

LCWR Presidential Address
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Called to Hope
as Prophets, Artists, Healers, & Lovers

Good morning, my friends, my sisters and leaders for religious life, our church, our country, our world!

It has been a precious honor for me to serve LCWR with past presidents Sisters Mary Whited CPPS and J. Lora Dambroski OSF, president-elect Mary Hughes OP, our Executive Director Sister Jane Burke SSND, as well as the LCWR Associate Directors Sisters Pat Cormack, SCSC, Marie Lucey OSF and Annmarie Sanders IHM, and the staff, Marianne Benson and Carol Glidden. All of these women are beacons of hope who have called us to hold forth our feminine stature as leaders for religious life in our time.

In 2009 we left New Orleans having celebrated our contribution to renewed life after Katrina and with J. Lora Dambroski bidding us

- to recover a deepened understanding of our *LCWR Call* by living out of an honest spirituality and theology of religious life rooted in the Gospel of Jesus -- the hallmark of the *LCWR Call* that had just been reaffirmed along with the Shared Futures conversations that give it shape;
- to engender fresh creativity in the chaos of our time while not debasing our own expressions of faithfulness;
- to be carriers of the hope and an expression of Jesus' love and passion for life, and
- to pray to know the direction of the Spirit.¹

Since then, we have experienced a year of contrasts and unexpected events. We have taken pride in the ongoing *Women & Spirit* exhibits, supported the efforts of the CHA and Network for health care reform, hailed the courage of Bishop Kevin Dowling in South Africa, and enjoyed honored recognition from the U.S. House of Representatives, the Chicago Mayor and City Council, and Pax Christi. We also found ourselves

¹ J. Lora Dambroski. "In our own words... in our own time..." LCWR Presidential Address. New Orleans, LA: August 14, 2009. <http://www.lcwr.org/lcwrannualassembly/09/Dambroski.pdf>

quavering with the continuing ecclesial inquiries and canonical assessments, shocked by the planetary quakes in Haiti and Chile, Turkey and Mexico, the Gulf oil spill, the mudslides in China, and disturbed by emerging news about sex abuse scandals around the world -- not to mention the quakes that health care reform generated within our church and country. Few of these latter events were explosions of holy joy as happened at the Resurrection!

Amidst all the systemic unrest that these explosive events engender, we have called ourselves to *Hope in the Midst of Darkness*. We dare to articulate how our ecclesial role as women religious is calling us to mission. We do not have to mimic our founders to find the answer about how to do this. St. Francis said, *I have done what is mine to do. May Christ show you what is yours*. In other words, the Gospel will show us what to do, how we must act with the attitude of Jesus who emphasized an inclusive love of all in right relationships.

So -- "what is hope", we ask ourselves over and over? A high tech sales consultant, Rick Page, says: "Hope is not a strategy and somewhere is not a destination". Business requires a plan and a strategy with concrete objectives. We should not think, in other words, that hope will get us where we want to be. Others will say that the essence of hope is changeless because the future is always new! The future itself is a revelation of God's desire for us. Like a certain nameless pastor who declared that authority in the church "doesn't rely on a formal imposition of hands, but rather a divine imperative from the heart", we can say also that hope is an imperative of the heart.²

Peter's First Letter to early Christian communities echoes into our time: *in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.* (1 Peter 3: 15-16)

Called to HOPE

Though we know instinctively the hope within us, we must give a reason for it. "Giving an account" means moving from a tentative, unspoken, fuzzy, or intuitive grasp of what fits for us as women religious to a disciplined, articulate and explicit description of that outlook so that others can understand and appropriate it for themselves. We must get the word out that Jesus Christ is the center of our lives, that generosity and goodness are what the world thirsts for, that difference, diversity, and dialogue are not dirty words but central to Trinitarian life at the heart of human

² Fr. Nonomen. *A Holy Order: Where Would the Church be Without Women?* Commonweal (Feb. 26, 2010), 8.

relationships in community.³ We must be a testimony of hope for the world. *Gaudium et spes* states in a clarion way, the future of humanity is in the hands of those who are capable of providing others a hopeful vision of life (*Gaudium et Spes* 1).

