

March 2008

LCWR National Board Meets to Move Forward Significant Conference Agenda Items

The LCWR board met separately as well as jointly with the board of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men in Tucson, Arizona from February 16 - 20. Highlights from the meetings are in this newsletter. More specifics about each item will be discussed at the LCWR spring regional meetings.



LCWR's Shared Future

The LCWR national board spent significant time reviewing the responses from the regions on LCWR's shared future. The regions offered ideas on what these times are calling forth from the membership and leadership of the conference and, in some cases, made specific recommendations.

The board carefully reflected upon the ideas that had been synthesized by a board task force and added their own learnings and insights. This synthesis and the added ideas of the board will be shared with all members at the spring LCWR regional meetings.

The board also considered other models for how the LCWR presidency could operate that are in keeping with the current realities of the conference as well as the demands on women in elected leadership for their own institutes. The regional chairs will present an option for consideration for this year's elections and ideas for future ways of governing and managing the conference.



On This Holy Mountain LCWR-CMSM Assembly Denver, Colorado



Throughout this summer's assembly and particularly on the final day, LCWR and CMSM will hold separate sessions so that LCWR members have sufficient time to fully and creatively engage with the ideas emerging from the LCWR Shared Future Process.

All LCWR members are encouraged to attend this important assembly and participate in an exciting process regarding the conference's future services to women religious leaders at this critical time in religious life.

Mark your calendars for August 1-5, 2008

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From the LCWR Presidency

Water of Life

by J. Lora Dambroski, OSF — LCWR President-Elect

Easter is early this year. We have heard it said many times that the Christmas tree was just taken to the back porch and we were in procession to receive ashes on our foreheads!

My thoughts go more to Easter than either the forlorn tree or the dry ashes. Images of water have taken up much of my reflection. At the Easter vigil we bless the fresh water, image of new life in Christ as it is used for baptism. We hear phrases like, “we immerse ourselves in the waters of life,” “we are refreshed by the waters of baptism.” So beautiful are these waters of new life that we recall our own baptisms with renewed commitment.

“Water of life cleanse and refresh us...” Cool clear, sweet, cleansing and refreshing water.

Also in my thoughts I heard myself saying, “If there’s one more thing that crashes the agenda I hope that I

*When there is no apparent threat
how do we maintain
the balance of water’s gift
in our own personal and collective ways?*

can keep my head above water.” This water is less than refreshing and more suffocating. The image is one of swimming as fast as I can to just breathe. And more serious is our country’s vacillation over whether water boarding (simulated drowning) is legal, let alone torture.

Early in this year 2008 raging weather, wild winds, and powerfully destructive waters swept over our brothers and sisters in the central states. Not only was property destroyed but also lives lost and families displaced. It brought back scenes of New Orleans where Hurricane Katrina’s wind and water seemed to crush and level life there forever.



But remembering our LCWR sisters in New Orleans and our conference’s continuing response to this chaos makes me reflect more on spirit, hope, and new life. It brings before me what the resurrection really is — Christ alive in the dogged commitment of those who bring hope in action despite the imbalance of negative odds.

Those rains and floods make us wish there were not so much water. While on the other side of the globe are people who wish for, long for a sip of water for a baby’s lips, or to

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above water?*

water withering crops. The dearth of water means possible death.

Water – so necessary, so beautiful, so destructive. A gift of life whose imbalance sometimes creates life-threatening situations for us. A gift of life that we take for granted until the imbalance of its presence makes us pay attention. I wonder how careful we are in respecting, sharing, and protecting this natural gift. I wonder when there is no apparent threat how do we maintain the balance of water’s gift in our own personal and collective ways.

The Easter promise of resurrection keeps me asking myself about the waters of life and where my focus is. As a congregational leader, is it on being part of the dogged commitment of the Gospel shared for others and about balance of gifts (like water) or is it just about keeping my own head above water? My hope is that it is the former.

