

April 2009

Relationship-Building Cited as High Priority as Religious Leaders of the Americas Meet in Jamaica

Representatives of the religious conferences of the Americas meet in Kingston, Jamaica: Yvon Pomerleau, OP (CRC president); Ignacio Antonio Madera Vargas, SDS (CLAR president); Tom Picton, CSSR (CMSM president); María del Socorro Henao Velásquez, CTSJ (CLAR general secretary); Mary Whited, CPPS (LCWR president); Annmarie Sanders, IHM (LCWR communications director); Annette Noël, SP (CRC executive director); Paul Lininger, OFM Conv (CMSM executive director)



With a focus on climate change and migration, the InterAmerican Committee met in Kingston, Jamaica from March 10 to 12 to share on how women and men religious in the Americas are responding to these and other critical concerns.

LCWR past president Mary Whited, CPPS and director of communications Annmarie Sanders, IHM attended the meeting, along with the presidents and executive directors/general secretary of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), the Confederation of Latin American Religious (CLAR), and the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC). The gathering took place at the Jesuit Centre at St. George's College.

The meeting began with a presentation by Jesuit regional superior Peter McIsaac who spoke on the social, political, and economic realities of Jamaica and the challenges to the rapidly decreasing body of women and men religious. As vice president of the Conference

of Religious of the Antilles, he also explained the complexity of this organization and the unique challenges it currently faces.

Each conference had an opportunity to share information on significant projects undertaken and issues addressed in the past year. The topics included:

CMSM: Assimilation of new communities of men religious from outside the United States, implementation of the Instruments of Hope and

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From the LCWR Presidency **We Are Resurrection Women**

by J. Lora Dambroski, OSF — LCWR President

With a deep breath I begin this reflection. There have been so many agendas claiming attention these most recent days. Agendas within the Church and our world, within our congregations, within the lives of our sisters and those they serve... agendas within my own life as it is touched by all of these concerns.

Pausing for the necessary prayer and contemplation for this sharing, what was most obvious in all of these matters is that they begged the attention and the renewed promise of Jesus' Resurrection.

It is April and within a few short weeks we will be celebrating, yes, celebrating, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This mystery central to our faith and Gospel message is called once more before our Church's believing community.

This promise of Jesus that Resurrection would be all of ours is what keeps us going, knowing that we



gives us the courage to get up again and again to search for the Risen Christ and to proclaim the power of his Resurrection to others.

In her message last month, president-elect Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA, spoke about the gaps of life, and the month before past-president, Mary Whited, CPPS, shared about bridges and crossings. The reality of our lives is that we do live in the Promise and also in the not-yet. We've said it ourselves many times. This drew to

*Like the women of the Gospel narrative,
it is this grace that gives us the courage
to get up again and again to search
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Resurrection would be all of ours
is what keeps us going, knowing that we have
experienced not only the proclamation of
his Resurrection but our own resurrections
to new life in Christ along our way.*

have experienced not only the proclamation of his Resurrection but our own resurrections to new life in Christ along our way. This doesn't come without the deaths of deep conversion and commitment. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us it doesn't come cheap, it is a costly grace. We've discovered that it comes with the willingness to continue to believe even through some long Holy Saturday darkness and waiting. Like the women of the Gospel narrative, it is this grace that

mind what Parker J. Palmer, founder and senior partner of the Center for Courage and Renewal, calls "living in the tragic gap." His challenge, like that of Jesus, calls us to "understand and inhabit the cruciform way of life that is at the heart of our tradition."

We recognize the gaps of what is and could and should be...we are bridges when we stand firm with both faith and hope to live in the gaps. We are not Polyannas. We are Resurrection women who are willing not only to live in those gaps but cross over them, reaching out our hand to help others do the same.

In the time of contemplation of this holy season what I hear as I live in the gaps is the proclamation of the Easter Vigil liturgy, Light of Christ! Thanks be to God!

The Broken-Open Heart – Living with Faith and Hope in the Tragic Gap, Parker J. Palmer, *Weavings*, March-April 2009

Religious Leaders of the Americas Meet in Jamaica

(continued from page 1)

Healing program regarding allegations of sexual abuse, changing demographics of the US Catholic church, possible ripple effects of the declaration of bankruptcy by some men's orders;

CLAR: Upcoming assembly plans and speakers on the 50th anniversary of the confederation's founding, the identity of religious life, the shifting focus from what religious do to who religious are;

CRC: Effects of the recent restructuring of the conference, prioritizing advocacy actions, building relationships with bishops;

LCWR: Shared Futures process, the exhibit on US Catholic sisters, the apostolic visitation of US women religious.