The challenge is awesome. We reach for a way of living that expresses God's desires for us and all of creation. This requires of us to let God be as big as God wants to be – fluid, flexible, and ever-creating – and to courageous abandonment to divine recklessness! Though reason and dialectic point the way for us, spiritual realities do not come largely through reasoning. They are reached through direct contact and participation in eternal realities. Ancient texts by Plato and Socrates speak about those who mediate the spiritual world. They are prophets, artists, healers and lovers. I would like to propose that hope calls us to respond to our time through a four-fold mission of prophecy, art, healing and love.⁴

Prophecy

John Paul II in *Vita Consecrata* stated: “The prophetic character of consecrated life . . . takes the shape of a special form of sharing in Christ's prophetic office, which the Holy Spirit communicates to the whole People of God. There is a prophetic dimension which belongs to the consecrated life as such, resulting from the radical nature of the following of Christ and of the subsequent dedication to the mission characteristic of the consecrated life.” (*Vita Consecrata* 84)

We are impelled by the Spirit who in mystical exhortation moves us forward in a prophetic way. Our primal place of relationship with our Creator is where we enter into the evolutionary process of creating our own Word as it is formed in us through Christ. Mysticism and prophecy are integral to one another in a dynamic process where the Spirit confirms our reading of reality and where the hands of our heart touch the ones needing compassion. It is necessary to discover the “art” of touching the heart and holding the hands of the victims of injustice while also calling to truth the authors of scandal. Hiding behind bushes will not do it. To go out from hiding is to have the courage to walk forth with a vitality that will truly protect the fecundity of our charisms. But it will not be done without a living intimacy with Christ, and without ambiguity.

Prophecy gives us the capacity to be watching the horizons. Hope finds expression in prophetic daring where our charisms are exchanged within a present reality so that we can sow the seeds of justice with compassion. Central to the process

³ William J. Short OFM. *Give An Account of the Hope That Is Within You!* The Cord 53.5 (2003) 252, 254-255.

⁴ The schema for this presentation is found in Morton Kelsey. Encounter With God. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, Inc. 1972.

is trust and solidarity, openness to assist one another, and rootedness in our mystical connectedness with God who keeps us together and on the move.⁵

We might say that prophecy is about hearing the music of the future. Faith is dancing to it. Without some vision of the future as sacred, what would be the reason for compassion, sacrifice and mutual care? The prophetic call is an individual quest for the holy that must lead to a communal quest for justice. As prophets for the future who move beyond pessimism and a culture of guilt and blame, we are prompted to see possibilities for healing, forgiveness, and to re-enact the actions of Christ as he witnessed to God's tenderness. We bring our grain of sand in the wisdom of small steps that give imagination to charity.

Vita Consecrata states that true prophecy is born of mystical listening to God in the dialogue of prayer and proclaiming with our lives and lips the Gospel of Christ (VC 84). As our Jewish brothers and sisters regard the Torah as having 70 faces which allows an interpretation of the Word in 70 ways, we too should never settle on one interpretation of the Gospel. Every generation must hear the Word of God for its own time.⁶ Our lives as ecclesial women should be provocative. We must not despair of the impasse of non-existent and misunderstood conversations with church leaders. Our mystical and prophetic traditions compel us to look into the darkness and to see what it reveals in terms of wisdom and insight. We are constantly led to attentiveness to what is on the brink (not to sleep), to grasping the moment we have, to trusting with others while not knowing the end, and to accepting risk together (never alone). Prophecy comes out of shared pain and emergency, not because we need to wallow in it but because we are in solidarity for the beginning of an alternative future. God will come into this tent with us because God knows we are good. Walter Brueggemann asserts that our voices will sound God's Word efficaciously after all the so-called *final voices of legitimacy have either been exposed as false or accommodated in silence.*⁷

**As leaders, how will we provide
a way forward to the calls we are hearing
in a time of uncertainty so that all can move to
a fuller prophetic justice that God desires for the world?**

Art

⁵ These concepts are gleaned from Fr. Bruno Secondin. O.Carm. in his May 2010 address to the UISG Plenary entitled *The almond branch and the boiling pot (Jer. 1, 11-13): What is the future for our mystical-prophetic heritage?*
<http://www.uisg.org/public/Attachments/Bruno%20Secondin%20English.pdf>

⁶ Rabbi Arthur Green. *A Theology of Empathy*. Address given to UISG Plenary in May 2010. Rome, Italy. http://www.uisg.org/public/Attachments/RABBINO_ENG.pdf

⁷ Walter Brueggemann. *An Indispensable Upstream Word: The Gift of Prophecy*, in *Reflections: The Future of the Prophetic Voice*. A magazine of religious inquiry and opinion generated by the community of Yale Divinity School. Vol. 93, No. 1 (Winter 2006) 49.

