

A Journey to the Smithsonian

As part of the LCWR's jubilee celebration, the membership of LCWR advised the conference to mount an exhibit at the Smithsonian. This exhibit would describe the contribution of women religious to the culture of the United States. Pursuing this idea is the History Committee: Barbara Cervenka, OP; Mary Charlotte Chandler, RSCJ; Helen Garvey, BVM; Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ; and Constance Phelps, SCL.

On December 14, Helen and Barbara, along with LCWR executive director Carole Shinnick, SSND, traveled to the Smithsonian where they heard Sheila Burke and James Gardner, executives of the Smithsonian, caution them about the many challenges to mounting an exhibit:

- The closing of the American History Museum for two years for renovation,
- Lack of funds and personnel,
- The fact that the priority of the Smithsonian is its

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LCWR executive director Carole Shinnick, SSND; and LCWR Jubilee History Committee members Helen Maher Garvey, BVM and Barbara Cervenka, OP visited the Smithsonian and the FADICA offices to investigate possibilities of mounting an exhibit on the contribution of women religious to US culture.

Reflections on the Congress on Consecrated Life: A Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity

by Christine Vladimiroff, OSB, LCWR President

I was privileged to represent LCWR at the Congress on Consecrated Life, celebrated in Rome from November 23-27. It was organized by the two Unions of Superiors General of women and men. It was a wonderful experience of being part of a global society and a universal church. There were 847 religious from all parts of the world who participated. The organizers worked very hard to express a universal church with no boundaries. Developed countries helped to fund participants from the developing parts of the world. There were 95 religious from Africa, 250 from America, 92 from Asia, 16 from Oceania and 394 from Europe. The majority in attendance were superiors general but also represented were presidents from 130 of the national con-

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From the LCWR Presidency
Remembering and Anticipating

by Constance Phelps, SCL -- LCWR Past President

The New Year is, for me, an opportunity to remember and to anticipate.

Reflecting on the past year, I remember the opportunities and the challenges we faced as a conference. The challenges were many, some more prominent than others. I am sure each of us could list and comment on their importance from our own perspectives.

As we lived through the last six months of the year, I recall we needed, occasionally, to act with deliberation, sometimes more swiftly than our processes allow. We had to make decisions about issues our conference had not previously faced, and, at times, to risk proceeding without conferring with you, our members. As is indicative of a healthy



As I remember 2004, I am thankful for the way in which God entered our lives and ministry as a conference. It was not, always, the manner in which I may have selected, but it was the grace of the moment. And, looking back, we did learn from both the opportunities and the challenges. We stood together and moved confidently forward. And we could not have done so without the support and leadership of Carole Shinnick, SSND and our national staff. I am deeply grateful for their service to us as they absorbed all the "extras" and sustained their normal responsibilities during these past months.

As I anticipate 2005, I am optimistic. I am hopeful as we embrace Our Call 2004-2009. I look forward to the InterAmerican Conference in Brazil in May. I await, with eagerness, the opening of our Jubilee year and all that it will encompass. And I am energized and encouraged as I continue to observe all the persons and situations touched and affected by the lived commitment and ministry of women religious.

Yet, I am realistic. I know we will face unknown challenges amidst the opportunities, in our congregations as

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organization, not all of you agreed with our decisions. Your critique was welcome, and provided insight for our ongoing discernment and future decisions. Yet, through it all, you were a tremendous support, and continue to be as we move where we are called.

The opportunities were many, as well. Of the many highlights of 2004, of note was my participation in the Catholic scholars' consultation "The Person, the Poor, and the Common Good: A Catholic Dialogue on the Environment." Sponsored jointly by USCCB and the University of St. Thomas, it brought together 60 participants from various academic fields, as well as bishops, heads of national Catholic organizations, diocesan social actions leaders, and media representatives. Bishop William Skylstad reflected that the conference theme components "not only need deeper exploration, but (were) ones where the church can make a difference." Follow up in the spring will review the effort of over a decade and reflect upon possible future initiatives.

