



November 2009

New NRVC/CARA Vocation Study Resources Now Available

Following the presentation at the LCWR assembly on the findings of the vocation study, many leaders expressed interest in obtaining resources to help them and their members process the findings and utilize them in their own institutes. The study, conducted by the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), is based on surveys of religious institutes, surveys and focus groups with persons who recently entered religious life, and an examination of selected religious institutes that have been successful in attracting and retaining new members. The study was designed to identify and understand the characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of the men and women who are com-

LCWR Receives Expressions of Support from Religious Around the World

Two leadership associations of religious have sent statements of support to LCWR members as they proceed with the apostolic visitation.

The Leadership Conference of Consecrated Life of Southern Africa, which represents religious in South Africa, Botswana, and Swaziland, sent a letter that reads in part:

We write to you in a spirit of solidarity. We are conscious that women religious in the USA are at present undergoing an official "investigation" by the Vatican. While we are many miles away and not directly involved in your present experience, we are nevertheless affected by it. Where one part of the body suffers, the whole body feels the pain.

A copy of the letter is posted with the conference's

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ing to religious life today as well as the characteristics and practices of the religious institutes that are successfully attracting new candidates and retaining new members.

To assist religious institutes in the processing of the study findings, NRVC has posted a number of resources on its website: www.nrvc.net. NRVC draws the attention of leaders to the following:

- After each section of the major findings found in the executive summary, NRVC has included reflection questions for leadership teams and/or vocation and formation personnel to begin applying the study results to their own reality. The document, "Discussion Questions for Religious Institutes," is available at www.nrvc.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=394&Itemid=75.
- The executive summary is now translated in Spanish and is posted on the NRVC website.
- Mary Bendyna, RSM, executive director of CARA and the author of the study, will present the results on December 2 at the Bon Secours Spiritual Center in Marriotsville, MD. The goal of this presentation

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From the LCWR Presidency
Life Reflected in Headlines

by J Lora Dambroski, OSF — LCWR Past President

Headlines the LCWR Presidency
Column:

- Truth and integrity – Virtues of This Time
- Gratitude for the Privilege of Service
- Bound in a Blessed Solidarity

Last year at this time, November 2008, we were immersed in headlines that surrounded us on a daily, if not moment by moment basis. It was the time of the US national election for President and the fall conventions were surprising in their results as well as their cultural shifts. The election of Barack Obama was a turn of the tide in our history as not just age but racial lines were crossed in the search for *hope and peace* with a “yes, we can” attitude of previous eras.

As our country welcomed its new president, women religious of this country received communication of another unprecedented event in their history. The apostolic visitation of all congregations of women religious was announced both here and at the Vatican. Cardinal Rode’s communication was brought to us and the world by Mother Mary Clare Millea, ASCJ and Sister Eva Maria Ackerman, FSGM. The “rest” is becoming history as we live through each day of this process and the media’s varied fascination with it all.

Within less than a month, the national LCWR and its presidency received communication from Cardinal Levada regarding a doctrinal assessment of our leadership and activities of the conference.

We’ve reviewed these scenarios before and daily we are reminded of new elements within each experience and its impact on us personally, communally, and nationally. It seems that the news isn’t news but it is always news with a new twist!

There was a new twist to the national and world news a few weeks ago. President Barack Obama was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. Again, controversy: What



has he done, where are the results, he has not been president long enough.... In the midst of all the world and national turmoil a person who has not accomplished resolution or end to any of the chaotic issues of our time is selected to be honored for peace making. But, rather than not accepting this honor, President Obama receives it for all of us — for what we are all hoping for and reaching for as a people who desire peace.

The turmoil around this honor may be in what we all expect from anyone in leadership. We want results! We want verifiable facts! We want the deeds done in our viewing! In fact, we may want all of this done for us without our being bothered by any of the personal effort it may call from us.

Maybe there’s upset with this award because the world (that’s us!) does not honor or award anyone for instilling hope, for engendering undaunted efforts toward collaboration for the common good. It seems that this recognition is not for perfection (lack of mis-steps or even mistakes along the way), but for persistence in the belief of a common spirit of good in most people and the ongoing energy of humility to challenge that good in all peoples for all peoples. That good being respect and peace among peoples.

Women religious in this country were thrust into the eye of our Church and the world by the apostolic visitation and doctrinal assessment. The chaos created by the processes does not seem to have shaken the focus of the lives and the mission of our sisters and our leaders. The processes may have diverted precious energies, time, and emotion but not conviction, commitment, and resolve in the belief of the authenticity, value, and God-centeredness of our lives and missions. We continue to experience at the eye of the swirl of this chaos (that has been created) the pulsating heart of God.

