



## Contemporary Religious Life Annotated Bibliography Compiled by the LCWR Contemporary Religious Life Committee

### Suggested Questions:

1. What insights does this article/book/presentation shed on the mystery and meaning of religious life as I/we live it today and into the future?
2. In what ways does this article/book/presentation stretch me/us toward re-imagining the place of women religious in relation to the present realities in our church and the world?

### July 2013

**Delio, Ilia.** *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being...God, Evolution, and the Power of Love.* Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 2013

This book is not only informational, but truly inspirational. Ilia has made a case for love as the source and goal of the evolutionary process and to the degree that we expanding consciousness allows us to claim our identity as “agents” of such love, to that degree do we hold out the possibility of bringing healing to those around us and to our very universe. Ilia breathes new life into the notion and reality of the wholeness and oneness of all creation. She provides a lens through which her readers see and experience Jesus, Eucharist, contemplation, education, technology, and numerous other familiar topics, with new eyes and in a new way. *“Evolution is not background to the human story; it IS the human story and love is the energy of all life. Evolution rests on the power of love because what ignites the core of being is ultimately unitive and transformative.”*

### December 2012

**Williams, Rowan,** “Address to the 13<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith”

<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/2645/>

At the invitation of Pope Benedict XVI, Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, framed his remarks at the synod within the wisdom, vision and theology of the Second Vatican Council.

He noted that Vatican II offered a renewed understanding of Christian anthropology, a view of humanity as made in God’s image and of grace perfecting and transfiguring that image. The Archbishop suggests that it is this vision of what it means to be fully human – recreated in Christ’s image – that needs to inform the new evangelization.

The Archbishop points to the essential link between being fully human – recreated in Christ’s image – and being contemplative. He writes, “...the humanity we are growing into in the Spirit, the humanity that we seek to share with the world as the fruit of Christ’s redeeming work, is a *contemplative* humanity.”

He describes ‘true theology’ as “the silent gazing upon God that is the goal of all our discipleship” and contemplation as “not just one kind of thing that Christians do: it is the key to prayer liturgy, art and ethics, the key to the essence of a renewed humanity.”

The remainder of his speech suggests what a new evangelization emerging from contemplative discipleship will look like in our world. This speech is well worth our reading, reflection and contemplative gaze.

## June 2012

**Cannato, Judy.** “Field of Compassion: How the New Cosmology is Transforming Spiritual Life.” Sorin Books, Notre Dame, Indiana, 2010.

This small book is above all a call to transformation. Weaving together theological and scientific insights – foundational Christian beliefs and the growing science of cosmology – the author slowly draws the reader in, opening the path to new understandings and making a compelling case for the urgency, the desirability and the (almost) inevitability of ongoing transformation for the whole web of life, including human consciousness. As an aid in integrating new concepts and connections the dispositive section of each chapter is followed by a Contemplative Pause and a brief Prayer. The book concludes by describing some very appealing attitudes to be cultivated as part of a transformed spirituality, among them spaciousness, commitment and imagination.

## May 2012

**Pinto, Philip, CFC;** “Out of Darkness Breaks,”

<http://cori.ie/images/stories/website/a%201.%20address%20by%20philip%20pinto%20cfc.pdf>

In his address to the International Conference on Religious Life, sponsored by the Conference of Religious of Ireland in May 2011, Philip Pinto reminds us that “out of darkness” a new world can break forth, if we will be faithful to the deepest core of our vocation -- “keeping alive the dangerous memory of Jesus.” Using poetry and scripture he urges us to embrace wholeheartedly the dyings that are ours so that, transformed by the action of the Living God in our midst, we might give witness to the radicality of the Gospel and thereby contribute to the making of what will be a transformed world.

