A large, abstract watercolor splash in shades of blue and white, centered on the page. The splash is most concentrated in the middle and fades out towards the top and bottom edges.

Living **MERCY**

REFLECTING ON THE VOCATION AND VALUES
OF SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY

CELEBRATING SALVE REGINA'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Edited by Dr. Jayme M. Hennessy

Living MERCY



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Edited by Dr. Jayme M. Hennessy
Professor Emerita, Religious and Theological Studies

SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
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LIVING MERCY

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*This
Open
Door . . .*

A SYMBOL



*This open door—
symbol of welcome and warm greeting—
happiness to have you here—
sorrow to see you leave—
the true meaning of Salve Regina College.*

INTRODUCTION

LIVING MERCY: REFLECTING ON THE VOCATION AND VALUES OF SALVE REGINA

Dr. Jayme M. Hennessy

Professor Emerita, Religious and Theological Studies



When the Religious Sisters of Mercy opened the doors of Ochre Court on Mercy Day, September 24, 1947, they transformed a Gilded Age Newport mansion into a Catholic women’s college: Salve Regina. The pioneer class of young women who walked through those doors anticipated that an education at Salve Regina College would “...guide them along the way to light and truth.”¹ And as they made ready to graduate in 1951, they recognized that their education had prepared them to take their part in the effort to renew the world as it recovered from the suffering and destruction of World War II, a world sorely in need of mercy, hope and respect for human dignity. Paging through the first annual Regina Maris yearbook, we find a declaration of their sense of vocation and a spirit of mercy that had been shaped by four years of study: “We wear the robes of honor and responsibility. We have been given much, now we must give to a materialistic world the sense of sound Catholic values that the Sisters of Mercy have given to us. Our heritage is great, our responsibilities tremendous.”²

With this collection of essays, we honor this sense of vocation and this spirit of mercy that has enlivened and guided our University for the last 75 years. Inspired by the accomplishments of the past and looking forward to the call of the future, these essays provide a starting point for University-wide conversations to support Salve Regina in discerning how it will move into the increasingly complex challenges of the future. Our efforts follow the path charted by Sister Mary Jean Tobin and Sister Mary Eloise Tobin, the esteemed professors whose own history of Salve Regina emphasized that “In trying to capture the true meaning of Salve Regina College from its earliest beginnings to the present, we must look beyond its chronology to **the spirit** which engendered and which to this day sustains it. It is the history of those who sought to make visible in our time the reality of an ideal rooted in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy.”³ This tradition of mercy is rooted in the example of Catherine McAuley, who founded the Sisters of Mercy in 19th-century Dublin, Ireland. It is a model of faith expressed through action and maintains that each person is called to and capable of contributing to the common good by responding to the needs of the day, to respond to the suffering and injustice of each era.

Attending to this spirit of mercy that continues to guide our University, this project considers how the six core values of Salve’s Strategic Compass – *purpose-driven education*,

respect and dignity for all, mercy community, integrity, faith and spirituality, and compassionate service and solidarity – relate to our shared mercy, Catholic heritage, and the mercy vocational paradigm. The document on the Strategic Compass notes that:

Through the voices of students, faculty, staff, alumni, community members and other stakeholders, the Strategic Compass Steering Committee named six core values that have strong ties to the history, future and uniqueness of Salve. These values serve as a lasting foundation for the culture of Salve Regina University, guiding the behaviors, decisions and actions throughout the University.⁴

Exploring how to re-root and re-frame these values, we approached the project as a vocationally oriented narrative. This type of narrative focuses on the call and vocation, as well as the patterns of meaning that shape the unique identity of an institution in its founding and how the institution has evolved and changed in response to the claims and context of social and historic dynamics. Thus, these six essays are harmonized by a three-fold critical-creative structure that attends to the dynamic experience of the call and spirit of mercy modeled in the founding of the University, how we presently live this call, and envision the challenges and possibilities that lie on the horizon. We employed the perspectives of *Foundations*, *Living Presence*, and *Horizons* to frame an analogical exploration of the unique character, actions and ideals that have inspired and sustained the vocation and mission of Salve Regina University, and may be creatively transferred to shaping the horizon for future generations of students.

Reflecting on the mercy *foundations* of Salve Regina University, our conversation began with Catherine McAuley, whose example of faith and action, realized in the merciful response to the needs of her day, provided us with patterns of meaning and mercy that shape the identity, the vocational call, and the activities that distinguish the University's identity and its mission. Viewing a set of video interviews with the Sisters of Mercy, who developed the curriculum offerings and academic programs that fostered the evolution of Salve Regina College into a university, we recognize that there is a spirit of abundant mercy

and love that is at the heart of the vocation and calling of the University. Working from these examples of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy, the authors focused their reflection through the particular lens of the value they explored. Some found common ground in the paradigmatic value of Catherine McAuley's story with particular emphases brought into focus or shaped by the core value. Reflecting

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... there is a spirit of abundant mercy and love that is at the heart of the vocation and calling of the University.

on the *living presence* of these values through the framework of the mercy, Catholic tradition of Salve, the authors consider points of continuity and discontinuity with the ideals, models and activities that have shaped the University. Challenged by the horizon that lies before us, they speculate what may be required for Salve to carry this spirit and calling forward to meet the increasingly complex challenges that shape our future as a Catholic University sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy.

From the beginning, this project was designed to provide a foundation for a University-wide conversation of the re-rooting and re-framing of six core values of the University's Strategic Compass. The 12 authors worked in pairs, and the conversations prompted by these values were enriched by the perspectives of multiple academic disciplines, as well as the expertise contributors brought to this project. Dr. Theresa Ladrigan Whelpley, vice-president of mission, planning and innovation, and Dr. Steven Rodenborn, vice provost and dean of undergraduate studies, examine the ways in which the mercy tradition forms the expectations for a purpose-driven education, proposing that: "Both liberal arts and professional studies, spiritual formation and practical application, wisdom and justice, have been and remain central to the project of mercy higher education today" and that "...the integrated purpose of a mercy education is directed toward both personal transformation and the advancement of the common good."

Reflecting on the core value of respect and dignity for all, Dr. Kelli J. Armstrong, president of Salve Regina University, and Dr. Sean O'Callaghan, associate professor of religious and theological studies and director of the humanities program, employ different historical images that capture the indignities and suffering inflicted on persons who live in a world without the humanizing effect of mercy. Beholding this suffering, they voiced: "Mercy makes a difference. It changes lives. It is powerful because it speaks truth to power and extends a hand to raise up the downtrodden." Looking to the horizon they challenge: "As we build Salve for the next 75 years, given our values, what role will we have as an institution in shaping the world's future? What role will we want our graduates to have in the improvement of dignity and respect for all?"

Dr. Myra Edelstein, associate professor of business and economics, and Ms. Rose Albert, associate director of multicultural programs and retention, direct our attention to the formative power of a mercy community that embodies the mission of the University. They emphasize how this mercy mission is "... supported by the practices of welcome,

“

*... the integrated purpose of a
mercy education is directed
toward both personal
transformation and the
advancement of the
common good.*

collaboration and transformation.” Their essay challenges us to collaborate in ongoing transformation to become a community where all feel they belong, and all can flourish.

Sister Therese Antone, chancellor of Salve Regina, and Dr. William Leeman, professor of history and director of the Pell Honors Program, present us with an analysis of the value of integrity for the vocation and the mission of the University, noting that the mission statement trues the identity and purpose of the University with the vision and tradition of the Sisters of Mercy:

The mercy tradition, first proclaimed by Catherine McAuley in 19th-century Ireland and preserved in its wholeness by the founders of Salve Regina, must remain the guiding compass for the University as it continues its mission of producing students who utilize their education to work toward a world that is harmonious, just, and merciful in the 21st century and beyond.

Dr. Daniel Cowdin, professor and chair of religious and theological studies, and Ms. Aida Neary, director of community educational partnerships, explore how mercy distinctively frames the tradition and experience of faith and spirituality at our University. Reflecting on the secular nature of our society, on cultural polarization, and the diverse religious and spiritual background of the students, they propose:

As a community whose spiritual axis is the doing of mercy, Salve models a spiritual path that has a ring of authenticity in the midst of wider cultural dynamics that tend to co-opt religion for ulterior ideological purposes. The much-loved St. Francis of Assisi was known to say, “Preach the gospel always—use words sometimes.” This resonates with the mercy tradition and appeals to the mind-set of contemporary students. In this respect, our spiritual ethos also resonates with the global efforts of Pope Francis, who has attempted to shift Catholicism off the axis of the culture wars. Through its mercy tradition, Salve offers an ethos of service deeper than cultural polarization. In so doing we also, perhaps, offer our students a reintroduction to what faith, the church and religion can mean.

Writing on the core value of compassionate service and solidarity, Dr. Kaitlin Gabriele-Black, associate professor of psychology, and Dr. Jameson Chace, professor of biology and chair of cultural, environmental, and global studies, trace the movement from the programs of service learning and charitable volunteer work, practiced in Salve’s early years to the development of programs today that emphasize engagement with community projects and organizations in the Newport area. They observe that:

While there are countless examples of how members of the Salve Regina community have embodied compassionate service, the University must grapple with what it truly means to stand in solidarity with another. Solidarity is a commitment to action, a dedication to serving others... As more students take part in community-engaged learning, we must provide opportunities for them to understand and practice mercy in action.

Celebrating the 75th anniversary of the founding of Salve Regina University, we invite readers to reflect on this collection of essays and then to join the conversations that are to follow as we continue to discern the path forward as Salve takes its next steps into the future. May the following prayer enliven our minds and hearts for that journey:

*In this moment of time and in this place
We are made one with those
who have gone before us
Having sown the seed of our harvesting
That lights our way with an enduring vision
A vision engendered in prayer fortified
by the spirit.*

*A vision which sees within the immediacy
of the day's tasks
The handing on of a tradition of excellence
in Mercy
Ordered not only to magnify the splendor
of the Truth
Whatever its demands
Wherever it may lead
But also to enkindle the desires of the heart
To embrace the ways of Mercy and Justice.
The same Spirit moving us all the while
from action to contemplation
To that Sabbath Rest in the spirit
wherein knowledge becomes wisdom
and discipline the order of love.*

*Thus a pathway is laid open to us
The far horizon beckons us beyond
these shores.
Let us then fare forward
with faith as our compass
and love as our lodestar.*

Written by Sisters Eloise and Jean Tobin on the occasion of the inauguration of M. Therese Antone, RSM, sixth president of Salve Regina University.⁵

NOTES

¹*Regina Maris*, (1951), 5, available at: <https://archive.org/details/reginamaris1951salv>, accessed November 11, 2022.

²Ibid, 6.

³Sister Mary Eloise Tobin RSM, and Sister Mary Jean Tobin RSM, *With Courage and Compassion: A Reflection on the History of Salve Regina University in the Light of the Spirit Which Engendered and Sustains It* (1993), 3, Faculty and Staff - Ebooks, available at https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/fac_staff_ebooks/1 accessed September 12, 2022.

⁴*Salve Regina University Strategic Compass Document*, available at: <https://salve.edu/document/strategic-compass-overview>, accessed October 2, 2022.

⁵Sister Mary Eloise Tobin RSM and Sister Mary Jean Tobin RSM, *A Prayer for the Enduring Power of Vision*, *Salve Today*, May 6 2020, available at: <https://today.salve.edu/a-prayer-for-the-enduring-power-of-vision-a-pathway-to-the-future/>, accessed November 1, 2022.



Photo by Joseph Gugliuzza

Ochre Court, 2022



Photo by Andrea Hansen

Commencement 2018

PURPOSE-DRIVEN EDUCATION

The Salve Regina University Strategic Compass articulates the mission value of a Purpose-Driven Education as follows: *Through a values-based education rooted in liberal arts, academic rigor and experiential learning, Salve students gain deep knowledge that prepares them for career success and a journey of lifelong learning. Students gain the unique ability to enrich any workplace and pursue a life of meaning and impact.*

Dr. Theresa Ladrigan-Whelpley

Vice President for Mission, Planning and Innovation

Dr. Steven Rodenborn

*Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies
Associate Professor, Religious and Theological Studies*



What is the purpose of a mercy education? Salve Regina University, in articulating its core commitments as an institution, names purpose-driven education as a primary value. In this chapter we will explore the foundations, living presence, and horizons of purpose-driven education as central to the work of mercy, Catholic higher education.

FOUNDATIONS

Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, established the first House of Mercy in Dublin, Ireland in 1827. The House of Mercy contained a residential school for poor young women providing “instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic, and plain needlework, as well as preparation for the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Communion.”¹

An educational apostolate was urgent for Catherine and held both a spiritual purpose and practical end. A mercy education was to transform the minds and hearts of poor girls and women, invite them into deeper relationship with God, and give them the means to support themselves through the development of skills for gainful employment.



The first House of Mercy on Baggot Street, Dublin, Ireland¹⁶

In 19th-century Ireland in the wake of the penal laws, Catholics were limited in their ability to own property, they had little access to education and employment and restricted political agency. Catherine knew firsthand the debilitating constraints that Catholic women, in particular, faced in this context and she was determined to establish a school where women could learn to embrace their own dignity and gain “employable skills and reap some small benefit from their labors.”² As Sister Hilda Miley, RSM, former president of Salve Regina reflects: “Mother McAuley began the actual work of the classroom...to fit the children for earth while not unfitting them for heaven...In other words, she wished the secular branches of education to be taught and to be taught well, but, as she states, ‘not as an end but as an essential means.’”³ For Catherine McAuley and her companions the purpose of a mercy education was spiritual and moral formation as well as personal transformation and social mobility.

While the house on Baggot street was being built, Catherine traveled to France in 1825 to explore innovative forms of education that integrated knowledge, faith, and service and could be applied to support the instruction of large groups of women and children. She spent time with the De la Salle Brothers and the French Sisters of Charity who were working to provide transformational educational outreach to children in the slums of Paris. She brought their innovative educational methods back to Dublin and opened the first mercy community school serving over 200 poor children. In the *Rule and Constitutions* of the

Institute of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, Catherine asserts: “The Sisters shall feel convinced that no work of charity can be more productive of good to society, or more conducive to the happiness of the poor than the careful instruction of women, since whatever be the station they are destined to fill, their example and advice will always possess influence, and wherever a religious woman presides, peace and good order are generally to be found.”⁴ As she grew her network of mercy foundations and schools across Ireland, Catherine was among the first to affiliate her schools with the newly founded National School Board as a strategic means of gaining financial support for her teachers and students and because she observed “the children improve so much more expecting the examination.”⁵ She also was a pioneer in secondary education in Ireland, establishing pension schools in Carlow, Cork and Naas for middle class students who could not afford the pay schools and whose modest tuition could underwrite a portion of the expenses for the poor schools. By her death in 1841, Catherine had established 14 communities of mercy, each including an educational apostolate that sought to restore dignity to the human person and develop each student’s gifts and capacities to meaningfully contribute to society through gainful employment and service.

