

UPDATE

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Leadership Conference
of Women Religious

OCTOBER 2003

LCWR Celebrates the Contributions of its Former Presidents and Executive Directors at National Assembly



Standing: Doris Gottmoeller, RSM; Constance Phelps, SCL; Camille D'Arienzo, RSM; Mary Waskowiak, RSM; Donna Markham, OP; Nancy Sylvester, IHM; Andree Fries, CPPS; Kathleen Pruitt, CSJP; Helen Marie Burns, RSM; Kathleen Popko, SP; Mary Mollison, CSA; Anne Munley, IHM; Janet Roesener, CSJ; Mary Christine Fellerhoff, CSA; Carol Quigley, IHM; and Carole Shinnick, SSND. Seated: Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ; Theresa Kane, RSM; Angelita Myerscough, ASC; Joan Chittister, OSB; Mary Luke Tobin, SL; Mary Dooley, SSJ; Mary Daniel Turner, SNDdeN; and Helen Maher Garvey, BVM. (Present but not in photo were Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM and Nancy Schreck, OSF.)

Twenty-two of the 31 living former and current LCWR presidents and four executive directors were among the nearly 900 participants at this year's LCWR national assembly in Detroit.

Drawing them to this year's assembly was not only the focus, "Tending the Holy," but also the honoring of Mary Luke Tobin, SL, the fourth president of LCWR.

The presence of these outstanding women, whose leadership saw LCWR through decades of significant growth and challenge, contributed much to the energetic and hope-filled atmosphere that permeated the assembly.

More on the 2003 national assembly is found on pages 2 and 3.

The Call to 'Tend the Holy'

Participants in the 2003 LCWR national assembly entered into profound reflection on their call as religious leaders to tend the holy of God's creation. The days of prayer, ritual, presentations, workshops, conversation and celebration clearly reminded us that, in the words of composer Suzanne Toolan, RSM, "awesome, indeed, is the entrustment" given to us to bring forth a sustainable global society. The words of the presenters and the words of our prayer for one another provide us with bold challenges as we declare our responsibility to the greater community of life and to future generations.



"Every act sourced in the power of genuine relatedness subverts the power of hierarchy and patriarchy. In the stories we have told, we have uncovered within ourselves the power most necessary for the creation, salvation, and resurrection of our church, our world and our earth. It is the power of relationship, of our sisterhood with all that is." -- Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM, "Tending the Holy Through the Power of Sisterhood"

"We women are building a motherland; each with her own plot of soil eked from a night of dreams, a day of work. We are spreading this soil in larger and larger circles, slowly, slowly." -- Clarissa Pinkola Estes, as quoted by Mary Ann Zollmann as she invited the LCWR executive committee and regional chairs to ritually celebrate the works of women religious



"One of your challenges as a leader in this time is to foster in your congregations the development of a theology that is adequate for the new time, that has something significant to say to the reality in which we live, that will challenge people today, and will be attractive to new members."

-- Nancy Schreck, OSF, "Seeing Stars: Leadership in a New Time"



The assembly participants prayed: "May this salted water be a sign of our solidarity as sisters, as women committed to the healing of the world, to helping make what is broken whole. May we never take for granted the power of communion that we share."

Photos: Karen Donahue, RSM

"My heart is filled with gratitude for how much LCWR continues to serve the women religious of this country as well as other groups in the church and in the wider world. The conference has faithfully assumed its leadership role of inspiring and energizing, of taking an outward-reaching and forward-looking stance, of endorsing and implementing strong positions on issues of justice, peace and compassion. I appreciate the courage and the creativity which the LCWR has demonstrated through the years." -- Mary Luke Tobin, SL, excerpt from her remarks upon receiving the LCWR Outstanding Leadership Award



"There is immense opportunity right here. Things are going to happen so quickly. The difficulty is at the level of spirituality and consciousness. And that can happen like a wildfire. All around the planet change is going to be extremely rapid. But there is preparation needed." -- Brian Swimme, "The Powers of the Universe"



Assembly participants blessed one another's hands as a symbol of their solidarity and a reminder that they do not face the challenges of the future alone.



Lucille Phelps, 95, mother of Constance Phelps, SCL, joined the assembly participants in the blessing of her daughter and all members of the the LCWR national board as they prayed in song: "May all you do be for the healing of the whole. May all you do mend our broken world. May all you do bring blessing on the earth. May all you do be for the good of all, for the good of all."