**Fiand, Barbara, SNDdeN;** “Religious Life for the Twenty-First Century: Embracing Our Past Toward a Different Future”

<http://cori.ie/images/stories/website/a%204.%20address%20by%20barbara%20fiand.pdf>

In an address delivered at the International Conference on Religious Life of the Conference of Religious of Ireland in May 2011, Barbara Fiand explores the radically different reality of

religious life in and for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. She begins by offering a brief description of religious life as we have known and lived it during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reminding us of the world view and cultural ethos that shaped religious life during these years. She then explores key factors that have contributed to the changing landscape of religious life and vocation citing, in particular, 1) the impact of the Second Vatican Council and the shifting image of God that emerged from the teaching of the Council, 2) the collapse of the dualistic worldview in which Christianity emerged, and 3) the impact of the discoveries of quantum physics with its unfolding of the interconnection and interrelation of all things. Fiand then asks what the implications of these shifts in world view and assumptions are for religious vocation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She outlines what she considers hallmarks of a commitment to religious vocation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and invites us to both draw on the “deep wisdom” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and engage in creative discernment that is responsive to this moment in our history.

### May 2011

**Maher, Mary, SSND.** “Called and Sent: Reflections on a Theology of Apostolic Religious Life Today.” [http://vd.pcn.net/en/index.php?option=com\\_docman&Itemid=37](http://vd.pcn.net/en/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=37)

This presentation, given by Mary Maher at the UISG/USG Theological Seminar in Rome on February 9, 2011, highlights some “main new thrusts” in the theology of apostolic religious life today. Mary provides insight into the struggle for identity of apostolic religious life as it is tied to how the Church understands itself and its mission. She lifts up the single most critical issue which divides the Church and impedes a movement forward together. She highlights four significant elements which can guide and support the future direction of apostolic religious life into the future, and she identifies elements that reflect some of the most significant and fundamental issues confronting the Church today.

**Pernia, Antonio M., SVD.** “Challenges to and Opportunities for Religious Life from the World and the Church of Today.” [http://vd.pcn.net/en/index.php?option=com\\_docman&Itemid=37](http://vd.pcn.net/en/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=37)

Given by Antonio Pernia at the UISG/ Theological Seminar in Rome on February 8, 2011, this presentation explores some challenges related to the phenomenon of globalization, specifically, dwindling membership and a perceived irrelevance of religious life. Antonio considers challenges from a world church as he explores multicultural membership and the multi-directional mission of a world Church. He also elaborates on how the world and Church today offers many opportunities for religious life, particularly through interculturality in membership, inter-congregationality in ministry, and partnership in mission with the laity.

**Bombonato, Sr. Vera Ivanise.** “Theological Reflection on the New Experiences of Apostolic Religious Life.” [http://vd.pcn.net/en/index.php?option=com\\_docman&Itemid=37](http://vd.pcn.net/en/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=37)

In this presentation, given at the UISG/USG Theological Seminar in Rome on February 11, 2011, Vera Ivanise Bombonato presents a profile of new foundations of apostolic consecrated life. She names significant elements of new experiences of apostolic consecrated life, including strong spiritual experience in opposition to secularism, a new way of living religious consecration, evangelical austerity and radicality, the importance of the founder or foundress,

new ecclesial self-awareness and strong sense of catholicity, institutional flexibility and agility, strong sense of community, and missionary fervor and use of media as a means of evangelization.

**Schneiders, Sandra, IHM.** "The Radical Nature and Significance of Consecrated Life."  
[http://vd.pcn.net/en/index/php?option=com\\_docman&Itemid=37](http://vd.pcn.net/en/index/php?option=com_docman&Itemid=37)

Sandra Schneiders situates her presentation given at the UISG/USG Theological Seminar in Rome on February 2011, in a twofold affirmation, namely, that apostolic religious life is radically constituted by the lifelong total consecration of the religious to God effected and expressed by perpetual profession lived in community and mission and that religious life is shaped by the historical context in which it is born and in which it is lived. She indicates that a apostolic religious life, which is non-clerical and non-cloistered, is coming into its own today through engagement in "the world."