The four conference presidents also formed a panel on how religious are addressing the issues of migration/immigration and the environment. Discussion followed on the unique role religious can play in addressing matters of this complexity and magnitude.

Theologian Maricarmen Bracamontes Ayón, OSB attended the meeting as well and offered a reflection entitled "Leadership for Religious Life from the Viewpoint of the Emerging Realities of Migration and Ecology: Who Are We and What is Our Call?" She said in part, "What is happening today is not just a financial crisis, or an energy crisis, or an environmental crisis, or an immigration crisis. It's not just a problem of increasing fundamentalism. It is a systemic crisis and I believe that the most serious danger we face in religious life is that we ignore the challenge to move firmly forward towards the new paradigm with the gifts we have to offer: the Gospel values that reveal God's power as the love that makes humanity equal, created in the divine image and likeness."

Former LCWR member Marie Chin, RSM joined the committee for a tour of some of the Sisters of Mercy ministry sites in Kingston. The tour provided greater insight into the problems confronting Jamaicans and the shrinking resources of the government, churches, and religious congregations to assist them.

The committee members agreed that relationship-building among the four conferences should remain a high priority and noted their appreciation for the significant sharing that occurred at prayer, Eucharistic liturgies, and meals, as well as throughout the meeting agenda.

The next gathering will take place in May 2010 in Quebec City where the committee hopes to continue dialogue on the identity of religious within the church, as well as the effects of the financial crisis on religious life.



Peter McIsaac, SJ updates the committee on the realities of Jamaica



Mary Whited, CPPS and Annmarie Sanders, IHM with Marie Chin, RSM (center) as she led a tour of a boys' school in Kingston

Mary Whited, CPPS listens as Maricarmen Bracamontes, OSB addresses the committee on religious life leadership



More than 100 Members Participate in the LCWR New Leader Workshop

The more than 100 participants in LCWR's New Leader Workshop evaluated the event as a great success and highly useful as they continue their ministry of leadership.

Most of the participants came with all or some members of their teams and found the opportunities offered each day for council discussions particularly helpful.

Held from March 19 to 22 at the Retreat Center at St. John's in Plymouth, Michigan, the workshop provided information on some of the critical areas facing religious life leadership in the areas of civil and canon law, communications, human behavior, and finances. Nancy Schreck, OSF served as facilitator of the workshop and also presented on the meaning-making dimensions of leadership and the spirituality of leadership.

The workshop not only offered information and resources to the leaders, but also experiences of contemplative prayer and team work sessions so that the participants could begin integrating what they were learning and receiving.

Participants also had the chance for conversation with the presenters and one another on pertinent topics of the day such as the apostolic visitation and the current financial crisis and its impact on religious congregations.

LCWR offers the new leader workshop annually and keeps adapting the program based on the evaluation of each year's participants. The next workshop will be March 11-14, 2010 at the Retreat Center at St. John's.



▲ Christine Rody, SC and Simone Campbell, SSS presented on canon and civil law



▲ Jean Dennison spoke on communications



◀ Grace Sbrissa, CSJ addressed finances



▲ Nancy Schreck, OSF served as facilitator and a presenter, while Lynn Levo, CSJ spoke on team-building and leading in times of change



LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank Calls for Diving Deep

From February 23 to 26, 44 LCWR members and justice coordinators learned about diving deep for effective transformation, even in the dry Arizona desert. Led by Barbara Stanbridge, IHM, participants in the 2009 LCWR Systemic Change Think Tank held at the Redemptorist Retreat Center in Tucson followed the Theory U process developed by Otto Scharmer and others and popularized in the book *Presence* by Peter Senge et al.

Participants found Theory U systems thinking challenging, intriguing, and very appropriate for today's complex world. For a practical application of theory, Barbara invited those present to divide into smaller groups according to a current socio-economic political topic. In addition to this small group process, participants had the opportunity for quiet reflection in the beauty of the mountain-desert environment, and for sharing in open space sessions on a variety of topics. An Ash Wednesday outdoor prayer service highlighted the plight of immigrants, many of whom cross the Arizona desert in attempts to enter the United States, and some of whom die there.

