

RELIGIOUS OF
THE SACRED
HEART OF MARY

Highlights

Eastern American Area

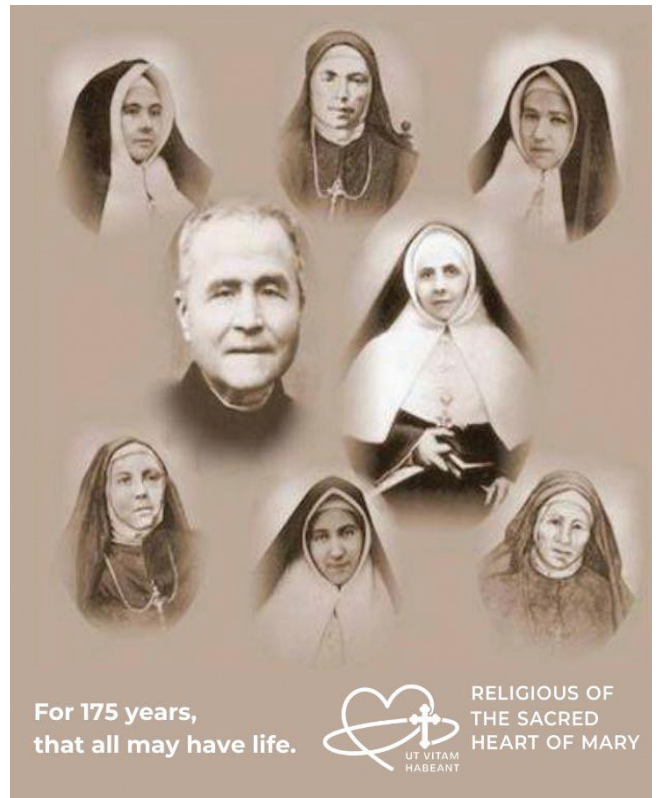
Spring 2024

A Letter from Our Generalate on the 175th Anniversary of Our Foundation

Joyful greetings on this 175th anniversary of the founding of our Institute! We rejoice and give thanks for the charism and mission entrusted to Jean Gailhac and our founding Sisters “for the service of the Church and the life of the world” (Const. 4). We remember too the journey in faith and time of the many sisters who followed them, answering the call of Christ and giving their lives in service to the Institute’s mission. Along with a host of lay companions, they form a great procession of people walking together, across time and space, sharing the one dream of making God known and loved, rich in their diversity, one body for mission. As we remember their story - our story - we give thanks for God’s immense goodness, generosity and compassion towards the Institute, from its foundation to the present day.

Writing about the early years, Sister Rosa do Carmo Sampaio surmised that “when Jean Gailhac founded the Institute, he was far from imagining its future development.” (Sampaio, *A Journey in Faith and Time*, Vol. 1, p.104) But expansion was rapid. As soon as the Motherhouse was established, “a great desire to expand arose within the community” (Ibid. p.134). She attributes this to “Fr. Gailhac’s zeal and that of the first community” which was “unlimited” (Ibid. p.113). Driven by the inner flame of faith and zeal, and with the cooperation of many lay people, the mission continued to expand for more than one hundred years, during a time of relative stability in the Church and world, and when religious life seemed unchanging. There were difficulties, obstacles, sufferings and even persecutions, but the mission was abundantly blessed and fruitful. For that we rejoice and give thanks on this anniversary.

The following 75 years brought about change on a global scale, while the Second Vatican Council inaugurated an era of renewal and adaptation in the Church and religious life. Inspired by the Spirit, the Church reached out to embrace “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties” of all people, especially “those who are poor or in any way afflicted” (*Gaudium et Spes* 1). The RSHM responded to the Church’s call with the same faith and zeal as that of our Founders. They undertook renewal programs, adapted their lifestyles, and engaged in new ministries, moving closer to the poor and



marginalized. One of the great graces of the Second Vatican Council - the rediscovery of the vocation of the laity in the Church’s mission - enabled sisters and lay people to work side by side in pastoral ministry in schools, hospitals, and parishes. Throughout these remarkably dynamic years, the charism of Jean Gailhac was a resilient and dynamic force adapting to the changes and responding to the new mission needs that arose.