Work of the LCWR National Board

Throughout its five-day meeting at the Redemptorist Retreat Center in Tucson, the LCWR national board dealt with a number of questions facing the conference and also planned for future events. The agenda included discussion of:

- the LCWR-CMSM assembly
- the 2009 LCWR assembly in New Orleans
- the upcoming survey of members on policies, procedures, and practices on preventing sexual abuse and responding to allegations of abuse
- the LCWR project to provide assistance to the women religious in New Orleans affected by the 2005 hurricanes
- the LCWR museum exhibit
- the LCWR dues structure
- approval of the budget
- adjustments to the nomination process for LCWR officers
- LCWR's participation in the Catholic Relief Service delegation to the Middle East to assess the situation of Iraqi refugees
- the annual trip to Vatican offices by LCWR officers
- the InterAmerican Committee

Information on these topics will be discussed further at the spring regional meetings.



Work of the LCWR and CMSM Boards

The boards of LCWR and CMSM met jointly several times during their days in Tucson and also shared in prayer, Eucharistic liturgies, meals, and socials. Among the topics on the joint meeting agenda were:

- updates on the Commission on Religious Life and Ministry
- updates on the Center for the Study of Religious Life
- the 2008 joint assembly
- updates from the National Religious Retirement Office
- a presentation on the complimentary norms
- the restructuring of LRCR and NATRI



Legal Resource Center Conversation: Diocesan Policies Affecting Religious Institutes

Dan Ward, OSB, director of the Legal Resource Center for Religious, addressed the two boards concerning ways to work with local bishops regarding diocesan policies and actions which may have an impact on religious institutes. Areas touched on included: employment contracts, sexual abuse settlements, fundraising and leasing norms, and requests for statements of members' suitability for ministry.

The conversation surfaced several suggestions for ways in which religious leaders and the two conferences might work effectively in local situations. Dan noted resources on these and other topics available to LRCR members from the center's website. Additional information will be shared by the regional chairs at the spring meetings.



*Dan Ward,
OSB and Mary
Dacey, SSJ,
LCWR past
president*

USCCB Vice-President Addresses Boards

Gerald F. Kicanas, bishop of Tucson and newly-elected vice-president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) joined the two boards for an informal conversation on topics of mutual interest.

Bishop Kicanas described the restructuring of the USCCB which has been aimed at downsizing the Washington-based staff as well as streamlining the USCCB Committee structure. In particular, he explored some of the potential implications of the restructuring for men and women religious in the United States.

Bishop Kicanas also talked about his recent attendance at the 35th gathering of the bishops of the Americas which focused on the final document from the 2007 meeting of Latin American and Caribbean bishops in Aparecida, Brazil.



Janice Bader, CPPS

NRRO Report: Continuing on the Road to a Sustainable Future

Janice Bader, CPPS, director of the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO), spoke with the LCWR and CSM boards on its ongoing work. Once the NRRO collection was renewed in 2007 by the USCCB for another 10 years, the Commission on Religious Life and Ministry asked the NRRO to:

- Distribute funds in ways that will promote systemic change
- Develop a plan for reducing unfunded past service liability

Quoting Peter Senge, from his book, *Presence*, Janice reminded the group that: "If the future is going to be different, we have to go far beyond little piecemeal gestures and begin to see the systems in which we are embedded." Consequently, the NRRO is planning a revision of its services, operations, and funding processes. More information on this will be shared with LCWR members as the plans develop.



*Mary Dacey, SSJ; Mary Whited, CPPS, LCWR president;
Tom Picton, CSSR, CSM president; and Gerald F. Kicanas,
bishop of Tucson and USCCB vice-president*

Upcoming LCWR Officer Events

LCWR members are asked to keep in their prayer some of the upcoming events involving LCWR officers on behalf of the conference.

March 3 — 7
InterAmerican Committee Meeting
Washington, DC

LCWR and CMSM will host a meeting of the InterAmerican Committee, which is comprised of the executive directors and presidents of LCWR, CMSM, the Canadian Religious Conference, and the Conference of Latin American Religious.

Annual Visit to the Vatican Offices
March 29 — April 5
Rome, Italy

Mary Whited, CPPS; J. Lora Dambroski, OSF; Mary Dacey, SSJ; and Carole Shinnick, SSND will travel to Rome to meet with various Vatican officials for conversations on LCWR activities and concerns. This includes meetings with representatives from CICALSAL and other Vatican offices .



LCWR Online Membership Directory

LCWR members and associates are encouraged to become familiar with the online membership directory available in the password-protected area of the members' information section of the LCWR website (www.lcwr.org). The directory offers a number of features including the following:

- The opportunity to submit online any changes or corrections to your own listing. (Members are encouraged to check all the information in their listing, including the expiration of their term. It is especially important to check your e-mail address since almost all communication from the national office to the members is done electronically.)
- The opportunity to search for other members according to name, congregation, geographic area, region, role, etc.

