

July 2006



## LCWR Endorses 'A Covenant for a New America'

In the name of LCWR, the members of the executive committee endorsed "A Covenant for a New America." This proactive biblical vision and policy platform is intended to help the United States rally around efforts to overcome poverty.

The covenant grew out of the Call to Renewal/Sojourners "Faith Summit on Poverty," a gathering of religious leaders in November 2005 to decide how the church could lead during this time when the United States

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## US Bishops Vote to Continue the National Religious Retirement Collection through 2017

The US Catholic bishops voted to extend the National Religious Retirement Collection for another 10 years. The decision was made at the bishops' June meeting in Los Angeles with a 143-10 vote. They also voted 149-1 to authorize the Commission of Religious Life and Ministry (CRLM), which oversees the collection and the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO), to change the grant distribution process as well as the office services.

The LCWR presidency, Bea Eichten, OSF; Mary Dacey, SSJ; and Christine Vladimiroff, OSB; as well as LCWR executive director Carole Shinnick, SSND attended the bishops' meeting as observers and were present for the voting.

According to an article released by Catholic News

*"I'm optimistic ...*

*we can meet*

*the challenge."*

— Archbishop Jerome G. Hanus

Service, "at the end of 2003 religious orders reporting to the National Religious Retirement Office had \$9.1 billion in investments dedicated to funding their retirement costs, but their total present retirement liability was nearly \$17.8 billion, leaving them with \$8.7 billion of that liability unfunded."

The proposal to extend the fund was introduced by the chairperson of the USCCB Committee on Conse-

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## *From the LCWR Presidency* **Singing a Song of Hope**

by Christine Vladimiroff, OSB — LCWR Past President

**T**his is my last column for *Update*. I am overwhelmed with gratitude for your trust in me and the privilege of serving you these past years. I celebrate my time on the national board and the executive committee and the presidency. Your friendship has been pure grace.



This jubilee year has allowed all of us to look back on the past of religious women in our country. It is difficult to imagine the challenges our sisters faced in the 1800s when with great risk they came to a new land with zeal for the care of immigrants. Our foremothers and founders stepped into the unknown of their day, trusting in God's good guidance and great providence. We are their proud daughters; these strong and holy women gave us a legacy.

Jubilee is symbol and vision of a new age. "Hope is the memory of the future," Marcel writes. Good hope has

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the qualities of realism, courage, patience, and the willingness to embrace difficulties. It is not an "easy hope" that merely wishes for better things. The future must be forged with fire and heat. We are up to the challenge.

There are new immigrants in a nation increasingly hostile to the "outsider." The poor are trapped in our inner cities with failed educational institutions, no medical care, and crime and violence on the dark streets of their neighborhoods. In a land of plenty, children go hungry. Hurricane Katrina showed us with pitiful clarity that the poor get left behind. It was a visual metaphor of the social, economic, and political divide in our country. To be without hope is to be trapped and to sense only limits rather than possibilities.

The Rule of Benedict calls its followers "to seek after peace and pursue it." Our world has opted for violence and war rather than a justice that brings peace. Globalization has been emptied of its promise to deepen the unity of the human family. Instead, it has opened the door to a process of exploitation and destabilization that is a source of despair in our world. We in the United States who benefit from the world's inequalities, do not respond with an open heart and hand to the pleas for worldwide poverty reduction and debt forgiveness. The apocalyptic disasters — tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes — lift up before our eyes the specter of a suffering people and a wounded planet.

It is with realism that we will forge a better future not for ourselves but for those who look to us as their source of hope. Emily Dickinson wrote:

Hope is the thing with feathers  
 That perches in the soul  
 And sings the tune without  
 The words  
 And never stops — at all.

Our year of jubilee celebrations is not a prolonged party, but a profound prayer. We are bearers of hope and our

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song can be heard around the planet. I am proud to be your sister.

## US Bishops Vote to Continue the National Religious Retirement Collection through 2017

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crated Life Archbishop Jerome G. Hanus of Dubuque, Iowa. He also introduced the proposal to give CRLM more authority to adjust fund distribution criteria on a limited basis from year to year and have more decision-making authority on which services the NRRO will provide. According to Archbishop Hanus, this decision would give CRLM more flexibility to adapt its strategies to year-to-year changes in Medicare or Medicaid rules, other shifting economic factors, or complex differences in the needs and resources of different religious institutes.

