength and value of a Catholic education will continue to endure. We may be living in challenging times, but through faith in God I find strength and hope.

Marlene Zebleckis has been married for 29 years. She has two dogs and enjoys cooking, baking and running. Marlene has been working with the Helpers since 1991 as assistant treasurer.



A portion of the following article was inadvertently omitted in the previous issue. Below is the article in its entirety

A Journey of Growth Fostered by the Goodness of Others

Anna Maria Baldauf, SH.

I entered the Society of Helpers, a community which I love deeply, six years ago at the age of thirty-three. I looked forward to responding to the call to commit myself to Jesus Christ and to integrate spirituality, community, and mission into my daily life. This new journey began with excitement and joy, yet was coupled with uncertainty and fear. Can I live this life? How will it affect my being? Am I able to be in mutually nourishing relationships with the other women? These were only a few of the questions that I pondered.

Looking back, entering a religious congregation was a massive step, but I was ultimately relieved to have made my decision to begin this life. It was a challenge to move out of my own apartment, to enter into a mutual formation process and to redefine myself within a new group. I experienced uncertainty, which prevented me from trusting my sisters completely. I struggled internally because I was drawn to religious life, yet making the transition was not easy. At this particular time, the communion of saints, especially the women who lived our Helper life before me, were very important to my journey. I needed to hear from sisters who had encountered those who came before me. I needed to hear their life stories, know their joys and struggles, their ways of living, life questions and passion for having been a Helper. I began to sense their presence in my heart, and I entered into a spiritual relationship with these ancestral sisters. I developed a sensibility for their presence. To my surprise, I became aware that I needed them in order to internally find trust for my fellow sisters and companions. They gave me hope and a sense of certainty. I could count on them and hold their spirits inside of me. All the Helpers who lived this life before me helped me connect to history and commune with many wonderful women who lived tremendous lives of deep commitment to the people of God. As a young woman, I can stand on their shoulders and be supported by them.

As time passed, I continued to grow internally and to find peace with my decision to be a Helper. With this inner peace came a sense of safety and contentment with this chosen lifestyle. My journey has been, and continues to be, life-giving, freeing, and full of moments which invite me to be a more loving woman. Trust and certainty are virtues I continue to develop. Through these seeds, which have been planted by these women of faith, I am able to see the saint-like parts of each sister with whom I share my daily life and encounter in our congregation. I stand in awe of how my older sisters have welcomed me as a young woman into their society. They welcomed me with compassion, deep respect, understanding, and a loving commitment to offer me opportunities in religious life that allow me to become the person who I am meant to be in God's eyes. I am grateful for this gift, and acknowledge that I am surrounded and lifted up by these women who are not only in touch with, but are open to sharing their saint-like virtues that dwell deep within their souls.



Sr. Jeanne Ellen Stroh (September 10, 1945 – October 17, 2009)



Sr. Jeanne Ellen has a unique history among the Helpers. Like many of the sisters, she found her way from high school to the novitiate, which is what many young Catholic girls did in the late '50s and early '60s. We knew her then as a young, vibrant woman who loved to laugh and sing. She was warm and approachable, appreciated both by community members and people she met in ministry. Like many of our sisters of her generation, she found her way out of the Helper community as her understanding of who she was matured in the turbulent time of a new age. However, Jeanne Ellen's Helper history does not end there as you will see in the unfolding of her story.

After leaving the Helpers, Jeanne Ellen worked in a law firm where her razor sharp intelligence and her fine attention to detail must have been a great asset to her employers. Yet this work was not enough to satisfy the spirit within her that anguished with the world's suffering. Jeanne Ellen was known to take time on the way to work to tend to a baby robin or rescue a squirrel, and spent hours supporting Vietnam veterans crushed by Agent Orange and the horrors of the Vietnam War. She railed against the injustices they suffered and took up their cause as her own. She gave her time, her money and her life energy to their plight. If Corrie ten Boom's common saying is true, "The measure of a life, after all, is not its duration, but its donation," then Jeanne Ellen's life was well spent on this issue alone. In spite of that, however, her life was meant to be completed in another way.

A series of events led her to discover once again the desire to express what was deepest within: her commitment to God as a woman religious. Freely, with enthusiasm and a certain amount of realistic caution, she returned to

the Helpers who welcomed her back as one of their own. She spent four very short years among us, studying at Catholic Theological Union and sharing her incredible compassion with some of the weakest and most abandoned members of the hospice community. Jeanne Ellen made final vows, prepared to be a hospital chaplain, then found herself in a cancer unit, not as a chaplain but as a patient diagnosed with metastatic lung cancer. One year from her diagnosis she died at Marian Village.

It was a gift to have Jeanne Ellen back in the Helper community. She demonstrated to us that the Helper spirit continued in her life during the 25 years she was away from the formal Helper community. She lived her last year very much in peace, only concerned about the effect her death would have on those closest to her and wishing to spare them this suffering.

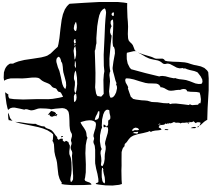
Helper History

Born Eugénie Smet on March 25, 1825, Mary of Providence was educated at the convent of the Sacred Heart in Lille, France. As a young woman, her faith led her to the revelation of God as Providence. Believing that with God, all things are possible, she charted an unconventional path to answer God's call when she moved to Paris in 1856 to establish the Institute of the Helpers of the Holy Souls. The Helper charism blends Ignatian spirituality, the basis of the Society of Jesus, more commonly known as the Jesuits, with her mission to serve all who suffer, focusing on the marginalized, disenfranchised and forgotten Souls of Purgatory. More than a century and a half later, the Venerable Blessed Mother Mary of Providence's legacy includes 118 Helper communities in 22 countries. Helpers around the world emulate their foundress' indefatigable spirit and commitment to follow Jesus Christ and "help in all manner of good" by bringing their unique gifts to their shared mission.

For more information about the Helpers, please visit
<http://www.helpers.org/>.

To learn more about Ignatian spirituality, please visit
<http://ignatianspirituality.com/>.

Mary of Providence
Foundress



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