For those who wish to have a printed version of the directory, go to "Search for Persons," choose "All," and then copy and paste the entire directory into a word processing document.



LCWR Think Tank X Earth as Teacher: The Dynamics of Emergent Processes

LCWR sponsored a systemic change think tank in February in Scottsdale, Arizona, which was led by Paula González, SC (second from right in photo to the right). Eighteen leaders and 21 justice and peace coordinators participated in the event.



Work on LCWR Museum Exhibit Continues with Goal of 2009 Opening

The LCWR History Committee met for three days in St. Louis in February with six staff members of Seruto & Company, the firm designing and building the traveling exhibit on Catholic sisters in America.

Tentative plans are to open the exhibit in fall 2009. At the February meeting, the committee and staff focused their efforts on a wide range of preparatory work for the exhibit including:

- artifact and content review of the exhibit
- a marketing and sales plan
- the design of an exhibit website
- a publicity folio
- ideas for supplementary items to be sold in museums
- floor plan designs
- concepts for films to be used throughout the exhibit
- applications to several museums expressing interest in the exhibit

Work on the exhibit on the part of both Seruto & Company and the committee will be especially intense in upcoming months as venues are researched, museum applications are completed, content decisions are made, fundraising continues, and marketing and public relations events are put into place.



Nancy Seruto displays a sample of possible fabric to be used throughout the exhibit as Helen Garvey, BVM; Mary Charlotte Chandler, RSCJ; and Constance Phelps, SCL look on.



The committee reviewed various concepts for the design of a contemplative space, a unique and key element in the exhibit which will provide visitors a place to ponder more reflectively what they have experienced



Mary Charlotte Chandler, RSCJ looks on as designer John Low shows drawings of possible creative display panels for the exhibit



Carole Shinnick, SSND; Molly Miles; Nancy Seruto; Annmarie Sanders, IHM; Mary Dacey, SSJ; and Constance Phelps, SCL review design ideas created by Seruto & Company for the traveling exhibit

From the LCWR Executive Director

There Will Be Light

A few weeks ago a friend of mine and I decided to see one of the films nominated for best picture of the year. She had already seen *Juno* and I had seen *Atonement*, so we settled on a film playing at a time and in a location convenient for both of us. We should have paid more attention to the title. We saw *There Will Be Blood*.

There's no question that this film is well-made. And Daniel Day-Lewis does an outstanding job of acting. But the film is one of the darkest I have ever seen and if you are looking for a chance to relax, I do not recommend it. The film opens with the sound of a pickaxe hacking repeatedly against the stone wall of a mine. For the first 20 minutes there is not one spoken word. The background music, which can only be described as a musical version of fingernails scraping across a blackboard, grows in volume and intensity throughout the film. It is – to say



Carole Shinnick, SSND

case against Jesus. So, when that quint-essential doting mother, Mrs. Zebedee, asks for high positions for her two boys, Jesus tells her what's involved – beatings, mockery, and crucifixion. (Low, threatening music in the background.) When Jesus tells his listeners that prophets are always persecuted by their own townspeople, the crowd tries to throw him off a cliff. (Music swells, becomes more insistent and intrusive.) And then by Holy Week, the ominous words roll off the page and over us when we hear, "Then Judas went out. And it was night." (Loud, high-pitched minor chords followed by a single cymbal crash.)

Lent reminds us that nothing will get you into trouble faster than naming out loud the gap you see between God's dream for God's people and what is. Those who have created the gap do not like to be named. They will do all they can to stifle the voices of the truth-tellers. Consider Jesus. Martin Luther King. Oscar Romero. Dorothy Stang. Yes, just as the film warns — there will be blood.

At a recent meeting of the LCWR national board in Tucson, I was lucky enough to stay in one of the hermitages at the retreat center. The hermitage faced east. So each morning I got up, made my coffee in the dark, and then raised all the blinds to sit and watch. At first I could barely see the outline of the mountains traced

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the least – unsettling. This is the menacing start to a very disturbing story. And for the next two and a half hours, the tension never dissipates.