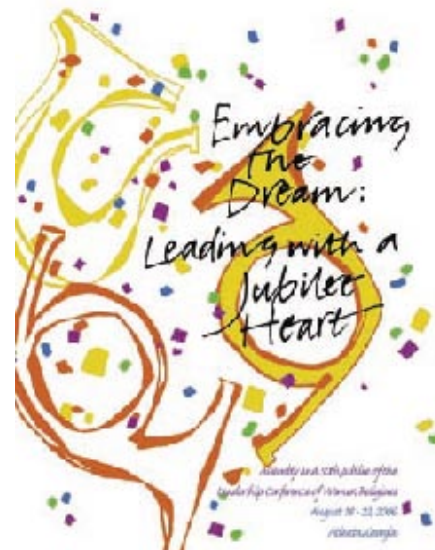
A Mercer Human Resources Consulting report commissioned by the retirement office and given to the bishops analyzed the retirement resources and costs and the age demographics and actuarial projections of men and women in religious orders. Based on data at the end of 2003, it projected that, without any new infusions into their retirement funds in the coming years, religious orders by 2023 will have all their current retirement funds wiped out and will be facing more than \$20 billion in unfunded liabilities.

According to the CNS article, "the bishops were told that the average annual Social Security benefit for women religious is \$4,033; for men it is \$3,240. Archbishop Hanus said the average Social Security income for Americans today is \$11,000.

"Assuming that Social Security benefits continue to increase an average of 3 percent a year and living costs for retirees rise only 6 percent a year — a conservative figure in light of the rapid inflation of medical and skilled nursing care costs for the elderly — the Mercer analysis projected that by 2023 the combined Social Security benefits of all retired religious will be \$184 million a year, but their combined annual cost of care will total more than \$1.6 billion."

At a press conference, Archbishop Hanus said that many religious orders are using a variety of strategies to deal with their changing retirement funding needs, and with the yearly collection and other efforts, "I'm optimistic ... we can meet the challenge."

LCWR expresses its gratitude to Andrée Fries, CPPS and all the NRRO staff for their untiring efforts to advocate for the extension of the yearly collection.



*Embracing the Dream:  
Leading with a Jubilee Heart*

### Early Registration Deadline for the LCWR Assembly — June 30

Registrations must be postmarked before June 30 to receive the special rate of \$340.00.

#### Highlights of the 2006 assembly:

- ▶ Pre-Assembly Event:  
Interfaith Prayer for Peace at the Ebenezer Baptist Church
- ▶ Keynote Presentation by Joan Chittister, OSB with 200 women leaders from the Atlanta area who have been invited to attend as guests
- ▶ Panel Presentation: Finding Meaning in Chaotic Times presented by leaders of congregations deeply impacted by Hurricane Katrina
- ▶ Choice of two out of six dynamic breakout sessions
- ▶ Presentation of the LCWR Outstanding Leadership Award to Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ
- ▶ Closing of the LCWR jubilee year

## Leadership Conference of Women Religious

### LCWR Membership Directory Available Online

The LCWR website has a new feature for its members and associates available online: a searchable membership database.

Accessible in the password-protected area of the LCWR website, the database offers multiple ways to search for information on members and associates. Searches can be done by members' last names, congregation initials, region, city, state, and other options.

Another feature of the online database is the option for members and associates to check their listings for accuracy and submit a form online if any changes or corrections need to be made. The LCWR national office will receive these corrections and be able to keep the directory updated daily.

The online directory will take the place of the printed directory that members have been receiving and, therefore, represents a cost-savings to the conference.

The password protected area of the LCWR website ([www.lcwr.org](http://www.lcwr.org)) can be found under "LCWR Members Information."

### LCWR Think Tank 2007

#### Uprising of Hope: Transformation for an Emerging Future

February 26 - March 1, 2007  
Villa Maria del Mar

Santa Cruz, California

Presenter: Linda Haydock, SNJM

*Director of the Intercommunity*

*Peace and Justice Center — Seattle, Washington*

Further details will be announced in  
subsequent issues of *Update*.

### *Leading from Within Retreat*



January 14 – 19, 2007

Franciscan Center  
Tampa, Florida

An experience of input, quiet, contemplative space,  
a variety of ritual experiences, and some opportunity for  
group and individual spiritual direction.

Facilitators:

María Elena Martínez, OSF  
Margaret O'Brien, OSU

Open to the first 25 national members  
who register and send a deposit

Registration forms will be sent to all members  
online in July

### Legal Resource Center for Religious 2007 Legal Seminar

The 2007 LRCR Legal Seminar will be held March 8-11, 2007 in St. Louis, Missouri with the theme "Flowing Waters: Channeling Energy Through Turbulent Waters."

