

***Transformational Leadership:
Conversations with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious***
Edited by Annmarie Sanders, IHM

**Questions for Reflection and Conversation
Prepared by Solidarity with Sisters**

The way of leadership of Catholic women religious – Catholic sisters – has appeared in headlines in the past few years. In the face of great challenges, women religious have acted with a calm courage and integrity that caught the world’s attention. Many have expressed to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) a desire to learn more about their way of leading and being in the world. The book *Transformational Leadership: Conversations with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious* was developed in response to that interest.

In the preface to the book, editor Annmarie Sanders, IHM, explains that LCWR has been conducting interviews with contemporary thinkers to understand better this unfolding way of spiritual, transformational leadership. The interviews, first published in the LCWR journal, *The Occasional Papers*, are part of an effort by LCWR to explore the challenges of leadership from a faith perspective, and to assist its own members in these complex times.

Transformational Leadership is a collection of 18 of these interviews conducted over several years. The interviewees share from their own experiences:

- how to refashion leadership in light of new realities
- how to empower others to envision, adapt and embrace change
- how to lead an organization so that it can be an agent of transformation for the world
- how to encourage an organization to dream for its future and then adapt according to its dream

After reading this book, a group of lay persons considered how the ideas about leadership found in these interviews could be helpful to many different readers. The kinds of leadership and membership described in this book seem deeply rooted in people’s inner lives as well as in their lives as members of communities that matter to them. This led the members of the group, Solidarity with Sisters (www.solidaritywithsisters.org), to develop discussion questions that all readers could use.

The questions below invite you to explore the book in relation to your own life, including yourself as a leader and as a member of an organization. You should also think of your leadership and membership in family and community, at work, at school, in your neighborhood or town, in volunteer activities, or anywhere.

The interviews are divided into six sections. Readers and book discussion groups may want to spend a meeting on each interview or on each of the six sections. Take your time; there is much to think about. The questions are intended to help you share a little more personally about the interview topics. Some readers might find they want to use the questions for personal reflection or journaling. Happy reading and discussion!

LEADERSHIP AND CONTEMPLATION

Interview 1: Marcia Allen, CSJ “The Role of Contemplation in Leadership”

1. In response to the first interview question, Sister Marcia Allen refers to Karl Rahner’s definition of a mystic as one who sees “mystery in anything and everything.” She suggests that the contemplative leader must also cultivate this awareness of mystery every day in the “banal as well as the extraordinary.”

When have you been able to see your organization/community in the way that she describes? If you have not, can you imagine developing this “every day awareness”? What do you think have been the obstacles that limit you when you have not been able to see your organization/community in this way?

2. Continuing her focus on women religious, Sister Marcia suggests that a leader must be able to cooperate with this “mystery of how God is acting in the world.” She says this contemplative stance takes “attention to the moment and a resolution to remember the presence of God.” Does this seem in reach in your current experience of leadership? How have you cultivated that ability or contemplative stance? How might you sustain that way of being a leader?

3. Sister Marcia continues in the interview to describe the need for a communal effort to see mystery every day and to develop a communal contemplative stance. What do you find yourself resisting as she discusses the community effort? What does she say that gives you hope and confidence that you could move toward this way of leadership?

Interview 2: Constance FitzGerald, OCD “Pursuing Our Dreams in Times of Darkness”

1. Organizational dreaming has consequences, Sister Constance FitzGerald says, and includes being ready to pay the personal price, transcending self. Have you approached leadership in this way? What has made it possible for you to transcend yourself for the dream?

2. Sister Constance says that we learn to understand, dream and vision by “looking at and bearing with our unknowing, our blockages, and our blindness” and we “vision specifically by sustaining the darkness.” Can you imagine your organization/community sustaining the darkness and waiting until it is able to see? How might your organization cultivate this ability?

3. In her response to the next to last interview question, Sister Constance refers to the “active process of preparation” for when the dream matures. She suggests that we need “to dedicate our full energies to the task — both actively and passively in prayer.” Has this been your experience that active preparation and the passive dream can work together? Share how you have experienced what she suggests.

