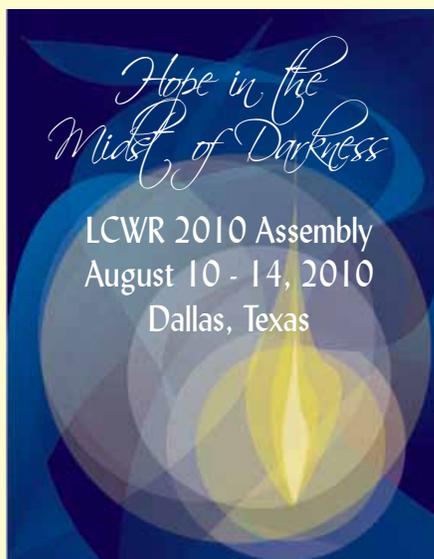


April 2010



Watch for the Registration Forms for the 2010 LCWR Assembly

This gathering is an important event as women religious leaders explore their role as ecclesial women in a time of rapidly shifting realities.

New Items on the LCWR Website

- A message from Pope Benedict XVI regarding the 47th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, to be celebrated on April 25, 2010
www.lcwr.org/what%27snew/WDP1tr.pdf
- New messages of support for US women religious as they undergo the apostolic visitation
www.lcwr.org/what%27snew/av.htm

LCWR Stance on Healthcare Reform Draws Praise and Criticism

On March 17 NETWORK presented a letter to each member of Congress urging support of the Senate healthcare bill (HR 3590) which promises to expand coverage to 31 million uninsured persons while upholding longstanding conscience protections, and not provide taxpayer funding for abortions. Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA signed the letter as LCWR president, as did almost 60 other leaders of LCWR congregations. According to feedback from members of the White House staff, members of Congress, NETWORK, and others, this letter had a significant impact on the debate over the bill and helped lead to its passage on March 21.

The media gave a great deal of attention to this action by women religious. This may have been due partly to an inaccuracy in the subsequent press release issued by NETWORK implying that 59,000 Catholic sisters had voiced their support for the bill, rather than some of the leaders. The media coverage also played on the angle that the position taken by Catholic sisters and the Catholic Health Association differed from that taken by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

In responding to media inquiries, LCWR stated, "Without question LCWR stands with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and other Catholics in their tireless efforts to promote the sacredness of life and to assure that federal funding is not used for abortions. LCWR emphasizes that we are not in opposition to the bishops in their pro-life stance. We support this legislation because it provides healthcare coverage for

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From the LCWR Presidency

Liberty of Spirit ... Once on a Holy Easter Sunday

by Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA — LCWR President

Here is a story from the Franciscan tradition. In imitation of Christ, Francis never wished to abandon the dignity of the poor Christ at any time, not even on the feast of all feasts, Easter. He used to go begging on all the principal feasts, saying that, in the poor, the psalmist's words are fulfilled: *Humanity eats the bread of angels.* [Psalm 78: 25]

Francis believed that bread is clearly angelic. Bread is sought out of God's love, gathered from door to door and given away out of God's love by the blessed prompting of angels. Once on a holy Easter Sunday, while Francis was staying at a hermitage so far away from anyone from whom he could beg, he decided to beg alms from his brothers. He wanted to be like a pilgrim and beggar, mindful of the Christ who appeared



that Easter Day at Greccio, *God's poverty should move us more than others.*

We resist being co-opted by unholy cultures in favor of being compelled by the Gospel. Our roots are planted deeply in the heart of Christ and watered by all that is sacramental, all that brings grace into life. We are urged by the touch of God to bring the bread of prudence and wisdom on all forces that negate love, mercy, compassion, and justice in the world. Let us embrace the liberty of spirit to beg alms. In our personal poverty, may we seek the alms of forgiveness, healing, and love that are not mere words but the powers that touch the deepest core of our souls.

As we set our tables more carefully this Easter Day and decorate our homes with signs of resurrection and springtime, let us also capture some of that liberty of spirit when we seek out bread for others – be it bread that satisfies the hungers of the body or the bread of spiritual gifting. We know the Risen Christ in our lives. We have seen him on the way and courageously speak “Peace” from the place where our hearts are on fire. Our bodies are turned to the springtime sun and our souls to

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in the guise of a pilgrim to the disciples traveling on the road to Emmaus. He knocked on the door of the brothers. When Francis had humbly received bread from the brothers, he taught them to always celebrate the Passover of Christ in poverty of spirit – passing from the desert of this world like pilgrims and strangers.

St. Bonaventure noted that Francis *when begging for alms was motivated . . . by liberty of spirit.* [Major Legend Chapter 7: 9] Liberty of spirit meant that Francis had implicit trust in God when he asked alms and promised the love of God as a reward to those who gave to him. Celano comments that . . . *he made the hearts of his brothers burn as he spoke.* [Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul, Second Book XXXI: 61] Francis said to his brothers

*... let us capture some of that liberty of spirit
when we seek out bread for others –
be it bread that satisfies
the hungers of the body
or the bread of spiritual gifting.*

the lunar Son who calls church into a Paschal presence of loving the world without end.