LCWR Decries Loss of Life in Iraq

LCWR national office released the statement adopted at the national assembly on the situation in Iraq to President George Bush and members of his Cabinet. The statement, which decries the continuing tragic loss of life in Iraq, was revised by the LCWR board at its post-assembly meeting to incorporate suggestions made by the members during the national assembly.

LCWR regional chairs also sent the statement to members of Congress in their respective regions.

A press release on the statement was issued to national media outlets and is available on the LCWR website (under Assembly Information). All members are encouraged to disseminate the release to their diocesan and local media outlets.

LCWR Members Reflect on: 'To What is God Inviting Us?'

At the close of the LCWR national assembly members were asked to reflect on the question, "To what is God inviting us?" Members of the national board reviewed all the responses submitted in writing and discussed many of the suggestions at their August meeting.

While some of the responses were specifically aimed at future national assemblies, the other responses generally fell into three categories:

- Deepening our contemplative stance
- Claiming our place, power, role and voice as women in the church
- Living out our understandings of the new cosmology

The board will continue to work with the written reflections by incorporating ideas into meeting agendas at both the national and regional levels.

Please note that the LCWR national office has been experiencing some problems with its e-mail system. If any member has contacted the office by e-mail and has not received a response, please try again by e-mail or phone.

2003 LCWR Assembly Materials Available on LCWR Website

The following materials are available on the LCWR website as a follow-up to the national assembly:

- ▶ Presidential Address of Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM
- ▶ Keynote Address of Nancy Schreck, OSF
- ▶ Post-Assembly Press Release
(members are encouraged to use this in their own internal publications and with their diocesan and local newspapers)
- ▶ Three Resolutions Passed at the Assembly
- ▶ The Petitionary Prayers Written by the Regions for the National Assembly

LCWR Board Hears Presentations on Religious Formation and Forums for Accountability

Janet Mock, CSJ, executive director of the Religious Formation Conference, and Judy Hereford, JD, associate director of the Legal Resource Center for Religious, addressed the LCWR board at its post-assembly meeting in August.

Janet presented information on the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Religious Formation Conference. The jubilee will be commemorated through a national symposium in November (see page 6), a series of two-day workshops of theological education and reflection in the 16 RFC regions, a series of one-week summer forums for theological study and reflection offered in cooperation with schools of theology in various locations in the United States, and the writing of the RFC history. The conference has also established the Rosemary Thompson, RSCJ Memorial Fund to provide monies to aid immigrant congregations in formation, provide scholarships to RFC programs and print some RFC resources in Spanish.

Judy addressed the board on forums for accountability that could be used for situations involving sexual abuse allegations. Included in her presentation was discussion on possible intercommunity or regional forums of accountability as well as various dispute resolution options.

LCWR Partners with Call to Renewal Movement

LCWR has become a partner with the Call to Renewal movement, an ecumenical group of religious leaders.

Call to Renewal defines its mission as follows: "Rooted in four primary values (overcoming poverty, dismantling racism, affirming life, and rebuilding family and community), Call to Renewal's current focus is its Covenant and Campaign to Overcome Poverty which emphasizes the necessity of dismantling racism in conjunction with overcoming poverty... The two primary ways in which Call to Renewal implements its Campaign to Overcome Poverty are by providing a voice to influence national and local direction and public policy and by networking churches and faith-based organizations' leaders to build a movement to overcome poverty."

The LCWR board approved the partnership for the year 2004.

LCWR Board Elects At-Large Members of the Executive Committee

The LCWR national board elected Maria Elena Martinez, OSF and Mary Catherine Rabbitt, SL as the new at-large members of the LCWR executive committee. They will serve with Constance Phelps, SCL; Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM; Christine Vladimiroff, OSB; Anne Hennessy, CSJ; and Rose Jochmann, OSF.

Anne Hennessy, a Sister of St. Joseph of Orange, California, and Christine Vladimiroff, a Benedictine Sister from Erie, Pennsylvania process to the stage during the assembly to be blessed by the membership as they assume the roles of secretary and vice-president.

Upcoming LCWR Projects and Events

The LCWR board members began initial plans for both a new goal-setting process for the conference and the celebration of LCWR's 50th anniversary.

The board approved a timeline and an overall process that will lead to the goals for 2004-2009. The board also approved the establishment of an ad hoc committee to facilitate the goal-setting process. All LCWR members will be asked to participate in the initial stage of the process at their fall regional meetings.

