

Update

A Publication of the
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

December 2003

Religious Conferences Urge Protection of Human Rights in Iraq

LCWR, CMSM and the Conference of Religious of England and Wales (CoR) recently joined an Amnesty International effort to urge British Prime Minister Tony Blair and US President George Bush to take decisive steps to ensure that reconstruction efforts in Iraq are carried out for the benefit of the Iraqi people and will ensure the protection of human rights in Iraq. In addition, the leaders, representing more than 100,000 members of Catholic religious congregations, called on the government leaders to reduce the number of US military personnel in Iraq and quickly return the country to Iraqi control.

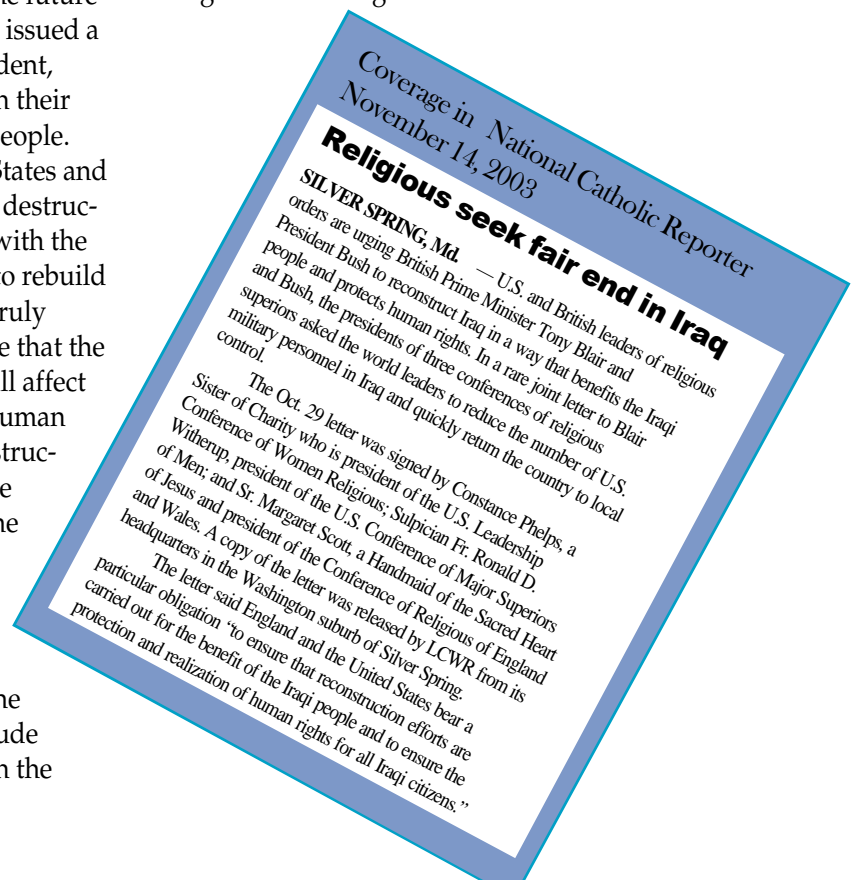
Recognizing the important roles both nations continue to play in the rebuilding of Iraq and the future of the region, the presidents of the conferences, issued a rare joint letter to the Prime Minister and President, emphasizing the solidarity of the conferences in their concern about the future of Iraq and the Iraqi people.

The religious leaders said that the United States and Great Britain must accept responsibility for the destruction of Iraq caused by the war and must work with the Iraqi people and the international community to rebuild the nation. "In order for peace and security to truly flourish in Iraq and in the world it is imperative that the Iraqi people participate in the decisions that will affect the future of their country," reads the letter. "Human rights must be given a central role in the reconstruction process. Those countries responsible for the destruction of the nation's infrastructure and the current unrest must now be responsible for the financial costs associated with reconstruction."