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well as in our conference. There will be heartfelt losses mingled with beautiful surprises and blessings. As we accept all, I pray we remain Spirit-driven as we faithfully continue to act and respond in a manner that flows from who we are, and that reflects what we value as we continually moves toward truth and justice.

A blessed New Year to all of you!

A Journey to the Smithsonian

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own collection. (Ninety-eight percent of the Smithsonian collection is not exhibited.).

As the LCWR representatives listened to these practical concerns, they also remembered the unsung commitment of the women of congregations to education, healthcare, and social service. They recalled the mission of justice embraced by congregations through the years and renewed in the era following Vatican II. They spoke this truth. By the end of the meeting it was clear that there is a possibility of having a temporary exhibit at the Smithsonian which may well be a photography show. Burke and Gardner advised that there must be a compelling theme (angle) which will interest the general public; telling the story about women's contributions is not good enough. How did sisters make a difference? What did their lives change?

On the following day, December 15, Helen, Barbara and Carole visited Frank Butler, of FADICA (Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities, Inc.). The purpose of the visit was to gain more knowledge about grants. Because the exhibit cannot be funded by LCWR, such knowledge is essential. Mr. Butler was enormously generous and helpful.

The committee will pursue these questions at its January 2005 meeting. Mounting an exhibit at the Smithsonian is a complex goal, including the writing of proposals for the Smithsonian and for funding agencies. However, as Helen recalls, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."



Barbara Cervenka, OP and Helen Garvey, BVM meet with Frank Butler at the FADICA office in Washington, DC.

New LCWR Publication on Peacemaking in Process

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious will be publishing a daily reflection book that encourages deeper probing of the 2004 joint assembly focus on peacemaking.



The book will contain reflections by 55 LCWR members on the words of various writers and thinkers on creating peace, as well as on related passages of scripture. The objectives of this publication are:

- Provide LCWR members with a spiritual tool that can aid their reflection on the call to be peacemakers in these violent times
- Provide LCWR members with a resource that can be shared as well with their own members
- Foster a bond of unity in prayer among LCWR members, other women religious and anyone else who wishes to utilize the reflections. More than 22,000 copies of the 2004 LCWR reflection book were sold, enabling many people to join in prayer together around a common theme.

LCWR members, associates and subscribers will receive a copy of the publication. Information on ordering additional copies of the publication will be sent via a World Merge message in January. The book is designed for use for the months of May and June.

Stop Trafficking! Newsletter Highlights Work of Women Religious

The November issue of Stop Trafficking! focused on awareness-raising and collaboration of groups working against human trafficking. Efforts of women religious, both congregations and coalitions, are featured in many of the articles. To access this issue of the newsletter, go to <http://homepage.mac.com/srjeanschafersds/stoptrafficking/index.html> and click on Vol. 2 No. 11.

Reflections on the Congress on Consecrated Life



More than 800 women and men religious attended the Congress on Consecrated Life in Rome. (Photo from the Vidimus Dominum website.)

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ferences of religious, theologians, directors of reviews and publications, and a group of young religious. It was a Pentecost event with languages and attire very distinctive, but with one spirit animating us.

There were theological and sociological presentations around religious life and issues that affect it. There were profound calls to a deep spirituality of religious life, as well. A lifting up of the violence and oppression of our times was the context of our profound discussions. I found the presentations very stimulating, but perhaps the best part was the table discussion and exploration that followed each speaker. I shared this experience at my table with men and women religious from Germany, Belgium, Zimbabwe, New Zealand, and Austria, along with two other Americans. It was a rich and provoking discussion. Our perspectives were different, but our hearts burned with the same conviction that religious life has a gift to give the church and our world.

