

SPRING 2011

MARIA COLLEGE

BEREAVEMENT STUDIES NEWSLETTER



*Celebrating the Colors
of Our Lives*

a mandala entitled "Emergence" drawn by a Bereavement student

REFLECTIONS

Sister Jean Roche, RSM, MA
Campus Minister –
Bereavement Studies Coordinator

The Maria College Bereavement Program

is designed to feed the soul,
to heal the heart
and to nurture the spirit.
Students are taught to
access altered states of
consciousness and creative
centers of the brain which
lead not only to knowledge
but also to wisdom. Our
prayer is that we may seek
to be “the ever-faithful
guardians of the spirit
who know that without
darkness, nothing comes
to birth, as without light,
nothing flowers.”

~ May Sarton ~



As we enter the twelfth year of the Bereavement Studies program, we celebrate its life, growth and transformational power, an outcome which is consistently articulated by our students. What is it that makes the experience so meaningful and profound? I often ponder.

A student recently shed some light on the matter. She said to me, “Bereavement Studies” is not for the faint-hearted, but my instructor is a Master.” Reflecting on our faculty, I recognized that in addition to impeccable academic qualifications, each one is a person seasoned by pain and by prayer. We are no strangers to suffering in both our personal and our professional lives. The lessons we teach were first taught to us by the dying and bereaved with whom we have worked for decades. The words of the poet Wendell Berry deeply resonate:

*To go in the dark
with a light
is to know the light;
to know the dark,
go dark.
Go without sight,
and you will find that
the dark, too, sings
and is traveled
by dark feet and dark wings.*

In the accompaniment of suffering humanity, we have dared to immerse ourselves in the well of grief, lest in hardening our hearts to sorrow, we render ourselves impervious to joy as well.

The nature of the program, furthermore, is rich and multifaceted. Courses include a three-pronged approach: the imparting of information, experiential exercises and opportunities for self-reflection. We concur with the mystic Eckhart who observed, “The outer work will never be puny, if the inner work is great.” Thus, many of our students find that their own losses, be they physical, symbolic or disenfranchised, are healed at a deeper level. Academic credit is offered for clinical experience, ranging from hospice volunteerism to participation in the Clinical Pastoral Education program at Albany Medical Center. Student projects are often implemented in the broader community, including area churches and synagogues. Our 2010 Spring Newsletter highlighted the amazing accomplishments of our graduates.

A more subtle but unmistakable quality rendering the Maria College program unique is the pervasive thread of spirituality. Thus, individual courses feature topics such as images of self and images of God, the healing power of personal, biblical and archetypal story and basic principles of energy medicine. Psychospiritual interventions presented include techniques of life review, meditation, visualization, the use of imagery, expressive art, music, journaling, myriad modes of prayer, stress-reduction exercises and creative ritual. Focusing on actual case studies, students learn to assess patients and families; they are also taught to develop and implement psycho-spiritual plans of care. Self-assessment in terms of spiritual life and growth are also integral to this process.

In this era of unprecedented change, numerous losses ensue. Indeed, it seems that structures which once served us well in all spheres of human endeavor are crumbling. This is evidenced in the economy, politics, religion and the environment. The fast pace of life is escalating. Busyness, boredom and myriad distractions prevail, militating against time-honored spiritual practices of stillness and self-reflection. We are on information overload.

The prophetic voice of the poet David Whyte is countercultural. He writes:

*This is not the age of information.
This is not the age of information.
This is the age of loaves and fishes.
People are hungry and
one good word is enough*

BEREAVEMENT STUDENT EARNS CERTIFICATION IN THANATOLOGY

Lisa Kay, whose bereavement studies include the Maria College and Mt. Ida programs, recently attained her certification as a thanatologist from the nationally acclaimed Association for Death Education and Counseling. It was no small feat!