Amnesty International is urging others to contact the Prime Minister and President and lists five priorities for the rebuilding of Iraq. The conferences support these priorities which include reforming the justice system, involving Iraqis in the

rebuilding process, integration and the full participation of women, fair awarding of contracts, and just decisions about the use of Iraqi oil resources. The religious leaders added another priority, the "quick reduction in the number of US military personnel in Iraq and serious efforts to return the country to control by Iraqis committed to the protection of human rights and the development of a nation integrated into the international community."

LCWR president and Sister of Charity of Leavenworth Constance Phelps, CMSM president and Sulpician Father Ronald D. Witherup, and CoR president and Handmaid of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Margaret Scott signed the letter.



From the LCWR Presidency

How Will You Tell the Christmas Story?

by Constance Phelps, SCL



It is November in Kansas, and the approach of winter surrounds us as winds and falling temperatures invade our days, and the sun slowly sinks earlier and earlier. We anticipate the Advent days of darkness and waiting.

I can remember, as a child, anticipating the lighting of the Advent

candles each week as they led us closer to the full light of Christmas. What joy I experienced then!

Yet, today I find it difficult to experience a similar kind of joy. I am too aware of so many in our world for whom it is impossible to anticipate any light, any joy. And I wonder: How can that darkness in our world become a tending place for healing, justice, and peace to grow?

And as I wondered, I recalled learning that the Christmas story can be told in many ways. It can be a story about darkness giving birth to light, about seemingly endless waiting, and about the one who lies

at the end of all our waiting. It can be a story of a young woman who said yes to God and brought forth new life. It can be a story of love for us. It can be a story about the birth of a revolutionary.

I also learned that any story can be told innumerable ways, not simply according to who does the telling but to where that person is on the journey.

How will I tell the story this year? I do not know. I must discern where I am on my journey – now. I do know that I must enter the mystery of Advent and

*How can that darkness in our world
become a tending place for
healing, justice, and peace to grow?*

Christmas again, as I now am, to understand the ways in which the holy is born. And I invite you to do the same.

How will you tell the story?

As the Christmas story unfolds for you, and its joy begins to creep into Advent waiting, may our anticipation turn into fulfillment. May this season bring each of you many blessings and light.

LCWR Attends Press Conference on Medicare

On November 18, Senator Tom Daschle called a press conference to communicate the opposition of leading Democrats to the Medicare Conference Agreement. Presenting strong arguments against opening up Medicare to privatization, thus dismantling Medicare as an entitlement program, were, in addition to Senator Daschle, Senators Edward Kennedy and John Rockefeller, House Leader Nancy Pelosi, and Representatives John Dingell and Marion Berry.

Representatives of several senior citizens groups, as well as individual Medicare recipients, told compelling stories to explain their fear and anger about the proposed legislation. Marie Lucey, OSF, LCWR staff, and Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ, NETWORK staff, also spoke

briefly on behalf of their members about the injustice of this agreement. Marie expressed the serious concern of members of religious congregations for those they serve in nursing homes, parishes, and community organizations meeting needs of poor and low income seniors, as well as for the bill's impact on the care of our own aging members. Also, NETWORK and LCWR voiced strong opposition to benefitting the pharmaceutical and insurance industries who will receive subsidies to compete against Medicare.

Senator Daschle stated that while the debate and vote on the conference agreement could come within a few days, "One thing that all of us in this room have in common is that none of us has seen this bill."

LCWR and CMSM Send Joint Letter on US Policy Toward Cuba

LCWR and CMSM recently sent a joint letter to President George W. Bush urging him to consider signing



legislation to ease some of the travel restrictions that have isolated Cuba for more than four decades. They also asked him to reconsider policy changes that he had proposed.

