



Remembering Spring at LEN News

Excerpts from Mary Ann Coyle's writings

My cup of coffee is sitting on a cold windowsill directly to my right.

February is soon to merge into March. But all I see is a blanket of snow. Occasionally, a Flicker comes and now and then a little snow bird vacates its tree abode. The little grape hyacinth, the stalwart daffodil are not likely to raise their heads for another week at least!

In the *Denver Post* in Spring 2011, Mike Keefe had a cartoon that made me pause and wonder if we humans really get it. Placed against a black background was the view of Earth from a NASA photo with the caption "Nuclear Waste



Containment Vessel." I'm sure it was the magnitude 9.0 quake and resultant tsunami along Japan's northeastern coast that prompted Keefe's drawing. I didn't want my dark side to overshadow the hope I experience.

Today we find young people, mid-life folks, wise-elders and ancient ones united in their thought about the changes we must make if life on this planet is to persist for future generations. In the classroom we taught students for many years about the three primary colors: red, blue and yellow. Today every paper we pick up challenges us to think GREEN. After reading this issue of *Loretto Earth*

Network News, rest for a bit, pick up your journal and list for yourself the efforts you are making on a regular basis to let GREEN be primary in your life and thinking. As the mystic and poet Rumi writes: There is a fountain inside you—don't walk around with an empty bucket.

It may have been the early 1900's when the poet Rilke wrote, "If we surrendered to Earth's intelligence we could rise up rooted, like trees." Nearly a century later, Mary Oliver wrote about sitting down on a hillside to think about God when a cricket came along and began to move the hillside soil. She writes, "Let us hope it will always be like this, each of us going on in our inexplicable ways building the universe."



Sister Charles Loretto





Toasting Mary Ann Coyle

Vivian Doremus and Libby Comeaux, by Judith Powers

Editor's Note

Libby Comeaux CoL

When Mary Ann Coyle completed her term as President of the Loretto Community, the Loretto Earth Network welcomed her passionate engagement as editor of *Loretto Earth Network News* and one of our loyal LEN Coordinators. Her many years with us, so freshly ended, are dearly missed.

Now in another season of the Loretto Community, the larger publication strategy shifts to emphasize the interconnected nature of the current crises and our woven ministries in response. You have in your hands the last edition of *LEN News*.

Many thanks to Vivian Doremus, Anna Koop, and Mary Ann Cunningham for their kind contributions. I especially treasure a conversation in

which Mary Ann Cunningham elaborated on the voting registration work she shared with Mary Ann Coyle in the South (see bottom of page 6). Apparently, a segregated Catholic parish became too uncomfortable hosting the sisters, so they moved in with a generous black Baptist family instead. Anna sent her article in with a note for me, "Thanks for putting together this one last LEN newsletter and being willing with others to put it to rest with our dear Mary Ann Coyle."

It has been my honor to follow briefly in the footsteps of a legend and dear friend. Here we celebrate the seasons of Mary Ann's life in Loretto Earth Network. Unless otherwise noted, this entire issue is in her own words (though a bit rearranged). The center of this issue celebrates her life in local community.

Whatever we may be putting to rest, Mary Ann's loving spirit endures in our hearts.

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Correspondences

By Vivian Doremus, CoL

In the letter to friends which she sent in May, Chub described her days in the vestibule of death. As she wrote,

“It is helpful to hear from others who are capable of reflecting on this dramatic time and willing to share with others.”

I can only imagine how she was looking around at the vestibule, examining its features, and wondering what was behind the big door. Can't you see her face? Open, interested, looking carefully about, with a warm and pleasant expression – as she met almost everything.

Mary Ann closed her short letter by promising to welcome us when we arrive at the Pearly Gates and to show us around. I can testify personally that welcoming and reassuring were things that Chub did to perfection. As a rather young Sister, just four years out of the House of Studies, I received the astonishing assignment to teach at Loretto Heights College. This amazed me, as my degree in elementary education, followed by one year of fourth grade teaching, then three years of teaching Spanish at Machebeuf High School, hardly seemed enough to qualify me to report to a college campus and teach there. Of course, relying heavily on *Deus* fulfilling the *Provedebit* promise, I showed up, mystified and terrified in equal parts. The first day, in addition to receiving class assignments from the Dean, the exquisite Sr Cecile

Reddin, I learned that I would live in and be in charge of a small dormitory, St Joseph Hall. My, my.

