

October 2010

LCWR Assembly Celebrates Hope in the Midst of Darkness

Meeting in assembly in Dallas, Texas from August 10 to 13, more than 750 LCWR members and associates heard speakers and shared experiences centered on finding hope in the midst of dark times. The assembly focused particularly on the ecclesial role of women religious.

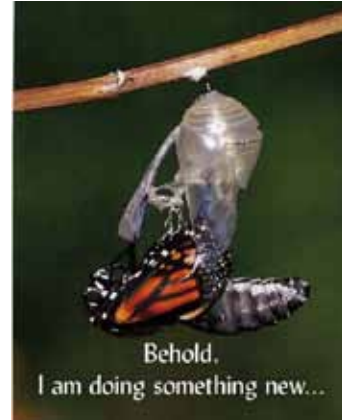


Keynote Addresses

M. Shawn Copeland, PhD of Boston College addressed the assembly on the challenge of being church today. Speaking on the grace of prophetic hope, she suggested the following characteristics of a prophetic ministry for these times:

- Prophetic ministry protests idolatry and ideology.
- Prophetic ministry assumes a critical attitude and posture toward established power.
- Prophetic ministry reads the “signs of the times,” uncovers, and meets hidden and neglected human suffering.
- Prophetic ministry witnesses unyielding hope that resists despair.

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LCWR Introduces New Contemplative Process Designed to Foster a National Conversation on Religious Life

At the LCWR assembly, the Contemporary Religious Life Committee introduced a plan to foster a national conversation on the critical questions in the world and church that impact religious life and call for a response from women religious.

The committee has developed a contemplative process for use by the members that is based on Isaiah 43:19: “Behold, I am doing something new.... Can you not perceive it?” This process will engage the members at their regional gatherings, as well as board and committee meetings with questions that will attempt to get to the

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2010 LCWR assembly participants

From the LCWR Presidency

Remembering Our Solidarity

by Mary Hughes, OP — LCWR President

There are books I keep at hand that I pick up from time to time, ever to find something new. So it was that I recently picked up Joan Chittister's book *The Breath of the Soul: Reflections on Prayer*. I was particularly struck by her words in the section on realism. She writes:

The spiritually mature person does not rely on God for miracles. They rely on God for strength and courage, for insight and hope, for vision and endurance. They know that God is with them: they do not believe that God is an instrument for the comfort of human beings. (p.122)



within the confines of grants, of corporate structures, and of governmental guidelines. While the funding that we receive is necessary, we find ourselves in a different space. Sometimes that space is very uncomfortable. The same can be said for our public presence and our public voice. There is hardly one among us who has not had the experience of signing on to a public statement and/or issuing our own and then being stung by the harshness of emails, blogs, and telephone calls from those who think differently. It feels very personal and

it can cause us to want to step back and perhaps even hide so that we can heal. The spiritually mature leader cannot stay in this space for very long.

This insight seemed particularly important in light of the very fine newspaper coverage the LCWR assembly received. Over and over again the strength of our bonds and our solidarity were highlighted. All of this is true. But like our belief in God and our trust in prayer, the strength of such relationships is not about "feeling good" about the way we are together, as wonderful as that is. There is work to be done. There is a gospel to be preached. There are persons in need who crave what we

This is when we need to remember experiences such as the August assembly. We remember that we can rely both on God and on one another for strength and words

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as we are fed by our experiences of God in prayer,
we are fed as well by the strength and vitality
of this community of religious leaders.*

*We remember that we can rely
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for strength and words of courage.
We do not stand or speak alone.*

might bring to them. There is a climate in this country lacking in civil discourse and crying out for moral leadership.

There was a time when our work, at least in retrospect, seemed simpler. We educated, we catechized, we ministered to the sick, and we fed and clothed the poor. We still do those gospel imperatives, but we often do so in such complex settings. Now we frequently work

of courage. We do not stand or speak alone. We need only to reach out to hear the voice or touch the hand of someone who believes in the same course we believe needs to be followed. In our conversations with one another, at the regional level and locally, we can once again touch into insight and hope, vision and endurance.

As we are fed by the bread of Eucharist and as we are fed by our experiences of God in prayer, we are fed as well by the strength and vitality of this community of religious leaders. There is work to be done. Let us continue to go out into our world to become the miracle for which we hope. We trust that God is with us, even when it does not feel good.

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- Those who are called to exercise prophetic ministry bear the wound of knowledge of the pained heart of God.