We, too, recognize that we are not perfect but we are persistent in our belief of our mission and our call as

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NRVC/CARA Vocation Study Resources Now Available

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is to offer vocation and formation directors, leaders, and other congregational members insights into the research and to discuss how these findings can assist all those involved in vocation ministry. The cost of this day is \$50 for NRVC Region 4 members, and \$60 for non-regional members. A registration form with further information may be downloaded from the NRVC website.

- The Fall 2009 edition to *Horizon* has as its theme: "What is the study of new membership telling us?" This timely edition contains several articles that may be of additional assistance to religious institutes in their processing of the study results. Subsequent issues will also feature further reflection on the study. Subscription information is available on the NRVC website or by contacting Debbie Prieto at DAPrieto@nrvc.net.

Lastly, the USCCB has invited Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, NRVC executive director, to address the national assembly of bishops in November on the vocation study results. The purpose of this talk is to state the implications of the study for the future of religious institutes in this country and to solicit the continued support of the bishops for religious life.

Life Reflected in Headlines

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Gospel women. We believe in the energy of the humility of challenge. We seek to see the good and we work for peace. We do it together. We do work in continued collaboration for the common good of all as women of the Church.

We are a reflection of our Church and our culture. I saw this as I looked back on the headlines of the last three *Update* columns: "Truth and Integrity – Virtues of Our Time," "Gratitude for the Privilege of Service," and "Bound in a Beloved Solidarity." We're not working for a "prize" or "world recognition" for our lives or our service but we continue to work and live out of a relationship with a loving God who loves and encourages us to continue on the Spirit-lead paths that we have been unfolding before us. We are reflecting the

The New Leader Workshop

Presented by the Leadership Conference of
Women Religious

March 11-14, 2010

Conference Center
University of St. Mary of the Lake
Mundelein, Illinois

Please note the new location.

Although this workshop had been advertised as being held at The Retreat Center at St. John's in Plymouth, Michigan, this facility is being closed.

Registration materials will soon be sent by e-mail to all LCWR members.



challenge of our Church that the proclamation of the Gospel must be for us a primary and unavoidable duty.¹

"The grace to be in the truth and integrity that God asks is not new..."²

"Climbing the mountain has become a way of life for us, ecclesial women who desire to see from the perspective of God."³

"We are bound in a beloved solidarity that gives momentum for every step of our future."⁴

We're not done. We go on. The good before us.

1. Benedict XVI, message for World Mission Day, October 2009

2. J. Lora Dambroski, OSF, *Update*, July 2009

3. Mary Whited, CPPS, *Update*, August-September 2009

4. Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA, *Update*, October 2009

LCWR and Women Religious in the News

The following are links to some of the articles that have been in the news since the publication of the October 2009 LCWR newsletter.

“US sisters have served with grace and fidelity”
National Catholic Reporter
 Essay by Kathy Coffey
ncronline.org/news/us-sisters-have-served-grace-and-fidelity

“House of Representatives Resolution”
America Magazine
 Blog by James Martin, SJ
www.americamagazine.org/blog/entry.cfm?blog_id=2&id=61518553-3048-741E-6261970086799755

“Two Vatican investigations focus on nuns in the US”
Cleveland Plain Dealer
 Article by Michael O’Malley
blog.cleveland.com/metro/2009/10/two_vatican_investigations_foc.html

“Confessions of a Modern Nun”
America Magazine
 Article by Ilia Delio, OSF
www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=11905

“Year of the Sister”
America Magazine
 Essay by Chris Chatteris, SJ
www.americamagazine.org/blog/entry.cfm?blog_id=2&id=83050565-3048-741E-5444683162908716

“Denver Catholic sisters under Vatican scrutiny”
The Denver Post
 Article by Electa Draper
www.denverpost.com/news/ci_13555625

“Why are American nuns under investigation?”
Sacramento Bee
 Article by Jennifer Garza-
www.mcclatchydc.com/homepage/story/75539.html

“Dallas Women’s Museum exhibit celebrates nuns”
University of Dallas

Review by Camille Izlar
media.www.udallasnews.com/media/storage/paper743/news/2009/09/29/ArtsEntertainment/Dallas.Womens.Museum.Exhibit.Celebrates.Nuns-3787446.shtml

“Vatican asks U.S. bishops to fund \$1.1 million sisters study”
National Catholic Reporter
 Article by Thomas C. Fox
ncronline.org/news/women/vatican-asks-us-bishops-fund-11-million-sisters-study

“Cross Examination: Why Is Rome Investigating US Nuns?”
Commonweal
 Article by Sister X
www.commonwealmagazine.org/article.php3?id_article=2658

LCWR Receives Expressions of Support from Religious Around the World

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permission on the public side of the LCWR website at:
www.lcwr.org/what%27snew/av.htm.