Interview 3: Nancy Sylvester, IHM
“Integrating Contemplative Practices into Leadership”

1. Sister Nancy Sylvester suggests that a contemplative stance is especially valuable when a lot is at stake or when those in the group have a wide spectrum of views on the issues. She says “The contemplative posture is one that opens us up to ambiguity, paradox, and the unknown because it releases for us a lot of our preconceived ways of being and thinking, and it releases us of our ego.”

What changes when a leader or a group acknowledges ambiguity? How easy or difficult is it for you to be comfortable and patient during a time of ambiguity?

2. A contemplative process lets us “engage others’ wisdom in such a way that something new might emerge.” A group can sometimes treat a radically different view dismissively. It’s as if the group asks (either verbally or nonverbally), how can you possibly think that? Imagine instead asking a similar question aloud – what leads you to think that? -- but doing so in a gentle spirit of contemplative openness and curiosity.

What would change in the dynamics of the group? How might that stance change the group’s ultimate decision?

3. Sister Nancy recommends that when tension levels rise, “we need to step back and pause. That’s when engaging in some contemplative sitting together can be very helpful... Our hearts soften as we welcome the other in. We become more spacious for the other person and for ourselves.”

Have you experienced pausing for “contemplative sitting together”? What changed? Can you imagine making the suggestion to do that? How would you feel as you made the suggestion?

4. Sister Nancy notes ways of opening a meeting that change the dynamics and lead to a more contemplative approach. For example, she mentions a meeting where “we spent about 30 minutes sharing on what gives each of us energy in our work.”

What other questions might let group members tell each other about things that matter to them, things that they bring with them into the meeting? How would group dynamics change if people listen quietly to each other’s answers?

Interview 4: Donald Goergen, OP
“Fostering and Nurturing an Interior Life”

1. Transformational leadership is often referred to as a way of being rather than a way of doing. Father Goergen states, “...religious life is less about what we do than who we are.”

How would you describe who you are? How does who you are inform what you do?

2. Father Goergen states, “Although gratification can come from our ministries, they can also take us from being what we may most need to be at this moment.”

Think about what you find gratifying in what you do. Consider if these gratifying elements are in any way preventing you from searching for a more meaningful or appropriate engagement with the world. If a contemplative investigation of your personal situation led you to realize the need for a shift in direction for your calling that was difficult, unfamiliar and less gratifying, but

clearly a better use of your personal resources, how willingly would you embrace the new circumstances? What might hold you back - difficulty, unfamiliarity, less gratification or something else? Consider the same questions above as if you were a leader of an organization. If it became clear that there was value to the greater good for your organization to make a difficult shift in direction, how willingly would you take on the task of changing organizational direction? What would be difficult for the rest of the organization to absorb in such a change? How would you bring them along on the journey?

3. Father Goergen states that some persons "...may be given the charism to be an accelerator, while others may be given the charism to be a brake." He goes on to observe that each can find it hard to appreciate the other's role and, that the process is clearly not working when there is "bitterness or divisiveness or a kind of enduring anger that we cannot heal." He says that this may occur when the process of discerning the Holy Spirit in a group is not working. Consider what the signs of the process working well might be.

How could an individual discern the difference between "of the Spirit" and "of my desire?" Consider the same for a group.

Does the contemplative process called for in transformational leadership require the belief in a deity that will reveal higher paths to leaders? Would it be sufficient to develop a secular interpretation of "the kingdom of God on earth" and suggest that leaders move their organizations towards this rather than solely to benefit the organization?

4. Father Goergen refers to religious communities when he says, "We have an obligation to speak and to listen and it is important to ask: To whom do I listen?" This question might be asked by any leader of any group.

Whom do you listen to and why? Are you missing important voices? Who do you avoid listening to and why? Are you missing an important point of view? Who is it that you do not want to hear from at all?

Interview 5: Margaret Wheatley "Living a Discerning Life in a Complex, Harsh World"

1. Margaret Wheatley resolves to be there for people rather than withdraw in the face of "anti-human behaviors." In order to keep a personal commitment "to be of comfort and support to the people who are working in organizations that are trying to assist others," Wheatley meditates between 15 and 45 minutes a day so that she does not "just lose her temper, become enraged, or be brought down by despair."

