

# Update

A Publication of the  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

August/September 2004

## LCWR Statement Entered into Congressional Record

California congresswomen Anna Eshoo had the LCWR statement on the abuse of Iraqi prisoners entered into the June 17, 2004 Congressional Record. In her introduction to the statement, Representative Eshoo said, "Mr. Speaker, I rise today to place in our nation's record the statement issued by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious on May 7, 2004 regarding the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib Prison."

Following her reading of the statement, she  
*(continued on page 2)*



## Initial Jubilee Plans Emerge from Regional Meetings

The Jubilee Steering Committee met in St. Louis on May 22 and 23 to review the feedback from the spring regional meetings about the hopes for the celebration of LCWR's 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee. In addition to the three original members of the committee, Sherri Coleman, FSM, Ann Margaret O'Hara, SP, and Beth Taylor, CSJP, two resource persons were added to the committee: Mary Charlotte Chandler, RSCJ, director of the Center for the Study for Religious Life, and Mary Daniel Turner, SNDdeN, former LCWR executive director and current LCWR member.

The group saw four focuses emerging from the feedback which included:

- Noting in a significant way the impact of women religious on the history of the United States

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Helen Maher Garvey, BVM

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*From the LCWR Presidency*  
**'No Longer Bystanders': Why We Gather**

by Christine Vladimiroff, OSB -- LCWR Vice President

Ours is a world of change and challenge. We have audaciously claimed by the title of our joint assembly that "we are no longer bystanders." We can lament what is lost in our church and our world or we can be transformed by grace and become bearers of hope. By our willingness to name the sins of our times, we make a commitment to bring the Gospel and our voices to speak to the present moment with all its promise and poverty. The assembly will hold up the icons of suffering that we see around us in a world at war and in the midst of the violence that destroys the human family and the planet. We take all of this to prayer and together, make a choice to live beyond the safety of our own lives. The depth of our spirituality will be revealed by what we do with our pain and the pain we see around us. True religion leads us to practical compassion for all people in concrete and specific situations.



In 1944, during World War II, Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote of the spiritual costs of engaging in violence and war.

Good and evil, which were once as real as day and night, have become a blurred mist. In our every day life we worship force, despise compassion, and obey no law but our unappeasable appetite. The vision of the sacred has all but died in the soul of man(sic).

It is a distortion of religion to want a God who validates our violence. The scars of war and violence leave their imprint

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*Even if all other voices fall silent,  
religious leaders must be the moral voice calling  
a nation to the wisdom to opt for another path.*

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not only on the planet, but on our souls. Both can become desolate and barren. The stakes are very high indeed for those who seek to stand before the God of peace and justice. There is no need for nuance when truth is spoken clearly and honestly. War is not a way to peace. Violence destroys any hope of communion. Seeking peace and pursuing it is a spiritual journey that is difficult and arduous, but can trans-

form us as persons and grace our world. Even if all other voices fall silent, religious leaders must be the moral voice calling a nation to the wisdom to opt for another path.

We gather not to address multiple issues of what is wrong in our world. It is rather to find new forms of solidarity among us so that we might respond with more insight and sensitivity in the future. It is about crafting a shared vision of globalization that does not create victims of others. It is to nurture the determination to replace confrontation with authentic encounter and dialog. Along with the icons of suffering we must hold up the ancient and unfulfilled vision of justice for all.

Optimism arises out of the confidence we have in what we can do. Hope is confidence in what God will do. May our gathering offer a word of hope to our world from our own experience that God is faithful.

The Buddha has said: "The world comes into being from a sigh of compassion."

## LCWR Statement Entered into Congressional Record

*(continued from page 1)*

added, "Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the words of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and all they represent as we work toward human rights for all individuals around the world."

Representative Eshoo had received a copy of the LCWR statement from the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. She later sent to the sisters a warm letter of support and a framed copy of the Congressional Record entry.

LCWR is grateful to Representative Eshoo and to the SND de Namur team who sent the statement to her.

## LCWR Executive Committee Prepares for Joint Assembly

Through the generosity of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, the members of the LCWR Executive Committee gathered in Seal Beach, California for the July 11-14 meeting. It is not easy to focus on business when windsurfers are skimming by about an eighth of a mile from the meeting room, but focus they did.