**Bracamontes, Maricarmen, OSB.** "Some Themes and Challenges for Apostolic Religious Life and the Theology of Consecrated Life in the Regional Contexts of America."  
[http://vd.pcn.net/en/index/php?option=com\\_docman&Itemid=37](http://vd.pcn.net/en/index/php?option=com_docman&Itemid=37)

In her presentation at the UISG/UIS Theological Seminar held in Rome in February 2011, Maricarmen reflects on her experience with men and women religious from Latin-America and the Caribbean. She identifies the greatest challenges involved in cultural transformation and calls for creative responses to the current challenges.

## October 2010

**Galleres, Judette, RC,** "Opening the Heart to Listen, Becoming Mystics and Prophets Today"  
[http://www.uisg.org/public/Attachments/Plenaria%202010\\_Judette%20Galleres%20.pdf](http://www.uisg.org/public/Attachments/Plenaria%202010_Judette%20Galleres%20.pdf)

In her presentation to the 2010 Assembly of the International Union of Superiors General, Judette Galleres, RC, a Cenacle Sister from the Philippines, explores the connections between mysticism and prophecy. In the context of the story of Lydia from the Acts of the Apostles, she identifies the movements and phases of ongoing conversion which set the stage for awakening a mystic and prophetic spirit. She calls for a revitalization of our communities as places where we can learn the language of understanding and seek ways of bridging the gaps with others. She invites us to reflect more deeply on our religious call to be mystics and prophets in our own inner journeys and throughout the whole of creation. This article is a "must read" for all who seek to integrate the mystic and prophetic dimensions of our lives as religious.

**Prevallet, Elaine, SL,** "Religious Vows: Energy of Life for Life"  
[http://www.crc-canada.org/bd/fichierNouveaute/619\\_3.pdf](http://www.crc-canada.org/bd/fichierNouveaute/619_3.pdf)

In her presentation to the Canadian Religious Conference, Elaine Prevallet, SL addresses the vows of consecrated life from a universal perspective. She invites the hearer to re-orient our identity as religious in the context of the whole of creation. Drawing from Vatican II, she calls for a healing of the split between mind and heart and the theologies of love for God and love for creation. "The whole earth needs to be included in our understanding of our vows," she says.

“Life is one energy, and it expresses itself in us and through us. With all of creation we then form a community of life.” Elaine challenges leaders to hold the vision of religious life in the context of creation and to encourage their communities to live in hope.

**Sempore, Sidbe, OP**, “In a Multidimensional Africa, Giving One’s Life Out of Love”

[http://www.crc-canada.org/bd/fichierNouveaute/618\\_2.pdf](http://www.crc-canada.org/bd/fichierNouveaute/618_2.pdf)

For anyone interested in a perspective of religious life that come from across the globe, this presentation, which was given at the 2010 Canadian Religious Conference, is worth reading. Born in Burkino Faso, Sidbe Sempore OP adds a unique perspective to the realities of men and women living religious life today. He explores several obstacles and challenges of living one’s vows in the multi-cultural and multi-religious setting and highlights the rays of hope that are present. He indicates that prophecy is alive and that synergy and solidarity are pathways to the future for religious congregations in that continent.

**Sweko, Liliane, SNDdeN**, “Called To Illuminate with Prophetic Light the World of Darkness”

[http://www.uisg.org/public/Attachments/ENG\\_Liliane%20Sweko.pdf](http://www.uisg.org/public/Attachments/ENG_Liliane%20Sweko.pdf)

Liliane Sweko SNDdeN, an African woman religious who, prior to being elected to her leadership team, ministered for many years in Africa. She situates her remarks in her experiences in Africa. Drawing on the gospels, she indicates that in the very nature of religious life is the call to denounce, announce, and renounce as mystics and prophets in the world today. She names darkness present in the world and suggests actions to light the darkness in prophetic ways: the sound formation of women religious; involvement in ecclesial, national and international organizations; and networking across issues of justice and peace.