Eligibility criteria include:

- ~ a bachelor's degree and two years of related experience in death, dying and bereavement, or a master's/doctorate degree and one year of related experience
- ~ 60 contact hours of death-related education from academic courses, workshops, conferences or seminars that you attended
- ~ Two letters of endorsement
- ~ Verification of education and experience

After acceptance, an arduous process of study and preparation ensues, culminating in a three-hour multiple choice exam encompassing information, application and best practices relative to end-of-life care and bereavement.

The subject matter covered is vast; it includes the topics of dying, end of life, loss and grief, assessment and intervention, inflicted death and death education.

The aspects of each of the categories included in the exam are:

- a. Socialization/Cultural
- b. Religious/Spiritual
- c. Professional Issues
- d. Historical Perspective
- e. Contemporary Perspective
- f. Life Span
- g. Large Systems
- h. Individual/Family
- i. Resources and Research
- j. Ethical/Legal

Regarding the Maria College Bereavement Studies program, Lisa had this to say: "It was a huge plus! The vast experience and backgrounds of the instructors as well as students lends depth and breadth to the program. Every class invariably presented invaluable, useful information, and experiences easily translated into hands-on care."

We whole-heartedly congratulate Lisa regarding this momentous accomplishment. Her intellectual acuity, passion for learning and self initiation are surpassed only by her creativity and compassion for suffering humanity.

NURSE PRACTITIONER CREATES "GO BAG" TO ENHANCE BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

Bereavement graduate and Nurse Practitioner Sue Lasker has this to say: "I use my counseling skills learned from Bereavement Studies all the time! I'm working as a nurse practitioner in an inner city clinic, besides some occasional work in occupational health. Virtually daily someone—either patient or co-worker—comes in and seeks me out to talk not just about a death but about some kind of loss that has impacted them. I've saved most of my handouts and notes from class and go back to them often. Personally, I keep a "go bag" ready, containing poems, affirmations and rituals. So if I have to leave for a family problem, I can easily grab the "go bag" without having to search my files and bookcases. These courses have really been life skills for me—and my life is all the richer for having taken them."

BEREAVEMENT GRADUATE JOINS DIOCESAN PASTORAL CARE TEAM

Graduate Angie Marczewski is a Roman Catholic Chaplain hired by the Chancery to serve at Ellis Hospital. Angie completed her masters degree in Theological Studies at St. Bernard's in May 2010. She writes: "The Bereavement Certificate was definitely an asset in terms of my being considered and chosen for the position from among seven applicants. In addition, I will be part of a team teaching pastoral care to parish volunteers and Pastoral Care Coordinators beginning in late April."

This program, a six-week course, is sponsored by the Pastoral Care Office of the Diocese directed by Harley McDevitt. Harley has worked with Maria College Bereavement students in creating and implementing a Healing Grief Retreat for closing and merging churches.

BEREAVEMENT GRADUATE DISCOVERS HEALING IN THE CRAFT OF POEM MAKING

Susan Riback is a spritely woman emanating joy, a person who views life with eyes wide with wonder, like those of a child. At the same time, her intellectual acuity, intuitive wisdom and creative energy were clearly evident to her instructors at Maria College.

Nothing, though, could have prepared Susan for the unexpected incarceration of her husband. Having professionally used the reading and writing of poetry as therapy for clients with whom she had worked, Susan turned to her own journal to express the gamut of feelings which ensued.

Writing became a blessed release. Her journal was a virtual “place for painful feelings to be held, explored and transformed.”

As disbelief and numbness wore off, Susan wrote “Everything normal is gone ... Nothing matters except the swirling stories amplified by the passing of months and in interviews by the police one newspaper after another. We experienced a growing sense of powerlessness ... We are not living this story; it is as if the story is living us!”

Not everyone believed the press. Friends came with food and wine and hugs. Susan expressed her gratitude in this poem:

For Our Friends

*Who opened their arms to catch our fall
as we had no choice
but to jump from the roof
of our burning hearts*

*How else could we have landed
without breaking,*

*without shattering
into a million
unmendable pieces!*

In spite of her belief in her husband’s innocence, he was convicted.