Enter Sr Charles Loretto, as our dear Mary Ann was called in those days. While the other lions of academia greeted me with varying degrees of chilly astonishment, Chub was always smiling and kind, offering to show me around and make me welcome. I spent three years at LHC and they eventually proved to be instructive and delightful. I even made friends of some of some of the lions (others I carefully avoided so as not to be eaten, or gleefully baited them just for fun). Chub was always there for me. One of the faculty with an earned doctorate, in Chemistry, Chub never acted as if a young person whose highest academic credential was a master's degree being earned in inches over the intervening summers, should be relegated to second-class, or in some cases, steerage status. She always treated me with respect and kind attention, in any committee meeting or faculty forum in which we met.

Over ensuing years, we lost touch as I moved eastward, and Chub engaged in numerous endeavors after her assignment at LHC. Years later, when I was to be received as a co-member, my contact person, the magnificent Sr Ann Patrick Ware, thought it would be suitable to invite Mary Ann, now President of the

Community, to be a guest at the ceremony. She came willingly, and added much zest and joy to the spring meeting of Community Group 21, as we met on a lovely day at the home of Jeannine and Don Solar.

Our friendship subsequently deepened through correspondence.

Mary Ann wrote magnificent regular letters to the community, relaying information, soliciting input, recounting her travels and experiences, and in a most poetic way, describing the unfolding of life and grace as she experienced them.

After nearly each community missive, I felt compelled to write back! Her letters were an immense source of interest and inspiration over the years. Others who write their memories and tributes will flesh out her rich career and many accomplishments. I wish only to thank her for years of kindness, and incredible mentoring.



Community Living

By Anna Koop

How grateful we are for the life of our beloved Mary Ann Coyle.

She supported the Loretto Earth Network in so many ways. As editor of the newsletter she scouted out interesting articles and then made them look good by her excellent editing. She helped the community be conscious of our responsibility to reduce our carbon foot print and to appreciate the beauty of nature. Who could forget her love for her precious doggies and the birds, whom she fed royally, outside the kitchen window. Insects were not her favorite but she did not speak unkindly of them. She had books on Colorado birds and flowers and never failed to use them when she saw something she did not recognize. She tolerated my raised bed gardens in her back yard and when they first appeared said, "You are going to need a ladder to tend those gardens as the raised beds are so high!!!"

Mary Ann was a great person for relationship. During her administration as our President she went to great ends to visit members who lived places that were not necessarily on the Loretto routes to wherever she was going. She was a great listener but not shy about sharing her opinion when asked. Mary Ann often called community members who were close to members who just died. Her funeral homilies made attending funerals a joy as her descriptions

of people were always so wonderful.

Mary Ann made friends with many community members, colleagues, former students and was open to a conversation with almost anyone who tried to engage her.

I remember a time at an LCWR regional meeting when at the end of the day an older sister engaged her in a conversation which seemed to me to be endless. I afterward asked her, "Don't you ever tire of talking and listening to people?" She said something like, "Oh no, I always think people have interesting things to say." She was a true extrovert and an excellent proponent and practitioner of hospitality. I, of course, appreciated how she and Mary Ann Cunningham welcomed me as I claimed them as my Denver Loretto Community.

WE ACT FOR JUSTICE AND WORK FOR PEACE is the mantra which arose during Mary Ann's administration. It was my joy to travel with the Mary Anns to a number of protests. Mary



Buffy Boesen SL, Champ, Anne Spillane CoL, Ché, Mary Ann Coyle SL



Maria Daniel SL; Nasreen Daniel SL; Samina Iqbal SL

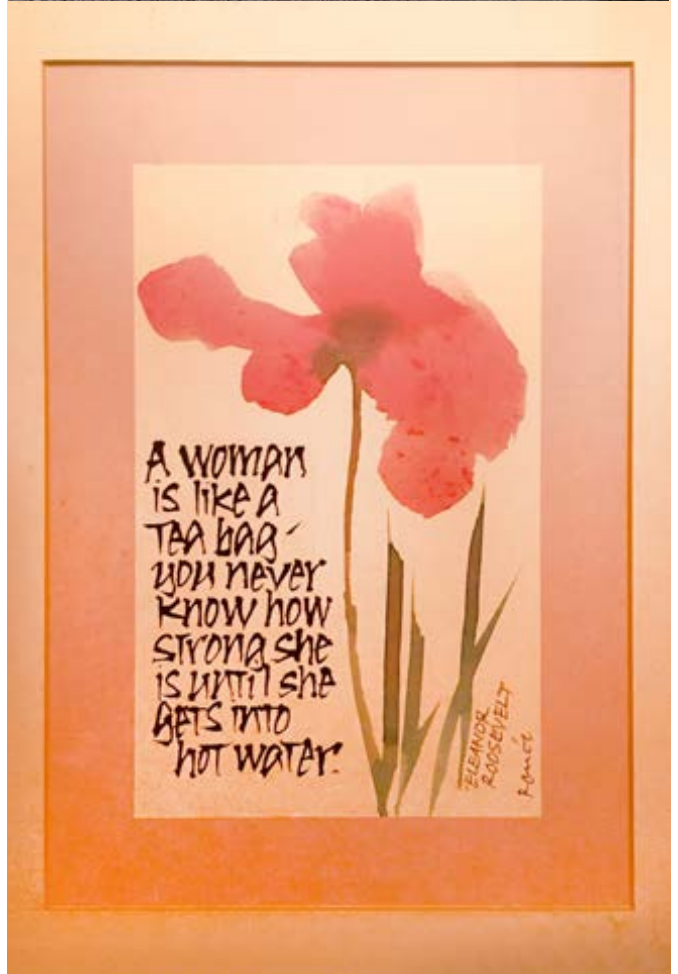
Ann decided while president to have the entire executive committee attend the SOA protest in Georgia. And then there was the Women's march in D.C., the anti-nukes protests in Las Vegas and D.C. - and the Peace Train! It was such a joy to share those trips with the two Mary Anns. Sometimes we would put a book in the tape player or read one aloud. And we all agreed to being distracted by a little side trip that looked interesting or was meant for a visit to relatives or a Loretto member.