The letter, written in the names of the conferences' executive directors, Carole Shinnick, SSND and Ted Keating, SM, describes what a delegation of LCWR and CMSM members and staff learned when they traveled to Cuba in March to hear of the experiences of the Cuban people living under the regime of Fidel Castro. They learned that the US policy toward Cuba has not forced the Castro government to reform and, instead, has only served to further impoverish the Cuban people. The letter states, "Isolated from the international community because of US policy, the Cuban people have been denied the right and opportunity to exchange ideas which would promote their own ability to work for reform in Cuba and bring about significant changes that would foster freedom and human dignity."

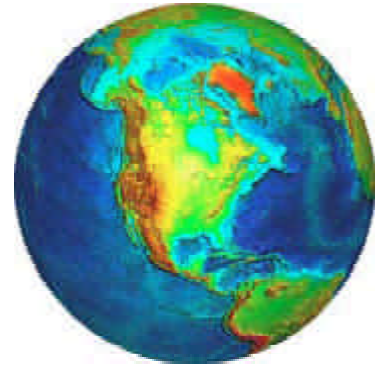
The letter concludes, "Our conferences have heard the voices of the people of Cuba and we continue to engage them in dialogue about the conditions in their country and the social and moral impact US policy has on them. Please hear their voices through us and promote policies that will strengthen and encourage the people of Cuba as they seek reform in their own nation."

LCWR to Publish an Earth Reflection Book

LCWR will publish a daily reflection book centered on the theme of the 2003 assembly, "Tending the Holy."

The book will contain 45 reflections written by LCWR members that can be used to deepen readers' prayer on the call to work on behalf of the whole Earth community. The book will begin with a reflection for April 22, 2004 (International Earth Day) and close with a reflection for June 5, 2004 (World Environment Day). Readers will be encouraged to pray each of the 45 days with an excerpt from the Earth Charter, a related scripture passage and a reflection written by an LCWR member with a suggested action for that day.

These books will be distributed free of charge to all LCWR members and associates. Additional copies will be printed as well for others who may be interested in using this resource for their prayer. Pre-orders will be requested prior to printing. Information on ordering these books will be sent to all members and associates in January. Special prices will be available for ordering bulk copies.



Openings Still Available for the LCWR

New Leader Workshop

March 25-28, 2004

Center for Development in Ministry
University of St. Mary of the Lake
Mundelein, Illinois

Deadline for registration:
December 31, 2003



Change in workshop faculty:

Mary Persico, IHM will lead the session on leadership in place of Gertrude Foley, SC, who had to withdraw because of illness. Mary is the president of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Scranton, Pennsylvania. She was the treasurer and a member of her congregation's leadership team from 1994-2002 and is a consultant for the National Association of Treasurers of Religious Institutes.

Which Way to Peace?

While the media focuses our attention on war, violence, and terrorism, and the US government forges ahead with a costly occupation of Iraq, the conversations about how to be peacemakers intensify in faith communities. Within the Catholic tradition, we remember in 2003 the anniversaries of two major peace documents: the 40th anniversary of the encyclical "Pacem in Terris," and the 20th anniversary of the US bishops pastoral, "The Challenge of Peace." Sometimes the conversation turns to debate between two traditions, nonviolence and just war. Ultimately, we all desire peace and want to be peacemakers, but differ about the most effective means.

Recently, LCWR was represented at two compelling, though different, meetings. On October 23, Pax Christi USA convened the second gathering of Catholic organizations to develop a process through which grassroots Catholics would be engaged in dialog and reflection which will culminate in a "people's peace letter." Participants included representatives from official Offices of African-American Catholics, Hispanic Affairs, Asian Catholics, Tekawitha Conference, Youth Ministry and National Council of Catholic Women, as well as LCWR, CMSM, NETWORK, and others. The goal is to develop a process tool that can be replicated at parish and diocesan levels to engage Catholics in the challenges of peacemaking in an age of globalization, war on terrorism, and growing economic disparities.