In closing she noted, “We ‘good Catholics’ would like to make you – and you must resist – into the talisman, the good luck charm, of our call to holiness. You must not, indeed, you cannot allow or submit to this. The very nature of prophetic ministry opposes patronage and true prophets are never on sale.”

Richard R. Gaillardetz, PhD of the University of Toledo, noted that the church’s members are looking to women religious for a way forward in their own ecclesial difficulties. “We are looking for you to model what authentic discipleship looks like in the face of ecclesial conflict,” he said.

“You are being called to venture forth on an ecclesial tightrope with no net,” he added, referring to the response women religious will need to make to the two Vatican investigations of them currently underway. “The good news is that successfully negotiating this ecclesial tightrope will require that you do what you have always done best, what has always been the most unappreciated gift of your distinctive life-form. Women’s religious communities have long been courageous exemplars of that authentic ecclesial discernment that

can never be confused with either a democratic majoritarianism or a pious yet toxic authoritarianism. This authentic ecclesial discernment may call you to risk taking seriously the concerns of those who are investigating you. But it will also call you to hold onto what you know to be true about your own contributions to the life and mission of the church.”

In her address, 2009-2010 LCWR president Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA exhorted the assembly to wait in “stubborn hope.” “My sisters, my friends – let us be reverent stewards of these holy energies of prophecy, art, healing, and love,” she said. “Let our charity give impetus to an unreasonable willingness to believe in and taste the future; to act together so that others might know and feel our love for the Gospel.”

Welcome from Bishop

Dallas bishop Kevin J. Farrell attended the opening of the assembly to extend greetings to the leaders. He highly praised the ministry of women religious, particularly those who serve in his diocese.

Vatican Investigations

The LCWR presidents shared information with the leaders on the current status of the doctrinal assessment of the conference being conducted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In addition, three leaders, Patricia Crowley, OSB; Mary Hughes, OP; and Yolanda Tarango, CCVI shared some of the experiences of having their institutes visited by an apostolic visitation team.

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Shawn Copeland



Richard R. Gaillardetz



Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA

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Contemporary Religious Life Project

LCWR's two new committees, formed at the conclusion of the 2009 LCWR assembly, reported on their work on the Contemporary Religious Life Project.

The Strategic Operational Plan Committee presented possible models LCWR region reconfigurations. The committee elicited feedback from the participants in order to shape their work on evaluating conference structures and services so that these are most responsive to the members' needs.

The Contemporary Religious Life Committee presented its work on fostering a national conversation among all US women religious around the critical issues in the world and church today that impact religious life and which call for a response.

Assembly Resolution

During the past year, LCWR received letters from conferences of Catholic sisters throughout the world expressing support of US sisters as they undergo these investigations. In response, the LCWR assembly unanimously approved a resolution to actively strengthen bonds with women religious globally. This will involve finding ways to listen to the stories of women religious in other countries, especially experiences of struggle, and learning more about the realities they face in their cultures and in the church, as well as what gives them hope.

Public Prayer Service

During the assembly several hundred of the leaders participated in an outdoor public prayer service in downtown Dallas centered on the abolition of the death penalty.

Election of Officers

President-elect Mary Hughes, OP assumed the office of LCWR president for 2010-2011 after the members voted in Patricia Farrell of the Sisters of Saint

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Bishop Kevin J. Farrell of Dallas greets the assembly



Patricia Crowley, OSB; Yolanda Tarango, CCVI; and Mary Hughes, OP share their experiences of the apostolic visitation

Several Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on Monroe, Michigan were present to celebrate with Margaret Brennan, IHM (center) as she received the 2010 LCWR Outstanding Leadership Award



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Francis of Dubuque, Iowa, to be the conference president-elect; and reelected Ellen Dauwer, SC as conference secretary.

Outstanding Leadership Award

The assembly closed with the conferring of LCWR's highest honor, its Outstanding Leadership Award, on Margaret Brennan, IHM, a theologian and former LCWR president who played a key role in the renewal of religious life following the Second Vatican Council.