Mary Ann was a hard worker staying up till all hours of the night writing the next day's speech and listening to the struggles of someone. I called her the queen of collaboration and she and Mary Ann Cunningham the queens of innovation.

What a joy to have been gifted with the friendship of such a wonderful person.

in companionable kettle steeping
tea is woman's drink
brewed slowly
the water just right
poured over dried leaves
of the Camellia sinensis
always it has meant
healing and comfort
friendship unhurried
and the soothing of spirits
and, ah, the words
in countless kitchens spoken
the sifting of thought
distilling of wisdom
concocting of hope
and perhaps
at the end
a reading of tomorrows

Mary Ann Cunningham, SL



Hand-carved wooden train commemorating the Peace Train, by Joan van Leeuwen. Passenger Pigeons page 7 by Daniel Lowenstein. Tree photos on pages 1 and 6 by Fran Kaliher, All Rights Reserved. Pages 4, 5, and 8 file photos of the Loretto Community.

Summer Wanderings

By Mary Ann Coyle

It is now mid-July. I look out my window and see that the leaves from our large maple tree have started to fall. It is strange and somewhat disconcerting. Do you think it is because of our disrespect for sacred Earth? Perhaps we ought to be seeking answers to this Earth dilemma from Native Americans and their ancestors who have long held the land in peace and harmony, preserving it in trust for generations past, present, and those still to come.

Sometimes in *Loretto Earth Network News*, we have scrambled a number of pieces together in a way similar to how your mother may have taught you to make coleslaw when you were young. I have so many thoughts rolling around in my head at this moment! Our world today seems in dreadful disarray, people appearing lost in their devices, valuing social media more than actual word-to-word communication. It can certainly be my age and maybe an innate Luddite leaning that makes me want to see how my ideas are received and if they are perhaps useful to promote. What is my personal responsibility to the sustainability of Planet Earth for the generations to come? ...



There is so much to learn and so little time to do it!

Way back in 1993, *Loretto Magazine* featured a lead article written for us in which Thomas Berry challenged *Loretto* to be aware of and reflect on the single sacred community of the entire universe. He wrote, "Throughout the natural world there is an intimacy of things with each other. The intimacy of the wind and the soaring raptors, the rain and the vegetation, the sea and the shore. So too the intimacy of the bee with the flower, the intimacy of the bluebird parents with the newly hatched young." He indicated that we will see a renewal of existing religious communities and the rise of new ones as soon as "we recognize and dedicate ourselves to the Great Work before us, the

renewal of Earth as the presence of the Divine."

In August I stand looking out the window at Villa Maria del Mar in Santa Cruz. I am anticipating the People and Earth Are ONE retreat lead by Marya Grathwohl and Helen Prejean soon to begin. My eyes feast on beauty in every direction: rolling waves breaking in white caps near the shore, playful dolphins and sea lions enjoying the sun and the companionship of birds, sardines, seaweed and kelp. The swooping pelicans, gulls, terns, and cormorants, as well as the mussels, barnacles, mollusks, and starfish joining us, help us understand that everything in this universe is attached by an unbreakable bond to everything else.

In 1969 Mary Ann volunteered as an exchange teacher for summer terms at Meharry College, one of the nation's oldest and largest historically black academic health science centers dedicated to educating physicians, dentists, researchers and health policy experts. During the 1970-71 school year, she taught at Texas College, an accredited historically black four-year college located in Tyler, Texas, affiliated with the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and the United Negro College Fund. She followed up with summers of voter registration in the southern states in the company of her good friend, Sister Mary Ann Cunningham — with whom she also studied Spanish in Mexico. These were the beginnings of Mary Ann's interest in championing causes of the underprivileged. Eleanor Craig, SL, Obituary of Mary Ann Coyle, www.lorettocommunity.org.