"While a daunting undertaking," states Marie Lucey, OSF, LCWR associate director for social mission, who represented the conference at the meeting, "a people's peace letter seems to be the natural next phase of an evolutionary process—from papal encyclicals, to bishops' pastorals, to a people's process and letter."

Marie also represented LCWR at a Forum on Catholic Traditions on Peace and War held on November 6 at Georgetown University, and co-sponsored by the Jesuit Conference and the Woodstock Theological Center. Most of the speakers were scholars or policy makers. Thirty-five to 40 invited guests gathered at tables to listen to, discuss, and provide feedback on presentations representing three positions within the Catholic tradition, identified as: The Pacifist Position; Presumption Against Force and the Just War Position; Contemporary Catholic Teaching on Peace and War; and Just War and U.S. Responsibilities after 9/11 (the classical just war position). Several persons within the



first position stated preference for the tradition of nonviolence rather than pacifist. The second position was seen as closer to the nonviolence position because it calls for exhausting all other means before applying just war principles.

"While the forum was informative, stimulating, and challenging," Marie observed, "the focus, in my perception, was more on just war than on peacemaking. I hope that the anticipated next step will involve persons most impacted by war, will be more racially and culturally diverse, will explore more deeply the tradition of nonviolence, and will focus on developing strategies and tools for peacemaking."

Canadian Religious Conference Appoints New Director

Margaret Toner, SCIC has assumed the role of director of the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC).

A member of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception, she served on the council of her congregation from 1980-90, and as general superior from 1994-2002. She succeeds Jocelyne Fallu, FDLS, who served from 2000-03.

Based in Montreal, the CRC represents the leaders of Catholic religious congregations (sisters, brothers, priests of religious orders) in Canada. In 2002, there were about 26,000 women and men religious in the country. The leaders come together every two years for a general assembly and to elect a new council.

LCWR Finance Committee Reviews Budget and Plans for Future

In mid-October the LCWR Finance Committee gathered in Silver Spring, Maryland for their fall meeting. The members present were: Rose Jochmann, OSF - Green Bay, WI (Chairperson); Alice Cote, RJM -- Mt. Rainier, MD; Mary Jo Shingler PHCS - Donaldson, IN; Jean Keniry, OSF - Rochester MN; and Eleanor Granger OSF --staff. Absent was Mary Bernadette McNulty CSJ -- Orange, CA.

FINANCIAL POSITION: The committee reviewed the Financial Position and Activity for September 2003. The LCWR financial position at the end of the third quarter is healthy. LCWR investments are recovering slowly and hopefully will help in producing a positive bottom line by the end of the fiscal year.

INVESTMENTS: The finance committee met with Mr. Vincent McNichol, investment manager for LCWR, who is one of the vice presidents of Rittenhouse, a John Nuveen Company. Mr. McNichol is positive on investments and the market during the coming year. Rittenhouse concentrates on high quality, large capitalization growth stocks and high-grade intermediate bonds. Our investment portfolio return is 2.23% for the third quarter, 9.8% for the year 2003 and -5.57% since inception in January 2001. The committee also worked on the revision of the financial, investment and social responsibility policies. There will be a second reading of these policies in the spring.

NACPA COMPENSATION STUDY: The finance committee discussed the need for justice in the workplace particularly as it pertains to our LCWR staff. A study was done by NACPA (National Association of Church Personnel Administrators). The results of the study and our recommendations have been given to the LCWR Executive Committee.

REVIEW OF MEMBERSHIP FEE STRUCTURE: The committee reviewed the early returns on the survey about membership dues. They will continue the discussion on the membership fee structure at the next meeting in April and then make a recommendation.

TEN-YEAR FORECAST: The finance committee will be building a ten-year forecast (2004-2014) that will assist



planning for the coming years. This forecast will also assist in the ongoing study regarding membership dues. The forecast tool is similar to TRENDS.

LCWR 2004 BUDGET: The LCWR 2004 budget was a full days work for the committee. The resulting budget will be recommended to the executive committee and the national board for acceptance.

