

February 2005

Celebrating the LCWR Jubilee as a Sacred Moment, A Time of Gratitude

by Ann Margaret O'Hara, SP

The LCWR Jubilee Committee reflected on the responses of members for celebrating LCWR's 50th anniversary in the regions and planned for resources to assist those celebrations. It was clear from the responses to the committee that this is a sacred moment, a time of gratitude.

Members desire celebrations that are inclusive of others while celebrating religious life. They hope to include various artistic expressions using the gifts of local persons. Often the members stated that any commemoration should include an action for justice.

Many members desire opportunities to strengthen and deepen their experience of leadership. The committee will provide materials that may be used for a reflective day or workshop on leadership in the fall.

In their communications about the celebrations, region planners may connect women religious with the historical development of their geographic areas. The committee will provide media packets for region use, and local members of the National Communicators Network for Women Religious may be available to assist



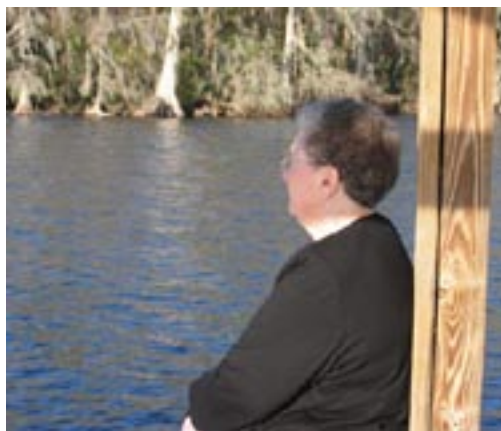
The LCWR Jubilee Committee met in Orlando, Florida on January 21 and 22 to discuss ways to forward the plans for commemorating LCWR's 50th anniversary. The committee members are: Carole Shinnick, SSND; Ann Margaret O'Hara, SP (chair); Sherri Coleman, FSM; Helen Maher Garvey, BVM; and Beth Taylor, CSJP.

with communications. Planners are asked to capture the times of celebrations in picture, film, and writing and send these to the LCWR national office.

The committee believes that it is so important that any activities of jubilee engage us in attending to God's Dream so that the blessing of jubilee will flow throughout the membership and infinitely beyond LCWR.

LCWR Holds First Leading from Within Retreat

Twenty-three LCWR members gathered in Winter Park, Florida for the first Leading from Within Retreat, directed by Regina Bechtel, SC and Nancy Schreck, OSF. The five-day retreat experience provided daily input from Regina
(continued on page 3)



Inside this issue:

- 4 LCWR Peacemaking Book
Deadline: March 1
- 4 Delegation Set for Mexico
- 4 Sexual Abuse Workshop
Offered

From the LCWR Presidency
What or Who is in My Center?

by Beatrice Eichten, OSF -- LCWR Vice President

*...all moments are key moments,
and life itself is grace.*

When I find a penny on the ground, I pick it up as a sign of God's blessings coming in small, everyday events. Sometimes it's an actual penny, sometimes it's a phrase that tips me into a new economy of grace. The penny I picked up before Christmas was a question posed by Don Goergen, OP, in the November *InFormation* newsletter – What or who is my center?



His question has become a sub-text that rumbles around in my busy-ness and surfaces in moments of quiet. Especially through Christmas and as I begin a new year, I ponder the mystery of Incarnation. As I experience God-made-flesh in each daily event, I wonder where is my center. Is it Jesus? I hope so. Is it calm

*How can I hear and receive the goodness of God in and through this person, this event, even this tragedy?
What is the sacred journey into which I am called and to which every other person is invited?*

and comfort? Occasionally. Problems solved or avoided? Sometimes. Ah! - maybe it is the question that is my center! The seeking, the yearning, the longing for meaning – this is often the pivot point of my life.

Daily, I encounter many blessings and challenges of personal, communal, and societal life. The ministry of leadership puts me in touch with both the richness and the foibles of people and institutions. Natural tragedies, political manipulation, and ethnic violence surround me constantly. I am pulled back to the question – Who is this Jesus in whom I say I center my life? How can I hear and receive the goodness of God in and through this person, this event, even this tragedy? What is the sacred journey into which I am called and to which every other person is invited? Can I open my

center enough to receive this moment fully so as to live out of and into the blessings that make my journey a sacred journey?