Does Wheatley's practice of meditation resonate with you as a means of remaining steady in the face of frustrating events or behaviors in your family, group or organization? What would be the challenges for you to use such a practice?

2. Wheatley laments the loss of "our great mind capacities of memory ...and seeing interrelationships because we are so distracted and busy with minor disconnected tasks." She celebrates how her mind becomes free of distractions as the result of making a retreat. Have you had a similar experience as the result of a withdrawal into stillness? How could you make this kind of experience available for members of your organization?

3. Asked about the task of leaders in these complex times, Wheatley observes that a leader must “periodically... stand back...and look at the patterns, look at what is happening and name it for others.” Once that is done people can “trust one another to self-organize appropriate responses.” How do you feel about this division of labor where the leader is responsible for seeing the big picture and naming what is going on, but others are trusted to devise a solution? Discuss how you think this might work/not work in your group or organization and why.

LEADERSHIP AND PROPHETIC IMAGINATION

Interview 6: Joan Chittister, OSB “The Power and Potential of Prophetic Communities”

1. Sister Joan Chittister says that a prophetic community can be more effective than a single voice because the community “magnifies a clear single message.”

As a leader, how are you challenged by this idea that the leader must inspire a group to claim its power as an agent of change? Have you ever experienced the effect of a group magnifying “a clear single message”? Explain how as a leader you have inspired a group; or as a member, explain how a leader inspired you.

2. Sister Joan challenges religious leaders “to define the truth and figure out how this congregation is going to tell it.” She says the leader must create a process that “leads a community to go deeper and deeper and deeper as a community into ... a conscious articulation of the truth that this culture needs at this time on this issue.”

How would you describe the challenge of trying to lead as she proposes? What excites you about this type of leadership? What do you find yourself resisting about Sister Joan’s idea?

3. Being a leader or member of a very intentional organization or community can require a lot of your energy. Sister Joan speaks of “what keeps [her] going” personally, and also says that “institutional renewal ... has always fascinated me.” She names things that help her in personal and organizational renewal like a sense of humor, a long view of history, the scriptures, playing the piano, parties, and including play even in the middle of serious things.

In good times and also under stress, what keeps you going? What keeps your community or organization going? Have you ever been part of a group or organization that intentionally built renewing experiences into its routines? What effect does “play” have on a group?

Interview 7: Walter Brueggemann “Prophetic Imagination: A Call to Leaders”

1. Leaders need “to nurture their own as well as their organization’s imagination and creativity.” Brueggemann says that he keeps his own imagination alive through his writing, “endless study of scripture,” and other reading. “I have to have a lot of input so that I can keep reorganizing my own data around other images and metaphors.”

What do you do to keep your own capacity for imagination alive? Can you think of an “input” that led you to “reorganize” your ideas in recent times? Is this book doing that for you?

2. Leaders “make space for God to do something uniquely new, something beyond our imaginations, and possibly beyond our inclinations as well.”

Can you name an experience where you became “attentive to, on the one hand, how we tend to shut things down and, on the other hand, how we really do yearn to have it broken open”?

How have you responded in a leadership situation to the tension created by the desire to shut things down or to break apart in your neighborhood, family, at work, anywhere?

3. Many of us sometimes feel overwhelmed by the wrongs that exist around us, near and far.

This is especially true to the degree that we are attentive to “the wounded people – those wounded by exclusion, or brutality, or whatever else.” Brueggemann says it’s important “to admit that things are not right and to grieve that reality.... The people who need to be hearing lament are the people in the power structure.... Laments really are acts of hope. They are not acts of resignation, but they are insistences that things have got to change and can change.”

Is there anything that fills you with a deep sense of lament? Can you imagine what public lament could look like, in a way consistent with the contemplative stance described in the first part of this book?

LEADING WITH VISION

Interview 8: Nancy Schreck, OSF “Articulating a Vision for the Future”

1. In her interview Sister Nancy Schreck suggests that the distinctive features of religious life today include: “an unapologetic loyalty to the needs of people who are poor and marginalized”; a response to these critical needs with “an unapologetic loyalty to the vision of Jesus”; and a willingness to live life “at the frontier” and seek “new ways to apply the Gospel.”