Most of the work of the July Executive Committee was related to the August assembly as well as to the national board meetings that precede and follow the event. Other agenda items included:

- A review of the Rome visits
- A finance report
- Updates on the Goal-Setting and the Jubilee Committees' work
- Planning for the InterAmerican Conference in May 2005

The committee (Constance Phelps, SCL; Christine Vladimiroff, OSB; Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM; Anne Hennessy, CSJ; Rose Jochmann, OSF; and Carole Shinnick, SSND) worked hard during the day and relaxed in the evenings. Good company, sea air, and a spectacular setting created the context for a healthy balance of business and play.



Christine Vladimiroff, OSB and Anne Hennessy, CSJ



Maria Elena Martinez, OSF



Mary Catherine Rabbitt, SL



Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM and Constance Phelps, SCL



## LCWR Vice-President Honored as 'Hunger Hero'

Christine Vladimiroff, prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and LCWR vice-president, recently was named one of 30 "Hunger Heroes" by Bread for the World Institute for having made a significant impact in increasing awareness of hunger in the United States and abroad. Christine accepted the award on behalf of her Benedictine community in Washington, DC on June 21 at the National Press Club.

Bread for the World Institute seeks justice for hungry people by engaging in research and education on policies related to hunger and development. Christine joined nine other recipients – including Irish rock star and activist Bono of U2 – in the "Movement Building" category of the 2004 anniversary awards.



*Christine Vladimiroff, OSB with Rev. David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World and Bread for the World Institute*



*Christine Vladimiroff, OSB (second from right) joins some of the others who were honored as "Hunger Heros."*

"Hunger is one problem that is 100 percent solvable. We have the food and the resources and technical skill to get food to all who suffer hunger in our country and in the world. What we lack is the depth of compassion that will translate into the political will to accomplish it. The presence of hunger is morally unacceptable," Christine said.

Christine is a past chairperson for Bread for the World and currently, she is co-chairperson of the U.S. Food Advisory Committee. She also was included in the book, *60 at 60*, in 2003, honoring those who have positively affected the progress of modern agriculture in the Americas.

Christine also was the subject of a feature article June 25 in the Los Angeles Catholic newspaper, *The Tidings*, based on a recent conference during which she spoke to more than 450 Christian women during "An Ecumenical Gathering of Women" June 19 at the First United Methodist Church in Pasadena, California. Christine stressed the need for more dialogue between women and men examining the representation and role of women in traditional, institutional churches.

## Initial Jubilee Plans Emerge from Regional Meetings

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- Preparing media-oriented materials to be used nationally, regionally, and locally to “get the word out” about women religious today
- Strengthening existing programs and developing new tools focused on leadership skills
- Integrating the arts in all aspects of the jubilee celebration

The group chose Ann Margaret O’Hara as their chair. Ann Margaret will give a brief report during the business meeting at the August assembly. Beth Taylor will oversee the leadership aspect of the celebration, and Sherri Coleman will work with LCWR communications director, Annmarie Sanders, IHM, in exploring ways to engage the media.

There was a great deal of energy perceptible in the regional feedback around doing something to note the intertwining history of the United States and women religious. Suggestions included exploring the possibilities for an exhibit at the Smithsonian to issuing a commemorative stamp. Because the scope of researching such projects requires a great deal of time, the committee recognized the need for someone other than the national office staff to assume oversight responsibilities. Their unanimous choice was former LCWR president, Helen Maher Garvey, BVM.

A trip to Silver Spring and the gentle persuasions of Mary Daniel and Ann Margaret sealed the deal! Helen will work from Louisville with occasional trips as needed, and she is already off and running. With Helen at the helm, there is no doubt that this dimension of the jubilee will be nothing short of superb.

Helen served in the LCWR presidency from 1986-89, and was the US delegate to the International Union of Superiors General from 1989-92. In addition to serving in leadership for her congregation, the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dubuque, Iowa, she was an elementary school teacher and principal and, most recently, the director of pastoral services in the diocese of Lexington, Kentucky. She is currently working as a consultant.