Susan wrote: “I can’t get my arms around this prison thing. Even as I walked toward the towering and intimidating walls, there is a sense I am not fully inhabiting my life ... I have had no training on how to be the wife of a prisoner, ... I am not a widow. I am only the wife of a man falsely accused who lives in a stone tower.”

The use of imagery allowed Susan to give voice to her feelings in graphic ways. She states, “I carry the bundle of fears like women in Africa, baskets of fear balanced on my head.” Anger is described as “a ferocious hungry bear eating up the last crumbs of spontaneous joy.” The enormity of the tragic experience is epitomized in the sentence, “I have been slung from a slingshot of tragedy into the hemisphere

of nothingness.” On some days, her husband’s name was “like a bone caught in my throat.” Yet the multifaceted losses in her life pushed her deeper into her own resilience and the search for deeper meaning.

She poignantly expressed the needs of her family in the following poem which she mailed to neighbors and close friends:

What We Need

*Need you to tell the world – Don’t listen!
reporters banging on our door
strangers reading the headlines
from one sided stories*

*When they ask “Don’t you know them?”
tell them before they take down our hearts
our buoyant hope.*

*Need you to tell the world
to hold our hands in a chain of trust
you who know our sweet spun children
Tell them
of the delicate web that connects us
here where our children learned to speak
here where our name was fondly recognized*

*Need you to tell the world
lies are brewing over us
like a dark storm*

*We need you
to stand watch with us
and if the roof of our dreams
should be destroyed
please shelter us from the rain.*

Eventually, Phillip was released on an appeal which affirmed the existence of prosecutorial misconduct. A plea bargain spared his family an excruciating retrial. But life will never be the same; the healing process continues. Susan writes to her husband:

*Phillip, I am building a path, word by word, stone
by stone, for you. For you but also for me. I follow
the notebooks, follow the words to a new place. Who
knows what purpose this life? Who knows what reasons
we love, we lose, we suffer,*

*we live?
And without all this
a silent rush of emptiness.
We are rich with the stories
of our own arriving.*

BEREAVEMENT STUDENT CORE TEAM EXPLORES ONLINE AND DISTANCE LEARNING

While continuing to offer face-to-face courses in each area, the Bereavement Core Team, Sister Jean, Eileen Clinton and Paula Gravelle are exploring technological possibilities in keeping with the signs of the times. There is some reticence, as one member exclaimed: "We are seeking to teach our students to meet face to face with dying or grieving persons, not send them an e-mail!"

Nevertheless, Eileen Clinton, having been trained by Sharon Hope, has offered Death, Dying and Bereavement, and Children and Death online. Face-to-face versions are also available. Feedback to Eileen's online courses has been superlative. Students are surprised by the breadth of knowledge presented. There were 19 registrations for one online course, compared to only seven for the face-to-face version

Eileen is currently creating a hybrid version of our Support Group course, which will include a workbook. Two-thirds of the course will be online and one-third face-to-face.

Sister Jean offered an experimental version of Accompanying the Dying to an out-of-state student. While there were some "glitches" in the plan, possibilities for distance learning adaptations are limitless. Thus, Sister Jean and Paula Gravelle are working on a plan comparable to those used at Notre Dame, Columbia University and in many Ph.D. programs. Simply expressed, students will be

required to meet with instructors for a week to 10 days, receiving a foundation for the courses Accompanying the Dying and Spirituality and Ritual. They will be provided with a syllabus, assignments, a workbook and meaningful educational materials. Experiential exercises, expressive art and creative ritual will be offered during this time. The possibility of temporary residence at the Convent of Mercy will be explored. Much of the work will be done independently and/or with another distance learner. Regular communication with instructors will be maintained. A culminating final meeting for the combined courses, Accompanying the Dying and Spirituality and Ritual will be arranged.