Frederick Buechner* speaks of a "crazy, holy grace" that wells up out of "the lostness and pain of the world and of our own inner worlds." He quotes an old prayer "For all thy blessings, known and unknown, remembered and forgotten, we give thee thanks." He says of these blessings that "it is their presence that makes

the life of each of us a sacred journey." The challenges draw us into the questions, which draw us into the searching, seeking, longing for meaning. That, in turn, can draw us into the blessings of God always present (gift) in this present (gifted) moment. We need to believe deeply that Christ is here with us in this church and world – this is the way we have been given and to which we have been given. It is our sacred journey.

Buechner exhorts me: "Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it

Can I open my center enough to receive this moment fully so as to live out of and into the blessings that make my journey a sacred journey?

because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace."**

*Selection from *Listening to Your Life, Daily Meditations with Frederick Buechner*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1992, p. 9.

**Ibid, p. 2.

LCWR Offers First Leading from Within Retreat

(continued from page 1)

and Nancy on the spirituality of religious life leadership today. Retreatants also had opportunities for individual and group spiritual direction and met twice a day for communal prayer and ritual experiences. LCWR staff members Carole Shinnick, SSND; and Annmarie Sanders, IHM also assisted with the retreat.

The retreatants strongly recommended that LCWR continue to offer this retreat. Some of their comments included:

"It was stirring to get back in touch with all that brought me to this leadership position and to leave with so much enthusiasm and hope for the journey ahead." -- Lisa Paffrath, CDP

"From the very opening gathering, I knew I was in the right place to be fed, supported, and challenged. The fire was in the air!" -- Carol Wester, OP

"Since I am nearing the end of my term, I wondered if such a retreat was 'too late' for me. But now I am grateful for the insights from the retreat that will inform my final months in office. The good company of other ordinary women called to elected office was a gift in itself." -- Toni Harris, OP



*Retreat directors
Nancy Schreck, OSF and Regina Bechtle, SC*

"A retreat for women leaders by women leaders provided the perfect opportunity to explore themes and symbols that are very real each and every day in this ministry." -- Jeanne Bessette, OSF

"The retreat put the experience of leadership in a framework that at once was consoling and challenging." -- Katherine Hamm, SC

"These days provided me an opportunity for rest, quiet, excellent input and just the right amount of sharing -- a perfect combination, held together with lovely, meaningful ritual." -- Paula Damiano, SP

"The retreat truly fed my inner spirit. The integration of presentations, prayers, rituals was so meaningful, truly a sacred space for me. What a valuable gift LCWR has facilitated for me!" -- Lynn P. Lavin, OSF

Additional photos from the retreat are available on the LCWR website under "Programs/Resources" at www.lcwr.org.

More information on future LCWR Leading from Within Retreats will be available at a later date.

Some of the LCWR retreatants and staff.





Deadline for LCWR Peacemaking Books: March 1, 2005

Orders are being received for the LCWR 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.

Information on ordering the book is available on the LCWR website, under "Publications." (www.lcwr.org)

Letters Signed by LCWR in January

On January 7, a letter from LCWR urging debt cancellation for tsunami-impacted countries was sent to President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, the World Bank, and the IMF. LCWR also signed on to a letter to members of Congress from religious leaders urging full protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

In addition, alerts to justice and peace coordinators urged the following actions: calling on Alberto Gonzalez, the President's nominee for Attorney General, to sign a Declaration Against Torture; opposing the President's goal of privatizing Social Security; participating in a January 18 call-in to members of the Senate to oppose the nomination of Mr. Gonzalez; and petitioning Treasury Secretary John Snow to assure that the US works to achieve 100% debt cancellation at the G7 meeting of Finance Ministers on February 5, 2005.

Workshop Offered on Sexual Abuse: Response and Prevention

St. Luke Institute and the Legal Resource Center for Religious in collaboration with LCWR will present a two-day workshop for LCWR National and Regional Members that will be held on March 14-15, 2005 in Silver Spring, Maryland and again on May 24-25, 2005 in St. Louis, Missouri.

The first day of the workshop will focus on civil and canonical legal issues and the second day will focus on psychological issues. Case studies will be used to assist participants to apply and integrate what they are learning from the legal and psychological perspectives. As part of the workshop, a leadership person will also share how she handled a case of sexual abuse including determination of credibility, working with a diocese, and interfacing with the Vatican.

Space is limited and the workshops are filling up quickly. More information on these workshops as well as registration materials may be obtained online at: www.LRCR.org/mission/workshops.htm.