In the years following Catherine’s death, the Sisters of Mercy continued to establish communities and schools in Ireland, England, and the United States. Sister Mary Frances Xavier Warde, one of Catherine’s closest companions, led a delegation of sisters to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1843, establishing several mercy schools as well as orphanages and hospitals. Sister Frances Warde then moved up to Providence, Rhode Island to develop Catholic schools across the diocese. In 1862, Catherine’s first House of Mercy on Baggot Street evolved to include a teacher training program and was endorsed by the National School Board as a teacher’s college, renamed Baggot Street College.⁶ Throughout these educational developments in mercy, a commitment to the intellectual and moral formation of students alongside the cultivation of professional skills and service remained central.

Catherine’s melding of intellectual and moral formation with the practical in her educational apostolates is notable and distinctive. For just down the road from Catherine’s enterprising educational foundation on Baggot Street, John Henry Newman was laboring to establish what would become the Catholic University of Ireland. It was here that Newman delivered his now famous lectures on “The Idea of a University” beginning in 1851, wrestling with the purpose and end of higher education. He inquired, much like Catherine McAuley, into the value and social import of education, asking: “To what then does it lead? Where does it end? What does it do? How does it profit? What does it promise?”⁷ In exploring these questions, Newman argued that a liberal education was a good in itself, cultivating intellect, delicate taste, a dispassionate mind, and a noble and courteous bearing in life. Though Newman conceded that “a cultivated intellect, because it is a good in itself, brings with it a power and a grace to every work and occupation which it undertakes, and enables us to be more useful, and to a greater number,”⁸ he qualified that the practical good of a liberal education was to develop good humans, and in this case, good men. “If then, a practical end

must be assigned to a University course, I say it is that of training good members of society. A University training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end.”⁹ While Catherine McAuley affirmed the goods of both intellectual and human formation within the work of education, she centered spiritual and moral formation and the end of gainful employment as animating purposes in the transformative project of mercy education. Both liberal arts and professional studies, spiritual formation and practical application, wisdom and justice, have been and remain central to the project of mercy higher education today.

LIVING PRESENCE

This brief overview of the foundations of a mercy education begins to reveal for us the *integrated purpose* of a mercy education at Salve Regina University. Many of the defining characteristics of a Salve Regina education emerge from the University’s commitment to holding in productive tension the value of an education that seeks to serve as a means for both personal transformation and the advancement of the common good. As it is articulated in the University’s mission statement, an education that seeks wisdom and promotes justice, expands knowledge and cultivates virtue, advances a liberal and professional education.

The knowledge developed in our classrooms is expansive, critical and substantive. Our students engage in the nuanced reading of classic texts, the analytical investigation of the causes of and solutions for complex social problems, the development of imaginative artistic expressions, and the careful scientific investigation of our planet. This knowledge is not, however, intended to remain in the classroom or exist for its own sake alone. The integrated purpose of a mercy education has a direction to it. It is directed toward the world, or perhaps more exactly, it is directed toward the work for a world that is a bit more harmonious, just and merciful.

To be clear, the integrated purpose of a mercy education certainly seeks to create students aware, in the most sophisticated manner, of the personal, intellectual and social realities of the past and present. At the same time, it seeks to educate students capable of applying that knowledge to addressing those realities. As expressed by the Conference of Mercy Higher Education: “A Mercy Way supports the academic rigor informed by a

contemplative mind and heart, moving the value and virtue of compassion into action through its teaching, research and service.”¹⁰

The standard by which Salve Regina seeks to be measured is both the depth in which our students understand themselves and the world around them as well as the difference they make in that world.

“

*... an education that seeks
to serve as a means for both
personal transformation and the
advancement of the common good.*



Environmental studies students land at Rose Island to explore bird banding, 2021.

The integrated purpose of a mercy education serves as a warning against understanding the educational dynamic of personal transformation and the advancement of the common good as only unfolding in one direction. That is, it resists the idea that the transformation of students and the acquisition of knowledge occurs in the classroom and only then will students be sent into the world. Such an understanding would fail to be genuinely integrated. Innovative faculty and staff at Salve Regina intentionally place students in the community, often before conceptual learning begins in the classroom. These students begin by learning to address practical, real-time realities and develop relationships with individuals who possess distinctive perspectives. Subsequently, these experiences serve as the foundation for personal transformation and learning. Concepts, insights and virtues that may have seemed difficult to grasp without real-world experience are now learned with a depth otherwise inaccessible to a student. It is experiences just like these that animate current University initiatives at Salve Regina, including community-engaged learning and internships developed through community partnerships.

It is perhaps evident that it is the integrated purpose of a mercy education that provides the foundation for a university capable of providing an effective home for both the liberal arts and professional studies. A liberal arts education detached from professional preparation fails to educate students primed to advance the common good. Professional preparation detached from a liberal arts education fails to prepare students for the myriad of ethical, technological and professional experiences that they will encounter as their lives unfold. As it is expressed in the University's mission statement, "Through liberal arts and professional programs, students develop their abilities for thinking clearly and

creatively, enhance their capacity for sound judgment and prepare for the challenge of learning throughout their lives.”¹¹ Salve Regina is well-positioned to offer a distinctive education, informed by both liberal and professional study, because of the integrated purpose of a mercy education that is directed toward both personal transformation and the advancement of the common good.

HORIZONS

It is perhaps equally evident that the integrated purpose of a mercy education requires Salve to offer a fundamentally relevant education, preparing students to address the most pressing and complex societal problems of the day. Reflecting on the characteristics of an education in the mercy tradition, the Conference of Mercy Higher Education advised, “reflection upon the history of Mercy and its charism leads us to realize that a Mercy Way is flexible, always open to values and virtues that respond to the needs of the time in a particular place.”¹² It is this posture toward education that accounts for the privileged place the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy hold in a Salve education.¹³ The commitment to Earth, immigration, nonviolence, anti-racism and women at mercy institutions seeks to foster among students a moral sensitivity and critical capacity to analyze the social structures animating these critical concerns and the practical and effective skills required to address them.

By learning to engage the critical concerns facing the world in this way, Salve students also begin to develop a richer and more hope-filled understanding of mercy. Mercy is a gift freely offered, extravagant, generous, in excess of any just desserts. Catherine reflects: “The mercy of God not only bestows benefits, but receives and pardons again and again, even the ungrateful.”¹⁴ The abundance that is at the heart of God’s mercy eases our fears that there is not enough or that there will never be enough. It loosens our tight hold on power, privilege, and possessions and redresses the myth of sacristy which fuels our impulses toward violence, domination, oppression, consumption, injustice and inequality. In the Gospel of John, Jesus reflects that “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). For both Catherine and the Gospel writer, the abundance of mercy is sourced in God, and as we experience this abundance, it returns us to ourselves and one another, to remembering that we all have inherent dignity and purpose, to remembering that we are more than the worst thing we have ever done, to remembering that we belong to one another. Mercy counters the tragedy of the commons with a shared commitment to the common good. As theologian and scripture scholar Walter Brueggemann reflects: “the church has [often] understood God’s unconditional grace as solely a theological phenomenon, instead of recognizing that it has to do with the reordering of the economy of the world. We cannot separate the two.”¹⁵ An essential experience of abundance within the classroom, campus, and community at mercy institutions like Salve Regina University moves our students, faculty and staff toward the work of an integrated and purpose-driven education: to seek wisdom and promote universal justice, to affect both personal and social transformation, “to work for a world that is harmonious, just, and merciful.”

NOTES

- ¹Mary C. Sullivan, *The Path of Mercy: The Life of Catherine McAuley* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2012), 182.
- ²Sullivan, 54.
- ³Sister Mary Hilda Miley, RSM, *The Ideals of Mother McAuley and Their Influence: Foundress, Educator, Social Welfare Worker* (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1931), 37.
- ⁴Chapter 2, Article 5, "Of the Schools," *Rule and Constitutions of the Religious Sisters of Mercy* in Mary Sullivan, RSM, ed., *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 297.
- ⁵Catherine McAuley, "To Sister M. Frances Warde," Carlow (May-August 1839), in Mary Sullivan, RSM, ed., *The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley 1818-1841* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2004), 199.
- ⁶Mary Jeremy Daigler, "The Dawn," in *Through the Windows: A History of the Work of Higher Education Among the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas*, (Scranton: The University of Scranton Press, 2000), 9.
- ⁷Cardinal John Henry Newman, *The Idea of the University* (South Bend: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), discourse 7, no.10.
- ⁸Newman, discourse 7, no. 6.
- ⁹Newman, discourse 5, no.2.
- ¹⁰Conference for Mercy Higher Education.
- ¹¹Mission Statement, Salve Regina University (1997), available at: www.salve.edu/mission-statement, accessed June 13, 2022.
- ¹²Conference for Mercy Higher Education, Some Common Focus Areas of a Catholic Mercy College/University – Ordinary Characteristics in the Fullest Sense, available at: <https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.138/dpk.3b7.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Gen-Characteristics-Mercy-CU-2.8.pdf>, accessed September 3, 2022.
- ¹³Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy, available at: sistersofmercy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CriticalConcerns-Poster-English.pdf, accessed September 3, 2022.
- ¹⁴Catherine McAuley, "The Limerick Manuscript," as quoted in Mary C. Sullivan, RSM, *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 173.
- ¹⁵Walter Brueggemann, "Enough is Enough," *The Other Side*, vol 37, no. 5 (November-December 2001).
- ¹⁶Photo by William Murphy, (CC BY-SA 2.0), available at: [flickr.com/photos/informatique/48987967831](https://www.flickr.com/photos/informatique/48987967831).



Sculpture of Catherine McAuley, by Michael Burke, at Mercy International Centre in Dublin Ireland⁹

RESPECT AND DIGNITY FOR ALL

The Salve Regina University Strategic Compass articulates the mission value of Respect and Dignity for All as follows: *We regard all humanity as being worthy of respect and honor the uniqueness and dignity of each individual as God's creation, embracing differences in the feelings, beliefs, wishes, experiences, cultures and traditions of others, with kindness and curiosity.*

Dr. Kelli J. Armstrong
President

Dr. Sean O'Callaghan
*Associate Professor, Religious and Theological Studies
Program Director, Humanities*



As with each of the essays in this volume, this one is a collaborative effort. Energized by two powerful images from distinctly separate eras, the authors have been in conversation for some time and each explores the historical context in which the photographs were taken through the lens of respect and dignity. The first image is that of a nameless woman dispossessed, set in Ireland in the early 1900s. It is carefully framed, likely by a professional photographer of the time, in such a way as to powerfully express the merciless nature of society in rural Ireland, from the time of Catherine McAuley up until the foundation of the Irish state and beyond. The second image is that of George Floyd, an African-American man who was cruelly beaten and mercilessly killed in plain sight in 2020. Photographs and videos taken with police body cams, security cameras, and the cellphones of eye-witnesses captured the scene from many angles. Both are shocking images because they illustrate a world without mercy. For so many communities worldwide today, the lived reality is all too similar to the lived realities of the people of Ireland in Catherine's time. Nevertheless, the lack of mercy can only be countered by an overflow of mercy, which is why the mercy mission is timeless.

Mercy makes a difference. It changes lives. It is powerful because it speaks truth to power and extends a hand to raise up the downtrodden. In this chapter, the voice of history and the voice of the moment will combine to speak forth the need for mercy where there is none.

FOUNDATIONS

Catherine McAuley in Historical Perspective

In his excellent book on Irish poetry from 1600-1900, *An Duanaire: 1600-1900: Poems of the Dispossessed* (1981), the late Irish poet, Seán Ó Tuama, writes of the process of dispossession that characterized the lives of so many in Ireland during that period, and indeed, long after. The term “dispossession” is one not often heard in our daily vernacular, but it aptly describes a state of being many experienced in their daily lives during the period when Catherine McAuley (1778-1841) was growing up in Ireland. Catherine would have seen this dispossession all around her, where deep, deep poverty would have been abundantly evident. Ó Tuama writes primarily of a cultural dispossession, where the poets of Ireland, their Irish language now no longer valued, their poems redundant in the new order, are excluded from society. The poets, however, were writing about the lives of the Irish around them, both aristocratic and peasant, and they are experiencing their own travails because the wider Gaelic order is crumbling and the people, in whom they have their roots, are being rapidly displaced and dispossessed. One poem that reflects the loss of status and the rise of grinding poverty is *An Droimeann Donn Dilis* (“Beloved brown white-backed cow”) which, in the Irish tradition of personifying/casting Ireland in another form, stands for Ireland itself. Written in the same century in which Catherine was born, the poet laments the loss of the things of daily life that bring security, money, health and self-respect. Speaking in the voice of Ireland, he writes “Níl fearann, níl tíos agaim, fronta ná ceol” or “I have no land, no home, no music or wine.”¹

The reference to having no home speaks, unfortunately, to a common experience for many Irish people in the 18th and 19th centuries and up into the early years of the 20th. In writing this chapter, we came across a haunting image of a young woman evicted from her home in the tiny village of Meelin in North Cork in the very early 1900s. The woman, in her 20s, is pictured outside of her ruined stone cottage, the roof broken in, no doubt by the landlord trying to prevent her return. No mercy! The most striking and sad feature of the image is the view of her meager possessions, tossed in a heap beside her, simple wooden chairs and other rudimentary furniture, a pickax that she probably used to farm the stony soil of a tiny smallholding, and a small pile of clothes strewn across the cheap, flimsy wooden objects. This image struck one of us forcibly, because Meelin, so small you would be through it in less than a minute, was the birthplace of one of our great-grandmothers, who was about the age of the woman in the picture when it was taken and would assuredly, in such a small place, have known her and known of this event.

Dispossession. Her home gone, she faces an uncertain future. It was into an Ireland just like this that Catherine was born. One of our grandmothers was born just a few years after this image was taken, a few miles from the very spot where it is set. It brings home sharply the fact that all of this happened not so long ago and Catherine’s time, and the period in which her fledgling order ministered to the poor, are not set in ancient history but only four or five generations past. It also brings home the fact that the problems Catherine faced a few



Village of Meelin in North Cork, Ireland, circa 1921¹⁰

decades earlier were deeply ingrained and her wisdom in founding an order to continue her work showed her far-sightedness and realism. The Ireland of the 1800s was filled with social and political turmoil and, as always, the poor bore the brunt. In this chapter, however, we will demonstrate that Catherine's ministry to the dispossessed had a power and longevity that political developments could never have. Political change would take too long. It was necessary, but the poor needed help today and not tomorrow.² Catherine knew that she had to reach hearts and souls and bodies, otherwise those bodies would die. The energy and charism of her mission are alive and thriving today in universities like Salve Regina; the force of her mission long outliving the temporary political solutions of her day.

It is easy for the term mercy to be emptied of its meaning in our own time. It is a word those of us who have the privilege of teaching in mercy institutions use extensively in our quotidian lives and it risks taking on the connotations of simply being charitable, or kind, or nice. It is so fundamental to the spirit of Catherine McAuley - and by extension any school, hospital or university founded in her name or by her congregation - that it risks being overused and separated from its radical origins. When one places Catherine in historical context, her decision to characterize her mission as one immersed in the mercy charism takes on a much more powerful meaning, because Catherine McAuley lived and ministered in a period where mercy was in very short supply. Perhaps one of the most effective ways to define mercy is to consider what a society without mercy looks like. It is precisely the kind of scenario that was found in every Irish city, townland, village and hamlet of Catherine's time.