To what extent do you experience each of these commitments or features in your own life? What supports these commitments in your life? What opposes these commitments? If the vision of Jesus is not meaningful to you, is there a leader whose vision inspires you in a powerful way that might evoke your “unapologetic loyalty”?

2. Sister Nancy names community as absolutely essential in order to be able to attend to the overwhelmingly complex needs in the world today. Specifically, she indicates that perspective, correction, encouragement and clarification are found in community.

Where do you experience community in your own life? In what ways do your communities provide the essential features outlined by Sister Nancy?

3. Sister Nancy suggests that articulating a vision requires courage, time and context.

Specifically, courage is required both to present a vision and to accept feedback from the group as ideas are shaped and reshaped. Courage is also required to practice the skill of drawing people into deeper conversations. Leaders need time to lead, and need to be willing to let other people do tasks that don’t require leadership skills in order to dedicate time to leadership tasks. Articulating a vision requires immersing ourselves in the context of greatest need. Leaders need to take care not to become disengaged from the needs.

Thinking of leaders in your community, or of yourself as a leader, how has your experience of courage, time and context affected your articulation of vision? Where might this apply in your future visioning?

4. Sister Nancy says that people need vision from their leaders. "They want hope and challenge and they want support for a radical life." She quoted one sister as saying, "I need encouragement to spend myself, not save myself."

What would a radical life look like for you? When did you have to resolve the tension between conserving resources and spending them? Describe an experience where a leader gave you new hope.

Interview 9: Lynn Jarrell, OSU
"Leadership and the Common Good"

1. Sister Lynn Jarrell says that understanding the common good of a group is "not a one-time process, but rather a whole rhythm of life" that must be done "in a collective context." She observes, "This doesn't mean that everyone in a group has to be directly in the conversation, but everyone is at least aware of the process and is willing to accept the outcome."

Are you personally more drawn to be "directly in the conversation" or simply "aware of the process and willing to accept the outcome"? What helps you to accept decisions in which you didn't directly participate? Can you think of a time when a leader engaged you in a decision when you expected simply to watch and accept? How did you feel about this?

2. Sister Lynn says that organizations need two kinds of networks: ways to stay in touch with what's happening in the larger world, and ways for members to network with each other. How well do you, or groups that you're part of, do those things? How do you collectively bring the insights from that networking to the attention of the group? In doing this, what do you personally hope for?

3. This book of interviews as a whole describes a way of leadership that isn't routinely found in organizations. This different way of leadership also involves a different way of membership, which Sister Lynn describes in writing about the common good. Members are actively involved in decisions or consciously willing to accept the outcome that others choose. They educate and develop themselves as mature individuals, but they also value collective discernment and don't try to dominate. Members are willing to step into leadership when necessary. They trust each other with honesty. They are committed to the common good, as they have defined it together. What resonates with your own hopes or experience about this "different way of membership"? What do you resist? Is there any part that attracts you toward action?

Interview 10: Judy Cannato
"Leaders as Agents of Transformation"

1. Judy Cannato opens her remarks by acknowledging that her perspective is firmly planted in the Universe Story and "...that all life is connected on a fundamental level, that all is one." How comfortable are you with a process of aligning the Gospels, the Bible and our entire religious tradition with this modern understanding of the coming into being of the universe and its continuing evolutionary processes? When envisioning the above alignment, where are you on the spectrum where one end is "irreconcilable – the work of atheists to discredit all religions," and other end is "necessary – the work of spiritual people taking the necessary next step towards understanding Holy Mystery"?

2. Cannato states that once we see through the lens of “everything is connected,” then “We still chop wood and carry water, but from a transformed perspective.” Environmentalists have successfully transformed the simple act of taking out the garbage. Over the past few decades most of us have evolved to separating the trash from paper, plastic and metal, while also trying to reduce the amount of volume in all these categories.

What is your response to these organizational and societal changes in how we metaphorically chop wood and carry water? Do you do this because you see the direct benefit to the greater good? To you? Are you primarily following the rules? Consider the above in how you literally carry water. Do you get a glass of water from the tap, carry a reusable water bottle, or get disposable bottles? Do you consider where the bottle came from and where it is going to go? How does this discussion carry over to the rest of your interactions with people and the world?