## April 2010

**Brueggemann, Walter**. *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001

Although many women religious may have read the first edition in the late 1970s, Walter Brueggemann’s second edition is well worth the time. Well versed in the Old Testament, he relates the prophetic stories to our contemporary situation. Brueggemann challenges us to be “alternative communities” which must be both critical and energizing in our prophetic ministry. The question we can ask as we read *The Prophetic Imagination* is “what would it look like if women religious were committed to being alternative communities in our Church and in our world today?”

**Fitzgerald, Constance**. “From Impasse to Prophetic Hope: Crisis of Memory.”

CTSA Proceedings 64 (2009): 21-42. <http://www.ctsa-online.org/0021-0042.pdf>

Constance FitzGerald continues to challenge us as theologians, as women religious to engage the impasses in our lives, our Church and our society, from a perspective of prophetic hope by leading us through some deeper reflections on what John of the Cross calls “the purification of memory”. Constance stretches us to see beyond our “old assumptions, burdened by memories that limit our horizons” that essentially make us “unfree to see God coming to us from the future.” Our memories make us who we are, and the “difficulty is that memories can lead us to either healing and empathy or hostility and destruction.” As a Carmelite, Constance shares that

the grace of contemplation is essential for “the purification of memories”. As we proceed in the process of re-membling and letting go of all that stands in our way, it is only then that we are open to the gift of hope, the prophetic hope for which we, our church, and our society yearn and is in fact the bridge to a new future.

**Maher, Mary, SSND.** “Between Imagination and Doubt: Religious Leadership In Postmodern Culture.” Keynote Address to LCWR National Assembly, August 18, 2002.  
<http://www.lcwr.org/lcwrannualassembly/previousassemblies.htm>

The keynote address at the August 2002 LCWR National Assembly was given by Mary Maher and it was very timely. However upon re-reading and reflecting on Mary’s address in 2010, it appears to be even more timely and imperative for women serving in congregational leadership to ponder. Mary invites us to consider that as religious women we need to use and stimulate our imaginations to *shape* the cultures in which we find ourselves – and in that process we will experience the *tension* between what we might *imagine* and what we *doubt* can happen. We are living in times when we live out of various combinations of pre-modern, modern and postmodern worldviews and yet we are called to be prophetic, to be women of hope for our the Church and for our world. How are we being and living the gospel in response to the signs of the times today? Mary challenges us to overcome our doubts, not with certitude nor with clarity but rather with our imaginations. This article is a great companion to Brueggemann’s *The Prophetic Imagination*.

**Schneiders, Sandra.** “Religious Life as a Prophetic Life Form.” *National Catholic Reporter*. Five-part series. <http://ncronline.org/news/women-religious/schneiders-explore-meaning-religious-life-today>

In this essay in five parts, Sandra Schneiders invites the reader to a deeper appreciation and understanding of the meaning of apostolic religious life today. Seeing religious life as a participation in the prophetic vocation and mission of Jesus, she explores “Religious Life as a Prophetic Life Form”, the “Call and Response of Prophetic Action”, “What Jesus taught us about His Prophetic Ministry”, the “Tasks of Those Who Choose the Prophetic Life Style”, and “Religious Life as a Sharing in Jesus’ Passion and Resurrection”. With keen insight and sensitivity she seeks to analyze the current situation of religious life under investigation and encourages the clear articulation and courageous claiming of our experience. Sandra encourages us to willingly live the vocation to which we have been called in spite of the sufferings that may be involved.

**Vigil, Jose Maria, CMF.** “A Call to Religious Life Worldwide.”  
<http://eapi.admu.edu.ph/eapr006/josemariavigil.htm>

In this article, the Spanish Claretian explores profound changes that are impacting religious life today especially in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. He highlights the prophetic and charismatic nature of religious life and raises questions that touch on the relationship of religious life to the institutional dimension of Church. In light of a present religious crisis, he invites religious to assume whatever risks are necessary to create a new future. He calls for

careful analysis of our current situation as well as a substantial change in light of shifting social and cultural realities throughout the world.