With no access to resources, the poor turned to emigration, seeking opportunity because there was no mercy to ease their burdens.

When Catherine chose mercy as the founding charism of her order, she did not choose it because it was a pious concept, or a lofty spiritual idea, but because it was needed so much and was so contrary to the spirit of the age. She chose it as a vehicle of the love of God, but also as an alternative to merciless hearts, to the hearts that valued profit over people, indifference over love, and cold-heartedness over a kind word or a helping hand.

It is important to recognize that the 21st century's expressions of Catherine's mercy ministry, through Salve Regina's mission statement and its steadfast commitment to the Critical Concerns of Mercy, are continuous with her own mission in her own era. The University is not so much building upon Catherine's ministry, as one might build upon a pre-existing foundation, but it is an extension of a continuous mission of mercy, projected through the 2020s and beyond.

Catherine McAuley as Exemplar of Mercy

In her short biography of Catherine, *The Ideals of Mother McAuley and Their Influence: Foundress, Educator, Social Welfare Worker* (1931), Mother Mary Hilda Miley, after whom Salve's Miley Hall is named, describes Catherine as a "Christian Social Service Worker," writing: "A Christian Social Service Worker is not a theorist, who from a luxurious home, writes learned theses on the causes of poverty; it is not one who sends messages of sympathy to the afflicted...It is one who wrestles with poverty as Christ did, who sympathizes personally with the afflicted as he did; who relieves distress as He did."³ Mother Miley then goes on to write "How almost daring, we might say, was Mother McAuley in selecting as a title for her Order that attribute of God which 'is above all His works'- Mercy."⁴

Mother Miley describes mercy as the greatest need that human beings can have, referring to Catherine's own statement that mercy is "the principal path marked out by Jesus Christ for those who desire to follow him."⁵ Catherine herself captures the spirit of mercy perfectly: "This is the Spirit of the order, indeed-the true spirit of Mercy flowing on us-that notwithstanding our unworthiness, God never seems to visit us with angry punishment ... Take what he will from us, He still leaves us His holy peace."⁶

Catherine's view of mercy as a necessary precursor for peace is fascinating. As she ministered among the poor, the desperate, the destitute, she will have observed that in times of personal chaos, peace is almost always one feeling that is conspicuous by its absence. Mercy would assure those to whom she ministered that God's love was still turned toward

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*When one is assailed by chaos,
it's difficult to have dignity,
to feel worthy of respect.*

them. Her magnification of mercy was in itself an act of mercy, an act of assurance that God was still there, that God could be brought into any situation and, in a time devoid of mercy, bring merciful peace.

When one is assailed by chaos, it's difficult to have dignity, to feel worthy of respect. As human beings, we blame ourselves keenly for our mistakes and our guilt and peace can rarely live in the same space. In highlighting mercy as the foundation for peace, Catherine employs a psychology that recognizes the devastation wrought by injustice on the human psyche. Its resulting engendering of guilt, self-blame, and worthlessness followed by its subsequent theft of peace and joy robs life of meaning and direction. Catherine intends mercy to perform a deep work of healing, of restoration, a work as necessary today as it was in the 19th century.

LIVING PRESENCE

Catherine McAuley's Legacy of Respect and Dignity for All in Today's World

As we examine the ideals of respect and dignity for all in the context of today's world, we think about those among us who are not treated equally and who suffer from injustice embedded within institutional structures. If Catherine were with us today, what communities would she support and walk alongside if she continued her mercy ministry in the modern world? Where would she see a lack of respect and dignity for all, and how might she remedy it? Catherine's legacy in the modern era is one of lifting up the disenfranchised, treating the poor with respect by providing basic needs, and restoring dignity by advocating for those without a voice.

Sadly, we continue to see stark examples where mercy and respect for the dignity of individuals is absent in today's world. Soon after the onset of the pandemic, we witnessed the devastating murder of George Floyd, and the iconic video of his last moment will be an enduring image of our era. In his eyes we saw desolation, echoing the earlier photograph of the dispossessed woman, and an anguish shared by those who have been cast aside and dehumanized. George Floyd's murder resulted in the eruption of global protests and a wider awareness of the inequities in our criminal justice system that disadvantage people of color. Inherent biases in our thinking and in our institutions were broadly discussed throughout the nation, with leading voices such as Ibram X. Kendi through his work on *How to be an Anti-Racist*, and Isabel Wilkerson's book, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent*, opening our eyes to embedded views across generations.

Many inequities in our society have been laid bare by the pandemic, some longstanding but viewed with a new perspective in light of the worldwide crisis. Illness and death resulting from COVID-19 affected the poor and BIPOC communities at a much higher rate, often because they were exposed to the disease in their work environments at greater levels and did not have ready access to affordable healthcare.

Indeed, as we consider communities among us that have endured a lack of dignity and respect, we also think of LGBTQ+ individuals who have long suffered from discrimination.

Though progress in civil rights has been won over the last decade, there is still widespread prejudice, particularly toward the transgender community. Sadly, we know that LGBTQ+ youth experience higher rates of depression and suicide, and that homophobia still exists in many settings.

Lack of respect and dignity for all could be witnessed with the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the United States Capitol, where we saw the full force of our political and ideological division as a nation. Societal differences have devolved far beyond a divergence of opinion on a particular topic or issue, but toward views that demonize those who think differently; “I not only disagree with you, but dislike you because of your beliefs.”

As we contemplate these and other daunting ills in today’s world, we think about Catherine’s legacy and what she has taught us about the impact that one person, or one community, can achieve to make progress in remedying injustices and restoring respect and dignity for all.

Respect and Dignity for All in Salve’s Current Context

The power of the mercy mission lies in the fact that it has been tried and tested by history. While the Critical Concerns of Mercy may seem to resonate with the concerns of the 21st century, each was just as necessary for a life characterized by respect and dignity in the time of Catherine McAuley. The roles of women, the Earth (expressed in local rather than global terms through an emphasis on the land), water as a symbol of sustenance, immigration/emigration, racism, and nonviolence were all as pertinent to the 18th and 19th centuries as they are today, although in different measure and in different ways. Accordingly, Salve Regina University strives to provide a values-based education for its students that is derived from our Catholic heritage and our mercy charism. As we examine our mission in light of the concept of “respect and dignity for all,” we see language that may guide us forward. The Salve Regina University mission statement, ratified by the Board of Trustees in 1997, states that we aspire to:

- Prepare men and women for responsible lives by cultivating enduring values
- Recognize that all people are stewards of God’s creation
- Encourage students to work for a world that is harmonious, just, and merciful.

As an educational institution, we strive to assure a particular kind of values-based experience that differentiates us from secular universities. How do we achieve this? How can we ensure, with our legacy inherited from Catherine McAuley, that we fulfill our mercy promise?

In the spring semester of 2020, the Salve community embarked on a community-wide exploration of what we called our Strategic Compass, to define the set of experiences that we would like *every* student to have by the time they graduate. One of the four points of the Compass identified “inclusive community” as an essential component of a Salve education. “Every Salve student will have the lived experience of being part of an inclusive community that embraces all with kindness, dignity, and respect.”



Photo by Laura Paton

Mercy rally, 2017

Like many universities grappling with the realities of inequity at a predominantly white institution, Salve will need to create structures to advance its goal of creating an inclusive community for all. With the formation of the Presidential Commission on Equity and Inclusion in the fall of 2020, Salve committed to a thorough examination of policies and procedures, the enhancement of training and development, the creation of educational programs and events, and to perform regular, ongoing assessments of its progress.

In our first survey of the campus climate at Salve, we encountered results that laid bare the gaps in our experience, or where our aspirations may not resemble the lived reality of all our community members. We learned, and confirmed from earlier data, that some members of our community from non-majority backgrounds encountered discrimination on campus. We also learned that those from a range of political affiliations sometimes felt unsafe expressing their differing viewpoints on campus.

In the comments offered through this survey, we hear the voices of our community members as they express concern that their views are not valued or respected:

*"I purposefully hide my political views from other students because I have heard them say awful things about those I have similar beliefs to. I don't want other students to find out my views and judge me before they get to know me as a person OR before I can defend myself."*⁷⁷

*"I come into class knowing that I may be the spokesperson for my race, I drive down the street nervous of getting dirty looks for playing Spanish music when white classmates play rap, and I'm constantly anxious that I need to represent not only myself but as a Hispanic woman in all areas of the Salve community."*⁷⁸

These voices remind us of the importance of supporting respect and dignity for ALL, and that if some members do not feel valued, we have not achieved our goal of an inclusive community.

HORIZONS

Fulfilling the Mercy Promise for Salve's Future

As we contemplate our lives of living mercy, Catherine's legacy teaches us that we must face the realities of our day, and not ignore the issues, the people, who live alongside us and who may be living less equitably because of systemic biases or inherent racism. We must confront failures, due to our own lack of action or through our ignorance, that serve as barriers to an inclusive environment.

To build the inclusive community that Salve aspires to be, there is work to be done as we think about the curriculum we offer to our students, the ways in which we develop faculty and staff, the programs that we choose to sponsor, and the openness in which we can speak about progress along the journey. As we look beyond our own campus borders, we need to see the inequities that exist in Newport, Rhode Island, the United States, and the global community. Currently in Newport, our K-12 school systems suffer from some of the lowest graduation rates and achievement test scores in the state, and the public schools encounter deep poverty in spite of the city's privileged setting and image. What will our role be to walk alongside our neighbors as Catherine has taught us? As an institution of higher education, how will we provide better access to education that will lead to lives with greater dignity and respect?

As we examine some of our newer ventures at Salve – a revised core curriculum that will allow for more inclusive dialogue in the classroom, a new endowed chair dedicated to the support of civil discourse, and our own Pell Center, which embodies our values through the lens of public policy and mercy leadership – what are our hopes and aspirations for the impact that these changes will have on our educational experience and, ultimately, the communities where our graduates develop meaningful lives?

Salve Regina is a values-based university and we measure our success by the impact that our alumni have on the world. Our commitment to the advancement of an inclusive community provides a model for our students, and ultimately for our graduates, of how to live a merciful life that truly honors our legacy and deep connection to the example given to us by the life and work of Catherine McAuley. As we build Salve Regina for the next 75 years, given our values, what role will we have as an institution in shaping the world's future? What role will we want our graduates to have in improving dignity and respect for all?

NOTES

¹Seán Ó Tuama and Thomas Kinsella, *An Duanaire: Poems of the Dispossessed*, (Portlaoise, Ireland: Dolmen Press, 1981), 311.

²Angela Bolster, RSM, "Catherine McAuley: From the Edges of History to the Center of Meaning," *The Journal of Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology*, Vol. 6, NO. 2. (Spring 1996), 3.

³Mother Mary Hilda Miley, *The Ideals of Mother McAuley and Their Influence: Foundress, Educator, Social Welfare Worker* (New York: P.J. Kennedy and Sons, 1931), 44-45.

⁴*Ibid.*, 45.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Mary C. Sullivan, RSM, *The Path of Mercy: The Life of Catherine McCauley* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 161.

⁷Undergraduate student, HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey, 2021.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Photo available at: [Spleodrach/CC-BY-SA-3.0 commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Catherine_McAuley.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Catherine_McAuley.jpg).

¹⁰Photo by Hogan, W. D. (1921), available at: catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000279878.



Photo by David Hansen

Dance students perform at Salve Regina's 75th anniversary opening ceremony, September 2022.

MERCY COMMUNITY

The Salve Regina University Strategic Compass articulates the mission value of Mercy Community as follows: *We recognize the sacredness of community and pride ourselves on being a welcoming, inclusive and collaborative environment, with a sense of companionship and belonging for all, as we help each other on life's journey and in service of the common good, in hopes of making the world a better place.*

Ms. Rose Albert

Associate Director, Multicultural Programs and Retention

Dr. Myra Ellen Edelstein

Associate Professor, Business and Economics



Mercy community is integral to the mission of Salve Regina University and a beloved aspect of our campus culture. It is a dynamic set of relationships, friendships, and expectations that both support and actualize participation in the transformative aspirations that Salve Regina University has established in its mission statement.

Community is a distinctive hallmark of the character and life of Catholic higher education and beginning with its founding by the Sisters of Mercy, Salve Regina has strived to embody not only the holistic ideals of a Catholic university community but also the particular vision of mercy reflected in the vision and life of Catherine McAuley, the foundress of their religious order. Writing this essay, we looked to the past to move our mercy community forward by discerning the characteristics that shape a mercy community. We dialogued with students, faculty, staff and members of the University administration to reflect on how our community meets the challenge of living mercy in our present day, and we lean into the future to consider the challenges and promises that this community faces.

FOUNDATIONS

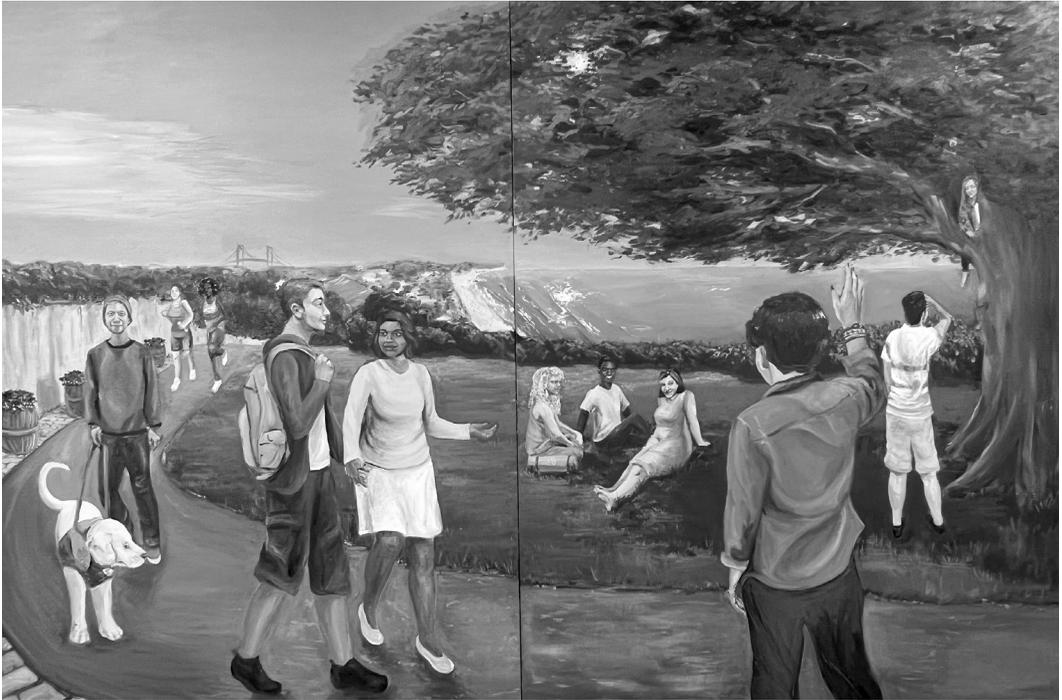
Dr. Arlene Nicholas '92, professor of business and economics, provides a unique perspective on the character of the mercy community at Salve Regina in a publication she wrote about the University's business education:

The establishment of Salve Regina University by the Sisters of Mercy is itself an example of benevolence and leadership. A mansion built by a corporate tycoon given to an order of nuns for a school. An order of nuns that was founded by a keen businesswoman, Catherine McAuley, who transformed the lives of poor women in Dublin, Ireland, by providing shelter and education with an inheritance she had received from her childless employers. After the house for homeless girls was established, Catherine founded the Mercy order and inspired others into lives of service and education ("Foundress," 2014).¹

Reflecting on the character of our community, Dr. Nicholas focused on the benevolence, kindness and good will that motivated the Sisters of Mercy to open a Catholic college for the education of women.² Benevolence – the practice of kindness and acting for the good of others – may well be a universal characteristic of the communities at all Catholic universities, but we propose that mercy is what leads us to ask if the University brings distinctive qualities or expectations to this good will and kindness. We propose that a benevolence modulated or guided by mercy and focused on mission is the distinguishing characteristic of our University community, and we find the contours of this merciful benevolence modeled in the work of Catherine McAuley and in the vision of the Sisters of Mercy who founded Salve Regina College 75 years ago.