The next meeting of the finance committee will be held April 4-6, 2004 in California, hosted by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange.

Former LCWR President Publishes Radio Commentary CD

Camille D'Arienzo, RSM recently produced a set of CDs featuring more than 200 of the 1800 reflections she has broadcast over New York radio station 1010 WINS since 1973.

The collection, *In a New York Minute*, features commentaries on topics such as war, terrorism, education, capital punishment, politics and the role of women. The reflections center on well known politicians, heroes and celebrities, as well as many lesser known persons who deserve to be honored. Former New York Governor Mario Cuomo offers a prologue to the collection.

Camille served as LCWR president in 1998.



Global Concerns Committee Completes Systems Thinking Handbook

During its meeting from October 30-November 1 in Washington, DC, the LCWR Global Concerns Committee (GCC) concluded its task of developing a systems thinking handbook. After a final review of the format at the committee's spring meeting, the handbook will be ready for publication.

The GCC also identified topics for the next three issues of Resolutions to Action—Global Free Trade, Consumption, and Worker Justice—all of which build on the LCWR assembly 2003 resolution on the FTAA. The committee also anticipates developing a resolution on nonviolence and the earth for the 2004 Assembly, related to the theme of "Tending the Holy." A joint resolution with CMSM is also under discussion.

The committee also urged that attention continue to be paid to the World Bank Bonds Boycott, especially by congregational treasurers and investment managers, with reference to the July 2003, LCWR Resolutions to Action.

The committee decided to discontinue the LCWR justice listserv, due to minimal activity. Messages related to justice and peace will be sent to members by way of World Merge messages, with a request to forward to social justice contacts or coordinators in the congregation.

The GCC accepts with regret the resignation of Mary Catherine Rabbitt, SL, due to her recent appointment to the LCWR Executive Committee. A replacement will be sought.

Committee members are: Mary Brigid Clingman, OP; Toni Harris, OP; Barbara Moore, CSJ; Peggy Nolan, BVM; Aline Marie Steuer, CSC; Peggy Sause, OP; and Marie Lucey, OSF, (staff).

Religious and Priests of South Texas Launch New Website

More than 40 south Texan religious communities recently launched a new website focusing on religious life, as well as personal spiritual growth.

The website is a project of RECAST (Religious Communities Alive in South Texas), a collaborative effort created in 1996 to help update the image of people in religious life. Today the effort expands to reach out to all people who are looking for a mission in life -- whether or not that includes entering a religious community.

The site, located at www.ReachOutReachIn.org features a data base of community organizations and educational opportunities, as well as engaging stories about how people found their missions in life and how others may find theirs.



Religious Formation Conference Honors Former LCWR Presidents and Executive Director

At its 50th Jubilee Congress, the Religious Formation Conference honored former LCWR presidents Margaret Brennan, IHM and Elizabeth Carroll, RSM and former LCWR executive director Mary Daniel Turner, SDNdeN.

The three were presented RFC Jubilee Awards for their outstanding contributions to the development of religious life, and particularly to the Sister Formation Conference.

Today, Margaret resides in Farmington Hills, Michigan, is a professor emerita of Regis College and continues to write, teach and share her theological experience. Elizabeth is a Sister of Mercy from the Regional Community of Pittsburgh and resides in Pittsburgh. Mary Daniel lives in Washington, DC in a multi-generational and bi-racial community and serves as a facilitator in the ForMission Program, among other activities.



Leaders of Men's Religious Orders Launch Hope and Healing Program

More than 175 priests and brothers who head religious orders in the United States are participating this fall in the first steps of what the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) calls the "Instruments of Hope and Healing" program. The leaders are undertaking a stringent plan to ensure that their members and their organizations are safeguarding children and young people. About one-third of the priests in the United States belong to religious orders.