Evaluations indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the experience and encouragement to plan Think Tank XII in 2010, if economics allow.



◀ Some of the participants in the LCWR systemic change think tank

▼ Participant Donna Korba, IHM (left) with facilitator Barbara Stanbridge, IHM



Scenes from some of the prayer experiences in the desert



WOMEN & spirit
CATHOLIC SISTERS IN AMERICA

Work continues on all aspects of the “Women & Spirit exhibit in order to complete it in time for its May 16 debut in Cincinnati. Members of the LCWR History Committee recently traveled to Pasadena to review the exhibit script, design, and videos; to prepare for marketing efforts; and to view some of the completed nine-foot panels that will make up the exhibit.



Molly Miles; Mary Dacey, SSJ; Karen Kennelly, CSJ; and Nancy Seruto inspect the panel of Sister St. John Fournier



Sr. Helen Garvey

Each member of the committee was interviewed for two brief film clips that will be used as part of the publicity campaign for the exhibit.

Members of the LCWR History Committee at the exhibit production studio in Pasadena: Helen Garvey, BVM; Mary Charlotte Chandler, RSCJ; Annmarie Sanders, IHM; Mary Dacey, SSJ; Karen Kennelly, CSJ; Carole Shinnick, SSND; and Constance Phelps, SCL



The history committee reviews the panel on Mother Joseph Pariseau of the Sisters of Providence



Visit the Women & Spirit website for more information
www.womenandspirit.org



Upcoming Showings

**Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal
in the Cincinnati History Museum**
Cincinnati, Ohio
May 16, 2009 - August 30, 2009

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

Mississippi River Museum
Dubuque, Iowa
February - April 2011

Midwiving a Vibrant Future 2009 LCWR Reflection Book



Copies of the 2009 LCWR reflection book,
which runs from May 31 to July 22,
are now in the mail.



*Women of Spirit:
Creating in Chaos*

2009 LCWR Assembly

New Orleans, Louisiana

**Pre-Assembly Tours of Sites Impacted by
Hurricane Katrina**
August 11 — morning

Opening of Assembly
August 11 — 7:00 PM

Closing of Assembly
August 14 — 9:00 PM

Travel Home
August 15

Conference on Torture Held at Catholic University in Washington, DC

Approximately 100 academics, students, lawyers, victims of torture, and justice advocates attended the program, "Torture, Conscience, and the Catholic Moral Tradition," held in the Columbus School of Law on the Catholic University of America (CUA) campus on March 19. The conference was sponsored and planned by the Catholic Leadership Council of NRCAT (National Religious Coalition Against Torture) of which LCWR is a member, the Life Cycle Institute of CUA, and the Center for International Social Development, CUA.

The program was comprised of three panel discussions: Catholic Social Teaching and the Use of Torture; Peacebuilding and Torture; and Responsibilities of Catholics in the Public Square: The Question of Accountability in the Use of Torture. Panelists included theologians, lawyers, writers, a psychologist working with victims of torture, a USCCB staff person, and retired military personnel, one of whom headed the investigation of torture practices at Abu Ghraib. While victims of torture were not represented on the panels, several members of TASSC (The Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition) participated in the discussions following each panel presentation.

One of NRCAT's 2009 goals was achieved when President Obama signed on January 22 an executive order banning torture, one of his first official acts as president. The next goal is to secure an independent commission that will investigate and disclose the torture policies and practices of the US government since September 11, 2001. Several panelists expressed understanding of the President's desire to move forward, not backward in laying blame, but insisted that truth-telling is essential before real progress can be made in ending both practices of torture and support of torture by a large number of US citizens, including many Catholics. (See www.nrcat.org to support a Commission of Inquiry.)

HOWO Members Meet with CBS Religion Unit Producer

Staff directors of Heads of Washington Offices (HOWO) met on March 20 with the director of the religion unit of CBS to discuss and plan for a short documentary on the advocacy work of the interfaith community. Marie Lucey, OSF, LCWR's associate director for social mission participated in the dialogue about major themes to be covered in the documentary.

Catholic Coalition on Climate Change Prepares Launch of Covenant

Catholic Climate Covenant: The St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor will be launched during the Easter season with a press conference on Earth Day, April 22. The coalition, to which LCWR belongs, hopes to have members of religious congregations, parishes, and other Catholic organizations sign the pledge before the formal launch. See www.catholic-sandclimatechange.org/coalition_activities/covenant.html.