The Mercy Community: Welcome, Collaboration and Transformation

Looking at the roots of our mercy community we return to the example of Catherine McAuley and the House of Mercy she founded in 1827. Catherine envisioned that this house and the practice of the works of mercy were a way of practicing the teachings of Jesus: she took up the mission of helping the poor, sick and uneducated persons that God had entrusted to her care. While she did not write of a mercy community, she did establish expectations as to the purpose of the shared life and the character of the relationships in her House of Mercy. It was a house that *welcomed* both the young women who wanted to learn skills for employment and the young women who joined in these works of mercy because they wanted to relieve the sufferings they witnessed in their own city. Catherine McAuley created a house and community where they all *belonged* together, for she believed that “[t]he Tender Mercy of God has given us one another.”³ She expected that their *work together* and their relationships would be characterized by love because mercy is a type of love that enters the experiences of vulnerability and incompleteness while holding fast to the potential of one's humanity – as a person created in the image of God. Mercy is a love directed to persons and their needs in *particular times and particular places* and is needed, today, in 21st-century



Mission Statement, Oil on Canvas, 2015

Created by Class of 2016 studio art majors Rachel DeLuca, Hope Foster, Serena Lafond and Jordan Thuman

Newport as it was in 19th-century Dublin. Through this *call* to serve and through *praying and working* together, their understanding of who these women were, what they needed to do, and what they could do in the world were *transformed*: they knew that they belonged to the poor, the uneducated, and the sick who needed the care of the Sisters of Mercy.

Reflecting on the story and work of Catherine McAuley, we propose that the character of our mercy community and its commitment to mission is supported by three particular practices: welcome, collaboration and transformation. In 1947, the Sisters of Mercy opened the doors of Salve Regina College and *welcomed* young women to Catholic higher education in Rhode Island. The annals of the University testify to the kindness and support that the religious women, themselves, shared in community as they supported each other in their new responsibilities of educating and housing the young women who enrolled for that first year at Salve Regina College. Both the Sisters of Mercy and the students were brought together by the desire for truth, wisdom and the contributions to society that higher education provides. The sisters and students shared the tradition of the Catholic faith that established a horizon for the meaning of their studies, as well as a rhythm of life set by sacred time and supported by their shared participation in prayer, sacraments and rituals.

From the beginning, the young women who chose to study and live at Salve Regina

College understood that they were *collaborating* with the Sisters to bring this community and institution into existence. This charter class reflects on their experience in the 1951 yearbook that celebrates their four years together: “We were leaving a college that we felt *belonged* to us in a way that no deed of ownership could surpass ... Our ideals, our laughter, our hopes, our tears had built the spirit of Salve Regina as sure as the bricks and mortar had constructed the building.”⁴ This first class of Salve graduates entrusted the continued development of this nascent community to those who would follow across the decades: ... “Future Salveites will enlarge – improve the work we have started...”⁵ The classes of these early years of Salve Regina College welcomed women from Rhode Island and other states, as well as young women from Formosa (Taiwan), South America, Barbados and Belize. The college community continued to expand and transform as it met the needs of the day by welcoming religious sisters from Belize and India who trained to be nurses. The college became a co-educational institution in 1973 and has evolved into the Salve Regina University that we enjoy and appreciate today.

LIVING PRESENCE

The mercy community of Salve Regina University has expanded and grown in diverse ways over the past 75 years. Our university mission statement opens with the words, “As a community that welcomes people of all beliefs...” Those powerful words reflect the hospitality that Catherine McAuley encouraged in opening the House of Mercy. Those powerful words are the words upon which we seek to build a diverse and welcoming community in our own institution. These are the words that assure education to all persons who choose to be part of a community that “seeks wisdom and promotes universal justice.” To get a sense of how our present-day mercy community is experienced, we sought the insights of different members of the community. We are grateful to all those who so graciously agreed to interviews and shared their experiences of and hopes for the mercy community.

Today we know that the practice of welcome needs to attend to the practice of inclusivity – of creating a community where persons know and feel that they belong. Keeping the spirit of Catherine McAuley alive, Salve Regina is continually working

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*... creating a community where
persons know and feel
that they belong.*

on fostering an environment where everyone belongs and experiences belonging. The Office of Multicultural Programs and Retention is celebrating its 10-year anniversary at Salve Regina University. Dr. Sami Nassim, assistant vice president for diversity initiatives and retention, was drawn to the University and has, for the

past 10 years, worked here because, as he said, “The commitment to mercy is something that I hold dear to my heart due to my background and beliefs... and I work to advance the programs focusing on mercy and inclusion.”⁶

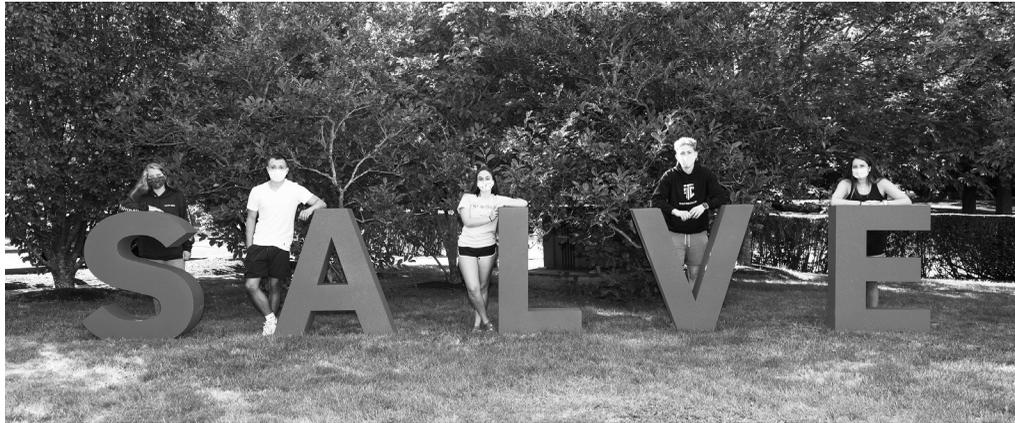
The shared mission and supporting values that we have in common create this unique environment. Dawn Emsellem, director of the McKillop Library, has 18 years of experience as a member of the campus community. She summed it up accurately when she said, “I like the first sentence in the mission where it says: ‘A community that welcomes people of all beliefs... seek wisdom and promote universal justice.’ ...the students always have an awareness of helping people.”⁷

While there are ideals that motivate the mercy community, we would be remiss if we neglected to point out the realities of others from marginalized communities who love Salve Regina University and value its mission but who also feel invisible on this campus. Dr. Letizia Gambrell-Boone, vice president of student affairs, said, “When we look at our data, our population overall states that most of our students feel like they belong. We need to assess the population that falls outside of the majority to assess how they feel. We have to recognize that some of the data may not tell the whole story.”⁸

This sense of belonging is an area where the University community can work together to celebrate each individual and their contributions. It is where we must recognize that our mercy hospitality gives us the platform to welcome and celebrate our differences. It is where we must all be embraced and visible, even when some of us might feel invisible. If our mercy community is alive and thriving, then everyone has the potential to be an integral part of that community.

A first-year student shared her concerns about a lack of attention to folks with disabilities. For example, the Office of Multicultural Programs does not have a ramp and some other places around campus do not have ramps for those students who require access. Additionally, she pointed out that the elevators in McAuley Hall remain out of service.⁹ Another undergraduate student discussed her wishes that Salve Regina further improve its efforts to attract a greater diversity of students, faculty and staff to campus.¹⁰ A mercy community recognizes that diversity has many characteristics and embracing one’s identity is critical to feeling represented and included in the community.

The pandemic was a serious challenge to the health, safety and flourishing of our mercy community. We are proud of our community’s ability to work together during the height of the pandemic when all classes shifted to online learning and all campus activities were suspended. Our mercy community, something that is very much a part of the Salve Regina experience, was forced to shift to an online, virtual environment. We had to find new ways to connect with and support each other as students, as friends and as colleagues. Guided by an expert team who kept the University community abreast of the evolving pandemic requirements and regulations, academic life continued to move forward as we all learned new teaching and learning modalities and adapted to the protocols put in place to support the health and safety of the community.



Students begin their first semester with masks as they move onto the Salve campus, Sept. 2021.

The challenge of COVID-19 proved our capacity for collaboration and it is through collaboration that we move to the practice of transformation – of becoming a mercy community of belonging. Following in the footsteps of the Sisters of Mercy foundress, Catherine McAuley, the Presidential Commission for Equity and Inclusion created and adopted a “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Mission and Vision Statement” document. In part, it states: “Confronting the needs of our time and acknowledging the historical oppressions of various groups, our campus embraces diversity in all forms by actively promoting a culture of inclusiveness and striving for justice in our actions as a reflection of our mission and the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy.”¹¹ In the true spirit of a mercy community, Salve is striving to be a community where all are welcome no matter their race, creed, religion or culture. Salve is working toward a more inclusive community by focusing on diversity and equity initiatives throughout the campus.

Colleen Emerson, dean of undergraduate admissions and a member of the Salve Regina community for 34 years, believes that in our institution we share a common set of values including, “empathy, kindness, giving back to the world and paying it forward.”¹² It is that set of values that helps build the mercy community that is so unique and precious to us. She went on to say that as a member of the University’s admissions team, “We are always looking for students who are going to live what Salve is about.”¹³ Salve Regina is a mercy institution that values harmony, justice, and challenges itself to be more inclusive and diverse in thoughts, ideas, identities and representations.

HORIZONS

As we plan for our future, our horizons, we must step back and ask a series of questions to ensure that students, faculty and staff are nurtured and encouraged to flourish in their work and in their lives. How do we ensure, then, that all members of our community flourish as they are an integral part of the mercy mission and mercy community at our University? How do we

ensure that students achieve their goals and flourish as they learn their craft and profession and how do we then celebrate those students' accomplishments? How do we ensure that the University continues to flourish as a Sister of Mercy organization moving forward, looking to the horizon? How do we celebrate our University and our lives together? It is crucial that we find ways to recognize and draw in all members of our community, that we grow and celebrate our diversity and that we enrich our mercy mission and our mercy community by learning from our differences and celebrating our shared dreams, goals and vision.

Dr. Nicholas also wrote, "My mission as a business faculty is to continue in this tradition and embed this love of learning, of people, and of the earth to students who will take seriously their social responsibility to care for, cherish and encourage others."¹⁴

Regina Dublin, lecturer in the Department of Nursing, speaks to the enduring importance of mercy and its relationship to justice: "Mercy is about stepping up to represent a cause that needs supporting. It's about acting and understanding that there are things bigger than you; it's about the notion of doing what is right."¹⁵

Dr. Gambrell-Boone spoke about the importance of understanding what a mercy community means if we are to preserve and enhance this concept moving forward. "We need to have a common narrative on what a mercy community means. We need one definition to assess how each one of us would be a part of that community."¹⁶

Fortunately, we have that narrative; it is our heritage born of Catherine McAuley's vision, the distinct mercy mission that the University has carried forward since 1947. It is our intent to shape the future based upon the needs of students, faculty and staff moving forward all within the extraordinary vision that Catherine McAuley bestowed upon us. Colleen Emerson was clear in her beliefs: "I love that we still value where we came from. I truly believe that Salve is on the cusp of something great!"¹⁷

As we consider the future of the mercy community as a part of Salve Regina University, we must consider the role that our administrators and trustees have in guiding us forward while preserving our mercy heritage. The Conference for Mercy Higher Education has published "Some Common Focus Areas of a Mercy Catholic College / University – Ordinary Characteristics in the Fullest Sense," which underscores the importance of cultivating a community that embodies the spirit and works of mercy that continue to support the enduring vision that has sustained Salve Regina University over the past 75 years and orients us toward the future. The document emphasizes that "Leadership is responsible to see that all the members of the campus community are steeped in mission, that they understand how it bears upon their particular duties, and that they take ownership for promoting its mission and identity."¹⁸

Therefore, we look to our leadership to guide us in a way that protects and promotes our mercy heritage, our mercy community and our unique approach to building the special inclusive community that will move forward with great success. What are you doing to create a community of welcome and how are you collaborating with other members of the community to transform yourself and shape the mercy community at Salve Regina University to meet the needs of the future?

NOTES

¹Dr. Arlene Nicholas, "Mercy and Business: A Partnership for Catholic University Business Students" Campus Event, Mission Integration Award Presentation, Newport: Salve Regina University, 2015.

²Women were often denied admission to Catholic colleges that were founded by male religious orders for the education of young Catholic men. Providence College, founded by the Dominicans (the Order of Preachers) opened its doors to women beginning in the fall semester of 1971.

³"Words from Catherine," *The Cork Manuscript*, available at: <https://www.mercyworld.org/catherine/words-from-catherine/>, accessed March 21, 2022.

⁴*Regina Maris*, 1951, Yearbook in Salve Regina Digital Archives, available at: <https://archive.org/details/reginamaris1951salv/page/14/mode/2up>, accessed June 12, 2022.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Dr. Sami Nassim, assistant vice-president, interviewed by Rose Albert, Newport, Rhode Island, April 28, 2022.

⁷Dawn Emesellem-Wichowski, director of library services, interviewed by Rose Albert, Newport, Rhode Island, April 25, 2022.

⁸Dr. Letizia Gambrell-Boone, vice president for student affairs, interviewed by Rose Albert, Newport, Rhode Island, April 28, 2022.

⁹Undergraduate student, interviewed by Rose Albert, Newport, Rhode Island, April 21, 2022.

¹⁰Undergraduate student, interviewed by Rose Albert, Newport, Rhode Island, April 21, 2022.

¹¹Salve Regina University Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mission Statement, available at <https://salve.edu/document/dei-mission-and-vision-statement>, accessed April 12, 2022.