3. Cannato says that “There comes a moment in the death-resurrection experience in which there is a shift from doing what we know will sustain us to allowing ourselves to be sustained by Holy Mystery...the spirit at work among us.”

How much do you trust in Holy Mystery or God? How does your experience of community (friendships, family, formal groups like churches) inspire this kind of trust? Does it inspire self-reliance? How does the balance between your trust and your self-reliance affect your choices and your way of life?

4. Cannato’s story from Isha Judd about the king, farmer and falcons alludes to movement towards a life that is more like what we perceive to be the falcon’s true self. Alternatively, some changes call for us to let go of what we consider to be our true selves, rather than just sitting upon a comfortable perch. These types of changes ask us to soar into an unknown space trusting that there is the possibility for breakthroughs into new ways of knowing. Is there a place in your life, family, or organization where you are clinging to what you understand to be your true self? Might you find a new perspective after completely letting go of your comfortable “branch” and trusting that the Spirit will lead?

Interview 11: Lynn Levo, CSJ

“Leaders’ Roles in Encouraging Members to Dream and Vision Their Future”

1. Sister Lynn Levo says that in order to envision their future, people need to consider the nature of the times they are in. She says that a vision helps us look at our purpose and focus our energy. In this rapidly changing time -- that can be exciting and also disturbing -- she highlights three natural tendencies that are not helpful: tuning out to avoid what is happening, being paralyzed with fear and anxiety, and trying to keep things just the same.

When you reflect on the possibly exciting, disturbing, rapid changes in the world and in your life, do you feel any of these tendencies? When have you noticed yourself studiously avoiding what is happening in the moment? Have you found yourself blocked by fear? When have you tried to maintain the status quo? How do you describe your current vision? In what ways might it need to evolve, given the times you are in?

2. Sister Lynn distinguishes between “planning our dreams and visions” instead of “listening for them.” She says that she is not sure “that we take the time to really listen for what we are

being called.” She suggests that all of our “responding, giving, and serving” may obscure the need to “breathe in” and develop our individual lives and collective interior life.

When have you been aware of listening for your vision? What communal experiences in your life have supported the intent to listen? Whom do you join with now to “breathe in”? What do you appreciate in the experience, and what is uncomfortable?

3. Sister Lynn suggests that leaders “encourage their members by helping create conditions to facilitate individual and collective dreaming.” Necessary elements include trust and the capacity to listen. Leaders need to foster connections within their membership and between groups. Leaders need to be able to tolerate when the “group vision is grander than that of the leaders and includes more of the world in its embrace than perhaps the leaders might imagine.” In your experience as a group leader and/or member, what has served to increase trust? How is the capacity to listen developed? When have you experienced a group visioning process where the group’s vision expanded beyond that of the leader?

LEADING THROUGH CHANGE

Interview 12: Donna M. Fyffe “Unearthing the Potential of Uncertain Times”

1. Donna Fyffe contrasts ways in which people respond to change, ranging from denial to adaptation. She says that both can exist together and may generate feelings of loss and resistance. “What is key is to allow ourselves to experience all our feelings — those of pain and of joy — and to acknowledge and grieve the loss we are feeling. The degree to which we will change or be adaptive, that is, find new ways to live within our changing environment, is contingent on our ability to recognize our fear and our anxieties and to deal with them.” What are your strongest feelings during these uncertain times? Do you feel safe in sharing those feelings with others? What does your organization need to do to help its members deal with the strong feelings associated with a time of uncertainty or change?

2. Fyffe reacts negatively to the notion of living “in-between time.” Feeling that this is not healthy, she says, “All of us need to name the life that is and to make choices each day about the life we want now and want for those who follow. Each day we are creating the future we want by the decisions we make and the actions we take.”

What decisions are you making today that hold the seeds of your future? Are they leading to the future you want?

3. When asked the sixth question by the interviewer about the qualities that she recommends that leaders develop, Fyffe lists seven qualities that leaders should try to develop for leading in a time of uncertainty.

Using her list of qualities, which one do you feel drawn to develop for your family or work environment? Why?

Interview 13: Luisa M, Saffiotti
"Reimagining Leadership"

1. In answer to the first interview question, Luisa Saffiotti emphasizes that for a leader and for members of an organization to live through major change well, "The vertical and horizontal dimensions are both essential – a deep spiritual groundedness with God, whatever that means for people, and communal relatedness."