Some adjunct instructors will be trained to offer online variations of electives. Proposals for two new courses, "The Healing Power of Poetry" and "Death and Dying in Film," are being explored. Since additional electives continue to be added to the program, we have decided to offer them on alternate years. Courses currently being considered for online are "Care for the Caregiver" and "Cultural Diversity in Death and Dying." Another course being considered is one on family dynamics.

A variety of plans for program expansion are being explored but we plan to continue the certificate program also. Creative alternatives and ameliorations from our students are always gratefully accepted.

Undertaking: IS IT OVER-TAKING YOUR LIFE?

Most members of our bereavement faculty are former hospice employees. In this capacity, we worked closely with funeral directors and are more cognizant than most of the myriad pressures upon them. They are virtually on-call around the clock. Personal plans are often – if not always – relegated to a lower priority. They work with those who have experienced the death of a child, a murder, suicide, or were the victim of a crime, including domestic violence. Consequently, when the State Department mandated ongoing education for funeral directors in areas such as bereavement, we were eager to become certified providers.

Eileen Clinton, herself a Funeral Director, created a mini-workshop series on topics such as bereavement, children and death, and the value of the wake and funeral. Approximately 20 funeral directors have availed themselves of these educational opportunities.

This year, Davia Boyle, a bereavement graduate and faculty member who works for Scott and Barbieri Funeral Homes, and Margaret Gulino who has also had extensive experience in the funeral industry, are offering

two Spring workshops. The first has an intriguing title; "Undertaking: Is it Over-taking Your Life?" The workshop is designed to open up a dialogue among members of the funeral industry in order to identify and deal with challenges that are unique to this profession. The instructors have stated "it is our hope that, even though we may not be able to eliminate the stressors inherent in this profession, we will be able to find ways to change the way we react to them, and in so doing, to promote a healthy lifestyle, both on the job and in our personal relationships." Methods will include lecture, class discussion, a survey and relaxation exercises.

A second workshop will be "Creating Meaningful Wakes and Funerals." It is designed to raise awareness of the healing power of ritual and offer specialized training in the planning and facilitation of personalized wakes, funerals and memorial services. Inherent in this course is the importance of empowering the people they serve to take an active role in planning meaningful end-of-life tributes for loved ones.

A “Model” STUDENT



Photographs by Judy Beckman-Lasher. Used with permission.

Jessica Carmel

Jessica Carmel is an 18-year-old woman studying to attain her R.N. degree at Maria College. She decided to test out her aspiration to be a nurse by seeking to start at the first rung of the ladder of her profession. Thus, she accepted a position as Patient Care Assistant at the Hospice Inn of St. Peter’s Hospital. Her tasks are basic: answering call bells, bathing and feeding patients, emptying bedpans. “And I love it!” she stated, eyes shining with delight.

In addition to prerequisites for nursing, Jess is also taking courses in the Bereavement Studies program at the College. Self-initiating and highly motivated, she has taken a series of online mini-courses sponsored by the Hospice Education Network. Thus, she has attained certificates of completion in areas such as Depression in the Dying, Explaining Hospice to Patients and Families, Spirituality and End of Life, Loss, Grief and Bereavement, Cultural Considerations at the End of Life, Religious Beliefs, and Effective Communication.

Jessica’s colleagues at the Hospice Inn have high praise. The head nurse, Michelle O’Brien, describes Jess as “cheerful, respectful and always willing to pitch in and help out.” The hospice chaplain, Betsy Ewalt, said “Jess is conscientious and deeply compassionate.” Exceptionally

caring, she is also “impeccable in terms of follow-up.” In addition, Betsy said that Jess has an eagerness to learn, not only about medical care but also about the psychospiritual needs of patients and families. “She’ll make a great registered nurse,” the chaplain concluded.