¹²Colleen Emerson, dean of undergraduate admissions, interviewed by Rose Albert, Newport, Rhode Island, April 27, 2022.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Nicholas.

¹⁵Regina Dublin, lecturer in the Department of Nursing, interviewed by Rose Albert, Newport, Rhode Island, April 22, 2022.

¹⁶Gambrell-Boone.

¹⁷Emerson.

¹⁸"Some Common Focus Areas of a Mercy Catholic College / University -- Ordinary Characteristics in the Fullest Sense," Conference for Mercy Higher Education, available at: <https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.90/dpk.3b7.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/W-Some-Common-Focus-Areas-of-a-Mercy-Catholic-College-v2-9.pdf>, accessed March 10, 2022.



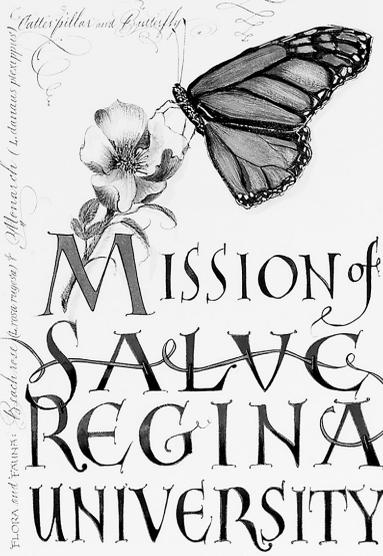
Photo by Maria Burton

Students volunteer at the Salvation Army for Salve's Day of Service, 2018.

AS A COMMUNITY THAT WELCOMES PEOPLE OF ALL BELIEFS, SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY, a Catholic institution founded by the SISTERS OF MERCY, seeks wisdom and promotes universal justice.

THE UNIVERSITY THROUGH TEACHING AND RESEARCH prepares men and women for responsible lives by imparting and expanding knowledge, developing skills, and cultivating enduring values. Through liberal arts and professional programs, students develop their abilities for thinking clearly and creatively, enhance their capacity for sound judgment, and prepare for the challenge of learning throughout their lives.

In keeping with the traditions of the Sisters of Mercy, and recognizing that all people are stewards of God's creation, the University encourages students to work for a world that is harmonious, just, and merciful.



FLORA and FAUNA: Branch (not to scale) by the Sisters of Mercy (L. Aronson, 1900) and Butterfly (L. Aronson, 1900)

Artwork by Maria Thomas

INTEGRITY

The Salve Regina University Strategic Compass articulates the mission value of Integrity as follows: *We seek to develop leaders with a strong moral compass, committed to making a positive difference in their communities and in a diverse and changing world. We hold ourselves to high ethical standards as stewards of the resources of Salve Regina University and the responsibilities entrusted to us.*

Dr. M. Therese Antone, RSM
Chancellor
Professor Emerita, Business and Economics

Dr. William P. Leeman
Professor, History
Director, Pell Honors Program



FOUNDATIONS

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “integrity” as, first, the “quality of being honest and having strong moral principles,” and second, “the state of being whole and undivided.” Both of these definitions are relevant to the history and continuing mission of Salve Regina University. Opening two years after the close of World War II, Salve Regina can trace the origins of its mission to Ireland in the early 19th century and the path-breaking work of Catherine McAuley, who founded the Sisters of Mercy in 1831. Catherine lived in a harsh and merciless world where Irish Catholics faced unimaginable poverty and degradation, which prompted her to take direct action, particularly through education, to restore the humanity and dignity of her fellow Irish Catholics. Although her actions, including the building of the first House of Mercy on Baggot Street in Dublin and the establishment of the Sisters of Mercy as a new religious congregation, focused on addressing the specific problems she witnessed in her own time, the mercy tradition that she created would prove timeless and adaptable to other places and eras. Through their tremendous dedication and determination, the Sisters of Mercy who established Salve Regina maintained the integrity of Catherine’s ideals while adapting the mercy charism to the needs



Students and Sisters of Mercy during summer session, 1949

of their own post-World War II American society. Since opening its doors in 1947, Salve Regina has strived to develop its students into leaders of personal integrity who possess a strong moral character, high ethical standards, sound judgment and a commitment to making a positive difference in a diverse and ever-changing world.

By the start of the 19th century, Ireland had been under British subjugation for centuries. Through the anti-Catholic penal laws, the British government institutionalized Irish poverty by preventing Irish Catholics, who amounted to approximately 80% of the population, from exercising any political, economic or social power. Although the last of these laws were repealed in 1829, their devastating effects remained, with Irish Catholics in Dublin suffering from high unemployment, epidemics, malnutrition, poor sanitation and severe overcrowding. Most Irish Catholic children received little to no education. Women outnumbered men among Ireland's poorest, including widows with children and single women who couldn't find employment. It was this poverty, ignorance and bigotry that Catherine McAuley set out to address.¹

Orphaned by age 20, Catherine managed the home and served as nurse for an elderly and wealthy Quaker couple. After inheriting their estate, she used the money to build a "House of Mercy" on Baggot Street in Dublin. This house, which opened on September 24, 1827, would serve as a shelter for unemployed servant girls and homeless women who lacked the means to support themselves as well as a school for poor children. In addition to

their work on Baggot Street, Catherine and her associates visited the sick and dying among Dublin's poor.² A practical focus on education became the central feature of Catherine's response to the problems of her era. Believing that education brought empowerment by liberating people from ignorance and subjugation, Catherine made the construction of classrooms her top priority when beginning the plans for her House of Mercy. Education was about giving students—mainly poor, illiterate and unskilled girls—the basic knowledge and trade skills they needed to support themselves and feel greater dignity and self-respect. Education would also serve as an instrument for overcoming injustice within society.³

Despite the necessary and heroic work being done by Catherine and her associates on behalf of Dublin's poor, they came under sharp criticism from the clergy and lay people who disapproved of their unique situation on Baggot Street. They were secular women who dressed simply and resembled nuns in their devotion to lives of prayer, yet they were not an officially sanctioned religious congregation of the church; in fact, some critics believed Catherine and her associates were competing against the official religious orders. Despite some serious misgivings about creating a new religious congregation, as urged by the archbishop of Dublin, Catherine decided that it was a necessary step if she was going to overcome this opposition and continue her important work on behalf of the poor. After completing the novitiate of the Presentation Sisters in Dublin and professing her vows, Catherine McAuley founded the Sisters of Mercy on December 12, 1831.⁴

The Sisters of Mercy represented something new among Catholic religious congregations. Most nuns remained isolated in the convent and devoted their lives to prayer. But Catherine created a different kind of order: "A deeply spiritual woman, Catherine McAuley wished to make Mercy practical in the lives of those most neglected in nineteenth-century Ireland. Impelled by this grace, she challenged the conventions of society in revolutionary ways."⁵ The Sisters of Mercy combined a contemplative life of prayer with active service outside the convent's walls, which earned them the nickname "walking sisters." In addition to the usual religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience that all nuns professed, Catherine added a fourth: service to the poor, the sick and the ignorant. The *Rule and Constitutions of the Religious Sisters of Mercy*, written by Catherine, made it clear that one must lead a moral life and have "purity of intention" to be able to teach and help others. Words weren't enough; one must also be a person of integrity who can be a role model and inspire others to make positive contributions to society. The *Rule* also put service to the most vulnerable at the heart of the mercy charism, dedicating the Sisters of Mercy to "a most serious application to the Instruction of poor Girls, Visitation of the Sick, and protection of distressed women of good character." For Catherine, mercy had no limit. Her emphasis on service to the poor, the sick and the ignorant reflected what was most needed in Ireland during her own lifetime. Although this type of service would always be integral to the mercy mission, Catherine created the Sisters of Mercy to be adaptable, to be able to make a positive contribution and meet the needs of the people at different times and in different places.⁶

In 1843, Frances Warde, Catherine's close friend and associate, arrived in the United

States along with six Sisters of Mercy. Settling in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, these sisters faced a very different situation than existed in Ireland. As a rising industrial city, Pittsburgh's population expanded rapidly in the mid-19th century, resulting in a wide range of urban social problems. Pittsburgh's industrial economy created a high demand for labor, which led to a major increase in the number of immigrants, especially Irish Catholics, living in the city. These immigrants experienced poor housing in slum neighborhoods as well as labor exploitation in the form of low wages and inhumane working conditions. Translating the mercy charism to their new home, the Sisters of Mercy moved quickly to open schools, care for the city's orphans, and visit those confined to the city's poor house and prison. In response to epidemics of cholera, smallpox and typhoid, the sisters opened the world's first mercy hospital in 1847. Over time, the Sisters of Mercy in America took on a wide range of responsibilities, including teaching school, caring for the sick, operating orphanages and homes for the elderly, providing shelters for women and girls, maintaining social service centers, visiting prisoners, and ministering to African Americans and Native Americans. During the Civil War, Sisters of Mercy provided medical care to Union and Confederate soldiers. Sisters of Mercy were among the first to respond during natural disasters such as epidemics, floods, earthquakes, and fires.⁷ By these works, through which the Sisters maintained the integrity of the mercy charism, "the spirit and vision of Catherine McAuley became alive in the pioneer society of nineteenth-century America." The Sisters of Mercy

arrived in Rhode Island just a few years after bringing the ideals of Catherine McAuley to the United States, establishing convents and schools first in Providence in 1851 and then in Newport in 1854.⁸

By the early 20th century, the Sisters of Mercy in America had taught over 100,000 students in mercy elementary schools, and 10,000 students in mercy academies and high schools. They had established 53 hospitals and 67 orphanages as well as countless social service organizations.⁹ Through these efforts, the Sisters of Mercy made a positive, and crucial, difference in an ever-changing modern, industrial world. In the first decades of the 20th century, the sisters in Rhode Island sought to meet these modern challenges by establishing a college for women in the Ocean State. The start of the so-called "American century" represented a period of significant change within society, particularly for

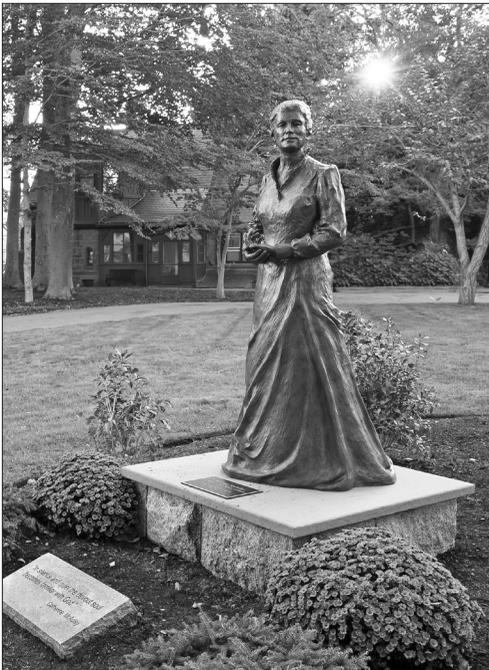


Photo by David Hansen

Catherine McAuley statue stands outside Our Lady of Mercy Chapel.

women. The Progressive movement highlighted the many hardships and abuses of America's industrial, urban society—including poverty, homelessness, child labor, unsafe working conditions, discrimination against immigrants, unequal access to education, corruption and environmental pollution—and tried to address these problems through a variety of reforms. Women often played a critical role in these efforts to humanize American society, especially through settlement houses and social service organizations. The wartime employment of women in business and industry during World War I enabled them to work in career fields traditionally restricted to men. Their crucial contributions to the war effort ultimately led to women finally gaining the vote after a decades-long suffrage movement. Even after the war, more American women worked outside the home than ever before. The 1920s also brought a revolution in morality within American society, as modern sensibilities gradually superseded traditional Victorian attitudes. The cultural upheaval of the Roaring Twenties gave way to the ravages of the Great Depression and World War II, which again changed women's roles within society and saw them entering the work force in unprecedented numbers. It was within this historical context that the Sisters of Mercy, reflecting Catherine McAuley's special concern for the education of women, sought to establish what would become Salve Regina College. Securing a charter from the State of Rhode Island in 1934 and a campus through the Goelet family's donation of the Ochre Court estate in Newport, Salve Regina College officially opened its doors on September 24, 1947, the 120th anniversary of Catherine McAuley's opening of the first House of Mercy on Baggot Street in Dublin.¹⁰

LIVING PRESENCE

As Salve Regina grew and developed during its first decades of operation, the presence of many Sisters of Mercy among the administration, faculty and staff ensured that the college's curriculum, student life and community reflected the mercy tradition first envisioned by Catherine McAuley, including Catherine's ability to see life as an integral whole. However, by the 1990s, the number of Sisters of Mercy on campus had noticeably diminished. In an effort to maintain the integrity of Salve Regina's mercy heritage, a statement highlighting the sisters' founding and sponsorship of the University began to appear in the catalog alongside a list of objectives that focused on nonsectarian academic goals. In 1995, the Salve Regina community set out to develop a formal mission statement that would integrate the University's academic objectives with its mercy tradition, setting the social standards that would shape the educational experience and form the culture of the University community. Over a period of two years, a University Mission Committee directed a series of workshops and meetings to explore such questions as the mission of a university in general, the mission of a Catholic university, the mission of a Catholic university in the mercy tradition, and the mission of a Catholic university in the mercy tradition as it prepares students for the 21st century. After consideration of multiple draft mission statements, the Salve Regina University Board of Trustees approved the final version of the University's mission statement in February 1997.



Photo by Lindsey Turowski

Nursing students participate in a Simulation Laboratory demonstration, 2018.

The goal of developing students into leaders of personal integrity who possess a strong ethical and moral character as well as a commitment to making a positive difference in their world is at the heart of the University's mission statement. Through teaching and research in the liberal arts and professional programs, the University prepares its students "for responsible lives by imparting and expanding knowledge, developing skills and cultivating enduring values." This values-based approach to higher education is firmly rooted in the educational philosophy of Catherine McAuley, a philosophy based on service to others that recognizes the inherent dignity and humanity of all people. As the mission statement declares, "In keeping with the traditions of the Sisters of Mercy, and recognizing that all people are stewards of God's creation, the University encourages students to work for a world that is harmonious, just, and merciful." Salve Regina's mercy mission strives to produce students who will use their knowledge, skills and judgment, informed by their character and values, to improve the lives of others and to promote universal justice.¹¹

After completing the process of writing the new mission statement, the University community set out to put its carefully crafted words into practice. The mission statement keeps the mercy standards and culture of the University intact while allowing for the flexibility and adaptability necessary to examine and respond to the changing needs of society over time. Reflecting the globalization of the post-Cold War world in the 1990s and early 2000s, Salve Regina University put particular emphasis on developing the world view

of its students. Steps such as redesigning the core curriculum as well as the founding of the Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy and the Pell Honors Program, both honoring U.S. Senator Claiborne Pell's commitment to creating a more just American society and international community, were meant to provide students with the knowledge, skills and perspective they need to become agents of mercy in the world. A formal study abroad program, on-campus lectures by distinguished speakers, visits by prominent leaders such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Elie Wiesel, and the creation of a community service requirement for all students put the University's mission statement into action. The creation of a high-ranking position within the University administration, the vice president for mission integration, emphasized the importance of maintaining the integrity of the mercy tradition on Salve Regina's campus.