Coverage of the LCWR Assembly

CNN American Morning
September 17

amfix.blogs.cnn.com/2010/09/17/nuns-speak-out-on-vatican-investigations/

"Strengthening bonds"

National Catholic Reporter

Article by Thomas C. Fox

August 30

ncronline.org/news/strengthening-bonds

"The mood has been changing"

National Catholic Reporter

Interview by Thomas C. Fox with Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA

August 30

ncronline.org/news/mood-has-been-changing

"LCWR members urged to maintain 'hope in the midst of darkness'"

Catholic News Service

August 20

www.thebostonpilot.com/article.asp?ID=12229

"Catholic nuns demonstrate against death penalty in downtown Dallas"

Dallas Morning News

August 14

www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/stories/081410dnmetsisters.4cf49390.html

Additional National Catholic Reporter Coverage

"SNAP to LCWR: model compassion for sex abuse victims"

ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/snap-lcwr-model-compassion-sex-abuse-victims

LCWR meets under tight media security

ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/lcwr-meets-under-tight-media-security

"Wanted: women of spirit in our own time"

Column by Joan Chittister, OSB

ncronline.org/news/women/wanted-women-spirit-our-own-time

"Theologian implores LCWR to remain prophetic"

ncronline.org/news/women-religious/theologian-implores-lcwr-remain-prophetic

"Dallas bishop welcomes LCWR - with media absent"

ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/dallas-bishop-welcomes-lcwr-media-absent

"Women religious experiences have implications for entire church"

ncronline.org/news/women-religious/women-religious-experiences-have-implications-entire-church

"LCWR marches against death penalty"

ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/lcwr-marches-against-death-penalty

"We wait in stubborn hope': outgoing LCWR president"

ncronline.org/news/women-religious/we-wait-stubborn-hope-outgoing-lcwr-president

"Honored by LCWR, 'elder' speaks of its origins"

ncronline.org/news/women-religious/honored-lcwr-elder-speaks-its-origins

"LCWR initiatives have global reach"

ncronline.org/news/women-religious/lcwr-initiatives-have-global-reach

Film crew from CNN's
"American Morning"
record the
presidential address



LCWR Introduces New Contemplative Process

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heart of the call to women religious today. These may include questions such as:

- What do you experience (through this speaker, article, meeting, etc.) as newly emerging?
- What response does this call for from you/your religious community/LCWR?
- What is the emerging reality or question saying to you about the future?
- What implications does the emerging reality have for your life/the life of your religious community/LCWR?
- Is there anything impeding your perception of this new reality and, if so, what can you do in order to see and understand it more clearly?

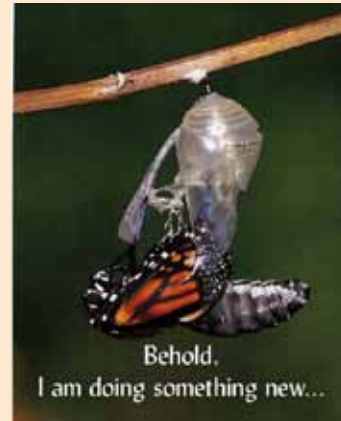
The hope is that leaders would also engage their community members in this process so that the community's ideas and insights could be shared with the whole body of women religious in the US as well. The insights shared will help shape subsequent gatherings of LCWR so that conversations build on one another through the years and across the nation.

The hope is that such a national conversation would:

- Enable greater contemplative engagement with the emerging questions being faced by the world and church
- Strengthen and shape the mission of US women religious
- Strengthen the solidarity among women religious

Each time the contemplative process is used (at regional gatherings; committee meetings; religious institute, federation, and intercongregational gatherings) the process will end with the group creating a brief statement. The statement would summarize that group's insight into what might be the emerging new reality into which God is inviting women religious and what might that reality be calling forth. These statements are to be sent to the LCWR national office.

As regions and committees submit their statements, they will be shared in the LCWR newsletter. There will also be a place on the LCWR website dedicated to the statements. Leaders and their institute members are encouraged to reflect on and pray with these insights.



The LCWR national board engaged in the "Behold, I am doing something new" process at the close of its meeting following the LCWR assembly. The members reflected on all that they had experienced both at the assembly and at the board meetings. The fruit of their individual and communal contemplation of these events is the following insight on "the new" that seems to be emerging for women religious.

LCWR National Board -- August 16, 2010

The real gift for us during this time of sharing was the clarity of thought that coalesced around the notions of solidarity and inclusivity. We have experienced a new, deep connection with one another and a sense of real communion as we live our way into new expressions of creative fidelity. We sense bonded energies and radical openness to what is unfolding. We are willing to wrestle with chaos – wherever necessary -- cognizant of the possible cost of such discipleship.