CMSM is coordinating the program to implement the US Catholic bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and the norms approved by the Vatican specifically as they apply to religious priests. The congregations of religious brothers voluntarily decided to be part of the CMSM program at the 2002 assembly of the conference.

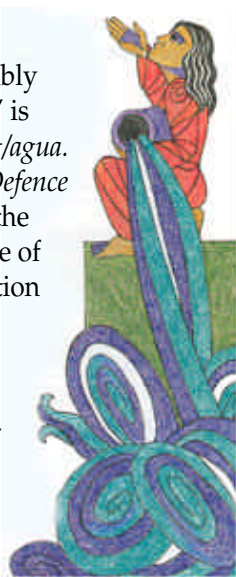
The goal of the hope and healing program is to provide training for the men's religious orders and their members with respect to the reporting and investigation of sexual abuse allegations, providing resources for prevention and response, and ultimately accrediting member religious orders and holding them accountable for being in compliance with nationally-accepted standards for child-serving organizations.

New Resource Available

A new resource for carrying forward LCWR 2003 assembly theme, "Tending the Holy," is available online at www.ofm-jpic.org/agua.

The booklet, *Water for Life! In Defence of Sister Water,* was developed by the ecology working group of the Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) of the Order of Friars Minor international/intercongregational promoters in response to the UN 2003 International Year of Freshwater.

An earlier book on climate change is available at www.ofm-jpic.org/globalwarming.



LCWR Member Serves as Chair of Bishops' National Advisory Council

Linda Werthman, RSM was elected chair-elect by the members of the US Bishops' National Advisory Council. Her term as chair-elect begins in January 2004, with succession to chair in 2005, followed by a year as past chair. She has been serving on NAC as one of two women religious nominated by LCWR in 2000. The other member, Joanne Hanrahan, SSND, has served for four years, two of them as an NAC executive committee member.

The council, established 35 years ago, offers help and direction to the US Catholic Conference of Bishops on issues that the bishops face at their twice-yearly meetings.

NAC has about 55 religious and lay members who meet twice a year with the bishops' administrative board, the body charged with shaping the agenda for the bishops' spring and fall meetings. The NAC chair and chair-elect also meet with the USCCB staff and the administrative board to give written and verbal input on issues coming before the bishops.

Linda Werthman serves as the president of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Regional Community of Detroit.



LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank

February 8 -10, 2004
Tampa, Florida

Openings are still available for more participants in the LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank.

This event is open to all women religious, leaders and justice coordinators in particular.

Please pass on this information to others.

From the LCWR Executive Director

And a Little Child Will Lead Them

In 1975 I worked for Catholic Charities in Newark, NJ as a caseworker for the adoption department. Several of my clients were families awaiting the arrival of a child from Vietnam. In April of that year, South Vietnam fell to the North Vietnamese and children were being flown out of the country by the planeloads. Almost nightly my community members and I would drive to Kennedy Airport to pick up the latest batch of wide-eyed, soggy, very tired babies.

I often remember a five-year-old boy named "Van" who amazed his new parents with his ability to sing popular American songs even though he did not speak English. Van would grab anything to serve as a microphone – a flashlight, for example. And then he would croon – eyes closed, head tipped back – "I've seen fire, and I've seen rain..." We could only guess what Van had experienced in his short lifetime.

In the summer of 1975 Van was included in the wedding party of a new relative and was asked to be the ring bearer. For the occasion, he was dressed in a tiny white tuxedo, charming everyone with his animated personality and his dazzling smile. As the bride and groom emerged from the church into the bright August sunshine, celebrants began to throw rice at the couple. Van froze in his steps – his face filled with horror and pain. "No! No!" he cried to the guests. Van dropped to his knees in his little white tux and began scooping the rice up with his hands. Now in tears, shaking his head, he continued, "No! No! No!" while the adults stood around him, fistfuls of rice clutched by their sides.