The board also approved the establishment of an ad hoc committee for LCWR's jubilee celebration. This committee will be asked to gather suggestions from the LCWR members and draft a proposal for approval by the LCWR national board for how the jubilee can be celebrated.

Retreat to Be Offered for LCWR Members

In a continuing effort to respond to the expressed needs of members, LCWR will be offering a retreat that focuses on the spiritual dimensions of the ministry of leadership.

The retreat will be offered initially from January 16-21, 2005 in Winter Park, Florida for 20 LCWR members and will be facilitated by Regina Bechtel, SC and Nancy Schreck, OSF. Based on the evaluation of this retreat experience, consideration will be given to presenting the retreat in other locations and times. More information on this opportunity will be forthcoming.



Pax Christi Holds Unique Consultation

Pax Christi International and USA led a collaborative event entitled "Preemptive Peace: Beyond Terrorism and Justified War." Held at St. John's University in Jamaica, NY on July 31, the consultation was unique in content and process.

While the stated purpose of the event was of large magnitude — "to contribute to the discernment of a global framework, including a nonviolent ethic, for evaluating and responding to violent conflict and war in the 21st century"— the goal and process concretized the conversation in a very real, challenging, and inspiring way. Three separate facilitated conversations among international and national peacemakers identified some of the key questions that need further exploration or public debate.

Each conversation was a facilitated "fishbowl" with an inner and outer circle, and participation of several hundred observers by means of questions or comments submitted on cards. The major topics addressed were: just war or justified war; the use and misuses of just war criteria including their application to the war against terrorism; responding without violence to egregious human rights violations, threats to use weapons of mass destruction and other "just causes" for war; the contributions of local or indigenous peace initiatives contribute to efforts to avoid war?

Before a concluding Eucharist liturgy, an engaging and challenging conversation among international participants from Pakistan, Germany, El Salvador, Rwanda, Tanzania, Jerusalem, Philippines, Ghana, Canada, and India was followed by closing comments by Etienne DeJonghe of Belgium, General Secretary of Pax Christi International. While no concrete strategy or action emerged from the consultation, it more than fulfilled its purpose of contributing to a much larger and ongoing discussion taking place in the United States and internationally, in the Catholic community and beyond.

Marie Lucey, OSF, associate director for social mission, represented LCWR at the consultation.

LCWR Think Tank To Address New Thinking About Systems

The LCWR Systems Think Tank is scheduled for February 7-8, 2004 at the Franciscan Center in Tampa, Florida. Margaret Galiardi, OP, will stimulate thinking by addressing "Impasse and New Thinking About Systems."

All members are welcome, with a special encouragement for participation of justice and peace personnel. Please pass the word and mark calendars. Further information will follow.

Upcoming Dates

A Movement in Hope
*A Conversation on the
 Theology of Religious Life
 50th Jubilee Congress of the
 Religious Formation Conference*
 St. Louis, Missouri
 November 6-9, 2003

LCWR Systems Think Tank
 Tampa, Florida
 February 7-8, 2004

LCWR New Leaders Workshop
 Mundelein, Illinois
 March 25-28, 2004

LCWR/CMSM Joint Assembly
 Fort Worth, Texas
 August 19 -- 23, 2004
*(please note the change in date from
 previous listings in Update)*

LCWR Retreat for Leaders
 Winter Park, Florida
 January 16-21, 2005

LCWR Assembly
 Anaheim, California
 August 19 -- 23, 2005

LCWR Assembly
 Atlanta, Georgia
 August 18 -- 22, 2006



NATRI Publication Offers Insight into Decision-Making About Land and Facilities

Integral to the focus of the 2003 LCWR assembly is the approach to land and facilities in the care of religious institutes. Since 2001, aspects of this subject have been studied by a joint NATRI/LRCR task force. This has resulted in the new publication, *Religious Communities and Real Property: Property Decision-Making with Ecological Consciousness*.

This collection of articles surveys the gamut of areas that enter into reflection and decision-making about congregationally owned properties. Topics include: spirituality and justice as context, a process for decision-making, master planning, comprehensive case study of the Monroe IHM campus renovations, and financial and legal considerations. Additional resources appropriate to religious institutes are also identified.

This publication has been mailed to all NATRI members and subscribers. A limited number of additional copies are available for purchase at \$15.00 per copy, which includes postage and mailing. For further information or purchase contact NATRI at: (301) 587-7776 or natri@natri.org.