A group of women religious major superiors of Asia-Oceania, also made a statement at their recent gathering. Addressed to “our sisters of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious,” the statement reads: “We, 113 women religious from 17 countries, representing the conferences of major superiors of Asia-Oceania, are participating in AMOR XV (Asia-Oceania Meeting of Religious) in Samphran, Thailand, from the 13-21 October 2009. The theme of this assembly is ‘Jesus Encounters the Syro-Phoenician Woman: Called to Move Beyond.’ Through your leadership conference, we are aware of the journey that many congregations of religious in the United States are going through. We offer you our solidarity and prayers.”

More information about this statement can be found in the National Catholic Reporter article “Asia, Oceania women religious offer support to beleaguered U.S. sisters” at ncronline.org/news/women-religious/asia-oceania-women-religious-offer-support-beleaguered-us-sisters

Former LCWR President Barbara Lawler Thomas, SCN Dies

Barbara Lawler Thomas, a former president of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth and the 1975 LCWR president, died on October 8 at age 87.



"She was a woman of vision, a woman of courage, a woman of great faith, a woman who had a great sense of where religious life was going," said Margaret Rodericks, SCN. "We would not be where we are today if it were not for her leadership."

Joan Chittister, OSB, who followed Barbara in the LCWR presidency, wrote, "One of the most difficult things in life is to say goodbye to someone whose life has affected your own, to someone whose life has been larger than themselves, to someone--the very memory of whom--conjures up an image of better times, important times, meaningful times, life-changing times.

"Barbara Thomas, sister, model and friend, is one of those for me and, I suspect, for many.

"Barbara brought a steady faith and an equally steady direction to a time more marked by chaos and uncertainty," Joan added. "She had the capacity to bring an aura of certainty to the maelstrom of confusion ushered in by Vatican II and, at the same time, to fan the hope in it, as well."

Born in 1921, in Richmond, Virginia, she joined her congregation when she was 21. She was a provincial from 1965 to 1972 to sisters in the Northern Kentucky and Ohio area. In 1972 she assumed leadership of her congregation which is headquartered in Nazareth, Kentucky.

Barbara was an internationally respected authority on canon law. After leaving the presidency of her congregation, she took a post at Our Lady of Peace Hospital in Louisville and began writing and traveling internationally to lecture and lead workshops on renewal in the church.

THE Occasional Papers

The Winter 2010 issue of the LCWR *Occasional Papers* will address the challenge of living with hope and seeking light in times of darkness.

Highlights of the issue will be:

An Interview with Dr. Shawn Copeland

Dr. Copeland, associate professor in the theology department of Boston College and a former president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, shares her insights on moving into a new future for the world and church. The interview utilizes the recent address of Constance FitzGerald, OCD entitled "From Impasse to Prophetic Hope: Crisis of Memory" (available at www.ctsa-online.org/0021-0042.pdf) as a launching point.

A Reflection on the Epiphany Story

The gospel story of the epiphany will set the context for the reflections of this issue on journeying with hope in darkness.

Reflections from Leaders on Hope in Dark Times

Several women religious leaders share their personal reflections on where they find light and hope today as they lead their congregations in these challenging times.

Reflections from Young Women Religious

Three younger women share on why they continue to choose religious life in these uncertain times and what they most would like to say to those in leadership at this moment.

All LCWR members, associates and subscribers will receive a copy of this issue in January. Many leaders order additional copies for their own members. Order forms will soon be sent online and will be due by **December 10**.

WOMEN & spirit

CATHOLIC SISTERS IN AMERICA

Exhibit Opens in Dallas

Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America opened at The Women's Museum: An Institute for the Future in Dallas, Texas. Beginning with a reception for guests and the media, coordinated by Mary Brian Bole, SSND, on September 24, the exhibit opened the following day to the public and will remain open until December 13, 2009. The museum is located on the grounds of the State Fair of Texas which also opened on September 25.



▲ LCWR president Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA welcomes guests at the opening reception



◀ The gift shop carries Women & Spirit greeting cards and bookmarks





Upcoming Showings

The Women's Museum: An Institute for the Future
Dallas, Texas
September 25 - December 13, 2009

**Smithsonian-International Gallery
in the Dillon Ripley Center**
Washington, DC
January 15 - April 2010

**Statue of Liberty National Monument/Ellis Island Im-
migration Museum**
New York City
September 24, 2010 - January 22, 2011

Mississippi River Museum
Dubuque, Iowa
February - April 2011

Justice for Immigrants Campaign Develops Strategic Plan

During the October 14 Justice for Immigrants (JFI) Campaign meeting an initial report was provided on the conversations with participating organizations that were the first step in developing a strategic plan. Current strengths and weaknesses of the campaign were both reported, with all groups believing that the church has special responsibility for immigrants and addressing immigration policies and practices. An initial draft of a strategic plan is expected by early November, and after review by members of JFI, will be sent to USCCB Migration and Refugee Services for approval.