Passion is a mysterious struggle at the center of all creativity. Henry James described it this way: *We work in the dark – we do what we can – we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion, and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art.*⁸ As artists, we must learn not to control this journey of mystery.

Because the artist is in dialogue with the Source of all creativity, art is the fruit of divine inspiration. Rising like the beauty of the dawn, our holy imaginations and expressions of song, dance, and poetry help us become an actor in the scene of divine goodness. It is about connecting the prose and the passion of the human journey which help people identify a spirituality (personalism, identity, contemplation, reflection) to assist them in navigating the challenges of modernity (e.g., technology and anonymity). An artist is not consumed by the past but by the empty space ahead of her. When Stanley Drucker, the renowned clarinetist in the New York Philharmonic, was about to retire, some one asked him – *What are you going to do?* -- to which he answered, *what I've always done; I'm going to play. I'm a player.* And we too can say, *we are players in the divine symphony of love.*

In Scene One of Olivier Messiaen's opera *Saint Francois d'Assisie*, Francis explains to Brother Leo that for the love of Christ he must patiently endure all contradictions, all suffering, and that this is "Perfect Joy."⁹ St. Francis' lyrical affectivity cannot be dismissed. He abandoned himself to joy, not to misery. His instinct was for a prayer of praise over petition. As a humble poverello, he wrote new songs, rejoiced, exulted, and even danced before the pope. If we are to follow in this way, we will discover that our mission must be expressed in poetry, the poetry of hospitality, of savoring diversity, and in the ultimate aesthetics of charity, meekness, joy and justice.

Tony Gittens CSSp. reminds us that we are meant to sing with one another. We sing with our lungs and limbs filled and gifted with God's bounteous grace. Paraphrasing Thomas Hardy he notes that we are like the thrush; we may be "darkling" people. But we can fill our lungs and "fling [our] souls on a world in need, irrespective of the "growing gloom," because we [like the bird "in blast-beruffled plume"] are called and destined to do so, and like the thrush, we are inspired by "some blessed Hope."¹⁰

⁸ Henry James. *The Middle Years*. Scribners Magazine, 1893.

⁹ Olivier Messiaen. Program notes to the recording of *Saint François d'Assisie*. Salzburg, Felsenreitschule (8/1998), 21.

¹⁰ Anthony J. Gittens, CSSp. *Behold I Create a New Heaven and a New Earth, or Hanging Baskets, Broken Strings, and a World Renewed*. In Mission Update. United States Catholic Mission Association (Vol. 19, Issue 1) Winter 2009, 6-11. The poetic references are from *The Darkling Thrush* by Thomas Hardy.

In our baptism we are called to be light. If we allow ourselves to be led literally and symbolically to the altar of God, then we too assent to being wrapped in colorful cloths and thrown into the myriad design of stained glass prisms . . . we are invited to dance upon common ground, the reflection of the living God we experience in one another. Hand grasping hand, we are radiant for we are all hues of hope!¹¹ Hope in emerging beauty enables the artist to face an empty canvas, a musician to put notes on a five-lined sheet, and ultimately, as Pope Benedict says, *to become a custodian of beauty in the world. Dramatic beauty becomes a proclamation of hope, an invitation to raise our gaze to the ultimate horizon.*¹²

Any artist will tell us that in making art there can be an analogy to the experience of spiritual transformation. When doing one's spiritual work or creating a piece of art, a certain abandonment of the self is important. Likewise, the artist offers herself to the creative impulse and worries not what is given the soul to reveal.

In the work of art, a canvas or piece of stone simply and blindly receives the stroke of the brush or the blow of the sculptor's chisel. It knows nothing of how the artist will shape it. It remains immovable in the hands of the artist, not asking what the creator will make of it. There is only an implicit and silent trust that the work will be the best possible and that it will reveal a beauty hitherto unseen or unknown. So the spirit of the artist must leave to the Creator what is prompted by the deeper Spirit and carry on peacefully with one's work. The artist and the work of art proceed together by a steady and simple submission, and a concentration on one's objective.

The work of the divine can never be anything but good and does not need to be reformed.¹³ When the creative impulse is felt to be new and fresh, goodness and love become the transformative power of God's work within the artist. Like the spiritual life, making art can involve transforming a garbage dump into a sanctuary or like a St. Francis becoming a trans-historical, trans-religious messenger of the love of life, of nature, and of the earth as sacred.¹⁴

As artists, we handle the notes like any other pianist. It's the pause – the contemplative pause – in between the notes where the art lies. The pause is where the

¹¹ Changing the Face of the Mountain. (Franciscan Federation 2006) Adapted from a reflection by Linda Tan, OSF.