May the bread of our alms have the quality of angelic life and love!

LCWR Stance on Healthcare Reform Draws Praise and Criticism

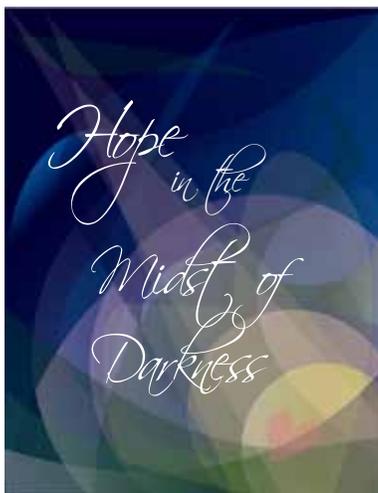
(continued from page 1)

millions of people, therefore expanding justice — the right to health care, for all.”

In the days following, the LCWR presidency and the LCWR national office were deluged with phone calls, e-mail messages, and letters from the public, as well as from LCWR members. Some people expressed gratitude to the conference for speaking publicly in support of the healthcare reform bill, while others expressed grave dismay for a stance they believed ran contrary to the bishops’ position and was not strong enough to restrict the use of federal funds for abortions.

The LCWR officers and staff are listening and giving serious consideration to all of the accolades, criticisms, and suggestions that are being offered regarding the ways in which the conference exercises its public voice. The responses to the conference’s action have underscored the strength of the moral authority of women religious and the responsibility to exercise that authority with great care. As a result, the officers and staff are engaged in a review of LCWR’s policies and practices to assure that the conference continues to employ its authority with integrity as it works to guarantee the rights and dignity of all persons.

LCWR Reflection Books



Orders of the 2010 LCWR reflection book, *Hope in the Midst of Darkness*, are in the mail and should be arriving soon. Individual copies mailed to all LCWR members, associates, and subscribers were sent bulk mail and may arrive after packaged orders.



LCWR Members Invited into Solidarity and Prayer During Phase Three of the Apostolic Visitation

*Gracious and loving God, Spirit of Wisdom,
today we come seeking your blessing
on the women whose communities
will be engaged in the next phase
of the apostolic visitation.*

*Fill them with wisdom, patience, grace, and courage
as they complete this phase of the process.*

*Fill the hearts of the visitors
with the light of your Holy Spirit
that together we all may continue
to love and praise you
and serve your people with compassion.
We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

LCWR members have been invited to pray for those congregations who have been selected for visitations, as well as for those conducting the visitations.

A listing of congregations requesting prayer can be found in the password-protected area of the LCWR website.

Any congregation who is scheduled to be visited and would like to be included on the list may contact LCWR executive assistant Marianne Benson at mbenson@lcsr.org.

More than 100 Members Attend LCWR New Leader Workshop

More than 100 women religious leaders participated in the LCWR New Leader Workshop held at the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois, from March 11-14.

Leaders received invaluable information on topics of critical importance through presentations by an outstanding faculty. They also had opportunities to explore the implications of the presentations for them as a group and for their congregations as they worked in several sessions as councils.

This workshop will be offered again March 24-27, 2011 in Mundelein. Leadership teams that have been in office two years or less are encouraged to attend. The experience has proven helpful for both first-time leaders and those returning to leadership.

Mary Dacey, SSJ presented on collaboration.



Nancy Schreck, OSF served as the workshop facilitator as well as a presenter on the dimensions of spiritual leadership and leading by reading the signs of the times as God's word.



Christine Rody, SC and Simone Campbell, SSS co-presented on canon and civil law.



Lynn Levo, CSJ (right) spoke on leaders and personnel issues: a survival guide for leading in a time of transition, as well as on working together in teams.



The participants had an opportunity to interact at mixed tables as well as in sessions with their councils.

LCWR Think Tank XII Energizes Participants

"I was stretched beyond my imagining. . ."
"A whole new consciousness-raising for me."
"Seeing members of LCWR together looking so boldly toward the future makes me believe in us even more."
"This was a very stretching, stimulating, and powerful experience of solidarity."
"Prayer set the tone and was so appropriate for the theme."
"Carol is a fabulous teacher — creative and organized!"

These few selected comments from the evaluations of the LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank held March 1-4 at Bethany Center in Lutz, Florida, illustrate the enthusiasm expressed by LCWR members and justice and peace coordinators who were led through "The Evolution of Human Thought and Religious Life, for the Life of the World," by Carol Zinn, SSJ.