Plans for Mexico Delegation in Place

Nine LCWR members and Marie Lucey, OSF, associate director for social mission, are ready to participate in the LCWR/Witness for Peace delegation to Mexico February 19-26. The WFP Mexico team has planned what promises to be a rich experience including an orientation in Mexico City with a visit to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe; travel to Oaxaca City to meet with organizations dealing with human rights, economic justice and agricultural issues; an overnight visit with members of a women's rug-weaving cooperative in a rural village to see first hand the impacts of NAFTA on rural communities; and a meeting with U.S. Embassy officials back in Mexico City. Members of the delegation are enthused about the trip and will appreciate prayers of LCWR members for them and for the people with whom they will meet.

Jubilee USA Presses on Toward Goal

Focus on actions for 100% debt cancellation for impoverished countries as well as two debates made for a packed but exciting agenda when the Jubilee USA Council met on January 13-14 in Washington, DC. Immediate action is urged before the February 5 meeting of the G7 Finance Ministers by sending a Drop the Debt E-Petition. To sign, visit www.jubileeusa.org or www.africaaction.org. Another action is to call Representatives urging them to sign the letter circulated by Representative Maxine Waters (CA) calling for 100% debt cancellation. To see a copy of the letter visit the Jubilee website. To contact Representatives call 202-224-3121 or go to www.house.gov to get connected to Representatives.

In the middle of the first meeting day, council members traveled by Metro from their meeting place to another venue to attend a debate on "Dropping the Debt, Footing the Bill: The Status of the Debate on Debt and Options for Financing Multilateral Debt Cancellation," co-sponsored by Jubilee, Center for Economic and Policy Research, and InterAction. Joining two knowledgeable and active debt cancellation activists were a representative from the US Treasury and the vice president of the World Bank. Following an informative and lively debate was an even livelier exchange with the panel by some of those crowded into the meeting room.

The debate and discussion on the second day centered on The Millennium Development Goals and Their Role in Global Economic Justice. One panelist, while acknowledging the limitations of the MDGs, saw greater possibilities and opportunities with the goals than the second speaker, who expressed great concern, not so much with the goals themselves but in the way they are being framed by the wealthier nations and IMF rather than by developing countries themselves. He urged that the wealthy nations move away from the formula "goals + money = development" and provide local determination over programs and resources.

LCWR is represented on the council by Marie Lucey, OSF, associate director for social mission.

RTFCAM Plans Anniversary Events

The main agenda item for the January 6, 2005 meeting of the Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico was working on plans for the three 25th anniversaries remembered during this year: March 24, assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero; December 2, murders of four North American churchwomen; and the creation of the Religious Task Force.

In addition to a conference at Georgetown University in DC on April 11 or 12, and a possible local parish event on March 17, RTFCAM is collaborating with the Religious Working Group on the World Bank and IMF to develop an Economic Way of the Cross which will include reflections from Romero on each Station. The goal is to have it ready for inclusion in the next issue of Central America/Mexico Report. LCWR members who subscribe to the publication have already seen the excellent articles in the November/December issue including stories on the November SOA protest, occurrences on the US/Mexico border, abolition of torture, the UCA martyrs, rural crisis in Guatemala, and others.

Furthermore, a letter is being written to Catholic church and US government leaders recalling the letter 25 years ago from Archbishop Romero to then President Jimmy Carter pleading with him not to send military aid to the Salvadoran government. The letter was not heeded, and one month later Romero was assassinated. In response to this letter, religious leaders in the US Catholic church formed what became the Religious Task Force. Today's letter will address today's situations during the season of Lent, asking "What would Archbishop Romero say today?"

For further information see www.rtfcam.org or send an e-mail to swright@rtfcam.org.

FROM THE
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF
RELIGIOUS LIFE

Cultural Audit Workshop Proves Helpful to Religious Leaders

Thirteen groups sent 42 participants to the three-day Cultural Audit Workshop in Burlingame, California in early January, offered by the Center for the Study of Religious Life.

Congregations have found it helpful to send several people: Sisters of the Holy Family, Fremont, California, sent five; Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, California Province, sent four; Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose sent four. The largest group was the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative with nine lay and vowed participants.

Margaret Fitzer, SSL; Gloria Marie Jones, OP; and Gary Riebe-Estrella, SVD helped Frances Cunningham, OSF and Rudy Vela, SM with the workshop. They are now available to assist religious communities in using the Cultural Audit.