Regarding her modeling career, Jess shared that it began with her performances with the Albany Riverette Ice Dancers known as the “Ice Mice.” A spectator, Dan Van Wagennen, approached her, observing that she was especially photogenic. He offered her a modeling opportunity with the All Star Entertainment Group, a charitable organization that raises money for cancer patients unable to pay medical bills. After a month of deliberation, Jess responded affirmatively. The process of networking through Facebook has also garnered a photo opportunity for Jess in a California magazine known as “Fifty-Seven Shutters.”

Jess has a balanced view of her modeling. She stated, “It is fun to dress up with glitz and glamour, evoking my spunky and silly self, but I know when to be serious and down-to-earth.” Hospice has taught her many lessons in terms of being grateful, and not taking life for granted. “So I say many prayers and count my blessings,” she added.

Jess is “Cheerful, respectful and always willing to pitch in and help out.”

COORDINATOR EXPRESSES GRATITUDE TO STAFF AND ADJUNCT FACULTY

“It takes a village” – and even more – to create and nurture a Bereavement Studies Certification Program. Thus we wish to acknowledge and thank the following adjunct faculty members who have so gratuitously shared their personal and professional gifts over the last 12 years.

Accompanying the Dying

Ed Dick
Liza McKinley
Diane Pellowe
Sister Jean Roche, RSM

Death, Dying and Bereavement

Eileen Clinton

Spiritual and Ritual

Paula Gravelle
Susan Schultz

Children and Death

Mary Qualters
Barbara Jones
Beth Pacini
Karen Goldman
Candace Van Roey
Eileen Clinton

Spiritual Practices for Healing and Wholeness

Sister Jean Roche, RSM
Victoria Onderdonk-Milne

May you be blessed for your time, efforts and gratuitous sharing of personal and professional gifts!

We also wish to express our gratitude to the Maria College administration and staff whose work, often behind the scenes and relatively unobtrusive, makes the program possible. Our thankful indebtedness extends further to the broader community. Our guest speakers are gratuitous givers whose expertise is essential to the quality of our program. Dr. Sean Roche, Family Practice Physician; Fathers Ken Doyle and Adam Forno; Rabbis Scott Shpeen and Beverly Maggidsen; Ed Dick, therapist; Rebecca Near, expressive art therapist; Sue Riback, poetry therapist, and Sue Emmanuele, Bereavement Coordinator of the Community Hospice of Albany, are among those who have enhanced our program through guest appearances.

Kudos also to the Head Nurse of the Inn, Michele O'Brien, and her interdisciplinary staff, who annually share their clinical experience with students who take our Accompanying the Dying course.

A final note: While this newsletter is specific to the Bereavement Studies program, let there be no doubt: Maria College as a whole is a unique institution true to our mission of education for compassionate service.

Coming Soon THE CRAFT OF POEM MAKING

Pending the approval of the Dean and faculty committee, a new course is being added to the expressive arts options of the Bereavement Studies program.

One of the reasons the Community Hospice of Albany was once described as offering the “gold standard of psychospiritual care” was the inclusion of interventions such as art, journaling, poetry and creative ritual. Similarly, Maria College students have consistently affirmed education on these elements as being “personally transformational” as well as providing additional tools of spiritual care helpful to clients, patients and families.

We are indeed fortunate in having as an instructor poetry therapist and bereavement graduate, Susan Riback. Regarding the proposed course, Susan writes:

“A curriculum that offers components of creative expression, poetry as a healing art and spiritual practices is absolutely necessary. As we are bombarded with information, media, advertisements, technology and the fast pace of life, many of us are feeling the disease and stress of modern life.”

There is a reluctance to slow down, to be in the present moment ...a poetic, spiritual and mindfulness practice can disengage our students from the habits of distraction, offer them access to a calmer, more relaxed mind and to the resilient nature of their imaginative and creative potential.”

This course on The Craft of Poem Making will teach “tools of the trade,” such as imagery, figurative language, sound and form. Focusing on the healing power of reading and writing poetry, the course will present universal life themes: the journey of life, love and loss, relationships, identity, use of the senses, letting go, joy and death.

