

March 2009

## LCWR National Board Explores Critical Matters Facing the Conference and Religious Life



LCWR board meets in Jacksonville, Florida

At their recent meeting, members of the LCWR national board discussed several of the most important questions facing the conference and its members. Held at Marywood Retreat Center in Jacksonville, Florida from February 15-19, the gathering was scheduled in conjunction with the board meeting of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and included some joint sessions, as well as daily prayer and liturgy together.

### LCWR Shared Futures Process

Donna Fyffe of Community Works, Inc. attended the board meeting to facilitate the work on the conference's shared futures process. The board reviewed all the feedback collected from both the 2008 assembly and fall regional meetings and discussed emerging trends regarding the needs of leaders as religious life moves into the future.

A committee from the board and staff will be named to consider the ideas provided by members as well as those that surfaced from the board meeting and draft a plan for LCWR. The plan will be submitted to the membership for feedback.

The board also reviewed the LCWR Call for 2004-2009 and noted its continued relevance for these times. The

board voted to reaffirm the document and use it as a continued guide for reflection on religious life leadership in US culture today.

The LCWR Call is on the LCWR website at [www.lcwr.org/lcwraboutus/lcwrcall.htm](http://www.lcwr.org/lcwraboutus/lcwrcall.htm) and is also available as a PDF document at [www.lcwr.org/lcwraboutus/LCWR%20Call%20-%20web.pdf](http://www.lcwr.org/lcwraboutus/LCWR%20Call%20-%20web.pdf).

### Apostolic Visitation

Donna Fyffe also facilitated the board's discussion on the recently announced apostolic visitation of institutes of women religious in the United States by the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The letter, sent from

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## From the LCWR Presidency

# Faithful Presence

by Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA — LCWR President-Elect

Through the liturgical year, we traverse the mystical reality of the Word Incarnate, the baptism of Jesus, and ordinary time. Slowly now – *lento* -- we move through the stories of the death of Jesus, a season for soul-reflection.

Why did Jesus need to be baptized? In baptism Jesus expressed his total solidarity with the human race. He wanted to identify with us as a fellow human being. What happened in the baptism of Jesus was the Father's total confirmation of the mission of Jesus for the work he was about to begin. Jesus was 'missioned' in his baptism and 'confirmed' in a Pentecost experience at one and the same time. This identification would ultimately have its dramatic culmination when Jesus died on the cross, executed with two convicted criminals.

Our baptism is not an isolated ritual, but primarily a daily embodiment of our identity with the human race and its summons for covenanting in right relationships. United with others in the community of God's people, we envision ourselves as salt for the earth, a city on a hill, a candle radiating in the surrounding darkness.

In our own journey of baptism, confirmation, and passion, we share in the successes of our sisters and brothers, delight in their dreams, and groan with their struggles. We move forward with relentless intention of making our lives extraordinary, not because we wish to be known as a featured story, but because our lives are the story of an invitation to creative abandon, boundless passion, and deep joy. In John 10:10 Jesus wishes for us *life to the full*. In this fullness we live in a spirituality that sustains disruption, ominous dark roads, and strange knocks on our doors.

Like first-time missionaries we want to fly on the wings of the dawn; we want to do a lot. Sometimes through the persecution of others, at other times through realization of our own inadequacy, the death of our first fervor becomes real for us. In these experiences we



come to understand that what we have to offer is not nearly as important as what we have the ability to receive. *Presence was my ministry*, Jesus said in the garden. *Just stay with me*. In the staying we find our mission through a tender revelation about availability. Charism, we learn, is the faith shock we encounter at the gap between the reality we abide in and the belief we hold. We can sleep because we are not overwhelmed by fear of the future.

The women in the passion narratives claimed a public missionary role. Mary of Bethany anointed the head and feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair (Mark 14: 3-9; John 12: 1-8). She recognized who Jesus was and what his mission would ultimately require of him. She was a prophet chosen by God to anoint God's chosen one for this mission. The

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fragrance of her perfume was symbolic of spreading the message of Jesus throughout the Gentile world. Occurring in the context of a meal, the anointing of Jesus' body had Eucharistic overtones. Jesus said: *wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her* (Mark 14: 9).