¹² Benedict XVI. Address to Artists. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. November 21, 2009. Published in Origins Vol. 39, No. 28 (December 17, 2009) 454-457.

¹³ Jean-Pierre de Caussade, translated by John Beevers. Abandonment to the Divine Providence. New York: Doubleday, 1975, 81-83.

¹⁴ Frederick Franck. Pacem in Terris: A Love Story. New Paltz: Codhill Press, 79; and Marlene Weisenbeck FSPA, Expressions of Beauty: A Tradition of Franciscan Art. 20th Anniversary of the Franciscan Spirituality Center in La Crosse, WI. September 29, 2005.

Word of God finds root in our souls. When we are conscious of our possession of the Word, we will not be intimidated by any system of power. We take our power from the Word. Indeed, the Word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit and marrow, and enables one to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart. No creature is concealed from the Word, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of the One to whom we must render an account.

We are called to be ministers of the Word. Reflect upon this as we listen to *The Word of the Lord!* from Bernstein's MASS¹⁵.

Celebrant: Brothers: This is the gospel I preach;
and in its service I have suffered hardship like a criminal;
yea, even unto imprisonment; but there is no imprisoning the Word of God . . .

A Young Man: Dearly beloved: Do not be surprised if the world hates you.
We who love our brothers have crossed over to life,
but they who do not love, abide in death.
Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer.

Another Young Man: Dear Mom and Dad . . .
Nothing will make me change my mind.
Do not feel badly or worry about me.
Try to understand: I am now a man.

Celebrant:
You can lock up bold men
Go and lock up bold men
Go and lock up your bold men
And hold men in tow,
You can stifle all adventure
For a century or so.
Smother hope before it's risen,
Watch it wizen like a gourd,
But you cannot imprison
The Word of the Lord.
No, you cannot imprison
The Word of the Lord.
For the Word
For the Word was at the birth of the beginning
It made the heavens and the earth and set them spinning,
And for several million years
It's withstood all our forums and fine ideas.
It's been rough
It's been rough but it appears to be winning!
There are people who doubt it
There are people who doubt it and shout it out loud,
There are local vocal yokels who we know collect a crowd.
They can fashion a rebuttal that's as subtle as a sword,
But they're never gonna scuttle the Word of the Lord.

¹⁵ Leonard Bernstein. *Mass*. A Theatre Piece For Singers, Players and Dancers. VIII EPISTLE: "The Word of the Lord" (sung by the Celebrant). CBS Records Inc. 1971.

An Older Man: Dear Brothers . . .
 I think that God has made us apostles the most abject of mankind.
 We hunger and thirst, we are naked, we are roughly handled,
 and we have no fixed abode . . .
 They curse us and we bless.
 They persecute us and we suffer it . . .
 They treat us as the scum of the earth, the dregs of humanity,
 to this very day.

A Young Girl: Dear Folks: Jim looked very well on my first visit.
 With his head clean shaven, he looked about 19 years old.
 He says the prison food is very good, cafeteria-style.
 For the first few days he's not allowed any books
 except his Bible and his breviary.
 We sat and talked about our marriage
 and about how we would grow through this.
 When I hugged him he smelled so good, a smell of clean soap;
 He smelled like a nun, or like a child when you put him to bed.

Celebrant: All you big men of merit,
 All you big men of merit who ferret out flaws,
 You rely on our compliance with your science and your laws.
 Find a freedom to demolish while you polish some award,
 But you cannot abolish the Word of the Lord.
 No, you cannot abolish the Word of the Lord.
 For the Word,
 For the Word created mud and got it going
 It filled our empty brains with blood and set it flowing
 And for thousands of regimes
 It's endured all our follies and fancy schemes.
 It's been tough,
 It's been tough, and yet it seems to be growing!
 O you people of power,
 O you people of power, your hour is now.
 You may plan to rule forever, but you never do somehow.
 So we wait in silent treason until reason is restored
 And we wait for the season of the Word of the Lord.
 We wait. . for the Word of the Lord . . .