Autumn Reflections

By Mary Ann Coyle



Snowmass region by Libby Comeaux

We must do everything we can imagine to create right relationships so that our planet Earth will remain vital for human and nonhuman life.

Study and reflection on the Earth Charter can help us move toward this goal.

Thomas Berry has spoken and written eloquently on the role of religious institutions in the building of the Earth community. "The Great Work before us, the task of moving modern industrial civilization from its present devastating influence on Earth to a more benign mode of presence, is not a role that we have chosen. It is a role given to us, beyond any consultation with ourselves. We did not choose. We were chosen by some power beyond ourselves for this historical task. We do not choose the moment of our birth, who our parents

will be, our particular culture or the historical moment when we will be born. We do not choose the status of spiritual insight or political or economic conditions that will be the context of our lives. We are, as it were, thrown into existence with a challenge and a role that is beyond any personal choice. The nobility of our lives, however, depends upon the manner in which we come to understand and fulfill our assigned role."

When the *Denver Post* interviewed me in Fall, 1994, about the direction the Loretto Community would take under a new presidency, I responded that we will continue its work with the poor, for a cleaner environment and against all forms of violence. I had no definite goals except to continue programs already under way, adding, "My role will be set by the community."

Though we don't have many recorded words of our earliest sisters, we can imagine them urging us, as this new century begins, to unite ourselves with the poor, to strive to bring forth a non-violent world, to promote equality and dignity, and to transform unjust systems. They would also encourage us to work to heal the earth, to continue to educate in many settings, to minister to the sick, to work with the disenfranchised, to advocate for women and to seek economic justice for all.

It is very clear that the way of our foremothers is to stand up, not to be afraid, and to dance to the music of the Gospels. To admit we're not sure what the next step is all the time, but we go on dancing, knowing that we're not alone. I encourage each of us to take appropriate risks. New learnings and insights generally follow. Sometimes change is a by-product.

I am drawn to the quote of Marcel Proust, "The real voyage of discovery does not consist of seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."



Winter Knowings

By Mary Ann Coyle

We care passionately for this Earth of magnificent, vibrant diversity. When we are faced with apparently divergent values, let us delight in our bioregion and savor the wisdom Nature brings us.

In 2009 I had the thrill of being in a truly environmentally conscious city/country. I was feeling a bit sad that I wouldn't be in Denver to participate in the 350.org activities in mid-December. However, at the stroke of 3:00 p.m. on December 12, I was entering St. Joseph's Church in Nijmegen, Holland. The sexton was manually tolling the bells to remind everyone in hearing distance of the important work in progress in Copenhagen. And at the same time, other Loretto members were participating in other places; we were all united in hope and prayer.

Other things I noticed in Holland gave me reason to pause and think of my own country. I saw big wire bins at street corners, gardeners out raking, and stacking leaves in the bins (no plastic bundles in Nijmegen!). People were free to take leaves for mulch; the city took what was needed for parks and common areas. Big parking lots were filled, not with cars, but with bikes. People were walking; children were playing outside in the fresh air. Truly, it seems to me, Holland is a leader. The Dutch people I met are clear that making a radical change in

our relationship with nature is no longer just an option but an obvious necessity.

The Haiti earthquake of 2010 said so much on so many levels about climate, violence, injustice, poverty, and suffering. How can I incorporate into my pledge all these elements? What actions can I take to heal Mother Earth and promote social justice within the human community?

I hope after you finish *LENN News* you will be encouraged.

Yes, there is something good penetrating the airwaves. And it is the work of many citizens of Earth who are coming to the realization that, as Thomas Berry wrote, "to devastate any aspect of the natural world is to distort the sublime experiences that provide fulfillment to the human mode of being."

I am sure you have read or seen the anonymous quote — "We'll hold this line until Hell freezes over — then we'll hold it on ice skates."



"Recognizing the violence against Earth that intensifies the suffering of people on the margins, as well as present and future generations of all species, the Loretto Community commits to significantly mitigate our impact on climate change and ecological degradation...Because of our current political, social, and ecological context, we are now called to conduct a thorough assessment of our carbon footprint, collaborate with other religious communities who share similar values, and explore the many ways available to us to help fulfill the Paris Climate Agreement. We state unequivocally that We Are Still In. We commit to continually discern — and then take — our next steps to evolve in solidarity with Earth."
(Loretto Community Assembly 2018)