Has either of these dimensions helped you personally through major changes? How? What could a leader do to encourage spiritual groundedness and community? How could this happen in a non-religious group?

2. Saffiotti describes "important roles that leaders would want to assume intentionally to help their groups move through deep transformation," such as Undertaker, Midwife, Torchbearer, Anchor, and Bearer of Hope.

Which of these roles would you probably be comfortable assuming? Why? Which are you less comfortable assuming? Why?

3. Saffiotti claims, "There also needs to be a distilling of the core elements of the charism of the group, so that what is essential gets carried along. There needs to be a holding of the essential, as well as openness to expanding it...."

Have you experienced the tension of wanting to preserve the central identity or mission of a group, and at the same time needing to stretch it into new territory or directions? How did you navigate that tension? How did leadership, by you or others, help or hurt this transformative process?

4. Near the end of the interview in the response to the next-to-last question, Saffiotti observes, "Leaders can support their members with a real attentiveness to the language, the discourse, the ritual, and how they themselves relate to a new consciousness. This helps members because they feel like their whole system is moving together in a certain direction."

Can you think of examples of effective ways for leaders to speak in crises? In a deeply unsettled time in your life, how did you or the people around you talk about it? Did you help each other to see unsettled time as "a frontier... of unlimited possibility, a place where it is easier to be creative, where mistakes are considered new ways of learning"? Why or why not?

Interview 14: Ray Dlugos, OSA
"Leading through a Time of Change"

1. Ray Dlugos states that underneath the inability to make a decision to go forward in a particular direction "is an inner experience of real ambivalence — an ambivalence that arises from a sense of powerlessness or futility."

Have you experienced resistance to change in your family, group or organization? What was your understanding of the source of the resistance? What steps did you take or might you take to address the problem?

2. Dlugos firmly states that it is a mistake for leaders “to pull back their affection” in the face of resistance to doing something new or different.

How have you seen leaders manifest affection? When members of your family, group or organization have been judged harshly for resistance in the face of proposed change, what have been their reactions? How have they responded to requests for a change in behavior when the requests are enfolded in affection?

3. Dlugos states that “life...requires a capacity to live with change as a constant experience,” that leaders must tell “the truth as fully as possible about what is really happening” and that they should “invite people to acknowledge their fear, their anger, and certainly their sadness and grief over what they are losing, because change is about loss.”

Have you ever had any experience of a communal discussion of the emotions generated by a disruption that contributed to healing? Describe the experience or discuss how the lack of discussion has affected you.

Interview 15: Marty Linsky “Adaptive Leadership”

1. Marty Linsky recommends bringing an “experimental mindset” to the process of transforming an organization when the status quo no longer works. He suggests “Thinking of yourself as running experiments rather than solving problems...”

What would be different if your organization adopted such a mindset? What advantages would flow from such a stance? How could it be implemented?

2. Linsky speaks of two ways change can come. Most of the time, “there is so much of a commitment invested in the status quo in organizational life that it takes an outside pressure to dislodge that stability.” But leaders can also get off the dance floor and take the “balcony view” where “you see patterns that are not always visible” when you are engaged in daily preoccupations. The balcony view “is both extremely useful and extremely provocative, especially in organizations where people are happy with the way things are.”

In your organization or in your personal life or family life, how often do you take the balcony view? What is the experience like for you?

3. Linsky notes that some members of the organization will not be able to make the changes needed as the organization adapts to the challenges of the future. He continues saying that the challenge for the leaders “is to pay attention to those unable to participate in change... let them live the rest of their lives as comfortably as possible without expectations that they will become the center of the community.”

Is this true in your organization? How does your organization address concerns about those who aren’t able to adapt? What would you like to see done differently?

LEADING IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Interview 16: Andrea Medea "Leading in the Midst of Polarization"

1. Andrea Medea identifies a pattern where "all sides split into predictable roles: villains, heroes, or victims.... The real work never gets done... The roles keep switching, and there's no way to stop it.... The problem is the pattern itself, which is destructive, wasteful, and wildly unstable."