LCWR national board meets in Dallas

LCWR National Board Carries Assembly Vision Forward

The members of the LCWR national board met on August 9 and again from August 14-16 in Dallas. Among the items discussed were:

- Evaluation of the 2010 assembly
- Planning for the 2011 assembly
- LCWR membership dues
- A proposal on offering leadership development programs
- The Transformative Elements document
- A report from the National Religious Retirement Office on retirement planning and funding
- Hotel chains and human trafficking policies
- The gathering of younger leaders during the assembly
- Correspondence from the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests
- Preparation for the LCWR fall regional meetings

During the meeting the board elected Carol Zinn, SSJ and reelected Patricia Crowley, OSB to serve on the executive committee of the board as at-large members.



The LCWR presidency: Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA; Pat Farrell, OSF; and Mary Hughes, OP at the post-assembly board meeting

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

A retreat for LCWR members and LCWR associates who are serving in congregation leadership

January 16 - 21, 2011

San Pedro Spiritual Retreat Center
Winter Park, Florida

Join with other women religious leaders for a five-day retreat that will provide opportunities to reflect on the blessings and challenges of religious life leadership today. The days will include input, quiet contemplative space, a variety of ritual experiences, and some opportunity for individual and group spiritual direction for those who so choose.

Retreat Directors



Regina Bechtle, SC



María Elena
Martínez, OSF

Registration form is available at
www.lcwr.org/lcwrprogramsresources/retreat2011.pdf
Participation will be limited to the first 25 members to submit their form and check.

WOMEN & *Spirit*

CATHOLIC SISTERS IN AMERICA

Upcoming Showings

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

Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium
Dubuque, Iowa -- February 18 - May 22, 2011

Mount St. Mary's College
Los Angeles, California - June 19 - August 14, 2011

Center for History
South Bend, Indiana -- September 2 - December 31, 2011

The California Museum of History, Women & the Arts
Sacramento, California
January 24 - June 3, 2012

Article

“‘Spirit’ of Sisters Infuses Exhibit”
Catholic New York
Article by Camille D’Arienzo, RSM
September 9
www.cny.org/archive/ld/ld8090910.htm

Letter from a Maltz Museum Docent

The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage in Cleveland offered the service of their docents while the *Women & Spirit* exhibit was on tour there. One woman religious who visited the exhibit received a note from the docent who guided her tour. The following is an excerpt from the docent’s letter:

Dear Sister,
Thank you so much for the lovely email sent to the Museum. The Museum gave me a copy of it. I appreciated it so much.... Today was a sad day. It is the last day of the exhibit for our Museum. We held a lovely Catholic/Jewish prayer service this morning for closure. We will greatly miss our contacts with the wonderful Sisters who worked with us and the wonderful tour groups we guided through the Museum. Over 20,000 people saw this exhibit and this last week, we

Work Progresses on Women & Spirit Documentary



LCWR documentary producer Tim Steinouer of Design Island shows ideas for the digital catalogue of *Women & Spirit* artifacts, photographs, and label copy that will be included on the DVDs of the documentary.

LCWR is seeking broadcast of the documentary on PBS, entry to documentary festivals, online sales, and other possible distributions when the production is completed in early 2011.

Helen Garvey, BVM, as well as Mary Dacey, SSJ; Annmarie Sanders, IHM; and Carole Shinnick, SSND are overseeing the project and recently worked with the production team at its studio in Orlando, Florida.

were “jammed” with school groups, their trips paid for by the Catholic Diocese. This has been such an incredible exhibit that Mr. Maltz has promised us at least one diversity exhibit every year. We’re really looking forward to that!...

Exhibit Attendance

As of August 31, more than 308,000 people have visited the exhibit since its opening in May 2009.

Exhibit to Open on Ellis Island September 24

As this newsletter “goes to press,” the *Women & Spirit* exhibit is being installed at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. Before the exhibit opens to the public on September 24, the museum will have a special showing for women religious in the area on September 23. A small reception and press event will take place on September 22.



LCWR Mourns Former Treasurer

LCWR mourns the death of Elizabeth (Betty) Ney, CSJ, a member of the congregational leadership team of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. Elizabeth, who resided in St. Louis, was appointed LCWR treasurer in August 2009. She died on September 8.



Registration Deadlines for LCWR-Sponsored Events

Mission Congress 2010: God’s Mission, Many Faces

LCWR is a sponsor of the mission congress held every five years. The 2010 Congress, held October 28-31 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, will paint “A Portrait of US Catholics in Mission,” at home and around the world. Early bird registration is due by September 28. A schedule and registration form are on www.missioncongress.org.