Many observed that the presentations, discussions, experiences, environment, and prayer were interwoven

and integrated. Both those who had some experience of spiral dynamics and those for whom it was new found the days stimulating and energizing. Several participants observed that the program was what was needed at this moment in religious life and they departed more hopeful than they came.

The Systemic Change Think Tank has evolved since 1997 to something other than the title indicates. Participants were asked to offer suggestions for a title that more accurately indicates what these days are. Until such a title emerges, the program will continue to be known as the LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank.



Signs of New Life

Rose Marie Riley, OP of the Dominicans of Springfield, Illinois, sent to the LCWR national office this photo of the plant seeded at her table during the 2009 LCWR assembly.

She wrote, "The pot has been on our kitchen window sill since we returned home from the assembly. Buds started to open up just a few days ago.... The plant still has many buds on it. What a wonderful sign of things to come!"



LCWR Committee Works on Long-Range Education/Reflection Plan

The members of the LCWR Contemporary Religious Life Committee held an all-day meeting on March 8 at Washington Theological Union to continue their work on developing a long-range education/reflection plan for the conference.

Catherine Bertrand, SSND facilitated the meeting which was attended by Constance FitzGerald, OCD and Sandra Schneiders, IHM (by phone) who served as consultants to the committee.

The group worked that day to image religious life as it is today, as well as it continues to emerge, and addressed the following questions: What is ending? What hard truths need to be spoken? and What is seeking to emerge?

Next the group named some of the elements that could be included in a corporate education/reflection plan for women religious leaders that would be carried out by LCWR over the next several years. The committee will continue its work to develop the plan which will be presented to the membership for input.



Attending the meeting at Washington Theological Union were: Annmarie Sanders, IHM; Rosemary Smith, SC; Marie McCarthy, SP; Jane Burke, SSND; Constance FitzGerald, OCD; Mary Whited, CPPS; Susan Schorsten, HM; and Catherine Bertrand, SSND.

JFI Joins March for America

A March 21 gathering of more than 200,000 people in Washington, DC, in coordination with the Ecumenical Advocacy Days Conference, called for reform now of our country's broken immigration system. The Justice for Immigrants Campaign supported and participated in this major immigration gathering. While the Interfaith Rally began at 1:00, and the full rally at 2:00, JFI planned an 11:00 Eucharistic liturgy held at St. Aloysius Church, not far from the National Mall.

During the March meeting of the JFI Core Group, in addition to reports on the march, members also considered plans for lobby visits to urge support for impending immigration legislation and the need to continue to educate Catholics about comprehensive immigration reform. More than 1,000,000 postcards were distributed, and a few thousand are still available, as well as the electronic versions on the JFI website (www.justice-forimmigrants.org).

FEE Grows the Degrowth Movement

The Faith, Economy, Ecology (FEE) Working Group, while educating about the "degrowth" of economy movement, continues to expand its efforts in several ways:

- A new website: www.faitheconomyecology.wordpress.com which is user-friendly, invites groups and individuals to endorse the statement, "A Call to Integrate Faith, Ecology and the Global Economy," and lists current signers. There is also a link to FEE on www.maryknollogc.org/FEE.htm.
- A series of reflections for signers of the statement is in process.
- Core finance principles for the design of a global green climate fund are also in development.



Upcoming Showings

**Smithsonian-International Gallery
in the Dillon Ripley Center**
Washington, DC
January 15 - April 25, 2010

Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage
Beachwood, Ohio (outside of Cleveland)
May 9 - August 28, 2010

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

Mississippi River Museum
Dubuque, Iowa
February - April 2011

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



- A Pax Christi USA letter to President Obama asking for specific commitment to reducing the role of nuclear weapons in US national security strategy was signed by Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA, LCWR president
- Two letters drafted by members of the Religious Working Group (RWG) on water were signed by Marie Lucey, OSF, associate director for social mission, who represents LCWR in the RWG.
 - A letter to the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the EPA, and the Pentagon Civil Works asking these groups to take action to prevent mountaintop removal
 - A letter to the chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to urge co-sponsorship of the Clean Water Protection Act of 2010 (HR 1310), and bringing it to full committee
- A letter to members of the House and Senate opposing the Iran sanctions legislation as written because it would be harmful to the Iranian people and limit the President's ability to conduct Iran policy.

NRRO Offers Planning and Implementation Assistance Programs

Religious institutes interested in exploring ways to more adequately fund its elder care costs may want to consider participation in the Planning and Implementation Assistance program of the National Religious Retirement Office.

Workshops are scheduled through 2015. Although the 2010 workshops are filled, institutes are welcome to submit an application for 2011 or beyond. Further information, an application form, and a list of future workshop dates are available at www.usccb.org/nrro/planning.shtml.



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Upcoming LCWR Dates

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

LCWR Assembly

St. Louis, Missouri

August 7 — 11, 2012