HORIZONS

Catherine McAuley engaged her world as it was, but she strongly believed that the world could change, and even be transformed, through the power of education. In a diverse world characterized by frequent political, economic, social and cultural changes, the adaptability of the mercy tradition to different times, different places and different problems makes it critical for Salve Regina to maintain the integrity of its mercy mission as it looks beyond its 75th anniversary. Recent efforts such as the adoption of an academic integrity policy, the revision of the core curriculum, and the founding of the McAuley Institute for Mercy Education are helping to renew Salve Regina's commitment to its mercy vocation by fostering greater personal integrity among its students and by bringing students into frequent dialogue with the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy. These critical concerns—immigration, anti-racism, Earth, women and nonviolence—provide a useful blueprint for identifying and addressing the contemporary world's many social problems. Just as today's Sisters of Mercy remain active in addressing the problems of the 21st century on an international level through organizations such as Mercy Global Action while continuing to adhere to the ideals of Catherine McAuley, Salve Regina must continue to update and improve its academic programs and co-curricular activities, informed by the mercy tradition and the critical concerns,

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... the adaptability of the mercy tradition to different times, different places and different problems makes it critical for Salve Regina to maintain the integrity of its mercy mission ...

to equip its students to take on the many local, national and international challenges to humanity and social justice that exist today.

The ultimate goal of education, especially a university education within the Catholic tradition, should be to benefit society by producing young people who possess not only intellectual attainments and professional knowledge, but who also aspire and strive to make a positive difference in the lives of others. In *The Idea of a University*, Cardinal John Henry Newman's classic treatise on higher education, he explained that "a cultivated intellect, because it is a good in itself, brings with it a power and a grace to every work and occupation which it undertakes, and enables us to be more useful, and to a greater number." Declaring that the purpose of education was "to prepare for the world," Newman concluded, "If then a practical end must be assigned to a University course, I say it is that of training good members of society."¹²

Twenty-five years before Cardinal Newman's reflections on the value of a university education, Catherine McAuley articulated the critical importance of education to prepare one for a life of service to others. It is through education in the liberal arts and professional programs in addition to student life and co-curricular activities, all immersed in the mercy tradition, that students can acquire the knowledge, skills and values they need to improve their society. Integrity has been at the heart of Salve Regina's mission throughout its first 75 years of existence by developing personal integrity among its students, and in the University's adherence to its mercy vocation. The mercy tradition, first proclaimed by Catherine McAuley in 19th-century Ireland and preserved in its wholeness by the founders of Salve Regina, must remain the guiding compass for the University as it continues its mission of producing students who utilize their education to work toward a world that is harmonious, just, and merciful in the 21st century and beyond.

NOTES

¹Mary C. Sullivan, *The Path of Mercy: The Life of Catherine McAuley* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 2-7; Kathleen Healy, ed., *Sisters of Mercy: Spirituality in America, 1843-1900* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 10-11; Mary Eloise Tobin and Mary Jean Tobin, *With Courage and Compassion: A Reflection on the History of Salve Regina University in the Light of the Spirit which Engendered and Sustains It* (Newport, RI: Salve Regina University, 1993), 3.

²Sullivan, *Path of Mercy*, 56; Kathleen Christ, "Pittsburgh's Faithful Servants: The Antebellum Origins of the Sisters of Mercy in America" (B.A. thesis, Salve Regina University, 2019), 2.

³Tobin and Tobin, *With Courage and Compassion*, 3-4, 6; Mary Jeremy Daigler, *Through the Windows: A History of the Work of Higher Education Among the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2001), 8.

⁴Sullivan, *Path of Mercy*, 84-92.

⁵Daigler, *Through the Windows*, xi.

⁶Healy, *Sisters of Mercy*, 6-8; *Rule and Constitutions of the Religious Sisters of Mercy*, printed in Mary C. Sullivan, *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1995), quote on 295.

⁷Healy, *Sisters of Mercy*, 15-19, 22-24. See Christ, "Pittsburgh's Faithful Servants."

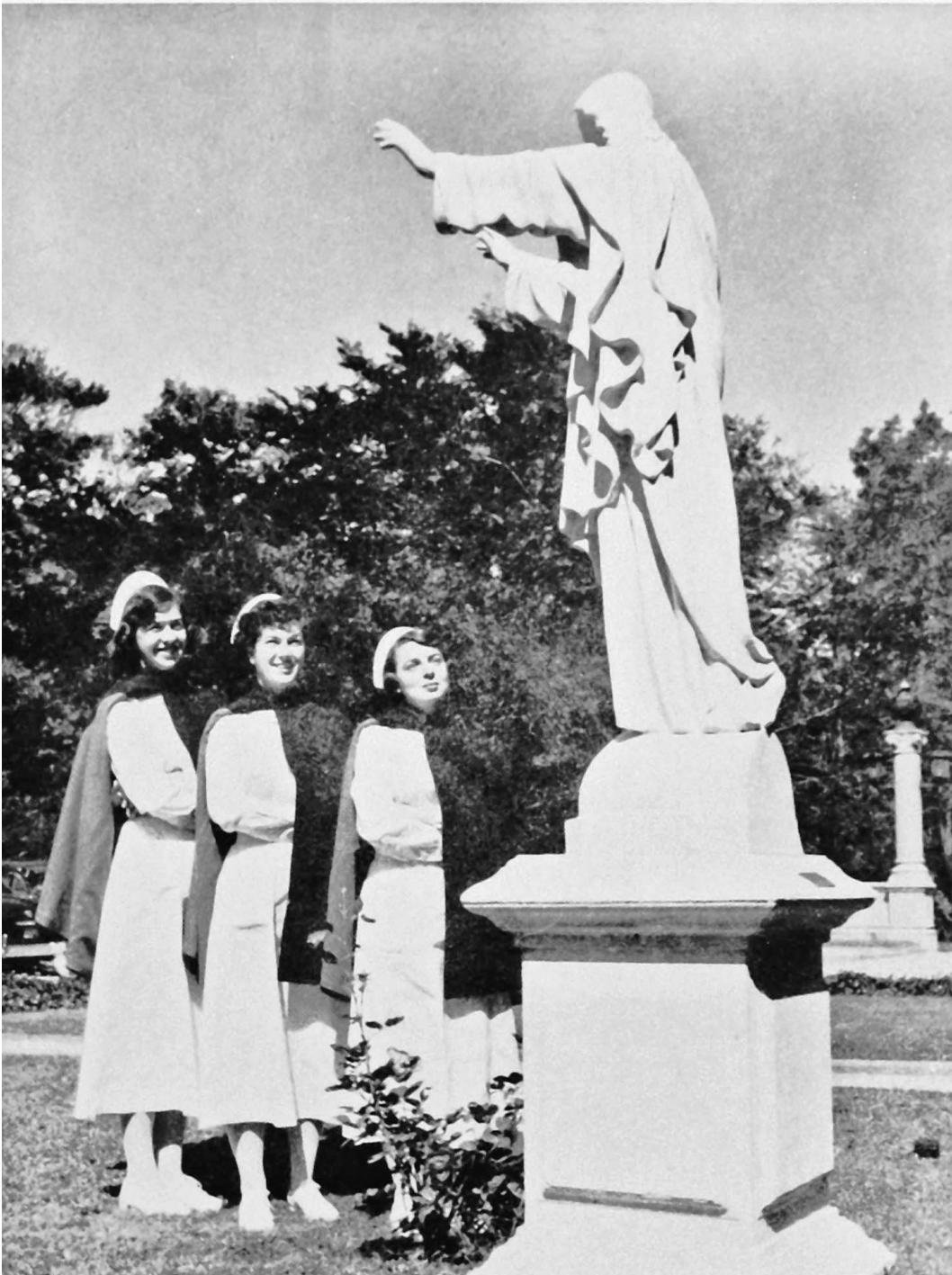
⁸Tobin and Tobin, *With Courage and Compassion*, 6.

⁹Dr. Timothy B. Neary, "The Rhetoric of Mercy: Do-Gooders, Corporatists, and Warriors," in *Mercy Illuminates* (Newport, RI: Salve Regina University, 2008), 49.

¹⁰Tobin and Tobin, *With Courage and Compassion*, chaps. 2 and 3. For a detailed discussion of the changing roles of women in 20th-century America, see Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press, 1997), chaps. 7-10.

¹¹Salve Regina University Mission Statement, available at: <https://salve.edu/mission-statement>, accessed February 15, 2022.

¹²John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ed. Martin J. Svaglic (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 126, 134, 176.



Nursing students pictured in 1952 Regina Maris yearbook

FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY

The Salve Regina University Strategic Compass articulates the mission value of Faith and Spirituality as follows: *We promote the intellectual and spiritual exploration of faith for people of all beliefs, guided by our Catholic heritage, we seek to support all members of our community on their spiritual journey.*

Ms. Aïda Neary

Director of Community Educational Partnerships

Dr. Daniel Cowdin

Professor and Chair, Religious and Theological Studies



FOUNDATIONS

In September 1947, Salve Regina College opened its doors to its first class of 58 students. The students, all female, came from Roman Catholic families who were looking for Catholic higher education for their daughters. Salve Regina College was established by the Sisters of Mercy as a Catholic institution. The sisters created an explicitly Catholic environment at a time when Americans demonstrated a high degree of religious affiliation and church participation.

At the time, the Sisters of Mercy did not need a singular focus on faith and spirituality for members of the Salve Regina community because there was an assumed shared understanding of Catholicism and the faith within it. The Sisters could focus on building an institution of higher education. Certainly, the curriculum included religious instruction, but prior faith formation was presumed. In addition, the faculty was composed of Sisters of Mercy, who were prominent visual reminders of the Catholic faith. Religious rituals and practice were never far from students' eyes.

As we embark on Salve Regina University's 75th year, we recognize and appreciate the contributions of the Sisters of Mercy and the resilience of Salve Regina College, now University. We also acknowledge that the situation in which Salve finds itself is different than in 1947. Faculty, staff and students are no longer universally drawn from the deep wells of Catholic culture and are not steeped in Catholic faith – reflecting the realities of the 21st century.

Today, the wider society is less explicitly religious, more suspicious and critical of religion generally, and at times caught in a science vs. religion false dichotomy. Many of our students bring this kind of consciousness with them into the University. Fewer of our students identify as Catholic, and for the roughly half who do, their experience of Catholicism is more personal than cultural. Moreover, there is widespread disaffection from the institutional church due to its positions on a range of issues. Likewise, the faculty are no longer drawn from the ranks of religious orders alone.

There is no better reminder that the world is different from that of 1947 than the use of the word mercy. Salve Regina holds dear the term mercy, both as part of the order's name but also as part of the mission statement, which ends with a call for Salve students to "work for a world that is harmonious, just and merciful." Yet mercy is understood through a different lens than in the early days of the institution. In 1947, students, faculty and staff could quickly reference the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Those were part of the Catholic lexicon of the day. A colleague from a Christian denomination recently shared that in her tradition mercy was not defined as loving kindness or giving to others as we ourselves have received from God. Rather, in her tradition, mercy meant "not getting the punishment that I deserve [for my sins]."

While the understanding of mercy as avoiding punishment is not uncommon, it is distinct from how we often speak of mercy at Salve Regina University. It reminds us that faculty and staff come from a range of religious traditions or no religious tradition at all and they do not necessarily share the same understanding of mercy. Students, like faculty and staff, come to Salve from a variety of spiritual traditions. In an increasingly secular world, students arrive on campus with less formal religious education, faith defined differently than in previous generations, and spiritualities encompassing Jewish and Christian traditions to Buddhism to Islam. Other members of our community do not profess a faith but have a guiding spirituality, while still others might have neither faith nor spirituality.

It is in this changed landscape that Salve Regina embarks on its 75th year. The mission to educate remains the same, but the expressions of faith and spirituality among the

members of the community are almost as varied as there are members of the community. Therefore, the question we ask ourselves is this: what does it mean to be a Catholic institution founded by the Sisters of Mercy in the 21st century and beyond?

LIVING PRESENCE

The question of "living presence" is one of ethos – the overall campus atmosphere, tone, and sensibility

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*... what does it mean to be
a Catholic institution founded
by the Sisters of Mercy in the
21st century and beyond?*

generated by our communal self-understanding. Stated compactly, Salve Regina University has a mercy, Catholic mission. We lead with the moral value and spiritual practice of mercy, which is rooted in the Catholic faith tradition.

In terms of faith and spirituality, the campus manifests the ethos through a variety of sources: the overall language of the institution across its myriad forms of communication; the Mercy Center for Spiritual Life; the physical presence of the chapel, and the worship life within it; the Department of Religious and Theological Studies specifically, as well as the many other departments who articulate their own mission in light of mercy; the Center for Community Engagement and Service; the performing arts, such as choral performances of classical and modern sacred music; public lectures, panels and presentations; student clubs and organizations; individual faculty and staff.

Continuity with the Past

As regards faith and spirituality, what is our ethos today?

It strikes us that at the heart of the mercy tradition is action, doing – faith and spirituality expressed in corporal and spiritual works of mercy. This is the “through-line” over the past 75 years. Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy were “walking nuns,” not cloistered contemplatives. The commitment to concrete service – to love expressed in action – links Salve present with Salve past, and will continue to shape the future.

It is a form of faith and spirituality that is visible, engaged, and impactful in real-life circumstances. The five Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy – Earth, immigration, nonviolence, anti-racism and women – each call out for concrete response. In its direct relationality, there is a very human, simple immediacy to this spiritual ethos.

Given our current context, we find the mercy ethos fortuitous in a number of ways. A mercy-infused spirituality offers a certain kind of authenticity, as well as flexibility, to our students.

As noted in the discussion of foundations, the religious sensibilities of our student body differ significantly from Salve’s earlier days. On the whole, there is a crisis of confidence among our students in Christianity at the level of tradition, community and institution. The commonly heard claim that “I am spiritual but not religious” – a claim not likely to be heard in the 1950s on Salve’s campus – often carries with it an underlying implication that “religion” is empty, misguided, and/or incompatible with personal authenticity. A key part of our students’ perceptions is a function of the “culture war,” with Christianity apparently on one side and the younger generation on the other. This can pose problems in terms of how students understand and relate to the religious dimension of the University. It is a challenge, however, that a mercy-oriented faith and spirituality is perhaps uniquely capable of meeting.

As a community whose spiritual axis is the doing of mercy, Salve models a spiritual path that has a ring of authenticity in the midst of wider cultural dynamics that tend to co-opt religion for ulterior ideological purposes. The much-loved St. Francis of Assisi was known to say, “Preach the gospel always—use words sometimes.” This resonates with the

mercy tradition, and appeals to the mind-set of contemporary students. In this respect, our spiritual ethos also resonates with the global efforts of Pope Francis, who has attempted to shift Catholicism off the axis of the culture wars. Through its mercy tradition, Salve offers an ethos of service deeper than cultural polarization. In so doing we also, perhaps, offer our students a reintroduction to what faith, the church and religion can mean.