Have you ever tried to rescue someone, been perceived as a persecutor, and hence become a victim? Where have you seen this pattern in the big or smaller world around you? How did it feel for you?

2. Medea introduces "procedural justice" and how it affects a leader's credibility. "People watch how an authority behaves. If they feel an authority is unjust, they may not comply, but resist." Procedural justice has three criteria: "Does the authority have respect for human dignity? Do I have a voice in what happens to me? Does this authority care about my welfare?"

Consider your own experiences, when you've been an authority and when you've been under authority. What tips you off to notice when those criteria are not being met? Do you feel in yourself or see in others, a sense of "resistance" when these criteria aren't being met?

3. Medea notes that women religious are "not very fearful.... Calm, steady courage deprives polarization of the fuel it needs to spread. Deep courage that foregoes anger...makes people stop and think."

In a situation of conflict, what strategies do you have, or can you imagine, to help you find "deep courage that foregoes anger"? How does a leader communicate that?

4. Medea suggests going beyond the talented example of Benjamin Franklin, who used tact, humor, and giving credit as means toward action in polarized times. To his approach, she adds, "If others are uncomfortable with thoughtfulness or intelligence, they can cope. They can learn to meet you in dialogue. They're less fragile than you think."

What in this resonates with you? What do you find yourself resisting? What would you like to hope for?

Interview 17: Breege O'Neill, RSM "Transformative Leadership in a Time of Public Crisis"

1. In her interview, Sister Breege O'Neill outlines many actions taken by her congregation of sisters when it was criticized for abusive treatment of orphans in its care.

Considering her description of the challenges that her congregation faced, what actions would you lead your organization to take if it were the target of public criticism for negative behavior? How would you address the concern, anger, and/or hurt of those directly affected as well as of the public?

2. Sister Breege points out that the members of an organization subject to public criticism for a failure by the organization can react with "confusion, anger, depression ...denial and grief."

She describes the steps that the Sisters of Mercy took.

How did you feel about their response? What did you find positive in their steps, and what did you find less satisfactory? What steps would you take as a leader if your group or organization were subject to criticism in order to address the negative reactions of your members and redirect them in a positive way?

3. Sister Breege notes the frustration of some of the people who had been in the orphanages of her congregation because they felt no one had acknowledged that anything that they were saying was true.

What is the downside of denying the failure to live up to behavior that meets the ideal of a group or organization? What potential benefit might flow from honestly taking responsibility for the failure? What new questions does the interview raise for you?

LEADERSHIP AMONG FUTURE GENERATIONS

Interview 18: Eileen Campbell, RSM and Nancy Schreck, OSF "Forming Leaders for these Changing Times"

1. At the beginning of the interview, Sister Nancy Schreck points out that there is an "institutional decline occurring in the world today" while at the same time, "there is a hunger among people in the world for ...experiences of contemplation."

Are you or people that you care about "disillusioned with institutions of religion and yet have this great longing for spirituality? Are there institutions or groups where you find both meaning and contemplative companionship?

2. Sister Eileen Campbell observes that, as an alternative to hierarchical leadership, "there is a call to leaders to learn how to engage members and share leadership and decision making." How might you prepare members to participate in decision-making about the future of the organization? Share some examples from your experience of everyone engaged in the process of problem-solving and direction-setting. What did the experience feel and look like?

3. Sister Nancy claims that there is benefit from "learning from all kinds of different organizations."

What benefit might your organization derive from having conversations with organizations that have different views and approaches? Is the idea of inviting "the least likely partners" to the table attractive or intimidating? With which organizations might you consider starting a dialogue?

4. Sister Eileen remarks that "the hardest people for me to interact with are those who can think of only one way to do things." She says that leaders need to learn "option" thinking. Do you feel more comfortable generating lots of options or focusing quickly on one way to do something? What might encourage you or your organization or your family to consider multiple options for solving a problem? What would help people who like quicker closure to be patient with this process?

5. According to Sister Eileen, one of the ways to help people engage in the inspirational and visionary dimensions of leadership is through "mentoring and peer support ..."

As a leader enmeshed in the demands of practical problems, how might a mentor or peer support group help you to develop a vision for the organization? What would it feel like to be open and honest with a peer or mentor about your concerns?