A report on a well-attended Philadelphia convening was provided as well as updates on ongoing congressional visits. JFI will launch a postcard campaign which will be completed for electronic use by students in November, and focused on National Migration Week in January for the larger Catholic community.

LCWR Represented at G-20 Religious Leaders Summit

Responding to an invitation from Bread for the World, LCWR presidents approved having an LCWR representative at the September 22-23 G-20 Religious Leaders Summit in Pittsburgh, but were not able to participate. Janet Gardner, OSF, general minister of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, based in Pittsburgh, graciously accepted the invitation on behalf of LCWR. Janet opened the press conference with a greeting from LCWR and a prayer. The USCCB was represented at the summit as well as the Diocese of Pittsburgh.



Religious leaders process to summit

Coalition Against Human Trafficking Meeting Focuses on Children

Several presenters at the September 17 meeting of the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking described the vulnerability of children and some efforts to address particular situations. Ambassador Maura Harty, senior policy director of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, provided information about a financial coalition formed by the US national center and the international center when reports indicated that the major purchasers of child pornography in the US used credit cards. More than a year ago, major credit card issuers engaged the issue of how to combat this practice and agreed to follow the money, stop transactions, and identify purchasers. Now nearly 97% of US financial institutions are involved, and there has been a 50% drop in direct child porno sites. However, there has been a large increase in purchase of sites from low- to high-cost purchases.

The link between child pornography and trafficking is largely anecdotal. There is a huge market for child pornography, because children are easily accessible, and money from pornography finances other activities.

Carol Smolenski, director of ECPAT USA (End Child Pornography and Trafficking) estimates that 25% of child sex tourists are from the US, most of whom are not pedophiles but "situational" tourists who see that what is criminal in the US is accepted in other countries and even say that it helps people who are poor.

ECPAT has sought to work with the travel industry by asking companies to sign a code of conduct. In addition to efforts with hotels, ECPAT has recently approached airlines. Resistance to signing a code is higher in the US than in some other countries because here the environment is more litigious. (Worldwide there are almost 1000 signers, in the US only four.)

Kathleen Coll, SSJ described the work of ICCR members to address these corporations in collaboration with ECPAT. Meetings with Starwood hotels (e.g., Westin, Sheraton) resulted in an agreement to have a policy. Efforts with Marriott, which has had two cases against it, resulted in a year-long review, but no signing of the code. At a shareholder meeting of Delta, shareholders were responsive to the code.

Because of the fear of litigation, there is a need to show companies that customers want them to sign on. Further information about the code of conduct can be found on www.ecpat.org.

2010 Justice-Related Events

Catholic Mission Congress: October 28-31, 2010

LCWR participates in the Catholic Mission Forum which plans the Mission Congress occurring every five years. The 2010 Congress will be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico with the theme: "God's Mission, Many Faces: A Portrait of US Catholics in Mission." When registration materials are available they will be found on www.UScatholicmission.org. "Mission" is an inclusive term, with diverse representation, presenters, and dialogue sessions.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days: March 19-22, 2010

An annual event, the 2010 EAD theme is "A Place to Call Home: Immigrants, Refugees, and Displaced Peoples." EAD will be held in a hotel near Washington, DC. The website is www.advocacydays.org.

LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank

The Evolution of Human Thought and Religious Life,
for the Life of the World

Facilitator: Carol Zinn, SSJ

Bethany Center
Lutz, Florida
March 1 — 4, 2010

Space is limited. Registrations are due by
December 11.

For information and registration see
www.lcwr.org/socialjustice/thinktank.htm.



2010 Membership Registration Now Being Accepted

Online registration for the 2010 NRVC membership year is now available at www.nrv.net. The new membership year begins on January 1, 2010.



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Upcoming LCWR Dates

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

*Redemptorist Renewal Center
Tucson, Arizona*

January 17 — 22, 2010

LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank

*Bethany Center
Lutz, Florida*

March 1 — 4, 2010

LCWR New Leader Workshop

*Conference Center - University of St. Mary of the Lake
Mundelein, Illinois*

March 11 — 14, 2010

LCWR Assembly

Dallas, Texas

August 10 — 14, 2010

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

*San Pedro Spiritual Retreat Center
Winter Park, FL*

January 16 — 23, 2011

LCWR New Leader Workshop

*Conference Center - University of St. Mary of the Lake
Mundelein, Illinois*

March 24 — 27, 2011

LCWR Assembly

Garden Grove, California
August 9 — 13, 2011