We also find it fortuitous that the value and virtue of mercy is complex and flexible. The spiritual practice of mercy is broader than and even separable from the Catholic faith as such, and the moral virtue of mercy can be understood in simply human and secular terms. This has allowed for adaptation to our present context of religiously disaffiliated students. Our mercy mission is, to borrow a term from molecular chemistry, multivalent; our students are able to bond with it in moral, spiritual and/or explicitly religious ways.

Discontinuity and Adaptation

While the authenticity and flexibility of mercy enables continuity, the Catholic dimension of our mission has had to adapt. At its inception in 1947 and for many decades after that, Salve established and maintained an alternative religious world of meaning, a distinctly Catholic subculture. Catholic faith and spirituality lived organically within a religiously holistic environment. Today, our campus culture by and large replicates the wider society's general religious sensibilities; religiously and spiritually we have become a microcosm of the social public macrocosm. Our overarching "world of meaning" is now secular, religiously pluralist, and spiritually privatized. In the midst of this lives a Catholic faith presence, though now significantly in the background.

One implication of this shift is that our mission in relation to faith and spirituality has become enormously more complex. This is exciting as well as challenging. As noted in *Foundations*, Salve's landscape of religious identity is Catholic, ecumenical, inter-religious, spiritual and non-religious, all at once. Marbled into this external diversity are the deep internal, often invisible spiritual needs of our students, many of which are a function of our times.

Catherine McAuley asked a foundational question with regard to the economically and educationally impoverished young women of Dublin: What do they need? When we reprise her question with regard to our own students' faith and spirituality, issues of impoverishment become visible in new ways, with psychological and social dimensions. Many suffer from anxiety, loneliness, lostness; many lack a comprehensive worldview, a center, a foundation from which to navigate media, consumerism and technology; many lack access to wider meanings beyond subjective preferences; many lack literacy with regard to huge swaths of human religious and spiritual experience. That our students have overlapping or even common spiritual needs, regardless of religious identity, is undeniable.

To what has this new situation called us, then, in terms of living presence?

When Dr. Cowdin arrived at Salve in 1998, we had a campus ministry program led by a Sister of Mercy, focusing on Catholic spiritual needs. Today, our focal point for



Photo by Maria Burton

Festival of Lights ceremony in Ochre Court, 2016

pastoral presence is the Mercy Center for Spiritual Life. With 15 years of lay leadership, the Mercy Center explicitly and intentionally offers ecumenical and interfaith outreach, in conjunction with its traditional servicing of Catholic faith needs. It seems evident that, on what might be termed the pastoral level, a vital component of our current approach is the practice of *spiritual friendship*, offered to all Salve students across our religious landscape. Spiritual friendship is a way of being with – seeing, feeling, supporting, exploring, sharing, challenging, celebrating and journeying with each other. It requires deep listening and seeks what is good for the friend on his, her or their spiritual terms; spiritual friendship also involves the sharing of perspectives and experiences, in respectful conversation, which can widen our overall vision. We encourage its future development and enhancement across all sectors of the University.

In addition to the pastoral dimension, we are, as a University, committed to the intellectual development of our students. This is no less true at the level of faith and spirituality than it is with regard to other areas of study. When Dr. Cowdin arrived at Salve in 1998, our Department of Religious and Theological Studies offered core courses focused on Christian morality, theology and scripture. Some brief attention to world religions was given in the last weeks of the sophomore theology course. Today, our Department of Religious and Theological Studies (RTS) offers a sophomore core course explicitly and intentionally in dialogue with the traditions of the world's great religions as a focal point for the intellectual

dimension of spiritual presence. Our upper-level core electives span multiple world religions, inter-religious dialogue, and various forms of spirituality, as well as Catholic and ecumenical courses in scripture, morality and theology. Most RTS courses engage religious content through a multidisciplinary humanities approach.

If at the pastoral level the guiding perspective is *spiritual friendship*, at the academic level we would propose the guiding perspective of *intellectual mentorship* in matters of faith and spirituality. The notion of mentorship implies that there is wisdom to be had in relation to faith and spirituality, i.e., that there is something, potentially, to learn. Although student preferences are always to be respected and honored, Salve Regina as an institution stands as a proposition that faith and spirituality are more than merely subjective preferences. There are thousands of years of traditions, conversations, insights, lived experiments, successes and failures, experiences and encounters in these areas, with the Catholic intellectual tradition being one such example. As a university we can improve our students' quality of thinking in relation to religion, faith, and spirituality.

Part of intellectually mentoring students in these areas involves challenging the largely unreflective biases they have uncritically absorbed from the wider popular culture. Salve Regina is (and can continue to be) a place where religion, faith and spirituality are understood, through a wide variety of academic disciplines, as having:

- cognitive and not merely emotional dimensions;
- developmental potential, and therefore opportunities for assessing growth and maturity beyond mere personal preference;
- rich variations of experience and expression rather than merely one-dimensional prose “beliefs” about “supernatural facts”; such experiences and expressions include aesthetic and artistic, narrative and poetic, mythical and symbolic, as well as historical and philosophical dimensions;
- personally challenging and transformative implications, in addition to the self-affirming therapeutic values they may provide;
- communal and cultural meanings that are larger than any individual perspective or even the sum of individual perspectives;
- socially challenging and transformative dimensions – economic, political, cultural – appropriate in certain contexts and deserving of critical consideration.

It further strikes us that part of Salve Regina's ethos is the positive, mutually informative, at times profound relationship between intellectual mentorship and spiritual friendship. At its best, Salve often becomes a place of genuine conversation where scholarly intellect refines faith and spirituality, while faith and spirituality deepen scholarly intellect.

Our secular academic disciplines offer an opportunity for critical reflection on these areas using scholarly tools. Understood as a form of spiritual friendship, this becomes welcome as a chance for spiritual growth, refinement, and maturity, without defensiveness or fear. Such intellectual mentorship has profound implications for students who choose to integrate their academic reflections into their spiritual lives.

We are meaning-seeking creatures who exist in a world with depth and mystery. In that light, the various disciplines at the University – hard science, social science, healthcare, humanities, business, criminal justice, etc. – can each be seen, potentially, as an entry point into deeper spiritual questions. By exploring the latent meanings and values inherent in any given area, a portal opens to depth and/or transcendence. This has profound implications for students who choose to integrate spiritual insight into their intellectual lives.

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moral virtues and values ...*

HORIZONS

Salve Regina’s mission statement, adopted in 1997 and re-approved in 2009 and 2020, opens with: “As a community that welcomes people of all beliefs, Salve Regina University, a Catholic institution founded by the Sisters of Mercy, seeks wisdom and promotes universal justice.” We place our religious identity between a spiritual invitation open to all and a commitment to moral virtues and values; in so doing, Salve’s Catholic faith lives as a particular presence within a universal set of human aspirations.

Salve Regina does not seek a return to a pervasively Catholic subculture. Our religious mission will neither be as forward as an evangelical school like Messiah University, whose website proclaims the motto “Christ Preeminent,” with faith suffusing “every dimension of life,” nor as directly ecclesial at the Catholic university, Ave Maria, whose website simply presents the full text of *Ex Corde Ecclesia* under the heading “About Us.” On the other hand, nor does Salve want to lose its religious identity. James Burtchaell warns us of this risk in *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches*. Numerous originally Christian schools (e.g., Congregationalist, Methodist, Presbyterian) have lost their religious identity entirely, and with it, any significant concern for the spiritual needs of their students.¹

Honesty requires acknowledging the precariousness of our situation. For example, one current Salve professor recently surveyed 75 students about religion and finds general disaffection among the majority, with only five being genuinely engaged with Catholic faith. Yet another professor finds that if the language of faith is presented in a compelling and thoughtful way, latent interests emerge among the majority. How will the future tip the balance? Dr. Cowdin recently surveyed his own first-year students and found that a third seek some sort of faith or spiritual connection from Salve, a third have no interest, and a third are somewhere in between. How will the future tip the balance?



Photo by David Hansen

2022 Baccalaureate Mass

We might say that in the past, Salve had a Catholic, mercy mission, whereas today, we have a *mercy*, Catholic mission. To reiterate our earlier phrasing, Salve now leads with the moral value and spiritual practice of mercy, which is rooted in the Catholic faith tradition. As we move forward, we propose three questions for consideration that seem crucial to serving the faith and spirituality needs of our students: 1) How can our Catholic identity remain vibrant?; 2) How can our interfaith efforts be enhanced?; 3) How can the mercy charism remain authentic and effective?

We propose that the first two questions are complementary rather than at odds. We have entered an era in which the assumption that deep religious commitments necessarily exist in a kind of mathematical zero-sum game has been effectively challenged. More and more people from different religious perspectives have discovered enriching and meaningful relationships with each other, not in spite of their religious commitments, but (perhaps paradoxically) because of them. To touch one's own tradition deeply can open up understanding with others who also touch their traditions deeply. Being centered does not necessarily entail being exclusive. As a result, religious difference can become an invitation to relationship.

Therefore, given our Catholic identity and the breadth of our current spiritual landscape, and in light of Burtchaell's cautionary tale, a "both/and" approach seems not only reasonable, but optimal. Indeed, each may be necessary for the other. If we lose our distinctively Catholic faith identity, we will eventually lose our deep relationship to wider religious and spiritual concerns; if we lose our deep relationship to wider religious and spiritual concerns, the Catholic ethos will become so isolated as to virtually disappear, in effect functioning as a completely separate tangent to our overall University life.

How to nurture, then, the Catholic faith at the roots of the institution? This must be done with purpose, so that the Catholic faith continues as a living institutional presence at the heart, soul and center of Salve Regina, rather than merely on the periphery.

Three possibilities initially come to mind-- in relation to admissions, student life and curriculum—and merit further discussion. In terms of admissions, is it possible to recruit a threshold number of students who are intentional in their commitment to Catholic faith, targeting such students for admission? In terms of student life, would it be possible to significantly intensify a mercy “associate” program on campus, cultivating it among students (and faculty and staff) such that it becomes in effect a kind of “oblate” program, inclusive of prayer, spiritual practices, and service in the mercy tradition? This would recreate a visible, engaged mercy Catholic presence on campus in a new form. In terms of curriculum, would it be possible to establish some version of a Catholic studies program as an academic focal point for this dimension of Salve’s identity?

With regard to enhancing the interfaith dimension of our ethos, might we establish a relationship to Eboo Patel’s Interfaith Youth Corps (IFYC), the origin of which is described so personally and powerfully in his memoir, *Acts of Faith*?² As an interfaith service organization geared intentionally toward college students, its resonance with our mercy mission holds promising possibilities.

Which returns us, finally, back to mercy. How can Salve Regina’s mercy-oriented ethos remain effective and authentic?

Since students are looking for “the doing” of mercy more than just “the talking” about it, there exists an ongoing imperative to enhance and expand opportunities for compassionate activism, from charitable giving and meaningful service to civil engagement and social action.

But equally important, we would propose, is how such action is framed for the students. Many secular liberal arts colleges share the concerns identified by the Sisters of Mercy, and shape their students accordingly; yet at times the moral ethos of such colleges become punitive, perfectionist, and even purgative. Salve’s ethos, however, must continue to offer something deeper and more enduring. A mercy, Catholic underpinning, while sharing a prophetic passion for social justice, also recognizes the limitations and imperfections shared by all human beings, and the humble human connection we all share in these respects. With King and Gandhi, the mercy tradition sees the ultimate “enemy” as the injustice itself, not the person. This awareness, in turn, means that compassionate activism need not terminate in critique, but rather offer the possibility of ongoing relationship amidst disagreement, dialogue and even healing resolution.

NOTES

¹ James Burtchaell, *The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publications, 1998).

² Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, The Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010).



Photo by Maria Burton

Environmental studies students test water samples, 2019.

COMPASSIONATE SERVICE AND SOLIDARITY

The Salve Regina University Strategic Compass articulates the mission value of Compassionate Service and Solidarity as follows: *We are sensitive and attentive to the needs and experience of others, accompanying them with mercy, acceptance and understanding. We seek to alleviate suffering, sensing what will truly be of service, and proactively anticipate and respond to these needs.*

Dr. Jameson Chace
*Professor, Biology and Biomedical Sciences
Chair, Cultural, Environmental and Global Studies*

Dr. Kaitlin Gabriele-Black
Associate Professor, Psychology



Compassionate service embodies the qualities of mercy: forgiveness or relief of suffering, the disposition to kindness, and, through action, restoring another to wholeness.

– Leona Misto, RSM¹

To employ the term “solidarity” entails recognizing human interdependence not only as a necessary fact but also as a positive value in our lives. We cannot realize our full potential or appreciate the full meaning of our dignity unless we share our lives with others and cooperate on projects that hold the promise of mutual benefit.

– Thomas Massaro, S.J.²

From the enrollment of its first class of students in 1947, the Sisters of Mercy at Salve Regina established core values of solidarity with the Newport community and compassionate service with its residents by building partnerships with like-minded charitable organizations. Today, Salve Regina’s commitment to compassionate service and solidarity is characterized by lay leadership engaged with the local community, involving many departments, programs, offices and individuals working together to build relationships to transform systems. In effect, the University has, since its inception, been working toward a world that is “harmonious, just, and merciful.”³

FOUNDATIONS

Salve Regina is firmly grounded in its foundations with the teaching of Catherine McAuley: “Mercy, the principal path pointed out by Jesus Christ to those who are desirous of following Him, has in all ages of the Church excited the faithful in a particular manner to instruct and comfort the sick and dying poor, as in them they regarded the person of our divine Master...”⁴

From the beginning, Salve Regina University was embedded in service to the local community. Early engagement between Salve students and Newport centered around education, social work and healthcare. For instance, students volunteered as Girl Scout leaders for local troops, teaching skills ranging from sewing, to singing, to healthcare, to parliamentary law.⁵ Over the years, students volunteered their time as tutors for local junior high school students. Sociology majors immersed themselves in aspects of social welfare related to the Newport community. Volunteers in the Student Nurse Organization visited the elderly and participated in afterschool programs for neighborhood children. Student clubs were service-minded, partnering together on joint campaigns.⁶

In its early years, Salve Regina also focused on service nationally and internationally. Supervised by faculty, students volunteered up to a year of their time at missions across the United States and abroad. The formation and work of University student clubs (Mission Club, International Relations Club and the Queen’s Choristers in the International Student Relief Campaign) gave students multiple service opportunities, and they carried forth the University mission with zeal. Under the direction of Sister M. Martha Quinn, several students became lay volunteers serving for up to a year abroad; for example, in India; with Mercy Mission in Belize; and in the United States, especially in Texas and North Carolina. In addition, having completed the required course, other students received certificates from the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine preparing them for service in their own parishes. In 1960 Salve Regina enrolled two Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament from India, Sisters Jerome and Jane Frances.⁷ Salve Regina’s commitment to solidarity and service was geographically broad.