Today, as we “remember the past with gratitude,” we ask for the grace to “live the present with passion, and to embrace the future with hope” (Pope Francis, *Year of Consecrated Life*, Nov. 21, 2014). In our contemporary world, where challenges are often global in scale, global responses are required, involving our collaboration and networking with different groups. Within our Institute, there are networks in place, to address some of today’s most urgent needs, while many RSHM throughout the Institute work with other religious congregations as well as groups of lay

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Signs of the Times

At 175 Years, a Fresh Look at the RSHM Charism



The Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary received a particular spirit or charism from our founder, Father Jean Gailhac, which became embodied in the life and leadership of Mere St. Jean, in the lives and mission of the founding sisters and in those who came after them until this very day. This spirit or charism was expressed in many of the letters of Father Gailhac to the early community. In particular, he called the community to live in a spirit of **faith** and **zeal**; ultimately, faith in God as made known in Christ Jesus and zeal for fullness of life especially for those on the margins of society.

Be Turned Toward God and Imitate Jesus Christ

It is helpful to follow the two threads of faith and zeal in Gailhac's correspondence to the sisters where he expresses the charism several different ways. I have been particularly moved by his constant admonition that the sisters "Be turned toward God;" it recurs more than 140 times in his letters. Writing to a community in 1877, he exhorts them:

"My children, be turned toward God, toward Him once and for all, toward God entirely, toward God unreservedly, toward God in every detail of life, toward God always."

Being turned toward God, however, is not enough by itself to shape the character of an apostolic religious' life. Gailhac insists that this desire for God must be effective; it must be accompanied by our loving attitudes and actions toward others. "It is all very well to say: We wish to be turned toward God. But our conduct almost always contradicts our words. Oh, if once and for all, sincerely, effectively, we would say to God 'We are yours,' at the same moment God would be 'all ours.'"

In stressing the embodied character of our dedication to God, Gailhac often speaks of imitating Jesus Christ. "Your life must be the image, the copy of His life.... So, without delay, after the example of Jesus Christ, hasten to dedicate your whole life to the glory of God, the up-building of the neighbor, to the works of salvation." And further, "To imitate Jesus Christ then is to love all that He loves and to hate all that He hates." Finally, Gailhac insists "to contemplate Him, that is



not enough; you must imitate Jesus Christ.” In the spirituality and language of his day, Gailhac articulates the aim of the apostolic religious. It is to be holy; it is to imitate Jesus Christ so as to participate in the salvific work of Jesus Christ in saving souls.

From what we have said above, it is fair to conclude that the desire for God is the root of our faith; the imitation of Jesus Christ is the root of our zeal.

Participation in the Work of God

Another theme which appears in Gailhac’s writings is continuing the “work of God.” This phrase appears more than 125 times throughout his letters. To do the work of God is, in fact, to do the work of Jesus Christ who always fulfilled the will of God. To imitate Jesus Christ is to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ which Gailhac articulates as the work of salvation. “I have always wished that all the members be penetrated with this thought – that God has chosen them in this end-time only to be co-workers of Jesus Christ in His great work for the salvation of the world.” As Mary Milligan states in her work, *That They May Have Life* (p. 160), “Because of their participation in the work of redemption, the sisters are associates of the apostles.” On the feast of the Ascension 1883, Gailhac reminds the sisters that they are called to be successors of the apostles and that the “highest objective of the apostles’ work and of your own is to lead others to eternal life.” As Milligan states, “It is participation in the saving, revelatory mission of Jesus Christ...that Gailhac is stressing.” (*That They May Have Life*, p. 162). This participatory work in Christ’s mission is the mission and ministry of the community even if we understand and articulate what salvation means in slightly different terms than Gailhac used in the 19th century.

From what we have said about the spirit or charism of **faith** and **zeal**, it is in the single-hearted dedication to God and in continuing the work of God in Jesus Christ that our mission “To know and love God and to make God known and loved” stands out so clearly as the RSHM contribution to the Church and to the world.

Catherine Vincie, RSHM

A new image for a new time

Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary | 24th February 2024



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NEW IMAGE, SAME MISSION

Leading up to our 175th Anniversary celebration, many who follow us on social media may have seen our countdown posts on Facebook or Instagram. “A new image for a new time.” “A new image, the same heart.” “A new image, the same cross.” “A new image, the same mission.” Our mission, “to know and love God and to make God known and loved,” has been our constant, while how we respond to the needs of our times continuously changes. For example, in the early years of the Eastern American Area, many sisters served as educators and administrators of RSHM schools throughout the United States. Post-Vatican II, sisters began to take on varied roles throughout the community. Whether helping the impoverished in Appalachia, being missioned to Africa, providing legal services and other assistance to new immigrants and their families, serving the sick and infirmed, or continuing to serve as educators and administrators, the RSHM remained true to their charism and mission.