## Three Resolutions Up for Assembly Vote

LCWR members have received, via a world merge message, copies of three proposed resolutions that will come up for discussion and vote during the August assembly.

### LCWR-Generated Proposals

#### Ecological Sustainability

*This is a Global Concerns Committee proposal which has undergone regional review*

#### Issue of Nuclear Weapons

*Submitted by Region VI*

### LCWR-CMSM Proposal

#### Encouraging Responsible Engagement in the 2004 Election Process

*Joint hearing, but voting will occur within the separate conferences*

Assembly participants are encouraged to review the three proposals before the assembly hearings.

## LCWR Signs On To Letters to Legislators

- Global AIDS Alliance letter to senators urging support of House-approved legislation (HR 4061), Assistance for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act
- The WISH (Women Immigrants Safe Harbor) Act
- Opposition to new OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control) restrictive rules for Cuba travel and remittances.
- As a member of the the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking, LCWR signed on to a letter to the US Department of Health and Human Services agreeing to join the “Rescue and Restore” national coalition against trafficking.
- LCWR signed on to a Unity Statement and Call to Action by Interfaith and Human Rights Groups urging the US and the UN to do more to end the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. Signers were Constance Phelps, SCL; Carole Shinnick, SSND; and Marie Lucey, OSF.

Information about these pieces of legislation were sent to LCWR justice and peace coordinators.

## LCWR Participates in Roundtable Discussion with the Bishops of SEDAC

On June 24, 2004, Marie Lucey, OSF, LCWR's associate director for social mission, was invited by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Washington Office on Latin America to attend a roundtable discussion with bishops of Central America and Panama who were in Washington to meet with US bishops, members of congress, and others to express their great concern about the impact of CAFTA (Central America Trade Agreement) on their people.

The current president of SEDAC, Bishop Alvaro Leonel Ramazzini Imeri, bishop of San Marcos, Guatemala, provided an opening summary of their concerns, then invited questions from the 35-40 participants representing a variety of organizations.

In their testimony, the bishops made clear that the vast majority of their countries were not made aware of CAFTA until the agreement was already signed. The signing happened too quickly without sufficient discussion, and this trade agreement will not solve, but only worsen, economic problems in their countries.

Major issues raised by the bishops were: agriculture and US subsidies, labor rights, the environment, and lack of public scrutiny, participation, and debate. Because the agreement in its present form will expand the gap between rich and poor, resulting in greater poverty and increased migration, the bishops urge renegotiation, considering CAFTA in the wider context of economic and social development. Each bishop provided specific examples from his own country.

In the year since LCWR members approved an assembly resolution opposing the proposed FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) agreement, when it became clear that the agreement would not win approval, the strategy was narrowed to making trade agreements region by region or country by country. The articulate and knowledgeable testimony of the SEDAC bishops confirmed that the impact of these trade agreements will be disastrous for the majority poor people in their countries.

## NATRI Announces November National Conference near Nation's Capital

The vibrant nation's capital is an apt site for the 2004 national conference of the National Association of Treasurers of Religious Institutes with its theme, "Seeking Liberty and Justice for All."

The conference will be held November 10-13 at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City Hotel, in Arlington, Virginia, five minutes from the Reagan National Airport. Visitors to the area are naturally awed by the many symbols of the history and dynamics of the US democratic society. Religious institutes, as part of this society, continue to be challenged to respond creatively to the ongoing injustices of racism and the exploitation of the poor, the elderly, the weak, and the very natural environment that sustains us, while persisting in the work for global peace and justice.

The keynote speaker on Wednesday evening is Julian Bond, educator, activist, and leader in the movements for civil rights, economic justice, and peace. Other speakers will unpack the theme in workshops on topics such as socially responsible investing, "deep greening" an office, liberty and justice for elders, unraveling institutional racism, promoting just and liberating ministries, and ethical dimensions of globalization. In addition, there are a variety of sessions that will include the current thinking on financial and legal issues, effective utilization of technology and ongoing development of the professional person.