Healing

Several years ago and again in April 2010 Ronald Rolheiser OMI was asked to name the ten major spiritual questions in the Catholic world. Among them was the “struggle to live in torn, divided and highly polarized communities, as wounded persons ourselves, and [to] carry that tension without resentment, to be healers and peacemakers rather than simply responding in kind”.¹⁶ He emphasized that polarization will always be front and center, whether it's spoken or unspoken. Today the big ecclesial questions are about who has power and authority over sacraments, governance, and how the crisis of abuse is handled. Yet these are not the central

¹⁶ John L. Allen Jr., *To be fully human: Rolheiser gets to the essentials* in National Catholic Reporter (May 28, 2010), 3a.

questions about deep longing that reside inside and underneath the elemental human experience lurking through our worries and complaints. Under all this are our holy longings for healing and wholeness, an ache for the infinite, and a yearning for love.¹⁷

Deep wounds, long-standing grievances, senses of violation, and ruptures of trust give some idea of the terrain that roads to healing must attempt to negotiate. Robert Schreiter C.P.P.S. outlines a threefold journey to reconciliation and healing. It is first about the human heart, not something we do, but what God is doing in us. Secondly, it is about overcoming injustices, a central attribute of God without which the wounds of those who have suffered cannot heal. Thirdly, healing is about alternative social formations, where people come out of their own bounded zones to meet one another in a place that bears some of the marks of their home reality. These might be healing and listening circles, truth and reconciliation gatherings, or common ground meetings for dialogue. It must be about change in all the parties involved – change as a matter of the mind, as well as of the body, which inscribes healing in the psyche of woundedness. A community of healing must be both a community of memory and a community of hope, for wrongdoing wreaks wounds upon the human heart and on the human community at the same time.¹⁸

Our healing powers are challenged by disease, by psychological and spiritual fragility. Again, the Gospel gives us all we need. There are more references to healing in the Gospel than any other activity of Jesus. Wondrous things come from a God who can do all things miraculously. We need transformative postures of expectancy, joy, possibility, intentionality, desire, and hope in God's goodness. We need healing and transformational images found in creation –sunrises, snowfalls, banquets of love, our companion travelers, personal and communal prayer, and openness to graced power. These earthy and spiritual realities help us to truly know the capability of the human body to take on a characteristic that is consonant with what it believes.

Let us nurture the internal dynamic of the journey, allowing it to change us and to be affected by its unique nature, knowing that the arduousness, the discomfort of the journey and the arrival are equally important. Taking our time seriously and elegantly, valuing our companions will assure us that we can . . . *move forward securely, joyfully and swiftly*, as Clare of Assisi wrote to Agnes of Prague.

No one should come into contact with us without receiving our mercy. This can happen only after we have done our own work of forgiveness. To be healed, to do

¹⁷ Donald Goergen, OP. *Fire of Love*. (Paulist Press, 2006) 184-185.

¹⁸ Robert Schreiter C.P.P.S. *Reconciliation: Healing the Past or Building the Future*. A paper delivered for "The Road to Reconciliation" Symposium at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry (April 16, 2009) and reprinted in *Mission Update*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Catholic Mission Association (Vol. 18, Issue 3).

penance, means to begin to consciously distance oneself from all that fragments our bondedness in human communion.

**Reflect now on moments in which you have been stretched
beyond your endurance,
how you have been stigmatized,
and how you have broken through it.**

Love

Ours is the only world religion whose one God became human. By virtue of God's immersion in the universe, the great waters of matter have been imbued with life and love. We are the recipients of this wild and universal love. We carry Christ in the enclosure of our souls. Bringing about a democratization of the Incarnation is our mission because Love is totally gratuitous; we are truth and love just by being created. T.S. Eliot wrote:

*Who then devised the torment? Love.
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame,
Which human power cannot remove.
We live, only suspire
Consumed by either fire or fire.¹⁹*

Religious life must be founded on a love relationship with Christ, first and foremost. If this is not the bedrock of our life form, nothing else will have efficacy – not community life, not social justice, nor any other effort at renewal or ministry that we take on. At the conclusion of the IXth Assembly of Bishops dedicated to consecrated life, they wrote: *“Throughout the history of the Church, Consecrated Life has been a living presence of the action of the Spirit, a privileged space of the absolute love for God and others, a witnessing of the divine plan to gather all of humanity within the civilization of love. . .”* (Concluding Message, October 27, 1994). Our sister, Sandra Schneiders, also notes that what the disciples share with Jesus as being God's children is the basis of both their union with him and their union with one another.²⁰ Ours is a spirituality of affectivity, that of becoming the One on whom we fix our gaze. Mutuality on either the human or divine level is not about equality; it is about dignity and the interdependency of mutual love.