Gone are the days of laborious, esoteric poetry with mystifying allusions. This course will blaze a path to your heart!

Come and see.



HONORING THE BEREAVEMENT CORE GROUP

The derivation of the word “core” comes from the Latin root “cordia” meaning “heart.” There is no more whole-hearted group of women than the core group of the Maria College Bereavement Studies Program; namely Sister Jean Roche, RSM, Eileen Clinton and Paula Gravelle.

Sister Jean Roche, RSM, co-creator of the program, has a B.S. in Elementary Education and M.A. in English from The College of St. Rose. She received her certification in Spiritual Direction from an International Program for Spiritual Leaders in Denver, Colorado. Upon graduating, she received an Award for Creativity. She also received the Spirit of Women Award bestowed by St. Peter’s Health Care Services in Scottsdale, Arizona.

A member of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Jean’s ministerial background has included teaching, community administration, hospice chaplaincy, campus ministry and spiritual direction. She has given retreats and workshops from Albany, New York, to Anchorage, Alaska. The author of numerous articles on spiritual care published in magazines such as *Health Progress*, *Rehabilitation Nursing*, *Annals of Long Term Care*, *Pastoral Care Journal* and *Humane Medicine*. Jean has also written two books, *Celebrations of Life* and *What Color is the Other Side of Darkness: Lessons Of Living Taught by the Dying*.

Her work as Campus Minister and Bereavement Instructor at Maria College is epitomized by what a student wrote:

“I love Sister Jean. She takes and accepts nothing less than you at your best. Yet I trust she will be there to catch us when we fall....as a teacher, she is amazing! She is one of those remarkable people who can make every person in the class feel valued. Her courses on Spirituality and Care of the Dying are charged with creative energy and enthusiasm. She is knowledgeable, dynamic, organized and always well-prepared. An asset to Maria College who teaches also by example, with humor and grace.”

Eileen Clinton, co-creator of the Bereavement Studies Program, has an Associate Degree in Applied Science, a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Science in Health Education. A licensed Funeral Director, Eileen was a consultant for bereavement services (1996-1999) and Bereavement Coordinator at the Community Hospice of Albany (1990-1996). She has been an adjunct faculty member of Hudson Valley Community College and Russell Sage College before joining the Maria College faculty.

Currently, Eileen works for the New York State Health Department, utilizing her pedagogical skills by offering

workshops for health care professionals including physicians, throughout the state.

Students have high praise for Eileen.

“Professor Clinton is a great teacher who is passionate about her work.”

...“ I have learned so much about bereavement from Eileen. She is so knowledgeable and excited about teaching us.”

... “Eileen is a teacher who never stops learning herself. Thus, her courses are packed with up-to-date information on bereavement, children and death and support groups. She has enhanced our program by creating three online course options. She is super-responsible, a tireless worker and a woman who integrates passion and compassion.”

Paula Gravelle, the third core group member of the Bereavement Team, has an Associate of Arts from Hudson Valley Community College, a Bachelor of Science from Empire State College, a Master of Divinity from the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and a Doctor of Ministry from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Her ministerial positions have included Pastor at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Altamont, Director of Spiritual Care at St. Peter’s Hospital, Consultant for Four Winds Psychiatric Hospital, Pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Loudonville, Director of the Regional Breast Cancer Program, Assistant to the Dean for Graduate Studies at Albany Medical College and Administrative Assistant and Director of Hospital Auxiliaries of the Hospital Association of New York State. Currently, Paula is the Director of Spiritual Care at Ellis Hospital where she also serves as a member of the Palliative Care Team. If one word were used to describe Paula it would be “enthusiastic.”

The word is Greek in origin and means “connected to God.” Perhaps that is the ultimate Source of Paula’s energy and delight. It makes her an exemplary teacher. Paula is an organized instructor who varies teaching methods and engages the class in spirited discussions. As one student observed,

“Paula’s course on Spirituality and Ritual has deepened my understanding of spirituality, enkindled my motivation and empowered me to minister to dying and bereaved persons with greater confidence and less fear.” “Paula is such a gifted woman; yet she is also humble and not at all inclined to flaunt her knowledge or doctoral accomplishments. She is a great teacher and a source of inspiration.”