Women followed Jesus to Jerusalem and were present at his crucifixion because they recognized his mission. They were faithful disciples dedicated to continuing that mission. His mother's faith did not depend on miracles and signs but on her belief in Jesus, her Son. Faith requires 'staying with', remaining with Jesus. Faithful presence at the moment of crucifixion turns into joyful awareness at the resurrection. It is a commitment to an excessive willingness to believe in and taste the future.

## LCWR National Board Explores Critical Matters

*(continued from page 1)*



*Region 1 chair Dorothy Scesmy, PBVM and LCWR treasurer Pam Chiesa, PBVM review questions addressed through the shared futures process*

Cardinal Franc Rodé, CM, prefect of the Vatican congregation, also announced the appointment of Mother Clare Millea, superior general of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to serve as the apostolic visitor.

Acknowledging the serious nature of a visitation of all institutes of US apostolic women religious, the board devoted considerable time to discussion of the visitation and the best ways in which LCWR could be a support and resource to its members during its duration. At the conclusion of the meeting, the board sent a letter to all members stating in part:

“We were surprised by the news of an apostolic visitation and, along with you, await further information from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life regarding the scope, process and hoped for outcomes of the visitation. With additional information we can better determine how our participation in the visitation can be beneficial to US religious life, the church and the world.

We also seek understanding of how the visitation will augment the significant discernment and study processes already inherent in our religious life. Our serious commitment to intense prayer and reflection, as well as to processes of

learning and analysis, have long served to make women religious keenly aware of our individual, communal and ecclesial strengths and challenges. As women religious well know, any opportunity that calls for greater reflection on our lives can be an occasion for the celebration of achievements and an examination of areas for growth. We hope that the visitation can offer that type of experience.

We are aware that the unanticipated news of the visitation has evoked a variety of responses in women religious, has generated many questions on what the visitation might involve and has prompted deliberations on how best to proceed with it. Within the next few weeks, the LCWR national office will alert you to resources that you may wish to consider regarding your participation in the apostolic visitation. We will also build time into the LCWR spring regional meetings for discussion of the visitation and ask that you bring your insights to these gatherings. In the meantime, we encourage you to reflect on the stories of heroic service and creative fidelity of your own members, as well as on the questions and challenges before us as we continuously seek to live religious life with depth and meaning in a pluralistic and rapidly changing culture.

Preparation for the apostolic visitation deserves your time and careful thought. You may also wish to consider ways of consciously bringing the visitation to your prayer and contemplation in the time ahead, particularly as we begin the season of Lent.”

The board also posted a public statement regarding the apostolic visitation on the LCWR website at [www.lcwr.org/lcwrpressreleases/publicstatements/Statement2-20-09.pdf](http://www.lcwr.org/lcwrpressreleases/publicstatements/Statement2-20-09.pdf)

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*Donna Fyffe (standing) leads the board through a discussion of the shared futures feedback.*



## LCWR National Board

### LCWR Assemblies *(continued from page 3)*

The board gratefully acknowledged the participation of a significant number of LCWR members who completed the online evaluation of the 2008 LCWR-CMSM assembly. The board, the 2009 assembly planning committee, and the staff found the feedback from the members invaluable for planning future assemblies.

Mary Jo Nelson, OLVM, facilitator of the 2009 LCWR assembly, joined the board as an observer as it worked through some of the topics that will be addressed at the assembly.

In addition to the keynote presentation by Cokie Roberts, other events of this assembly will include a pre-assembly tour of areas severely impacted by Hurricane Katrina, recognition of the success of the LCWR-FADICA project to assist women religious in New Orleans, discussion of the LCWR shared futures plan, and a presentation by NRVC and CARA on the results of their study on religious vocations. More information on each of these events will be forthcoming.

### LCWR Membership Dues

Discussion of the LCWR financial report included a look at the membership dues structure. In order to accurately project the impact of congregation mergers on LCWR's financial future, more data is needed from congregations who anticipate a merger in the next few years. The LCWR national office will be contacting members in the near future to ask for assistance in gathering this data.

### LCWR Public Statements

The board reviewed the conference's policy on making public statements in the name of LCWR on national and international political, social or ecclesial policies or practices. In order to continue making LCWR's public voice as effective as possible, the board and staff will modify some of the criteria and practices currently in place for issuing statements.