Two pre-seminar workshops are planned: Canon and Civil Law 101, an introductory workshop on civil and canon law of religious, and Canon and Civil Law 301 which will cover more advanced legal topics affecting religious life. See [www.lrcr.org](http://www.lrcr.org) for additional information or call 301-589-8143.

## LCWR Endorses 'A Covenant for a New America'

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has failed the poorest in the nation. The covenant is the product of discussions begun at the summit.

Acknowledging that a combination of public and private initiatives will be required to overcome poverty, the covenant also states that changes in culture are as critically needed as changes in policy.

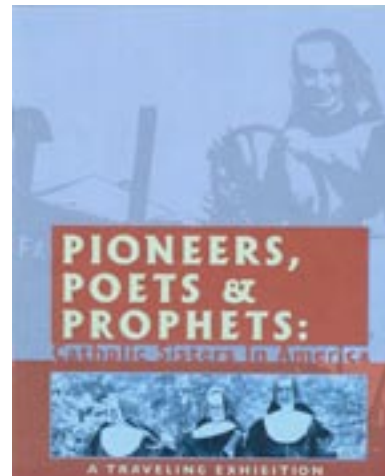
The three overarching goals of the covenant are:

- making work work
- cutting child poverty in half
- achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The covenant campaign is designed to build momentum with a number of phases which include:

- Launching the covenant at "Pentecost 2006: Building a Covenant for a New America," a national mobilization in Washington, DC on June 26-28.
- Educating and engaging churches and local partners around the vision of the covenant. This will be enhanced by a study guide on poverty and a resource addressing the biblical role of government.
- Organizing pilot grassroots work in some key states and districts.

LCWR executive director Carole Shinnick, SSND will be present to sign the covenant in the name of LCWR on the steps of the US Capitol on June 27. She will also speak at that time about the mission of LCWR as it relates to the covenant.



## The Search for Artifacts Begins

This summer the LCWR History Committee will be sending to all LCWR members a letter that explains more specifics about the exhibit being planned on the contributions made by Catholic sisters to US history.

The exhibit, entitled, *Pioneers, Poets & Prophets: Catholic Sisters in America*, will feature the contributions made by women religious in a variety of fields. To forward the work on the exhibit, the committee needs to know what artifacts are available in congregation holdings.

LCWR members will receive a form that asks for specific information on stories and accompanying artifacts (photos, letters, paintings, documents, objects, blueprints, maps, journal entries, etc.). Leaders are asked to share this form with their archivists or other personnel who are familiar with the congregation's history and archival holdings. More detailed information will be included in the letter and form.

## USCMA Announces Annual Mission Conference

During the June 2 meeting of the Catholic Mission Forum, materials were distributed announcing the 25th anniversary conference of the United States Catholic Mission Association to be held at the

University of Notre Dame, October 1-3, 2006. Titled "Celebrating and Integrating Our Mission Perspectives," the program features Robert Schreier, CPPS, Bishop Edmond Carmody, a responding panel and ten dialogue sessions on both short and long-term mission experiences.

For information contact [uscma@uscatholicmission.org](mailto:uscma@uscatholicmission.org).

*LCWR National Office Staff News*

**LCWR Welcomes New Staff Members**

**L**CWR welcomed two persons to the national office staff on June 1.

*Executive Assistant*

**Marianne Benson**, who serves as the executive assistant, comes with an extensive background with nonprofit organizations and experience working on Capitol Hill for several years. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in sociology from Marquette University and a master of education degree from Framingham State College. Her husband's work in the foreign service provided Marianne the opportunity to live in six countries in Latin America and to become fluent in Spanish. She is the mother of two sons.



*LCWR-CMSM Receptionist*

**Alberta Quaye**, the receptionist for LCWR and CMSM, is originally from Ghana, West Africa. She is currently a student at Montgomery College, Takoma Park, where she is majoring in radiology. She is soon to be married and is the mother of a five-year old son.



Also on June 1, Carol Glidden assumed the position of LCWR's administrative assistant, after serving one year as the LCWR-CMSM receptionist.

**Upcoming LCWR Dates**

**LCWR Assembly**  
Atlanta, Georgia  
August 18 — 22, 2006

**LCWR Leading from Within Retreat**  
Franciscan Center  
Tampa, Florida  
January 14 — 19, 2007

**LCWR Think Tank**  
Villa Maria del Mar  
Santa Cruz, California  
February 26 — March 1, 2007

**LCWR New Leader Workshop**  
The Retreat Center at St. John's  
Plymouth, Michigan  
March 15 — 18, 2007

**LCWR Assembly**  
Kansas City, Missouri  
August 1 — 5, 2007

**LCWR-CMSM Joint Assembly**  
Denver, Colorado  
August 1 — 4, 2008

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



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*From the LCWR Executive Director*  
**All We Have is Now**

I am on a flight from Los Angeles bound for St. Louis and then on to Baltimore. Like most flights these days, it is packed. There are two toddlers who have been crying since we took off – screaming actually – in chorus. They trigger each other at higher and higher frequencies — not unlike microphone feedback in a crowded auditorium. The parents seem to be from the “let them express themselves” school of child-rearing and fail to notice the clenched teeth and agonized expressions of other passengers.



