

**Distinguished Service Award  
Southwest Region ACPE  
October 1, 2009**



**Creative Inspiration  
of Clinical Pastoral Education Supervision**

**Sister Agnes Mary Joy, M.M.**

*REJOICE ALWAYS IN THE LORD...*

Philippians 4, 4

*HERE AM I AMONG YOU AS ONE WHO SERVES...*

Luke 22, 27

Thank you for the honor you have shared this evening. This Award testifies to the many years of service in which we have blessed each other. I am very happy to receive this Award. We all have shared participation in that ***Creative Inspiration of Clinical Pastoral Education Supervision*** that this Conference celebrates. We have heard God's call to love and to serve, through pastoral care-giving, ministry, healing, and teaching as supervisors in this unique, challenging movement.

Bill Carpenter's invitation to accept this award came as a complete surprise. Thus, this past month has occasioned for me a blessed review of my thirty-seven treasured years of service with all of us who form the living community of ACPE. You may be familiar with a prayerful period of spiritual reflection called "A Thirty-Day Retreat." I spent such a month in July, 1973, discerning God's call as I prepared to take a possible year's CPE program. Obviously it grew- until now!

May I briefly share this past month's spiritual reflection of these cherished years of the ***Creative Inspiration*** that has been for me pastoral service with colleagues, patients, students, and medical, chaplaincy and hospital staff since 1973. I surfaced memories of God-given resources of home, family, educational development, religious gifts of the Spirit and prayer, entrance fifty-six years ago into the Maryknoll Sisters' Congregation, living and teaching in missions in Panama and Mexico, and returning to USA to serve six years teaching on the formation staff of the Maryknoll Congregation. The '60's surfaced new religious models. Women came to ACPE. Catholic women enrolled after Vatican II. In '72, Maryknoll asked me to enter a unit of Dick Lehman's program in New York. That was my privileged initiation to CPE. Dick is an ACPE pioneer. He knew Anton Boisen personally. He worked to unite North, East and South CPE Programs.

That Association of CPE was but six years old, when I was accepted by Houston's Institute of Religion for a year's program. The Institute had already served as structure for ministries in the South's Texas Medical Center since 1954. (That history, a draft of which I have completed, is for another day.)

The ***Creative Inspiration has*** been a bottom line blessing through the years for Clinical Pastoral Education, and for me as I got to experience it. Dr. Boisen began the movement teaching four seminarians in Worcester, Mass. Hospital, in 1925. In those early years, Medical Dr. Helen Flanders Dunbar joined Rev. Boisen in developing the pastoral movement. She also held a Theology Degree.

As a CPE student in the Harris County Hospital District, Houston, Texas, I began to realize "here was a match!" I had been invited to their program by Rev. Ron Sunderland, an Australian Uniting–Methodist. His multi-culture experience from the other side of the world was a blessing for me. He already supervised two women students. He assigned me to the Casa de Amigos Community Health Clinic where I could use my Spanish language in patient care. In 1973, Ron was the sole USA Supervisor open to Supervise my ministry to the Hispanic patients. (Now both Supervisors in the Hospital District are bilingual.)

There was another Catholic Sister in the 1973 group, and a Presbyterian lay-woman, a first, who over the years obtained her ordination. Subsequently, I supervised several lay women. The Hospital District Chaplaincy and the Hermann Hospital Chaplains formed one Group. There was a Dutch woman Presbyterian Minister in the Herman Group. When Ron Sunderland was invited to become Director of the Institute of Religion, I was invited to become Acting Director of the Chaplaincy Department. It has been with great peace and delight that I have served in the growth of the Hospital District ACPE. Our SW Region demonstrates firm commitment to students and patients and staff through supervisory and pastoral programs for clergy and seminarians, men and women lay persons, minority and cultural groups.

Between 1976 through 1979 I was able to complete the pending re-accreditation process for the CPE program, the first of several over the years. In 1979 I completed my requirements for Full Supervisory certification. You can surmise correctly that those were very full, exciting years of ***Creative Inspiration***.

Dick Lehman of course was my first Supervisor, but I was not in a Supervisory training at that Unit. Ron Sunderland was the first of my training Supervisors from the Texas Medical Center. I call each Supervisor by name, for from each I learned the makeup of the ecumenical world new to me. I slowly got in on the ground level of becoming a Supervisor. George Thompson won a teaching victory when he searched for the key to “Agnes, what do you want to do?” .....Finally, I could say, “I want to teach!” Art Travis signed off on my work since we were in two campus locations. John Boyle spent a few short months as Supervisor before moving on to Chicago. Ron Wilkins, while at St. Joseph’s downtown, was peacefully and humorously patient as I supervised a group of Catholic Seminarians. Luke Jones, from St. Luke’s, offered an Episcopalian liturgical approach. In 1979, Raymond Lawrence contributed to my process of meeting the final “Committee” to obtain Full Supervisor credentials.

The late Al Greenburg generously volunteered colleague-time when he came back from the military. He was the only extra staff-Supervisor in the course of my Hospital District years. I served on Regional Committees: Certification, Accreditation, Secretary, Nominating, and often ad hoc when a woman was requested on a committee. I served one term on the National Finance Committee, attended most Regional and National conferences, and four International Pastoral Care Conferences. In 1986, I received the Religious Service Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. I always enjoyed renewing friendships, writing evaluation reports, (Really!), and meeting students around the nation who were serving in pastoral ministry or Supervision. For many years I was the only woman Director of a Chaplaincy Department in the Texas Medical Center, and the only Roman Catholic woman Supervisor there.

In the early '80's, Houston's Baptists sponsored several bilingual pastors from the Caribbean. One remains on the Chaplaincy Staff. I conducted the first Regional CPE Programs in the Spanish language. I and a Spanish-speaking student travelled to Mexico City and actually recruited two students for a year and one for a unit. (Not to mention that there was quite a strong "temblor," (earthquake), the day we arrived. Everything significant in CPE! To move on to the early '90's, several groups of Carmelite Catholic Sisters of Mexican background came for a 120 hour course "Introduction to Pastoral Care" that I gave in their Spanish language. Several of them later joined English speaking Units individually to complete a year's CPE. Two Sisters stayed on the staff as part-time, one recently retired, and one still on the staff. The CPE student body and staff remain intercultural and international.

During this past month of reflection, I read Fr. Joseph Heim's book **What They Taught Us**, a collection of "*How Maryknoll Missioners Were Evangelized by the Poor.*" This book underlines **Creative Inspiration** for me through Jesus' words:

*"Here am I among you as one who serves."*

We serve as Supervisors with colleagues and students, and as pastors care-givers to the needy, the poor, the critically injured, the confused or lonely, those in pain, suffering, and loss, and those with rejoicing and peace. The Conference theme is so well chosen. Service of love is shared. Once more, I thank you all. I recall several years ago praying at the bedside of a very ill, elderly patient. She was sitting up straight, fully clothed, even to the rose-colored brimmed hat and scuffed practical shoes. As I walked on down the hall, she smiled gently, waved, and called out, "*Honey, I'll meet you in glory.*" Thank you all, Amen, Alleluia.

On the cover of these pages, two persons move quietly across a Lake in the Adirondacks of New York, be it sunrise or sunset. The picture is a symbol of the depth of pastoral love and healing. Though the two persons seem separated, they are united while one or the other is leading or balancing the boat. God's loving creation surrounds them in the movement, the goal and the heart of their journey, as Jesus' says

*"Here I am among you as one who serves."*