### LCWR Spring Regional Meetings

The board suggested several agenda items for consideration at the LCWR spring regional meetings including the apostolic visitation, implementation of the 2008 assembly resolution, review of the proposed 2009 assembly resolution, the LCWR shared futures process, the LCWR dues structure, and the nomination process for LCWR officers.

### Collaboration with CMSM

The LCWR and CMSM boards met jointly twice during the week. Much of the agenda focused on discussion of the apostolic visitation, the annual trip taken by the LCWR and CMSM officers to various Vatican dicasteries scheduled this year for April, the "Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America" exhibit, the InterAmerican Committee, and the Cameron Street building fund.

Discussion also took place on the various ways in which LCWR and CMSM effectively collaborate. Both groups acknowledged that the joint meetings of the two boards and executive committees as well as the joint annual trip to the Vatican are particularly helpful ways of collaborating. Discussion also took place on whether the two conferences should plan other conjoint assemblies. This question was referred to the the two executive committees for a decision.



To keep updated on the apostolic visitation, LCWR members are encouraged periodically to visit the website established by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life: [www.apostolicvisitation.org](http://www.apostolicvisitation.org).

*The LCWR and CMSM boards met jointly twice during the week, and shared prayer and liturgy daily.*

## Updates on Women & Spirit Exhibit



### Ongoing Work on the Exhibit

**W**ork continues to complete “Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America” for its debut in Cincinnati in May. Efforts include:

- Finalizing the exhibit script
- Filming of women religious across the United States for various video projections in the exhibit
- Collection of artifacts being loaned by congregations throughout the country
- Development of supportive educational materials
- Formation of local marketing and public relations committees in each area where the exhibit will show
- Development and execution of national marketing and public relations plans
- Continued search for additional museum venues
- Planning for the May 15 opening event

The LCWR History Committee will be working with Seruto & Company in Pasadena during the final week of February to review the construction of the exhibit, critique videos, and orchestrate other aspects of the project.

*A film crew traveled to the ministry sites of several women religious for video shoots. Shown with LCWR member Pat Kelly, SSJ (left) at her congregation's motherhouse in Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania are: Brad Gorton; Mellissa Berry; Cameron Roberts; Annmarie Sanders, IHM; and Tim Steinouer*



*The crew filmed a council meeting of the Sisters of St. Joseph, as well as an interview with Mary Dacey, SSJ who will narrate the introductory video for the exhibit*



### Upcoming Showings

#### **Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal in the Cincinnati History Museum**

Cincinnati, Ohio

May 15, 2009 - September 7, 2009

#### **Smithsonian-International Gallery in the Dillon Ripley Center**

Washington, DC

January - April 2010

#### **Mississippi River Museum**

Dubuque, Iowa

February - April 2011

*One of the nine-foot exhibit panels currently under construction*



*Below: The crew filmed Simone Campbell, SSS (right) in DC during a lobbying visit with Ohio Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur*





*Women of Spirit:  
Creating in Chaos*

**2009 LCWR Assembly**

New Orleans, Louisiana

Pre-Assembly Tours of Sites Impacted by  
Hurricane Katrina  
*August 11 -- morning*

Opening of Assembly  
*August 11 -- 7:00 PM*

Closing of Assembly  
*August 14 -- 9:00 PM*

Travel Home  
*August 15*

## **Midwiving a Vibrant Future 2009 LCWR Reflection Book**



Orders for the 2009 LCWR reflection book, which runs from May 31 to July 22 will be shipped in April.



## **Notice to All Participants in the LCWR Cartridge Recycling Program**

LCWR has been notified by the cartridge recycling company, Empties4Cash, that it no longer will be accepting large laser toner cartridges. Please do not send these as a part of your cartridge recycling shipment as they cost extra to ship and could take away from the return funds used for LCWR scholarships. A rule of thumb to use when sending in your ink cartridges is that they should fit in the palm of your hand.

For a complete list of acceptable cartridges, go to [www.empties4cash.com](http://www.empties4cash.com).