Recent Sign-ons by LCWR

- Faith Statement on Child Nutrition Reauthorization promoted by Bread for the World and NETWORK
- Pax Christi USA Statement on Afghanistan. (To sign go to www.paxchristiusa.org)
- Letter to Senators and Representatives calling them to redirect excess defense spending to human and environmental needs and job creation

Upcoming LCWR Dates

LCWR Assembly
New Orleans, Louisiana
August 11 — 15, 2009

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat
Redemptorist Renewal Center
Tucson, Arizona
January 17 — 22, 2010

LCWR New Leader Workshop
The Retreat Center at St. John's
Plymouth, Michigan
March 11 — 14, 2010

LCWR Assembly
Dallas, Texas
August 10 — 14, 2010

LCWR Leading from Within Retreat
San Pedro Spiritual Retreat Center
Winter Park, FL
January 16 — 23, 2011

LCWR Assembly
Garden Grove, California
August 9 — 13, 2011

Leading from Within Manual A Leadership Program Designed for Use at Home



LCWR offers a leadership mentoring program that can be pursued from home. The conference developed *Leading from Within: A Mentoring Leadership Manual* that is based on the three dimensions of leadership (symbolic/meaning-making, relational, structural/organizational). Many leaders have used this manual and have found it extremely helpful in their ministry.

The program

- is especially helpful to those relatively new to leadership but is a valuable reflection tool for any leader.
- involves a period of reflection, study and exploration on the part of the leader. The process usually takes about one year.
- involves partnering with an experienced leader or former leader who serves as a mentor, or forming a peer mentoring group.
- is flexible. Participants can do as many or as few of the units as works well for them.
- offers a variety of experiences that will accommodate different styles of adult learning.

Information on ordering can be found on the LCWR website at: www.lcwr.org/lcwrprogramsresources/mentoringleadership.htm.



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RFC Congress 2009
Called to the Mountain:
Blessing and Hope
Denver, Colorado
November 12-16, 2009
www.relforcon.org

Pre-Congress Workshops

Orientation to Formation:

Formators and Leaders Together Creating a Preferred Future
Presenters: Don Bisson, FMS and Mary Ann Seton Lopiccolo, SC
Dimensions of Reconfiguration - Transformative Experiences for
Individuals, Communities, and Religious Life
Presenters: Janet Fleischhacker, CSJ and Steve Glodek, SM

Congress Keynote Addresses

A View from the Mountain: Called to Create a New Criteria for
Measuring the Vitality of Religious Life
Gary Riebe-Estrella, SVD

Blessing and Hope: Creating a Vision For Religious Life in the
21st Century
Donna Markham, OP

Plenary Session

Group Story Telling - Tell the Vision: Stories of Blessing and Hope
Facilitator: Mary Daniel Turner, SNDdeN

Seminar Sessions

The Influence of the Digital Age on Religious Life:
Call, Commitment, Community
Presenter: Sr. Rose Pacatte, FSP

Vocation and Formation Ministry: The Ties that Bind or Unbind
Presenters: Maria Hughes, ASC and Paul Bednarczyk, CSC

Lifelong Formation for Living in Right-relationship ...
only this: Act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly
with your God... (Micah 6)
Presenter: Luisa Saffiotti, Ph.D.

Forming Disciples of Hope
Presenter: Loughlin Sofield, ST

**The Resource Center for
Religious Institutes**
(The new entity formed by the merger of NATRI and LRCR)

**Orientation to the Management of
Religious Institutes**

For new treasurers/CFOs, finance office personnel,
and leaders with stewardship responsibilities

June 1-5, 2009

The Retreat Center at St. John's, Plymouth, MI

More information and application materials are available at on
the LRCR website: www.lrcr.org.

**The National Religious
Retirement Office
Planning and Implementation
Assistance Workshops**

January 22-24, 2010

April 20-22, 2010

September 14-16, 2010

January 21-23, 2011

April 5-7, 2011

Insofar as possible, locations will be determined based
on geographic proximity to the participants.

The aim of the NRRO planning and implementa-
tion workshops and consultation process is to assist
religious institutes in working toward reducing their
retirement funding shortfall. Priority will be given to
those institutes with the greatest financial need. Further
information and application forms can be obtained
on the NRRO website, www.usccb.org/nrro (Click on
Planning and Implementation Assistance) or by calling
the NRRO office at 202-541-3215.