InterAmerican Conference Postponed

The 8th InterAmerican Conference of Religious of the Americas scheduled for May 2004 in Brazil has been postponed.

This gathering of leaders of religious orders in the United States, Latin America and Canada has been rescheduled for May 2005.

More Than 200 Leaders Explore Sexual Abuse Legal Issues

The Legal Resource Center for Religious held a one-day multidisciplinary workshop entitled "Sexual Abuse: The Continuing Response." Held immediately prior to the LCWR national assembly, the workshop drew more than 200 participants who explored the civil and canon law issues involved in the sexual abuse crisis. The workshop also looked at new issues that have arisen including relationships with dioceses as they strive to comply with the national policies set by the bishops and with their own new diocesan policies.

The participants from various religious institutes heard from a victim's advocate, a public relations professional and a psychologist. The workshop also presented the ongoing issues involved in developing intercommunity forums of accountability.

Response to the workshop was very positive and participants voiced appreciation for the thorough and insightful presentations which were given by Sharon Euart, RSM; Judy Hereford; David Kuhn; Lynn Levo, CSJ; Phyllis Willerscheidt; and Daniel Ward, OSB.

Audio/CD/Video Tapes Available from CMSM Assembly

The 2003 national assembly of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men focused on "The Image of Religious Life in Contemporary US Society and Culture." Audio cassettes, audio CDs and video tapes of the five general sessions are available for purchase. The general sessions include the following keynote addresses:

"Religious Life in a World that is Coming to Be"
Timothy Radcliffe, OP

"A Revolution of the Heart"
Sean Sammon, FMS

The three other general sessions were feedback and respondent summary sessions.

Information on ordering copies of the presentations may be obtained by calling Veranda Communications, Inc. at 1-800-473-TAPE.

From the Executive Director

'I Think We Turned a Corner on This One'

I have just finished looking over the proofs for this issue of *Update* and all I can say is "Wow!" Just seeing the pictures and reading about the Detroit assembly got me excited all over again.

From the moment we blessed the space on the opening night until we followed the current and former presidents and executive directors out of the ballroom (and back into reality!), we met and moved in a tangibly powerful field of energy. I could think that it was just my over-active imagination at work if others hadn't noticed the same thing. But they did. Here are some excerpts from notes we have received here at the national office:

- "Once again, I am proud to be a member of LCWR... [This] joyful event gives new life to me and to the Conference..."
- "What a party! And Mary Luke – what a lady! The whole assembly was great!"
- "[It was] a wonderful gathering. Our power in unity was felt... We have long needed celebration of the past and present which moves us to the future."
- "The procession of presidents fortified the right relationships to which we all aspire. Our members felt the power of commitment and genuine service."

I saw Brian Swimme the morning after the banquet. I told him I was delighted that he and Mary Evelyn Tucker had stayed for the festivities. He told me, "I wouldn't have missed it for the world. I got goose-bumps when all those past presidents filled the stage. The energy in the room



Carole Shinnick, SSND

was unbelievable – enough to shift the course of the universe." (Coming from Brian Swimme, I thought the comment about shifting the course of the universe was pretty important to report to you!)

Former president, Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ called me to say (in her typical no-nonsense way): "Carole, I think we turned a corner with this one! No one ever mentioned 'death, dying, or diminishment' in the whole assembly."

In a lovely letter from Nerinx, Kentucky, Mary Luke Tobin, SL wrote, "It is heartening to know that so many dedicated women are united in efforts to make a more peaceful and just world. May God continue to bless the work of LCWR."

Even Mrs. Lucille Phelps, Constance's 95 year-old mother, said in her note, "I have been telling [the residents of the retirement community where I live] about your conference. So here the good news goes around like wildfire!"

May the good news continue to spread like wildfire. May the energy from our gathering fuel our service and brighten our coming days. May our exuberant God (who was waving a white table napkin along with the rest of us as we cheered for the life of Mary Luke Tobin) continue to stand with us, hold us, and lead us into a future filled – absolutely jam-packed – with hope.

The LCWR Finance Committee continues to study the conference's dues structure and is requesting information from the members to ensure wise decisions. The committee will study the input from the members, as well as trends and the financial condition of LCWR. Enclosed with this issue of *Update* is a **postcard survey**. The survey is to be completed by ONE person per congregation. The results of the study will be reported at the 2004 LCWR assembly.



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