## CHA Board Begins Vision 2020 Process

In response to a Catholic Health Association board directive to staff to lead a new long-range visioning process for Catholic health ministry in the United States, members of the board, together with staff and participating observers (USCCB and LCWR), began this process during the February 4-6, 2009 board meeting. In preparation for the meeting, all were asked to read the 1988 vision titled “Catholic Health Ministry: A New Vision for a New Century,” developed by a wide range of persons engaged in the ministry, including several LCWR members. The board identified key elements to be contained in Vision 2020, and provided input on who should be involved in the process going forward.

In its advocacy efforts, CHA reported satisfaction with the passage of SCHIP, and has been working to assure inclusion of certain important items in the stimulus bill, including: \$87 billion in state Medicaid relief, the moratorium on seven Medicaid regulations, \$19 billion in Health IT, and \$21 billion to help 6.5 million unemployed workers retain health coverage. (All of these were retained in the final conference agreement.)

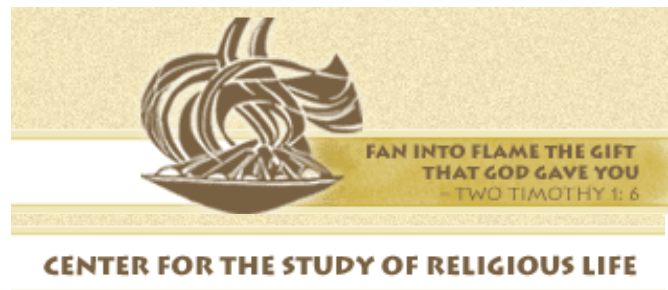
## Catholics in Alliance Engage Judiciary Official on Human Trafficking

In a February 11, 2009 conference call, members of Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good hosted Lou de Baca, Counsel to the House Committee on the Judiciary, to discuss slavery/trafficking issues in the 111th Congress. Mr. de Baca works for chairman John Conyers, who is committed to addressing human trafficking and involuntary servitude as well as immigration reform. Participants on the call expressed particular concern about raids and detention centers. A few members of the alliance who work with human trafficking and immigration issues, including LCWR, gave an overview of the work in which their members are engaged.

## Faithful Security Strategizes for Ratification of Test Ban Treaty

During a special meeting on February 12, 2009, members of Faithful Security: The National Religious Partnership on the Nuclear Weapons Danger met to determine how to engage religious communities to work for US Ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), given a new moment and new congress in Washington, DC. The CTBT has a long history, beginning with India’s Nehru, and in the US with Adlai Stevenson, President Eisenhower, and President Clinton, none of whom were able to secure senate approval for US ratification. While 180 countries have signed the CTBT, and 140 have ratified it, including all US allies, the US has resisted ratification. Staff members who work on the Hill believe that ratification is now possible, though it will be a hard struggle to achieve 67 Senate votes, i.e., two-thirds of the senate.

As one of the partners, LCWR will participate in efforts to engage key Republicans in the senate whose votes are essential, beginning with Senator Lugar of Indiana.



In March CSRL members will be receiving the center’s newest publication, *What’s a Leader To Do?: A Casebook for Leaders of Religious Institutes*.

This book is the outgrowth of the center’s three interdisciplinary forums on “The Individual and the Common Good.” It presents nine scenarios based on contemporary situations in religious institutes and responses to each from both panel members with expertise in different fields and participants in the forums.

Congregations who are not members of CSRL will be able to purchase copies of the book through the National Coalition for Church Vocations (NCCV), [info@nccv-vocations.org](mailto:info@nccv-vocations.org).

## Upcoming LCWR Dates



### **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

### **LCWR Leading from Within Retreat**

*Redemptorist Renewal Center  
Tucson, Arizona*  
January 17 — 22, 2010

### **LCWR New Leader Workshop**

*The Retreat Center at St. John's  
Plymouth, Michigan*  
March 11 — 14, 2010

### **LCWR Assembly**

*Dallas, Texas*  
August 10 — 14, 2010

### **LCWR Assembly**

*Garden Grove, California*  
August 9 — 13, 2011

*Update* is an official publication of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious published monthly and distributed to members nationally.

**Editor:** Annmarie Sanders, IHM

8808 Cameron Street

Phone: 301-588-4955

asanders@lcwr.org

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Fax: 301-587-4575

[www.lcwr.org](http://www.lcwr.org)