So, as the Institute marked its 175th anniversary with prayer and celebration on February 24th, it also unveiled a new logo. It combines the heart, the cross and a circular shape which recalls the idea of openness and connection with the world, and the importance of love and care. The cross inside the heart signifies the importance of a listening heart and is linked to the circular line representing the RSHM/RSCM community. The use of this single logo throughout the Institute reaffirms our unity.

As we continue to celebrate our anniversary and mission throughout the year, look for our new social media campaign, “175 Years, 175 Faces.” Sisters, SHM Extended Family, alumni, collaborators in ministry, members of our Global Network of Schools, supporters and friends from around the globe share their wishes and dreams for the Institute, as well as reflect back on significant moments in the Institute’s history in social media posts that will appear every other day, having started on February 24, 2024 and ending on February 24, 2025.

175 Years, 175 Faces



Sister Rosamond Blanchet
Eastern American Area Leader

“My dream continues that we live: firm in faith, vibrant in hope, rooted in love and one in service.”



Comments from Marymount London participants:

“The RSHM Leadership Retreat was an eye-opening opportunity for me, as I am new to the school and the mission of the RSHM sisters. I was glad to learn the mission of the RSHM is so well aligned with the UN sustainable development goals... The word ‘radical’ that Sister Luisa repeatedly used was so fitting and purposeful for us all that will carry the mission of the RSHM forward.”

“I was not brought up Catholic, but I can't not be impressed by the RSHM's love and zeal for God and how this translated into their vision and commitment to serve those who are marginalized in our society, so that they may be seen as ‘human’ and have life. Over these retreat days, I found this very challenging in my own personal faith journey and quite emotional.”



In the first days of January 2024, colleagues from the Marymount schools of London, Rome, and Paris gathered for a three-day spiritual retreat led by Sister Luisa Almendra, RSHM, and graciously hosted by Marymount International School Rome.

The theme of the gathering was: Keeping the RSHM's dream of life for all today: faith and zeal, unity and diversity, internationality...the challenges in the RSHM's history and in today's world. Veteran colleagues of all four schools remembered how the retreat in Beziers, France, created a profound sense of shared purpose and a heightened commitment to the RSHM mission, and it was with this excellent model to follow that our schools embarked on the retreat.

The program was expertly designed by Sister Luisa, and the route she traced for the three days was sequential:

On the first day, the retreat participants were invited to deepen their understanding of the spiritual and historical RSHM heritage with a particular focus on the work of the RSHM for women and children in need. This was then presented in an objective relationship with the participating schools. Sister Luisa drew the parallels between the founding vision of the RSHM and how it is reflected in the education of the whole person, including the social, physical, and spiritual in addition to the intellectual.

To build on this shared knowledge the next day, Sister Luisa worked with the retreat participants to reflect upon the theme of personal values: those of the Founders and the RSHM and those of the retreat participants. This allowed participants to develop an understanding of the effectiveness of the dynamism of the charism and spirit of the RSHM throughout the long and vibrant history into the present day.

Dream of Life For All



The third and final day of the retreat provided the retreat participants with the opportunity to identify and discuss the priorities and challenges of the RSHM mission today. Participants deepened their knowledge on the ways in which the RSHM are maintaining the dream of bringing life to everyone today in a multitude of ways throughout the world: the JPIC (justice, peace and integrity of creation) group and the RSHM-NGO presence among many others. As there was a wide array of staff members in attendance, some very new to an RSHM school, learning more about the full breadth of the activism, ethical leadership and service of the RSHM around the world made a considerable impact.

The retreat participants were a diverse group of people holding different roles in the schools, with varied areas of knowledge and experience. In this rich diversity developed a sense of unity as they were expertly guided by Sister Luisa in serious reflection, fruitful exchange and interaction, and enough free time to develop friendships across the individual schools. The Marymount staff members returned to their respective schools motivated to continue infusing their work with the life-giving mission of the RSHM in our whole child philosophy of education.