Systemic Change Think Tank 2011: “Awakening the Dreamer”

Designed for women religious, the program, to be held March 7-10, 2011 at the Franciscan Retreat Center in Scottsdale, Arizona, is an expansion of the one-day “Awakening the Dreamer” symposium being held around the country. The program is open to LCWR members and justice/peace/ecology coordinators. Registrations are due in the LCWR office by December 15, 2010. www.lcwr.org/lcwr/socialjustice/thinktank.htm.

SHARE Delegation to El Salvador

LCWR and Pax Christi USA are co-sponsors of the November 29-December 6, 2010 delegation to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the murder of four North American churchwomen. The focus will be on women’s issues. Information may be found at www.lcwr.org/lcwr/socialjustice/elsalvador.pdf.



- Letter to President Obama from faith organizations urging leadership in calling for expanded debt cancellation for impoverished countries to assist them in coping with global financial crisis and in achieving Millennium Development Goals by 2015
- Save Darfur-initiated letter to President Obama urging strong pressure on the government of Sudan
- As a UN NGO, LCWR signed a request to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to dedicate its 2011 Day of General Discussion to Children of Imprisoned Parents.

Nominations Begin for LCWR Outstanding Leadership Award

Members will have the opportunity during the fall regional meetings to suggest nominees to receive the 2011 LCWR Outstanding Leadership Award. In preparation, all members are asked to reflect on the criteria and be ready to propose potential award recipients.

Past awardees are: Mary Luke Tobin, SL; Theresa Kane, RSM; Mary Daniel Turner, SNDdeN; Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ; Joan Chittister, OSB; Helen Maher Garvey, BVM; Sharon Holland, IHM; and Margaret Brennan, IHM.

The Award

LCWR established its Outstanding Leadership Award to recognize and honor persons who have significantly contributed to the ministry of leadership and who reflect the LCWR mission.

Nomination

National members of LCWR may nominate a person for consideration for the award.

Criteria for the Award

The person must have significantly contributed to the ministry of leadership in a manner that reflects the mission of LCWR. The nominee(s) evidence:

- Commitment and collaboration in the ministry of leadership
- Faithfulness to gospel values and mission
- Witnessing to creative and innovative leadership in one or more areas
- Making significant contribution, as a leader on the national and/or international level, particularly to women religious congregations in the United States.

Justice Organizations Swim Upstream

In the divisive, pre-election climate in the United States, organizations working for immigration reform, clean energy legislation, and reduction of nuclear weapons face resistance and reluctance but continue to work for the common good of the country.

JFI Lobbies for DREAM Act: With comprehensive immigration reform out of the realm of possibility in this Congress, Justice for Immigrants and others work for passage of the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act, the intent of which is to provide legal status and education opportunity to those who entered the US as minor children. (www.justice-forimmigrants.org)

New START Treaty: The treaty signed by President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in April has received strong support from leaders in the military, national security, and scientific organizations, yet has met opposition from Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee which must approve moving the treaty to the full Senate for ratification. Following intense work by many organizations in Tennessee, Senator Bob Corker, a key Republican on the committee, finally agreed to vote yes when a vote is taken on September 16. Once approved by the SFR Committee, hard work will continue across the country to get Senate approval for New START, which is essential for nuclear weapons reduction and verification. Faith groups view ratification as a moral, as well as practical, imperative.

Is Your Leadership Term About to End?

If your leadership term is ending this month, you must submit a change of leadership form so that the LCWR office can properly transfer LCWR membership to new leaders. Please use the change of leadership form found in the LCWR Members Information section (password-protected) of the website at www.lcwr.org/members/index.html.

Upcoming LCWR Dates

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

*San Pedro Spiritual Retreat Center
Winter Park, Florida
January 16 — 21, 2011*

LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank

*Franciscan Retreat Center
Scottsdale, Arizona
March 7 — 10, 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*

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat

*Redemptorist Renewal Center
Tucson, Arizona
January 15 — 20, 2012*

LCWR Assembly

*St. Louis, Missouri
August 7 — 11, 2012*

LCWR Assembly

*Orlando, Florida
August 13 — 17, 2013*

Religious Formation Conference



Transformation of Religious Life in the US: An Action-Oriented Initiative

A gathering of women and men religious committed to shaping the future of a prophetic religious life.

Initial information on the programs that will take place at five locations between January and March 2011

can be found at:

www.relforcon.org/Documents/Futuring%20Initiative%20Flier.pdf

Further information will be forthcoming on the RFC website: www.relforcon.org.

Questions may be directed to the RFC office at 301-588-4938



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

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