Little Van has long since outgrown his tux and probably has a few kids of his own by now. But the image of him on his knees gathering up the rice comes to me every so often, like a small angel of light. I think of Van as I make my seasonal rounds in search of the



Carole Shinnick, SSND

"perfect" – albeit modest – gift for each friend and family member.

Because of Van I'm more likely to look for alternative gifts – United Nations' calendars, packets of soup from the San Diego Women's Bean Soup Project, and hand-painted crafts from El Salvador. Because of Van, someday I just might give my family a duck or a pig or a rabbit from the Heifer Project catalog (although I think I'll have some serious explaining to do!)¹

Most of all, because of Van, I'm pretty sure that the dear ones in my life would be very happy to share a little bowl of rice with me and call it gift, as long as it was steamed with love and seasoned with gentle conversation.

A season of peace to you, dear sisters.

Many of these gifts are available online.

- The Heifer Project (http://www.heifer.org/giving_prog/)
- The San Diego Women's Bean Soup Project (<http://www.sdwbp.org/gifts.html>)
- The Heartbeats Catalog with international gifts (<http://www.heartbeatscatalog.org>)
- The Ministry of the Arts, CSJs of LaGrange (<http://www.motagifts.com>)
- UNICEF (<http://www.unicefusa.org>)

Available at Discount Price

Copies of

Women and Jurisdiction: An Unfolding Reality
The LCWR Study of Selected Church Leadership Roles

A ground-breaking benchmarks study examining how women in church leadership roles participate in decision-making in the church with regard to church personnel, property and policy.

Cost: \$10.00

(Price includes cost for postage)

Please make check payable to LCWR in US dollars and send to:

LCWR Publications
8340 Beechcraft Avenue -- Suite S
Gaithersburg, MD 20879

Upcoming Dates

LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank

Tampa, Florida
February 8-10, 2004

LCWR New Leader Workshop

Mundelein, Illinois
March 25-28, 2004

LCWR/CMSM Joint Assembly

Fort Worth, Texas
August 19 -- 23, 2004

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

Winter Park, Florida
January 16-21, 2005

LCWR Assembly

Anaheim, California
August 19 -- 23, 2005

LCWR Assembly

Atlanta, Georgia
August 18 -- 22, 2006

Annual Legal Seminar Addresses Critical Governance Issues

The Legal Resource Center for Religious (LRCR) will hold its annual legal seminar from March 11-14 in Denver, Colorado.

Christine Vladimiroff, OSB, LCWR vice-president, will open the seminar with her presentation on Law in the Service of Governance. Although law is often seen as an external controlling force or tool that should be used as a last resort, Christine will explore how law is meant to serve and assist leadership. She will show how with a right understanding, law can be a positive resource for leadership and can make the task of planning and handling issues easier.

Other presentations will be given pertaining to governance for religious institutes from the aspects of civil and canon law. The presentations will offer insights on effectively carrying on the work of the institute when both legal systems are implicated.

Workshops include: Giving Civil Effect to Canonical Authority, Sexual Abuse Update, Alienation and Indebtedness, Chapters and Councils in Governance, HIPAA and Other Privacy Issues, Selling and Buying Real Property and Government Regulations, General Styles of Governance for Women Religious, Basic Taxation of Members and New Issues in Taxation of Members.

Information on the seminar together with a downloadable brochure and registration form are available at the Legal Resource Center for Religious web site: www.LRCR.org/mission/seminar.htm. LCWR members should also be receiving the brochure in the mail in the near future.

Available at Discount Price

Copies of
Carriers of the Story
An LCWR Religious Ministry Study

An invaluable resource providing a detailed study of leadership ministry and sponsorship by LCWR member congregations in the United States. The study, by Anne Munley, IHM, identifies changes in ministry and contributing factors and highlights the accuracy of leadership projections for congregational ministry.

Cost: \$10.00 with CD, \$6.00 without CD
(Price includes cost for postage)

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