All four Marymount schools who were graced with the wonderful opportunity join together to share our gratitude to Sister Luisa for this meaningful experience! The heads of the four schools are hoping to run this retreat semi-annually to facilitate more staff having this opportunity.

*Sarah Thomas, M.Ed.
Head of School, Marymount International School, Paris*

Comments from Marymount London participants:

“As we come to this crossroads where the running of Marymount Schools is being transferred from the RSHM to lay leaders, we should follow their example of keeping one eye fixed on the past, taking stock of the present and looking to the future when we make decisions. The founding leaders were visionaries, and we should not forget this or be afraid to take risks. Test decisions against the yardstick of ‘what would the RSHM do?’”

“To keep the values of the founders alive and build on these, we should actively seek to attract and appoint people with similar values in order to deliver on the calling and mission of the schools. In working with our colleagues, we should be mindful to apply the values of respect, fairness and empathy.”

A Reflection on the United Nations' Commission on Social Development



THIS FEBRUARY, I participated in the 62nd Commission for Social and Sustainable Development that brought together U.N. leaders, analysts from related fields and grassroots participants from around the world. Its purpose may at first sound sweeping or simply aspirational: the eradication of poverty in its relation to social and planet injustice. Yet the underlying methodology of the commission brought these goals down to earth. Six

high level panels that were open to all brought new knowledge and data to bear on structural barriers to equity and rights of all people on this shared planet. Closely related to these panels of experts were 50 side events, smaller meetings in which diverse groups of member state representatives and NGOs discussed and shared their related projects and experiences. An unforgettable theme ran through every conversation: the right of every person to equity and social justice must drive us toward the change needed for a future in which “nobody is left behind.”

At this point you might wonder what I was doing there. I brought little practical experience or knowledge of the world beyond Europe and the United States or of the people at its peripheries. I was there because I wanted to learn more: a need enlivened by the writings of Pope Francis and the Synod as well as the reflections of many on the mission of the RSHM as we enter a transitional phase. This conference engaged people beyond abstractions; it involved encounters with others who have struggled even under unjust systems to find their voices, to offer opportunities to provide some security and growth to themselves and others.

Meetings covered a wide range of topics. I attended a session from a Working Women’s Forum with a telling title: “Empowering for Equity: Women’s Role in Cooperatives as Catalysts for Transforming Social Inequity and Patriarchal Practices.” Nandini Agad, a leader from rural India described her group’s efforts and achievements within the country’s agricultural economy. The women shared with a modest joy how they had learned to get loans and build a record of successful debt management. Their success not only gave greater opportunities for themselves and their families but improved agricultural production and distribution in their area.

Another side event included a few members of other NGOs of religious congregations that focused on root causes of inequity. “De-commodifying People, Things, and the Planet” took on the increasing tendency of today’s economies to treat these people, places and things as objects to be bought and sold. The ever-intensifying tendency of such commodification, according to Sister Winifred Doherty, RGS, has been to lose sight of their intrinsic value.

The day-long Civil Society Forum demonstrated the organization’s realism and capacity for self-critique. Most nations lag in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in time for the 2030 deadline (though Portugal gained a shout out for having done its homework). One could sense that people in the room felt a renewed



sense of urgency. At the same time, they heard in the background the drumbeat of war with its violence and increased military spending. Fergal Mythun, the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the U.N., put it succinctly: “Without peace there is nothing and nothing is anything without peace.” Yet there was energy among the diverse participants who had shared their heartbreaks and successes.

I found the presentation by Dr. Katriona O’Sullivan, an author and lecturer at Maynooth, Dublin, particularly moving. She startled the audience as she told the story of her life, standing at the panel as a visibly successful expert with a satisfying life. She then moved the story backward to her beginnings of a life of seemingly little worth. As a child of poverty, abuse, alienation from school and an early pregnancy she seemed destined to be one of those people left behind, burdens to themselves and others. Yet somehow the world turned, and she was placed in an excellent social program with mentors who recognized her intelligence and underlying dignity. Eventually she returned to school and then received a doctorate in Psychology from Trinity College. Dr. O’Sullivan has led a distinguished life, fulfilling her own dreams and inspiring others. In that conference room she opened up a space for hope, one that had been shared by so many others in their local efforts.