Before he became pope, Cardinal Ratzinger said the Church doesn't have “such an urgent need” for reformers, but rather what the Church really needs are “people

¹⁹ T. S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*. No.4 of *Four Quartets*.
<http://www.tristan.icom43.net/quartets/gidding.html>

²⁰ Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM. *Selling All: Commitment, Consecrated Celibacy, and Community in Catholic Religious Life*. New York: Paulist Press (2001) 292.

who are inwardly seized by Christianity, who experience it as joy and hope, who have thus become lovers. Each vocation offers a particular answer to the questioning of genuine love, of loving what really matters.²¹

Writing to the Romans, Paul proclaimed: *And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom we have received.* (Romans 5: 3, 5 NIV)

Conclusion

The mark of authentic Christianity has always been a paradox: it is thoroughly rooted in the earth, God's creation, and entirely bent on moving toward heaven, toward God. It is a dynamic balance. The virtue of hope is no different. Hope will give eagles' wings (Is 40:31) to our perseverance even as it restrains our flights of fancy. Hope is directed to God and God's beloved. It is focused, not on external reality or hard facts but on God, God's justice, and God's faithfulness. Hope endures, not because life seems good or is the way we would have chosen it, but because we are committed to God.

We have been moving for over 50 years through massive renewal and re-imagining of religious life. Some call it deconstruction. Now we are in the time of the Resurrection Waltz of re-integration.²² The still point of the turning world is where the dance is.²³ We must shore up the foundations that make hope possible, live in hope and not just wait or look for it – “fierce faithfulness”, this is called. The well of hope, a powerful urging in the depths of our souls, lies deep in each of us. As our beloved Mary Daniel Turner stated: *Intentionally and conscientiously we must now lay claim to our unique ecclesial identity: to be prophetic communities of hope who make Gospel imperatives a way of life, not rare expeditions into the Paschal journey, nor a private undertaking of individual sisters.*²⁴ To focus on the person of Jesus while working for concrete reform in the functioning and organization of the church (e.g., Roman Curia, exercise of Petrine ministry, appointment of bishops, place of women, inculturation, authentic liturgy, realistic ecumenism) is a rightful role of ours.

Let us remember however, that we will be known more by what we affirm than what we deny. Our whole being tends toward what we hope for. But we also know

²¹ Carl Anderson. “Called to Love: Common Vocation, Uncommon Joy: Getting Beyond a Hope-Killing Culture.” Adapted from his speech from the CMSWR Congress in Washington, D.C., September 11, 2009.

²² An observation made by a speaker at the Franciscan Federation Assembly of 2008.

²³ This is an expression of the Rev. Bliss Williams Browne, one of the first women to enroll at Yale University and an Episcopal priest; quoted in Reflections: The Future of the Prophetic Voice. Yale University, Vol. 93, No. 1 (Winter 2006) 43.

²⁴ Mary Daniel Turner. *Dying and Rising: Called to be Prophets of Hope*, in Transformation. Silver Spring, MD: Religious Formation Conference (Vol. 19, Issue 1, Spring 2010) 1.

that the prophet, who is always concerned about a better future, is not known for nuance. Its two greatest enemies are conformity and comfort. Grounded in a sublime principle of the Second Vatican Council, we wait in stubborn hope²⁵ for truth to impose itself by virtue of its essence as it wins over the mind with both gentleness and power. (*Dignitatis Humanae* No.1)

A young trembling poet wrote:

*Coiled to strike
My faith squirms
From grasping fangs
To soaring hopes

of escape. . .

I think not.*²⁶

Let us not doubt! Ours is a mission of love, healing, art and prophecy. Embedded as we are in the present, we are creatures of the future. Our God is faithful and innovative. My sisters, my friends – Let us be reverent stewards of these holy energies of prophecy, art, healing, and love. 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. And may the world find in us what it is looking for.²⁷

*How will we be reverent stewards of these holy energies
of prophecy, art, healing and love?*

²⁵ Mary C. Gordon in [The Huffington Post](#), April 6, 2010.

²⁶ Ben Kruse. [Neighborhood News](#): A newspaper published by A Place of Grace Catholic Worker House. Vol. 13, No. 2. La Crosse, WI: (Winter 2009) 4.

²⁷ Katherine Feely, SND. *The Density of the Present* in [Occasional Papers](#). Silver Spring, MD: LCWR Vol. 39, No. 1 (Winter 2010) 25.