The next Cultural Audit Workshop will be held at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago August 11-13, 2005. For further information and registration materials, contact vpiecuch@visioni.com.

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



Cultural Audit Workshop participants Helena Im, OP and Carole Shinnick, SSND

Plans for Mission Congress 2005 Finalized

Members of the Catholic Mission Forum reviewed specifics of the upcoming mission congress during a January 7 meeting. One of the goals of this congress is to encourage participation of young people, both lay and religious. Many religious congregations supported and participated in Mission Congress 2000 and the hope is that there will be similar participation in and support of this congress, "Horizons and Possibilities," to be held in Tucson, Arizona from October 13-16, 2005. Flyers will soon be available.

During lunch, the forum members heard an excellent presentation on human trafficking by Mary Ellen Dougherty, SSND, who works on the issue through the Migration and Refugee Office of the USCCB. Mary Ellen included post-tsunami protection of children; the most recent TIP (trafficking in persons) government report; and described what she sees as four problematic areas: problem of popular rhetoric, problem of domestic/intrastate trafficking (US), problem of underlying causes, and the challenge of the child. Mary Ellen was invited to share her expertise as a way of connecting the forum meeting with National Migration Week.

From the LCWR Executive Director
A Love Story

It's almost February – a month when the excitement of the first snowfall has long since turned to “Oh, rats!” and when the anticipation of the first brave crocus seems premature. So — to redeem itself from being the most boring month, February features Valentine’s Day. Thus, February arrives -- a bright red month trimmed with lace, sprinkled with hard pastel candy hearts, and delivered by several rather non-aerodynamic shaped cherubs.



Carole Shinnick, SSND

It seems that the Valentine’s Day custom of sending love letters and tokens of affection is rooted in the Northern European belief that birds began to search for their mates in the middle (i.e., the fourteenth day) of the second month of the year.

It is quite a leap from courting birds to heart-shaped boxes of Russell Stover chocolates, but a pleasant enough leap in a month that needs a bit of a boost. I do try annually to send out Valentines to the dear people in

*Not at all glamorous, but profoundly moving
 is love that matures over a lifetime,
 transcending boundaries and
 expecting nothing in return.*

my life to tell them that they are just that -- very dear. Why not? The older I get, the more important it seems to let others know how precious they are.

The love proclaimed by Valentine’s bouquets and Mylar balloons is romantic love – certainly a heady and powerful experience, but ephemeral and fleeting if it fails to mature into its deeper, less intoxicating version. Not at all glamorous, but profoundly moving is love that matures over a lifetime, transcending boundaries and expecting nothing in return. I was fortunate enough to learn of such a love — a real love story — last week in Florida.

A group of 23 LCWR members had gathered for the first Leading from Within retreat at San Pedro Center

just outside Orlando. Each morning we were greeted at breakfast by James, a quiet, smiling gentleman who served our meal from behind the steam table. One day I ran into James when he was leaving his shift and we spoke as he headed for his car.

James told me that he was new at his job. In fact, he was a retired person who had moved to Florida with his wife from the northeast. He said that he had recently taken the job at San Pedro because of the tsunami that had devastated several Asian countries a few weeks before. He told me that it was “the eyes of the children” that got to him and that if he had been able to, he would have gone to the disaster site himself.

So, James decided to go back to work. And he arranged for the paycheck from his job in the kitchen to go directly to tsunami aid. “I don’t even see it,” he said. When he talked about the children of the disaster, James’s voice broke and his eyes brimmed over.

James is the real deal. His story is a wonderful love story. And it has stayed with me since I first heard it. I offer the story of James as my Valentine’s gift to you -- calorie-free, but very rich indeed.



James

Upcoming LCWR Dates

LCWR Delegation to Mexico
February 19-26, 2005

LCWR New Leader Workshop
Passionist Retreat Center -- Riverdale, NY
March 17-19, 2005

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

LCWR-CMSM Delegation to El Salvador
November 30 -- December 6, 2005

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat
January 15-20, 2006

LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank,
Franciscan Center -- Tampa, Florida
February 12-14, 2006

LCWR New Leader Workshop
St. Mary of the Lake -- Mundelein, Illinois

March 30 -- April 2, 2006

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

LCWR Assembly
New Orleans, Louisiana
August 2-6, 2007



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