RAVE REVIEWS FOR BEREAVEMENT PROGRAM

“While the program has enhanced people’s careers and added a dimension to already established practices, in my case the program totally changed my life, leading me to self-fulfillment, a new career and passion for my new-found profession.”

— **Davia Boyle, Bereavement Services Coordinator for Scott and Barbieri Funeral Homes**

“My Maria College bereavement studies have empowered me to address issues of grief and loss within the educational community... When I first entered the program, I really did not know what to expect. Initially I was somewhat surprised by how much laughter there is in the classroom amidst the more serious moments but I quickly came to realize that bereavement studies is as much about living and the celebration of life as it is about the losses all human beings experience.”

— **Linda Collett, Educator**

“The course Accompanying the Dying taught me practices and interventions which were not covered in my medical education. I highly recommend it to anyone wishing to enhance their medical practice.”

— **Julie Phillips, MD, Physician, Instructor at Albany Medical College**

“Thanks to the Bereavement Studies program, I now have the “stethoscope” to listen more carefully to the fears of the wounded heart. I am now able to recognize the experience of chaos, surrender and the possibility of a transformational experience even during the final stages of life. I am able to recognize the need for reconciliation and have the “sutures” to support this process.”

— **Rosemarie Abitz, Registered Nurse, Supervisor**

“I have found the instructors in the Bereavement Studies Program knowledgeable. Classes are creative, assignments are meaningful and discussions are rich with unique perspectives and ideas. What I hadn’t expected was the profound personal experience I have had. Not only have my professional skills been enhanced but I have gained great clarity and insight into my own beliefs and spirituality. Time after time throughout this program, I have felt my heart expand and my understanding deepen, allowing me to begin some much needed personal healing.”

— **Jean Malone, Social Worker, Hospice Chaplain and Bereavement Coordinator**

“Both in tone and specific strategies, Sister Jean Roche’s course on Accompanying the Dying was enjoyable, informative and fulfilling. I walked away inspired with a wealth of resources ready to put to use. I heartily recommend her course to anyone interested in working with the dying.”

— **Michael McCann, Ph.D. , Hospice Unit, Stratton Veterans Administration Medical Center**

“Aside from a disaster site, there is no place on earth more filled with loss than a jail. My bereavement education at Maria College helped me to be more comfortable sitting and speaking to people in crisis, both inmates and their families.”

— **Gail Jensen, Teacher, Counselor**

WHAT IS THE MARKET VALUE OF *Mercy*

On what great cash register
does one ring up deeds of kindness,
service above and beyond the call of duty,
unconditional love?

What price tag is attached to availability
and constant care
in this age
wherein life as well as relationships
are so easily disposable and transient?

How much are prayers these days...
a penny a piece? two for a dollar?
Are they cheaper by the dozen?

Is there a bargain basement counter
in the store of the Spirit
where second rate reverence
can be bought more cheaply
or respect for human dignity
had for a song?

Where is the yardstick that
measures creativity
or prophetic leadership?
How many ounces of reconciliation
are equal to a pound?
And what is the comparative value
of hands that strive to assuage physical pain
and those that seek to pick up the pieces
of the human heart?