Major superiors should have received the program packet with registration materials. As usual, interesting local tours are being offered through NATRI and there is easy access to all the major DC sites of interest via the nearby Metro. Contact NATRI for additional copies of the registration materials at 301-587-7776 or [natri@natri.org](mailto:natri@natri.org).



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*From the LCWR Executive Director*

## Process: 10,000; Results: 0

Like many Americans, in recent years I have found myself getting rather “broad in the beam.” It all began when my personal odometer rolled over to 50. That milestone coincided with election to leadership, thus launching a series of breakfast meetings, fast food runs through airports, and nine o’clock microwave suppers. Not only did my food choices slide towards haphazard, but my pace slowed to crawl. I sat at my desk. I sat in the car. I sat on planes. And I sat to relax. Good exercise habits quickly eroded, falling victim to over-scheduled days and blurred priorities.



*Carole Shinnick, SSND*

I feel better since I started walking more. I don’t get “winded” going up a flight of stairs. I’ve met the neighborhood dogs (Bear, Sailor, Armani and Prada) as well as the neighbors that go with them (Sidney, Vernon, Earl and Joe respectively.) My morning prayer is informed with the scripture of the ordinary - neighbors en route to work, a paperboy with a terrific aim, burly trash collectors and the sounds of a waking world.

I knew the formula well – “eat less and move more.” It was “the moving more” that had become a challenge. But all that changed in early May when I walked into a Radio Shack and found a pedometer on sale. I had heard that walking 10,000 steps a day - including all the ordinary

You will recognize me at the assembly. I have not morphed into a mere slip of a thing.

Instead of the results hoped for, I received the gift that I needed, and so much more – an increased appreciation for commitment to a process and freedom from results, as well as the joy of greeting the new day with my neighbors.

*Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—*

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*I have started to appreciate the process and to let the product go.*

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*Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright  
wings.<sup>2</sup>*

steps we take to mail a letter or to go to the copier - was an improvement for almost anyone. Even persons who are somewhat sedentary walk about 3000-4000 steps a day. I decided that this was indeed a program I might actually stick with.<sup>1</sup>

Finally I found something both motivational and effective. So now I begin my day by walking about 5000-6000 steps in the morning. Then, if I go shopping, I park the car far away on purpose. If I get home with only 9,000 steps on my pedometer, I head outside for a quick turn around the block. And I have stuck with the program for two and a half months.

My original hope was that the pounds would melt away like butter on a corn cob. So far, though, there is no dramatic change. However – and, perhaps more importantly – I have started to appreciate the process and to let the product go. This is an improvement because I have always looked for quick results. When I was about eight, I tried gardening and began by planting radishes. I was an attentive gardener. Every day I would dig the radishes up to see how they were doing. Needless to say, they were doing quite poorly and the Shinnick family had radish-less salads that summer.

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<sup>1</sup> There are plenty of websites with more information about the 10,000 steps a day approach – here are two:

- <http://www.thewalkingsite.com/steps.html>
- <http://www.pbs.org/americaswalking/health/health20percentboost.html>

<sup>2</sup> Gerard Manley Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur” (1877)

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an increased appreciation for commitment to a process  
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FROM THE  
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF  
RELIGIOUS LIFE

The Center for the Study of Religious Life will have an exhibit at the LCWR-CMSM Joint Assembly in Fort Worth Thursday, August 19 through Saturday, August 21.

The new *Facilitators' Reflections* book will be available at the exhibit. The book contains the reflections on the signs of hope and areas of concern in religious congregations today by 40 women and men who facilitate gatherings of religious. (Note: Members of CSRL will receive copies of this book in the mail.)

Also on hand will be copies of each of the four "Reflection and Dialogue Series"

- What Mission Confronts Religious Life in the US Today?
- Community in Society, Church, and Religious Life: Making the Connections
- Becoming a Religious: a Process of Lifelong Transformation
- Theological Reflection for Transformation

## Religious Formation Conference Regional Workshops 2004 - 2005

A Movement in Hope: Continuing the Conversation  
on a Theology of Religious Life