At a mid-point in the congress we divided up into 15 self-selecting work groups for an all-day session and a report to be given to the congress the next day with a

plan of action on the particular issue. The discussion was ardent and, at times, the ecclesiologies collided in shaping the response to the specific issue. Taken together the 15 reports call us out of our self and on to mission in new ways.

The event is over but the very fact that we experienced the power of consecrated life in one room over a week of meetings gives us the responsibility to live out its demands in this our global context. It is a gift that at this time religious life experiences its poverty and limitations but does not dwell there. We have new frontiers as did our foremothers.

The core theological paper for discussion and other presentations as well as follow-up on the congress can be accessed on the Internet at: vidimusdominum.org.

Jubilee USA Network Maintains Pressure for Debt Cancellation

After the national elections, Jubilee USA did not miss a beat in pressing for 100% debt cancellation for impoverished countries without harmful conditions. First was the Christmas card campaign described in the December *Update*. On December 8, Jubilee issued a statement on Global Day of Action Against Debt Domination. Released to the press that day, the statement reiterates Jubilee's challenge to the US government, the IMF and World Bank, and the G-7 nations to take immediate action in 2005 to address the crisis of debt. In the new year, the Jubilee movement will focus on the meeting in February of the G-7 finance ministers, and then will turn to the G-8 meeting to be held in Scotland in June.

Now, Jubilee Network looks toward Jubilee Sunday (January 30, 2005) with an invitation to worshipping communities to make this a day of learning, praying, and acting for justice and freedom from the bond of debt. For suggestions see www.jubileeusa.org and find Jubilee Sunday.



LCWR Website

The LCWR website contains links to the member congregations that have websites. If your congregation has a site and it is not listed on the LCWR site, please send the name of your congregation and the address of your website to Eva McCrae at emccrae@lcwr.org. The links to congregations are on the LCWR website (www.lcwr.org) under "Links to Resources."

LCWR Endorses NGO Statement on Foreign Military Training

A group of NGOs attempting to reform US training for foreign security forces issued a statement on December 17 asking members of Congress to introduce legislation on this issue. Key proposals include: discontinue training to countries and groups that use child soldiers; mainstream effective human rights and humanitarian law education into all training; establish a joint state and defense database of US-trained foreign security force personnel. On December 8, LCWR signed on to the statement drafted by The Africa Faith and Justice Network, Amnesty International USA, East Timor Action Network, and School of the Americas Watch.

December a Banner Month for Anti-Death Penalty Advocates

During the month of December 2004, four executions were scheduled in four different states, and four stays of execution were issued, making this month the first since 1994 without an execution in the United States. Those who have urged stays of execution include local and national anti-death penalty groups, families of victims, and several US Catholic bishops.

On December 15 former LCWR president Camille D'Arienzo, RSM addressed the New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Codes, Judiciary and Correction beseeching that New York not reinstate the death penalty. She noted that while appearing as a representative of the New York Religious Leaders Against the Death Penalty, the opposition she expressed also reflected that of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

NETWORK Survey in *Connections*

A NETWORK membership survey will be included in the next issue of *Connections*, rather than being sent by a separate mailing. Results will be taken very seriously by staff and board members in planning for the next few years. Since women religious are a core constituency of NETWORK, LCWR members are encouraged to participate in the survey.

Members are also alerted to the concise and helpful summary of NETWORK's legislative activities during the second session of the 108th Congress in the Legislative Update sent December 13, 2004. The status of priority issues is defined: international trade and investment policies, TANF, tax cuts, FY2005 budget, military issues, housing, and immigration issues.

New TV Series to Air on Catholic Presence at the UN

The International Catholic Organizations (ICO) Information Center announced that a series of programs on Catholic presence at the UN will air on public-access cable TV. The schedule, which begins on December 26, includes the UN environmental programme, Catholic spirituality in global policy, and a report of how poverty separates parents and children. Programs are scheduled for Sunday, 9:00 AM on January 9, January 23, and February 6. Local listings will provide more information.