**Carole Shinnick, SSND**

Our pilot, no doubt someone who dreamed of being a tour guide when he was young, is providing a running commentary as we fly eastward. “There’s Las Vegas off to the left side and the Grand Canyon to the right.” The nappers are not enjoying his tour. And I can’t see the sights from my aisle seat. A few bars from *The Grand Canyon Suite* play in my head.

Here come the flight attendants, smiling cheerfully as passengers dump Starbucks cups and Pizza Hut boxes into their plastic bags. A dad passes by, proudly dandling a chubby baby in front of him. She is not screaming and gets several approving smiles for her silence. Whoops – we just hit some “light turbulence.” That could mean the end of the commentary portion of our flight. (We can only hope!)

I began this flight dutifully opening my trusty mis-salette to today’s scripture readings. I’ve re-read them several times by now, but I can’t concentrate. On this particular Saturday morning, I would rather be in my own little prayer space at home, a candle lit, soft music playing. But I’m here with distractions pulling on every sense.

Vietnamese spiritual guide Thich Nhat Hahn teaches that the way to peace is in being present — totally present — to the “now.” He posits that it is our resistance to what is, and our longing for what isn’t that is at the root of both personal and global strife. So, I decide to try to let go and to just be present to this aluminum cylinder full of souls flying to St. Louis.

Today you as leaders find yourselves in all sorts of settings even within a few hours. You may leave at 4:30 to catch an early morning flight. Or you may set out before dawn to drive to a board meeting for which you are also the chair. Or you might begin your day presiding at a funeral of one of your members. It is possible that you might eat your noon meal while on a conference call. (I know – the time was chosen by those folks on the east coast again!)

Perhaps in the afternoon you meet a distressed sister for coffee. And then, before dropping into bed, you place a late night call to a colleague in another part of the world. Drifting off to sleep you may wonder when you prayed in the course of this particular day. You cannot recall a small candle or any soft music, and if your life depended on it, you could not remember even one phrase of scripture from the daily readings.

Yet, I hunch that you were very attentive to the variety of persons who filled your day — mourners, board members, the distressed sister — even the disembodied voices on the other end of the phone. My guess is that Thich Nhat Hahn would say that today you contributed to peace and healing of the universe just by your very presence.

Well, the turbulence has worsened, but somehow that has rocked the screaming toddlers to sleep. Our captain

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*...Thich Nhat Hahn would say that today  
 you contributed to peace and healing  
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 just by your very presence.*

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has stopped pointing out landmarks and seems intent on getting us safely to the ground. (Thank you!) My laptop’s battery is very low and my column is coming to an end.

Thank goodness our God is a God of crying babies, chatty pilots, struggling pilgrims, and travelers of every stripe. All is well. All is well. All is well.

## RFC Congress 2007

*Compelled by the Spirit to be Fire:  
Impulsada por El Espíritu a ser Fuego*

Marriott City Center

Pittsburgh, PA

November 8-11, 2007

**T**his Congress carries on the Spirit-led religious life theme of previous congresses of the Religious Formation Conference, with keynote and breakout speakers who will provide input and experiences along two tracks:

- practical information for those with responsibility for formation ministry
- transformative, visionary experiences of hope and insight that can energize those who are living religious life into the future.

A rate of \$109 per night has been arranged with the hotel for this RFC Congress 2007. Check the RFC website ([www.relforcon.org](http://www.relforcon.org)) for updates as planning continues, congress fees are set, and speakers confirmed.

An event for:

- Leaders responsible for lifelong learning and energizing for mission in their congregations
- Formation ministers
- Vocation ministers
- Members of formative communities
- Members of religious congregations engaged in lifelong learning, motivating for mission, listening for indications of the future of religious life.

## FROM THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

### CSRL to Offer CEUs for Programs

**B**eginning with the September 24-27, 2006 Interdisciplinary Forum in New York, the Center will offer program participants the option of receiving Continuing Education Units (CEU) from Catholic Theological Union. Participants will indicate on the registration form if they desire to receive CEU. A certificate will be sent in the mail following the program.

For more information see <http://www.religious-life.org/programs/index.html>.