The two main characters in *There Will Be Blood* are men who grew powerful and rich by exploiting the good will and trust of their fellow human beings. One character smells money in the oil industry, still in its infancy. His life is one of unmitigated greed, cold indifference to others, and an almost total absence of decency and ethics. The other character uses religion to manipulate the human longing for healing and hope to similarly deceive and mislead.

As we move through the Lenten drama leading to Good Friday, we may well hear that same unnerving music from *There Will Be Blood* in the background. The gospels signal a circling of shadowy enemies, crafting a deadly

*It is true.
There will be blood.
But, more importantly and more surely,
there will be light.*

on the far horizon. Soon I would see a snaking line of headlights as commuters headed off to work. And then finally, slowly – very, very slowly — the sky would lighten, brighten, and glow gold.

It is true. There will be blood. But, more importantly and more surely, there will be light.

May the hope of Easter be yours.

Upcoming LCWR Dates

LCWR New Leader Workshop

The Retreat Center at St. John's

Plymouth, Michigan

March 13 — 16, 2008

LCWR-CMSM Joint Assembly

Denver, Colorado

August 1 — 4, 2008

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

Franciscan Center

Tampa, Florida

January 12 — 16, 2009

LCWR New Leader Workshop

The Retreat Center at St. John's

Plymouth, Michigan

March 19 — 22, 2009

LCWR Assembly

New Orleans, Louisiana

August 11 — 15, 2009

From the Center for the Study of Religious Life

On the Lookout for Documentaries on Religious Life

In the era of YouTube and cell phone videos perhaps it is not surprising to see a proliferation of documentaries and films on religious life. Every few months the Center for the Study of Religious Life (CSRL) learns of another documentary in progress. Information on these documentaries is posted on the CSRL website at www.religious-life.org/pdfs/Master%20List%20documentaries%20and%20films_jan08.pdf

Anyone who knows of a documentary recently completed or currently in progress not on this list is asked to send the information to the center at CSRL@religious-life.org. Most of the documentaries on this list are about women religious. Most of them are very positive.

Repeated by Popular Demand APRIL 16-18, 2008 LRCR Workshop

Reconfiguration Best Practices Civily, Canonically, Culturally

Faculty

Janet Fleischhacker, CSJ

Stephen Glodek, SM

Lynn Jarrell, OSU, JCD

Mark MacDougall, JD

Mary Reichert, JD

Daniel Ward, OSB, JD, JCL

Sheraton Cincinnati Airport

Rate \$109 plus tax

Subscriber Registration Fee: \$450

Group Rate: Three or More from same Institute/Firm
\$400

See www.lrcr.org for more details and registration form



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2007 NATRI Conference Resources that Impact Leaders

Several papers presented at the 2007 NATRI Conference in Miami may be useful to those in leadership and are available on the NATRI website.

Religious Apostolates, Past and Future: Lessons from the Present Refounding Cycle

Keynote address by Patricia Wittberg, SC

The role of religious as catalysts for addressing emerging needs and problems in a changing society.

Workshops

Internal Controls

Robert Craig and Susan Hall

The controls that are necessary to minimize risks in financial operations.

An Investment Policy Checklist

Developed by a NATRI Task Force

Finance Issues of Members

Donna Sauer, LRCR Associate Director

Frequently asked questions about credit card usage, gifts to departing members, patrimony and the Medicaid Recovery Act.

Recent Changes in Government Programs

Constance Neeson

Includes information on new rules for name changes in the Social Security system

These and other conference papers can be accessed on the NATRI website (www.natri.org) under Programs, and then Materials (last conference).

Orientation to Financial Management of Religious Institutes:

A Seminar for Financial and Leadership Personnel of Religious Institutes

June 2-6, 2008

The Retreat Center at St. John's
Plymouth, Michigan

NATRI's annual seminar for new treasurers, finance office staff and leadership with stewardship responsibilities

An experienced and dynamic faculty includes Dan Ward, OSB on civil and canon law, Hertha Longo, CSA on planning, budgeting, and financial forecasting. Keith Zekind will handle basic accounting. Sue Novak will cover advanced accounting issues. There will also be two tracks on investments. Janice Bader, CPPS and Constance Neeson will address retirement issues and government programs. Roger Duffield of Christian Brother Services and Barbara Winnals, SSJ will address management of risk and of facilities. Speakers will be available each evening for an open forum.

Financial aid is available.