Although the U.N. faces daunting challenges today, the global awareness it embodies sustains the dream of a more connected and just world. Reflecting on the structures that impede the eradication of poverty, the pursuit of fulfillment, the restoration of the planet, one cannot visit there often and remain an observer. It is a place for people to join one another in a globally connected world extending to its little-known margins. From near and far, one observes how people have contributed in diverse ways to the development and the life of the planet, whether through advocacy, prayer and discernment for moral conscience, collaboration with others or the very activity of sustaining hope.

Jacquelyn Porter, RSHM



Letter from Our Generalate *Continued from page 1*

people, in advocacy, collaboration, and networking. During this anniversary year, we will initiate a new collaborative mission in Luena, Angola, incarnating the charism of Jean Gailhac in another African country and culture. Collaboration with others generates new life and energy for mission. It inspires us “to live the present with passion,” responding to the calls of the Spirit to go out, “risking the new and the unknown” (2019 Gen. Ch. Doc. p.3). God, who is “eternal newness...impels us constantly to set out anew, to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond” (Gaudete et Exultate 135).

On this 175th anniversary of foundation, we “embrace the future with hope,” knowing that we are blessed in living at this hope-filled time in our Church. While our world suffers from increasing inequality, division, conflict and natural disasters, the Church is steadily walking the synodal path, inspired by “a deep desire for inclusion, a deep desire to experience Church once again as a faith community...” (Patricia Murray, IBVM, UISG meeting, April 11, 2023). We recall the process of reflection used during the Synodal Assembly in October: “conversations in the Spirit,” or communal discernment, leading to consensus. This practice, which promotes active listening and the prayerful participation of everyone in decision-making, will facilitate the growth of a synodal dynamic across the whole Church.

As RSHM and collaborators, we embrace Pope Francis’ dream of a synodal Church, a listening, discerning Church in which the Holy Spirit is the key player. The dream fills us with hope and inspires us to work towards becoming a Church that leaves no one behind, a Church of the people of God, sent out as missionary pilgrims. Being with others, listening to them, acting alongside them, using the synodal tools of collaboration, networking, and advocacy, we can join our efforts, however small, to those of the many groups who are working today for justice, right relationships, and the care of our common home. Strengthened and encouraged by the synodal way, we “embrace the future with hope.”

It is our belief that God is living and working in our history today, as in the past. So we go forward in faith, “pilgrims of hope,” moving towards the Church’s Jubilee Year 2025 and beyond. We go forth together, disciples in mission, our hearts fired by the love of Christ, whom we have personally met and who has changed our lives forever. Sustained by daily encounter with Him in prayer and in life’s experiences, we look confidently toward new horizons of mission. Bringing the best of ourselves, we go out to the peripheries, to those at our borders, the excluded, the outcasts of society, sharing with them the Good News that has been entrusted to us. Believing that God will never abandon us, we are ready to undertake new initiatives, in the same spirit and with the same inclusive mind and heart as Jean Gailhac, and those who have gone before us. We go forward in joy, one body for mission, sisters and collaborators, continuing the Institute’s long procession across time and space, in a unity that is beautifully expressed by our new Institute logo.

The Institute’s mission continues. Another page of its history is being written. “There is no greater freedom” Pope Francis writes, “than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing every attempt to plan and control everything...” (Ev. Gaudium 280). May the Holy Spirit lead us into the future. May this 175th anniversary of foundation be a special year of receptivity to grace, a year of prayer, following Pope Francis’ call to the whole Church to make the year 2024 a great “symphony” of prayer, leading to the Jubilee year of 2025. May Mary, who was led by the breath of the Spirit, and “believed in the fulfillment of what the Lord told her” (Luke 1:45) be with us on the journey.

Maria do Rosário Monica Sipiwe Ana Luísa Paú Margaret

Maria do Rosário Durães, Monica Walsh, Sipiwe Phiri, Ana Luísa Pinto, Maria Aparecida Moreira, Margaret Fielding

HIGHLIGHTS PUZZLE: Trinity

The themed clues in this puzzle are references to triples in the life of Jesus.