LCWR Seeks Illustrations and Photographs by Women Religious Artists

LCWR is interested in creating a bank of illustrations and photographs by women religious artists that could be used to enhance LCWR publications and its website.



Copies of illustrations and photos will be kept on file at the LCWR national office and used to accompany articles and website items. The artists/photographers would be credited with the use of any piece. LCWR publications reach wide audiences both within and outside of the United States and would provide extensive exposure for the artists.

LCWR members are asked to invite artists and photographers in their congregations to submit copies of their work. More specifics about submitting work can be obtained by contacting the LCWR director of communications Annmarie Sanders, IHM at asanders@lcwr.org or 301-588-4955.

LRCR 2005 Legal Seminar to Be Held in Atlanta

The Legal Seminary of the Legal Resource Center for Religious will be held April 21-24 in Atlanta, GA. The theme for this annual event will be "Law in Changing Times within Religious Life." The opening presentation by Professor Kenneth Wald will examine "The Influence of US Law on Religious Life."

Following this central theme of law in changing times, workshops will give insights into how to lead effectively in a world where important civil and canon law changes continue to impact religious institutes. Workshops include: Professional and Ethical Standards in Ministry; Creation, Retention and Destruction of Files; the Effect of HIPAA on Confidentiality; Professional License: Blessing or Burden?; How to Deal with Your Insurance Company; Lay Managers and Officers in a Religious Community; Crisis Hotline for Religious:

Its Liabilities and Legal Ethical Issues; Background Checks: Nuts and Bolts; Use of General and Provincial Property: Legal Issues; New Members and New Problems; Employee Handbooks: Creation, Updating and Use; Members on the Edge; Grant Applications: Legal & Financial Considerations; Patrimony from a Civil Law Perspective; Charity and Liability; Immigration in a New Era; as well as Medicare and Tax Updates. The seminar will end with a general session providing a practical update on sexual abuse.

Two pre-seminar workshops will also be offered. The first is Civil and Canon Law 101. This popular workshop provides a practical introduction to the civil and canon law issues that impact religious life. The second pre-seminar workshop will provide a full-day introduction to Government Programs for Religious Orders. The day-long program will introduce participants to the complex world of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, etc., and the particular issues raised by religious who participate in these programs. The workshops are especially helpful for those beginning new roles in leadership.

Information on the seminar and pre-seminar workshops together with a downloadable seminar brochure and registration form and further details for the event are available at the Legal Resource Center for Religious web site: www.LRCR.org/mission/seminar.htm. The brochure will be mailed to LRCR subscribers in early January.

Center for the Study of Religious Life Calendar of Coming Events

January 2005

KINDLING to members and subscribers
Focus: Emerging Communities

April 24-26, 2005

Religious Leadership Forum
Shalom Center -- Dubuque, IA

August 11-13, 2005

Cultural Audit Workshop
Catholic Theological Union -- Chicago, IL

Fall 2005 -- Spring 2006 -- Fall 2006

"The Individual and the Common Good"
Interdisciplinary Dialogue for Scholars and Leadership

From the LCWR Executive Director

Call in the Experts

It was June 1984 and I was living in St. Louis. It was already quite warm and the air conditioning had been turned on in the convent. One of the sisters had noticed a kind of low humming sound coming from her bedroom floor. It was becoming more and more pronounced. And then others began to notice the same humming sound emanating from the basement ceiling directly under the sister's bedroom. Taking matters into my own hands, I scouted the perimeter of the building outside and saw an air duct leading into the convent where a few bees were flying lazily in and out of the pipe. The bees were building a hive in our house.



Carole Shinnick, SSND

Not one to be deterred by a few bees, I announced to the community that I could handle the situation quite easily. I outfitted myself in a long sleeved shirt, rubber gloves, and long pants. I tucked the sleeves into the gloves and the pants legs into my socks. Having watched one too many episodes of *National Geographic Presents*, I fashioned myself a bee-keeper's protective bonnet by pulling a half slip over the crown of a wide-brimmed straw hat so that the slip covered my face like a kind of veil. I looked like the offspring of the Phantom of the Opera and the Bride of Dracula.

