

## EDITOR'S NOTE

There are crossword puzzle books stashed in most rooms of the house and sheets torn from flight magazines and newspapers on my kitchen table. When the clue in one of the puzzles at hand last week was “coalesce,” I quickly filled in the white boxes with “integrate.” I’ve had mission integration on my mind. And in the simple exercise of the puzzle I recognized that the act of integrating precedes any state of integration. Indeed, mission integration involves a lot of action — leading formation, ministering to staff, speaking up for values, listening to new voices, balancing priorities, taking risks. Mission integration is always ongoing; it’s never mission accomplished.



MARY ANN  
STEINER

At a recent CHA meeting of mission leaders, sponsors and ministry executives, Fr. Bryan Hehir used the image of a circle whose center is Catholic identity and whose mission is to reach the far edges of the circumference — where the church meets the culture of a changing and varied world. The missionary, the minister, the evangelist and, in this case, the mission leader traverse the roads or radii to reach the distant circumference. The culture of encounter that Pope Francis calls us to enter doesn’t happen at the center, where identity is secure and comfortably reinforced. It takes place near the blurred lines and in rutted trenches at the edges of our comfort, our communities and even our safety.

Cultivating and integrating mission beyond the hub of identity is the charge of everyone in the healing ministry. Yet the charge to cover the distance from the center to new frontiers is intentionally and most closely aligned with our mission leaders. While the rest of us witness to mission in many ways in our ministries, mission leaders are the constant travelers along the trajectories of mission as it is extended into new terrains, reinstated where it is at risk and reinvigorated where it has become lax. From the apostles to our founders, we have holy precedents for itinerant preachers, ministers and healers who traveled uncertain routes to bring healing and wholeness, long before we coined the term mission integration. As Sr. Pat Talone, RSM, points out in her article, one of the ways to maintain your footing on the precarious stretches of the journey is to just keep moving.

The attributes of the traveler — good balance, preparation, endurance and courage — are factors in any journey. So, too, are the particulars of the

terrain. Mission leaders are not sent to integrate the ministry’s mission in amorphous territories. If Fr. Hehir’s imagery of a circle can be carried forward, there are arrows on the compass, spokes in the wheel, blades of the windmill and struts within a geodesic sphere that provide direction and uphold the structure. In mission leader language, these supports translate into ongoing formation, the practice of servant leadership, the exercise of prophetic voice and the foundation of identity.

Another secret to maintaining balance while journeying to the reaches of mission integration is traveling light. With all due respect to behind-the-scenes programs and processes of mission leadership, the current vocabulary of the profession is heavy with complex terminology. “Executive mission leadership formation” and “workplace spirituality frameworks” are too bulky to fit nicely in a fleet-footed mission leader’s travel bag. Carry-on toolkits need mostly verbs: agile, versatile, robust action words that can get the traveler from here to there and back again.

It is Thomas Aquinas who always has had the final word on action and existence over possibilities and constructs. “To live well is to work well,” he wrote in his *Summa Theologiae*. Sr. Maureen McGuire, DC, in her article on the work of mission integration, would have made the old saint proud when she wrote, “our being is in fact what guides our doing.”

The role of the mission leader is in transition, and the task of integrating mission into complex and changing scenarios becomes more challenging by the day. We’re grateful to this issue’s authors whose questions, insights and suggestions push the discussion forward. We especially thank Brian Yanofchick, a generous guest co-editor, who was immensely helpful in selecting authors, reviewing articles and providing an introduction.

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