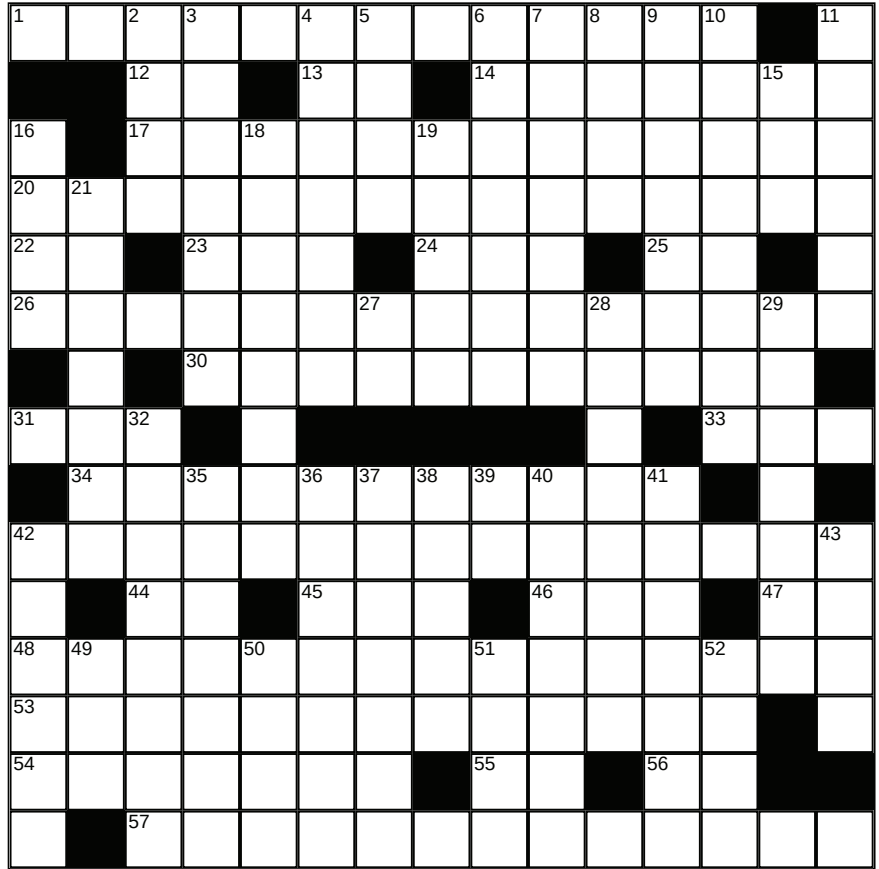
Answers are posted at www.rshm-east.org/category/newsletter

Across

1. *Good Friday to Easter Sunday
12. Online abbr.
13. Stanford Univ.
14. Counterparts of Popeyes?
17. Kurt's wager is Monday, briefly
20. Less effective annoyance
22. Et __ Brute!
23. Private Internet Access, abbr.
24. Pain or ailment in Paris
25. Not out
26. *Years after Nazareth, briefly
30. Throw identification to Yna, briefly
31. Rebel, abbr.
33. Former high performance Pontiac
34. *Jesus resisted them in the desert
42. NY basketball team stays strong
44. Turnpike, abbr.
45. National University Hosp.
46. America on the Move, abbr.
47. Note that follows so
48. *Stumbles on the road to Calvary
53. *Naysays by the first Pope
54. Cut edges of apple dessert
55. Located in
56. Irish Arts, abbr.
57. Snake's hissy fits end

Down

2. ____ Ono
3. Way to drink a slurpee?
4. Way to catch lobsters in Nova Scotia, briefly
5. Rump
6. Green gem
7. Wreck it completely, as a car
8. Oblates of Mary Immaculate, abbr.
9. Not in a neat way
10. How one can obtain coal
11. Univ. of Sierra Nevada Grad. Record Exam
15. Long time
16. Thank you from the Veep
18. Slowing up of Public Relations, briefly
19. Baby deer of film
21. Peter belonging to us, informally
27. Not them
28. Couch for rent?
29. Big legacy
32. Aunt Betty in Barcelona
35. Mt. Sinai poems, briefly
36. 10 Crime Scene Investigators, briefly
37. An intentional killing
38. Lake _____, straddling the California-Nevada border
39. Roman numeral following I



40. Web located
41. Inhabitants of Somalia
42. Reorganized Parent Teacher Assoc.
43. Small amount of a spice
49. ____odynamic
50. French pen pal, abbr.
51. Obstacle
52. Exam for aspiring attorneys

Bea McMahon, RSHM

RSHM Highlights is a production of the Communications and Advancement Office of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Eastern America. Editors: Maureen Egan, Bea McMahon, RSHM, Catherine Vincie, RSHM, Cathy Wilkins, and Cleve Youngblood, RSHM | Design: Barbara DeAngelo

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