Unfortunately, the slip was opaque – a definite drawback considering my plan. I had set up a stepladder near the end of the pipe and was armed with a large can of Raid. One of the sisters led me to the stepladder which I clumsily scaled, blinded by my slip. Carefully, I aimed the can of Raid into what I hoped was the pipe and shot it twice. The humming grew louder and soon out came a very large cloud of irritated bees. Off ran my shrieking companion leaving me to clamber down from my shaky perch. Once on the ground I had no idea which way I should run and I was too afraid to lift my "veil." I groped my way back to the front door, scaring one of our older sisters half to death as I stumbled into the hallway.

That afternoon we called one of our parishioners who was a beekeeper. He came over hoping to find the queen so that he could lead the bees to one of his hives, but the location of the nest was too deep into the

house's interior. Instead he engaged a professional exterminator who poisoned our fuzzy little tenants. We learned later that, in fact, there were 60,000 bees living in our air duct and they had produced 30 pounds of honey. Needless to say, with my can of Raid and my makeshift beekeeper's hat, I was hardly the person to have addressed the situation. Eventually the ceiling of our basement sagged under the weight of the now-poisoned honey and it began to drip into the basement, full of carcasses of many deceased bees. Not a pretty sight.

Many times leaders of religious congregations will say something like this: "When I was elected to office, I was asked to be a spiritual leader for the congregation. However, within a short time I found myself thinking that I really needed to be a combination physician, financial expert, lawyer, architect, therapist and Medicare specialist!" Hearing that kind of comment I remember my misadventures as an exterminator (almost a dead exterminator) and I want to say, "Don't be afraid to call an expert." In fact, the wise person is not someone who knows everything, but who knows what they don't know and who knows how to find someone who does. Now I let my fingers do the walking and have sworn off bee control forever.

Happy New Year, Everyone!



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Date and Site Set for Assembly 2007

The site for the 2007 LCWR Assembly has been finalized by Eleanor Granger, OSF, coordinator of site planning for the LCWR national office. The 2007 gathering will be at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in the downtown New Orleans area, minutes from the French Quarter. The assembly will begin on August 2 and conclude on August 6.

LCWR members may note that these dates are earlier than the traditional assembly time frame. Hopefully, this early announcement will minimize conflicts for LCWR members.

CHA Board Focuses on Strategic Planning Process

Catholic Health Association held a board meeting December 2-3 in Chicago, and focused its working session on a strategic planning process for FY2006-FY2008. The process includes input from members about priority issues and activities.

A report on the progress of the FY2003 – FY 2005 goals noted that the “Covering the Nation” program to advance the dialogue on the uninsured continues to move forward. In addition, CHA committed resources to a new initiative, “A Search for Common Ground,” which includes a number of major national organizations committed to building consensus solutions to the challenge of providing health care coverage to the uninsured.

LCWR’s report to the board included preparations for the jubilee year beginning in 2005; a positive meeting of the LCWR executive committee with CHA president/CEO Fr. Michael Place, Theresa Stanley, CCVI and Pat Talone, RSM about sponsorship; and brief summaries of health-related activities of groups with whom LCWR partners: NETWORK, Jubilee USA, Catholic Coalition Against Trafficking, as well as our efforts to promote the Millennium Development Goals. The report was well received.

Board members were surprised and saddened by Fr. Michael Place’s announcement that he will resign as president/CEO in February 2005 after seven years of service. The search for a new president/CEO began immediately.

Upcoming LCWR Dates



Upcoming Event for the Religious Formation Conference

Espiritu de Esperanza: Running to Catch the Spirit

December 1-4, 2005

Crown Plaza Hotel

on the Riverwalk -- San Antonio, Texas

Pre-Congress Workshops: November 28-December 1