

**Presentation of Maricarmen Bracamontes, osb
Symposium, CIB, ROME, September, 2010**

Maricarmen Bracamontes was born in Culiacan, Sinaloa on November 5th, 1955, the first girl after three older brothers. She did her High School studies in the early nineteen seventies, a time of much social and political ferment in Mexico and in society at large. Later she left home to study medicine, which she was unable to complete in the final stages because she returned home to help her family when her father was diagnosed with cancer in 1979.

In 1980 Maricarmen met the Benedictines from Mexico City. I had the opportunity to participate in a Congress in her home town. After my presentation she sought me out. It was February 10th, the feast of St. Scholastica. I haven't forgotten that first meeting with a rebellious young woman, dressed in denims and a sweat shirt, with a penetrating gaze that I could hardly make out behind long bangs.

She entered St. Benedict Monastery in Mexico City in August of 1980, intense, enthusiastic and critical. From the beginning she discovered the wealth of our Benedictine charism and the hope-filled message it offered to the poor of Latin America...in theory...but she questioned the practice. At times she became disheartened by the distance between theory and practice, not only in her own life but also in that of the community, but...she persevered... and with God's grace she made her perpetual monastic profession on Easter Sunday of 1989.

At one point, Maricarmen, with the encouragement of the community, considered finishing her studies in medicine, but she soon discovered that the monastic vocation and the medical vocation are both full time endeavors, and her definitive option was made for monastic life. So she changed fields and studied Philosophy at the Pontifical University and from there continued her theological formation at the Jesuit School of Theology, both in Mexico City. Maricarmen completed her licentiate at the Ibero-American University with a thesis entitled *Jesus of Nazareth and the Women of his Time*, which was published and is now in its second edition.

During her years of study Maricarmen taught Philosophy and Religion classes at Colegio Guadalupe, our Benedictine High School in Mexico City. In her final year of theology, she received an invitation to teach a summer course to young women and men in Initial formation, organized by the Mexican Conference of Major Superiors (CIRM). Because of her background in both medicine and theology, she was asked to develop the topic of *Sexuality in Religious Life*, a theme that had hardly been touched on at that time and about which religious in initial formation had very little knowledge. Since then she has continued to work uninterrupted in this area, not only in Mexico but in several countries in Latin America and in the Caribbean. Her years of experience and the needs that arise from our human condition have challenged her to go deeper into the topic and to update her investigations over and over again. She has developed a series of workshops entitled *Sexuality, Affectivity and Celibacy in Religious Life*, which she has shared with women religious in active ministry as well as with cloistered nuns. More recently she has been asked to give workshops on this topic to male religious communities and seminarians.

In 1992 >Maricarmen was part of the group of sisters who made a Benedictine foundation in north central Mexico, Monasterio Pan de Vida in Torreon, Coahuila. Since then she has

actively participated in our journey of gospel discipleship, following the Rule of Benedict and the best of our tradition. She has been untiring in her efforts to inculturate the Benedictine charism in our low income neighborhood. As a community we have made a commitment to a preferential option for women, especially those who are impoverished. In the Liturgy of the Hours, hospitality and her collaborative working style, Maricarmen has helped innumerable women to discover their dignity as beloved daughters of God. She is convinced that a transformation in their own identity has positive humanizing repercussions in women's relationships in the family, in society and in the Church. In our Center for the Integral Development of Women (CEDIMSE) Maricarmen has offered workshops and courses on subjects as varied as *Women's Rights* and *The Theology of Julian of Norwich*.

On several occasions she has participated as a presenter in our Regional Monastic Encounters (ABECCA, Region X) and in the gatherings of our three Latin American Regions. (EMLA). She has also been a Council and committee member in the Federation of St. Scholastica.

In 2004 -2005 Maricarmen studied at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill., USA in the Doctor of Ministry program. At present she is working on her dissertation. At the same time she is coordinating the Theology Team that advises the Presidency of the Latin American and Caribbean Conference of Religious Superiors (CLAR) and continues to participate as a member of the Theological Reflection Team for the CIRM.

PUBLICATIONS:

Mujeres y Derechos Humanos: Aportes Sociales y Eclesiales,
co-authored with Patricia Henry. Ediciones Schola, México, 1998
Second Edition 2001; Third updated edition 2009.

Jesús y las Mujeres: Ensayo de una Espiritualidad para el Nuevo Milenio,
Ediciones Schola, 2nda edition, México, 2005.

Algunas Reflexiones sobre el Jubileo de las Mujeres,
co-authored with Patricia Henry, in collaboration with The Mexican Episcopal Commission for Social Action, (CEPS) March 2000.

A chapter in an Anthology published as part of the International Forum: *The Interior Life and the Future Crisis of Humanity*, Ibero American University, Puebla, MEXICO, May, 2000.

Articles published regularly in the CLAR and the CIRM magazines, as well as occasional articles in the Magazines on Religious Life published in Nicaragua, Chile and Spain. .