Region 1 -- October 29-30, 2004  
*Framingham, MA -- Janet Ruffing, RSM*  
Region 2 -- November 12-13, 2004  
*Mendham, NJ -- Katherine Hanley, CSJ*  
Region 3 -- April 1-2, 2005  
*Immaculata, PA -- Gary Riebe-Estrella, SVD*  
Region 6 -- November 12-13, 2004  
*Dayton, OH -- Patricia Walter, OP*  
Region 7 -- April 29-30, 2005  
*Plymouth, MI -- Mary Ellen Sheehan, IHM*  
Region 8 -- February 25-26, 2005  
*Chicago, IL -- Anthony Gittins, CSSp*  
Region 9 -- October 8-9, 2004  
*Racine, WI -- Donald Senior, CP*  
Region 10 -- April 15-16, 2005  
*St. Louis, MO -- Patricia Walter, OP*

Region 11 -- October 1-2, 2004  
*Valley City, ND -- Mary Ellen Sheehan, IHM*  
Region 12 -- November 12-13, 2004  
*San Antonio, TX -- Gary Riebe-Estrella, SVD*  
Region 14N -- April 8-9, 2005  
*San Francisco, CA -- Gary Riebe-Estrella, SVD*  
Region 14S -- November 5-6, 2004  
*Los Angeles, CA -- Anita de Luna, MCDP*

Additional information is on the RFC website: [http://www.relforcon.org/5\\_wkshops/5\\_2004workshops.htm](http://www.relforcon.org/5_wkshops/5_2004workshops.htm)

Day One is for leadership ministers and vocation and formation ministers.  
Day Two is for leadership ministers, vocation and formation ministers, seasoned and newer members and associates.

## Upcoming LCWR Dates

**LCWR--CMSM Joint Assembly**  
*Fort Worth, Texas*  
August 19 -- 22, 2004

**LCWR Leading from Within Retreat**  
*Winter Park, Florida*  
January 16-21, 2005

**LCWR Delegation to Mexico**  
February 19-26, 2005

**LCWR New Leader Workshop**  
*Passionist Retreat Center*  
*Riverdale, NY*  
March 17-19, 2005

**LCWR Assembly**  
*Anaheim, California*  
August 19 -- 23, 2005

**LCWR-CMSM Delegation to El Salvador**  
November 30 -- December 6, 2005

**LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank,**  
*Franciscan Center -- Tampa, Florida*  
February 12-14, 2006

**LCWR Assembly**  
*Atlanta, Georgia*  
August 18 -- 22, 2006



## Updates from the National Religious Vocation Conference

### NRVC Convocation 2004, Chicago, IL

The NRVC biennial convocation takes place from September 9-13, 2004 at the Marriott O'Hare Airport in Chicago, IL. This year's theme is "Fidelity to Jesus: A Paradigm of Hope" with keynote speakers, Timothy Radcliffe, OP, and Mary Maher, SSND. Ms. Kathleen McChesney, the executive director of the Office for Child and Youth Protection of the USCCB, will address the assembly.

All major superiors, formation directors and professed religious under the age of 40 are also invited to attend the convocation. Having a cross-section of these groups will make for a rich discussion and experience. Workshops have been planned with these representative groups in mind. The final integration of the convocation will be a "fishbowl" conversation with Timothy, Mary and various vocation directors, major superiors and young religious. This promises to be an exciting event for all.

### Pre-Convocation Workshops

Prior to the Convocation, NRVC is offering three one-day workshops on September 9:

***Vocation Ministry and Civil, Canon and Immigration Law***, with Dan Ward, OSB and Margaret Perron, RJM, as presenters. This workshop will specifically focus on the key legal issues pertinent to vocation ministry.

***Inviting and Discerning with the Latino-Hispanic Candidate*** (sponsored by the NRVC Latin/Hispanic Standing Committee)

While celebrating the culture, this workshop will provide skills for the discernment process with candidates of Latino/Hispanic background.

***Discernment: The Asian Way*** (sponsored by the NRVC Asian/Pacific Standing Committee)

This experiential workshop will focus on the customs and needs of Filipino, Korean and Vietnamese candidates and how the vocation director can assist them in their discernment.

For further information on the convocation or the pre-convocation workshops, please call the NRVC office at 773-363-5454 or go [www.nrv.net](http://www.nrv.net).