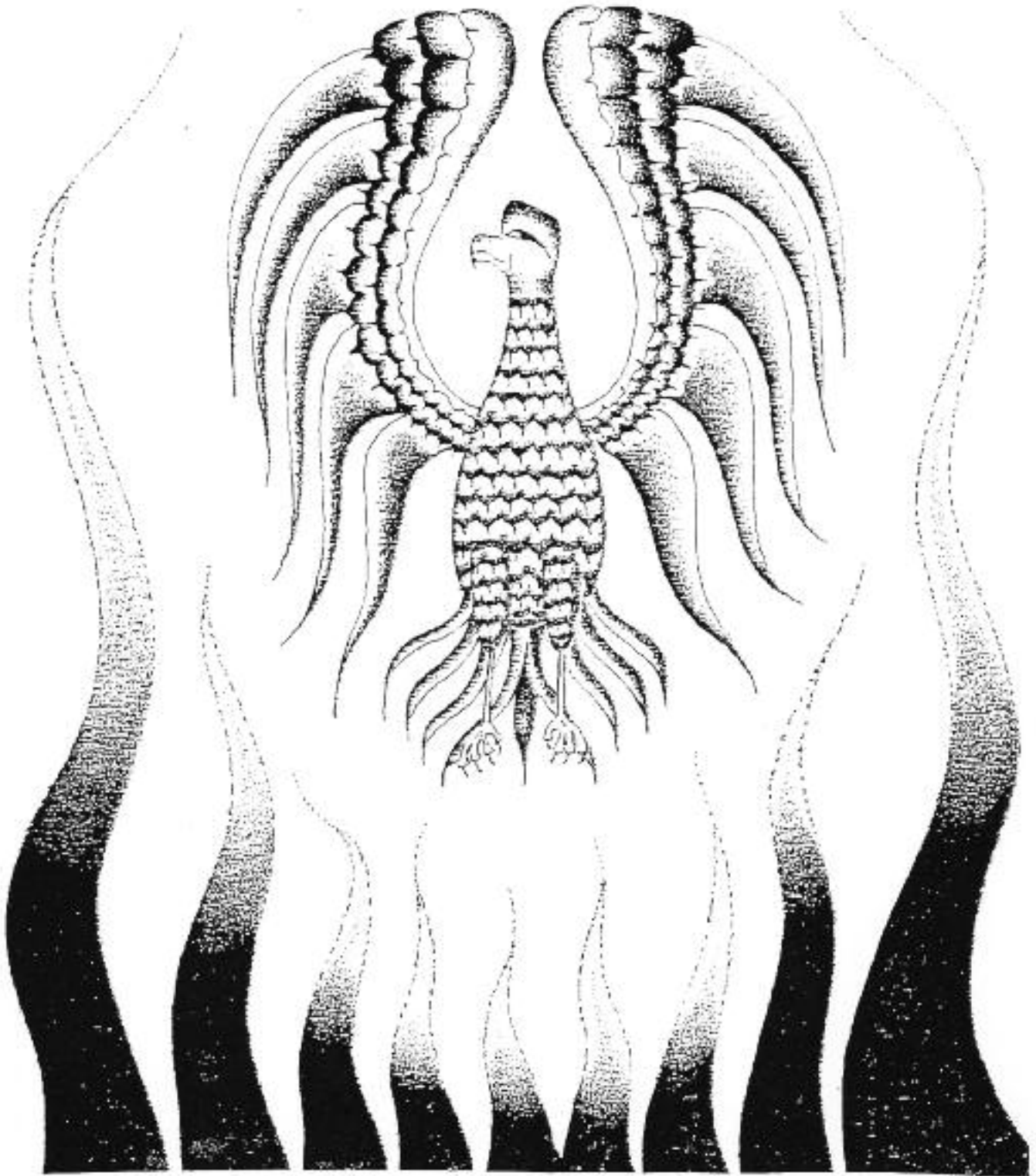
Does the market value go down
When complementarity is preferred to competition?
When the process is deemed
more important than the product
when compassion, rather than external
control, is the ultimate regulation?

The Jesus in me gives thanks to you
for seeking to overturn the tables
of consumerism
which threaten to desecrate
the temple of the health care profession

**Sister Jean Roche, RSM
Maria College Campus Minister and
Bereavement Studies Coordinator**

(Poem originally published in the
Journal of Pastoral Care, 1990, page 74)

PHOENIX RISING



"And we too shall rise"

~ Maya Angelou ~