On campus, the heart of Salve’s commitment to service and solidarity were the nursing, education and social work programs, which quietly worked throughout Aquidneck Island. In the early years, Elizabeth “Betty” McAuliffe, RSM, a member of the Class of 1968 and current faculty member of the Department of Education, recalls: “We’ve always been out in the community, I think it is just more visible now.”⁸

From the beginning, the sisters at Salve Regina were working in the Newport community and their students, to the level possible, were by their side. Even as an early Sister of Mercy with many different restrictions, Sister Betty and others served the community in many ways. True to their mission and directives, Salve Regina was intentional in the hiring of faculty, and a growing number of lay faculty, who would teach, lead and serve.

“I think the whole concept of compassion is to walk with someone,”⁹ said Sister Betty,



Student teacher at Coggeshall School, 1954 Regina Maris yearbook

and no one walks more with someone than a public school teacher. Salve Regina's education program has been training teachers in areas of solidarity and compassionate service since the gates of Ochre Court first opened through to the University's 75th anniversary. In the early years, according to the Tobin sisters, the University, being consistent with the mission and as an extension of the apostolic endeavors of Campus Ministry, volunteered time and talent to educate mentally and physically handicapped adults under the direction of Sister Charles Francis and Mrs. Alice Alexander of the Maher Center. Students studying special education tutored on a one-to-one basis, building both academic and social interaction skills. This developed into Learning Unlimited, a unique program in special education, where 23 student volunteers teach basic learning skills and give cultural enrichment to disabled adults. Their curriculum plan constantly evolves, shaped by the interest and abilities of the volunteers and students.¹⁰

"Solidarity implies context and...really working together," explained Sister Betty, and it requires "almost having one mind."¹¹ This is difficult, as she pointed out from her experiences, because "we are all caught up in our own day-to-day" agendas. Learning Unlimited and its predecessor programs under the direction of Sister Charles Francis and successfully implemented by many years of education majors have merged solidarity and compassionate service in our local community, Aquidneck Island.

The Department of Nursing's commitment to service has connected students to the community in a variety of ways, including through the work of the Student Nurse Organization. Seeing needs, student nurses created programs and clinics where none had

previously existed.¹² In Salve Regina's early years, student nurses visited the elderly and volunteered in after-school programming for children in Newport.¹³ In the 1980s, student nurses opened three clinics on Aquidneck Island for those suffering from chronic illness. During this same period, student nurses also developed programming for foster families, supporting them with needed resources. More recently, student nurses have partnered with incarcerated mothers by purchasing children's books and recording the women reading them so that the recordings could be shared with their children. The Student Nurse Organization has also collaborated with nonprofit organizations, such as the Make-A-Wish Foundation, in fundraising endeavors.

In sociology and social work programs, the dedication to service brought students into the community and the community onto the campus. Sister Mary Christopher O'Rourke, former chair of sociology, played an important role in the development of anti-poverty programs in Newport County. She was a founding member and leader of New Visions for Newport County, and established Salve Regina as the delegate agency for winter and summer Head Start programs.¹⁴ As the International Relations Club advisor, Sister Mary Christopher established, for three years, a model assembly of the United Nations for about 200 participants from 20 high schools in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. In these day-long sessions, the participants had the opportunity to contend with some of the problems of the world and become acquainted with the particular procedures for dealing with them.¹⁵

LIVING PRESENCE

The mercy ideal of education for service continues to be realized in the present. The Center for Community Engagement and Service is the hub of the University's engagement with the local community. Offering a wide range of service opportunities, service immersions, and service leadership programming, the Center is built around beneficial partnerships with local organizations to address the expressed needs of local and global communities. Building these partnerships to be sustainable takes enormous time and effort. No one knows this better than staff member Kelly Powers, who has

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*... beneficial partnerships
with local organizations to
address the expressed needs of
local and global communities.*

directed the Center for over a decade. In her role, she meets with community partners, who are not always aware of the ways they could utilize students. She also recruits students, who are often unaware of the opportunities and benefits of service, connecting them with community partners. "I'm constantly trying to think of innovative ways,"¹⁶ said Powers.

Alumni Engagement

Students continue to embody Salve Regina's commitment to compassionate service and solidarity as they "discover and live out their individual vocations."¹⁷ Some of their work takes place through institutional programming. For example, as part of the Service Advocates program hosted within the Center for Community Engagement and Service, students complete 100 hours of community service at partner sites around Aquidneck Island, including the Newport public school system and nonprofit organizations. The students form deep relationships with community members as they work together.

"Even if I don't help every student in the classroom, I know I'm helping one get through their last little part of the day," noted one undergraduate student who volunteers in an after-school program at the Tennis Hall of Fame. "That just means everything to me."¹⁸

An undergraduate student, who is also a service advocate, shared her thoughts about compassionate service: "I feel like it is realizing that you need service to give to other people just out of a deep sincerity of love for that person. And if you imagine that you really love somebody, you make every effort to invest into that relationship."¹⁹

Many Salve Regina alumni have continued in the tradition of compassionate service and solidarity. They can be found working in hospitals, volunteering with older adults through AARP, developing cutting-edge vaccines for COVID-19, and serving in schools.²⁰ For example, after taking an anthropology course with Dr. Debra Curtis and then volunteering during the summer at an orphanage in Nairobi,²¹ two Salve Regina students established Flying Kites, an orphanage in Kenya, in 2007.

"At Flying Kites, we believe that education is a path out of poverty," writes Leila de Bruyne '07, executive director and co-founder. "After 14 years in rural Kenya, we've learned that systemic change requires a holistic approach. Our work addresses both the immediate symptoms of poverty and disparity in our community, while also positioning students and teachers as agents of change for themselves, their schools and their communities, for generations to come."²²

Community-Engaged Courses

Today, Salve Regina attracts teaching scholars who enrich and integrate the mission and mercy values into their curriculum. In turn, they foster in students a drive and provide opportunities to engage in the lives of others through service in local, regional and international communities. Through a grant awarded by the Davis Educational Foundation (2016-2019) and led by Dr. Laura O'Toole (cultural, environmental, and global studies) and Dr. Amanda Minor (counseling, leadership, and expressive arts), faculty have been supported in developing courses where students work side by side with a community partner on a specific set of problems.²³

Dr. Craig Condella, professor and chair of philosophy, has routinely engaged his course, Environmental Justice, with Clean Ocean Access, a local nonprofit "working for a clean, healthy ocean that is accessible to all."²⁴ In solidarity with the partner organization,



Salve students join the community to march in Newport's hope-themed sidewalk parade, 2019.

Condella's students often survey the Newport community to determine when and how people access the waterfront, a domain — owned by no one — that should be accessible to all. However, the students find that access points are blocked, or that residents do not know where they have rights to the shoreline. Each class, focusing on a different portion of the Newport community, works to promote education and access, fulfilling part of the mission of Clean Ocean Access and serving the community.

Community-engaged coursework was also represented through the arts and humanities. Susannah Strong, associate professor of art and art history, led a collaboration between the Newport Health Equity Zone and her art students in a hope-themed sidewalk parade, with the goal of uniting and breaking down barriers between the housing communities in Newport.²⁵ Residents, Salve art students, and local artists created original pieces of art (e.g., flags, banners, costumes) for the project, walking their art through the city's north end. The parade ended with a community picnic and concert. First-year students in Introduction to Creative Writing, taught by Dr. Jen McClanaghan, associate professor of English, communications and media partnered with youth from FabNewport to install a poetry exhibit at McKillop Library as part of a city-wide "Poetry of the Wild" exhibition in Newport.²⁶ These projects, and others, taught students how to use their skills to collaborate with community partners in effective ways.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced new opportunities for compassionate service and solidarity. The Center for Community Engagement and Service developed virtual service opportunities for students.²⁷ Students took part in “Virtual Reading Rooms,” where they recorded themselves reading and acting out children’s books; the videos were shared with local teachers for use in virtual classrooms. Other students participated in phone calls with East Providence nursing home residents, building cross-generational connections.²⁸ Socially-distanced in-person events, such as the fall 2020 Service Plunge and beach cleanups in collaboration with Clean Ocean Access were meaningful ways for students to engage in service with the Newport community.²⁹

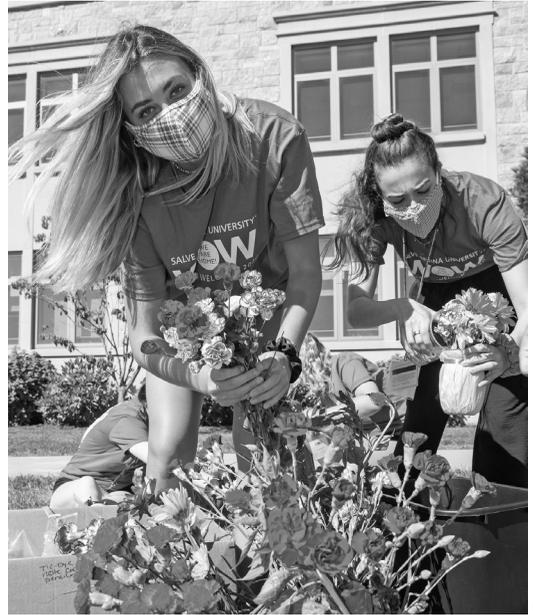


Photo by Andrea Hansen

Students volunteer during 2021 Week of Welcome.

Solidarity and compassion for one another was highly visible during the pandemic experience. All campus community members were asked to sign the Pledge for the Protection of our Community, promising “to do everything [we] can to safeguard and promote the dignity, health and well-being of all: students, faculty, staff and our neighbors in Newport and beyond.”³⁰

Community members smiled behind masks, engaged in regular COVID-19 testing and daily screenings, and remained flexible through the ever-changing pandemic environment. When vaccines were finally available, the University’s mercy-inspired mission, which calls for supporting the common good and the most vulnerable, propelled the community toward a high level of vaccination. The sense of solidarity is embodied in the hashtag #SalvesGotThis.

HORIZONS

As Salve Regina looks to the future, there are opportunities for growth in compassionate service and solidarity as the University seeks to deliver a transformative educational experience for each student. In 2020, Salve Regina was awarded a significant grant from the Davis Educational Foundation to advance the work of community-engaged learning. Building on the foundation of the prior award, this grant will support the development of two faculty roles, including a director of community-engaged learning. The director will partner with the Center for Community Engagement and Service and local agencies to support and develop community-engaged learning experiences in service to the community.³¹

While there are countless examples of how members of the Salve Regina community have embodied compassionate service, the University must grapple with what it truly means to stand in solidarity with another. Solidarity is a commitment to action, a dedication to serving others.³² Solidarity goes beyond service, requiring us to “interrogate the structures of power and privilege that create, support, and perpetuate poverty, racism, and other forms of oppression.”³³ As more students take part in community-engaged learning, we must provide opportunities for them to understand and practice mercy in action.

NOTES

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⁷Ibid, 34.

⁸Sister Elizabeth McAuliffe, interview by authors, February 10, 2022.

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¹⁰Tobin and Tobin, 79.

¹¹McAuliffe.

¹²Tobin and Tobin, 90-91.

¹³Ibid, 47.

¹⁴Ibid, 54.

¹⁵Ibid, 47-48.

¹⁶Kelly Powers, interview by authors, October 14, 2021.

¹⁷Misto.

¹⁸Undergraduate Student, interview by authors, October 28, 2021.

¹⁹Undergraduate Student, interview by authors, November 5, 2021.

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²⁷Samantha Tarbox, “Connections in a Pandemic,” in *Report from Newport*, Spring 2021, available at: <https://salve.edu/document/report-from-newport-spring-2021>, accessed October 2022.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹“*Report from Newport*, Spring 2021, “Salve Regina University Pledge for the Protection of Our Community.” Salve Regina University (2020), available at: <https://salve.edu/salve-regina-university-pledge-protection-of-our-community>, accessed October 2022.

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1951 Regina Maris yearbook

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*Thus a pathway
is laid open to us
The far horizon beckons us
beyond these shores.
Let us then fare forward
with faith as our compass
and love as our lodestar.*

Sister Eloise Tobin, RSM
and Sister Jean Tobin, RSM



2019 Commencement

Photo by Andrea Hansen

BIOGRAPHIES

Ms. ROSE ALBERT

Rose Albert '13 graduated from Salve Regina University with a Bachelor of Arts in sociology and anthropology and a minor in French. After working for a few years in the New England region, she went on to graduate school, completing her master's degree in inter-cultural competence and service leadership at the School for International Training Graduate Institute in Vermont. She returned to campus in 2018 and serves as the associate director in the Office of Multicultural Programs and Retention where she brings her talent and love for advocacy to push the Salve community to become a more culturally competent and racially equitable university, creating an environment where all students are seen, heard, and valued. Rose is a First Year Transitions instructor and is proud to be the founder of the Inclusive Reading Club. Rose recently began her doctoral studies in the humanities at Salve with a concentration in community, self and social transformation.

DR. M. THERESE ANTONE, RSM

Appointed chancellor in 2009, Sister Therese served as president of Salve Regina University from 1994-2009. A member of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, she has had teaching and leadership experience at all educational levels. Her career at Salve Regina includes tenure as a professor of mathematics and management and executive vice president for corporate affairs and advancement. Sister Therese holds a bachelor's degree from Salve Regina University and a master's degree in mathematics from Villanova University. She holds a doctorate from Harvard University in education with emphasis in administration, planning and social policy and completed the international senior executive program at MIT's Sloan School of Management.

DR. KELLI J. ARMSTRONG

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Dr. Jameson F. Chace is a professor of biology and chair of the Department of Cultural, Environmental and Global Studies at Salve Regina. He holds a doctorate and master's degree in ecology from the University of Colorado-Boulder and a Bachelor of Science in biology from Eastern Connecticut State University. His research spans a spectrum of environmental sciences, always with undergraduates working side-by-side and usually on local problems that are examples of global issues. He has over 40 peer-reviewed publications, of which the majority focus on how human alterations to the landscape affect avian populations and community interactions.

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Dr. Daniel Cowdin is a professor and chair of religious and theological studies at Salve Regina. His scholarly interests engage questions of religion and modernity, and span issues from technology and environmental concerns to inter-religious dialogue and contemporary spiritual trends. He holds a doctorate in religious studies from Yale University, a master's degree in philosophy from Colorado State University, and a Bachelor of Arts in religious studies from Stanford University.

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Dr. Myra Ellen Edelstein joined the faculty at Salve Regina University in September 2000. During that time, she served as graduate program director responsible for the business and healthcare administration programs. For several years Dr. Edelstein served as chair for the Department of Business and Economics. During her first 18 years on campus, she was proud to serve on the Mission Committee, serving as both a member of the committee and, for several years, as the chair. Dr. Edelstein is committed to ensuring that the University mission is communicated to and understood by members of the campus community; mostly she is committed to ensuring that we live our mission by helping make the world a more harmonious, just and merciful place. Dr. Edelstein holds a Doctorate in Education with an emphasis in organization development, a Master of Science in health policy and management, and a Bachelor of Science in community public health, all from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

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DR. THERESA LADRIGAN-WHELPLEY

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