

January 2015

LCWR President Participates in Press Conference on the Apostolic Visitation Report



Rev. Thomas Rosica, CSB; Mother M. Clare Millea, ASCJ; Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM; Cardinal João Braz de Aviz; Sharon Holland, IHM; Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV; at the Vatican press conference

The Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life invited LCWR president Sharon Holland, IHM to Rome to receive the report of its apostolic visitation of US women religious and to participate in a December 16 press conference where the study was shared publicly.

A copy of the report, the text of the remarks delivered at the press conference, and links to interviews with Sharon; Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV, chair of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious; and Mother M. Clare Millea, ASCJ, director of the apostolic visitation are available at www.lcwr.org.

LCWR offered a response to the report which states:

The apostolic visitation gathered a large amount of data both through questionnaires and through the respectful listening that took place on the part of visitation teams as they conducted more than 90 onsite visits to various orders of women religious throughout the United States. We are pleased that this data, as well as the experiences, hopes, and

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LCWR Bids Farewell to Janet Mock, CSJ



Janet Mock, CSJ at the reception welcome sign

More than 90 people attended a reception to honor LCWR executive director Janet Mock, CSJ as she completes her service to the conference. Guests included many women and men religious, clergy, friends

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From the LCWR Presidency

The Consoling Mystery of God-With-Us

by Sharon Holland, IHM — LCWR President

As the last days of Advent move steadily on toward Christmas, the ancient O Antiphons enter our Evening Prayer expressing our longings and desires. As I reflected on them, I was aware that they could well be prayed in any season.

O Wisdom! Come, teach us the ways of truth. Show those who govern in church and in civil society what is good for the people. Come to Syria, Yemen, West Africa, and to countless unknown places.

O Adonai! Come, guide leaders in right ways; guide law makers and courts in the ways of justice. Come to our cities struggling with racial tensions and to our borders where refuge is sought.

O Dayspring! Come, sun of justice, dawning light; dispel darkness and illumine the way before us. Day by day let your light shine and enlighten us in our personal choices and in our congregational decisions.

O Emmanuel, Come! Come, long awaited Messiah, desire of all nations; comfort of the lonely, friend of the poor, God-with-us. Come! Come, and, remain with us.

As we celebrate once again the consoling mystery of God-with-us, our song shifts from “O Come Emmanuel” to “O Come All Ye Faithful.” We invite one another to come and see and adore. In a recent audience with the plenaria of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Pope Francis reminded those present that “adoring God is not a waste of time, praising God is not a waste of time.”



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As an invited “expert” at the plenaria, I was able to participate in the audience which took place on Thanksgiving morning, before the Pope left for Turkey. In the brief moment available after being introduced, I was able to tell Pope Francis that I brought the prayer of the American sisters for him. There was not time for conversation, but I know he heard our message.

The following Saturday evening, a vigil of preparation for the Year of Consecrated Life took place at St. Mary Major, with members of the Taize community animating the singing. In addition to readings from scripture, *Lumen gentium*, *Perfectae caritatis* and *Vita Consecrata*, there were selections from founders and foundresses representing diverse forms of consecrated life: Ambrose, Benedict, Francis, Angela Merici, Ignatius, Teresa of Avila, Charles de Foucauld, Armida Barelli, and Teresa of Calcutta.

Ritual processions enhanced the contemplative atmosphere. Consecrated persons, men and women, processed in two by two carrying glass bowls illuminated by candles. These remained as a circle of light in the sanctuary. Again, during the Magnificat, a similar procession entered, each person sprinkling grains of incense into the brazier in the sanctuary.

Before the final blessing, a video brought a message from Pope Francis. He spoke of the challenges of consecrated life, and after a brief pause, he said, almost as an aside, “It’s not easy.” There was a gentle ripple of laughter in the basilica, which seemed to recognize the Jesuit Pope, as “one of us.”

LCWR Bids Farewell to Janet Mock, CSJ

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and representatives from many of the organizations with which Janet worked closely.

The guests also had the opportunity to meet the new executive director Joan Marie Steadman, CSC who was at the LCWR offices at that time for a week of orientation. Joan will assume the role on January 1.

Message to LCWR Members from Janet Mock, CSJ

Dear Friends,

How does one say a proper thank you for a time, a place, and people who provided one of the richest experiences of my life? Perhaps, by just acknowledging that these past three years have been just that. I am more grateful than I can say. You, the members of LCWR are some of the most creative and courageous people I know. I am exceedingly grateful for your embrace of your ministry and your participation in and support of LCWR that has certainly made my ministry a joy.

These years have engaged everything I have learned through a lifetime of public ministry – and I leave LCWR simply grateful for the opportunity to have served you these years in particular. It has been a special joy to work and be in relationship with the Presidents who have served the organization since 2011 and to consult with those who served in earlier years. Working in close collaboration with the Presidents has made me a believer in the model of leadership LCWR has chosen. No one does this work alone – and the combination of gifts in any given Presidency makes the decision-making process richer and the decisions, more deeply grounded in our common beliefs.

Likewise the collaborative and discerning mode in which the Executive Committee and Board engages as it governs LCWR has inspired me and strengthened my conviction in the activity of God in our midst. All the national organizations with which LCWR collaborates and all the people I have had the privilege to meet and work with along the way have certainly added to the abundance of these years.



Representatives of various organizations honored Janet Mock, CSJ during a reception on December 10



Members of the LCWR staff at the reception: Joan Marie Steadman, CSC; Laura Glasgow; Chris Costello; Annmarie Sanders, IHM; Janet Mock, CSJ; Carol Glidden; Marie McCarthy, SP; Ann Scholz, SSND; and Grace Hartzog, SC. Missing from the photo: Christabel Lartey.

The women with whom I work on a daily basis in the national office make coming to work each day such a pleasure. Their good spirit, their competence, their generosity and creativity, their affirmation and their challenge have all been sources of growth and remarkable companionship. I will miss them mightily. I will miss you all mightily. Some have suggested that I must be eager to leave. That is not true at all. I know within me that it is time to leave and I am utterly at peace, but I will miss the depth of engagement that takes place daily at LCWR. One of my predecessors, Mary Daniel Turner, SNDdeN spoke of this engagement as “discussing matters that matter.” Indeed, in these times, we must all engage matters that matter. It is a great joy to know that Joan Marie Steadman, CSC will be executive director, effective January 1, 2015. What a remarkable woman and how well-prepared she is to assume this position precisely at this time. Joan spent four days with us last week and the ease with which she entered into conversation about all that was

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LCWR President Participates in Press Conference on the Apostolic Visitation

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dreams shared during the onsite visits, resulted in an accurate report of both the blessings of US women's religious life as well as its challenges. The report, which conveys a good understanding of the transitions that have occurred in religious life since the Second Vatican Council, is offered without negative judgment or any facile solutions. Instead, the synthesis of data resulted in a realistic and appreciative account of women's religious life in the United States.

We are grateful that each religious institute has been entrusted with discerning its way forward in fidelity to its mission in the church. We are confident that US women religious will carefully read and study the report, discuss it with others, and discern what its call is to their own institute. We believe that the report will become a basis for important conversations in our own communities, and in our work with the pastors of the church and the laity.

While the Vatican's decision to conduct an apostolic visitation caused great pain and anxiety for many Catholic sisters, our members frequently speak of how our experience of the study became the source of profound transformation for our institutes. The process led us to study the heart of our vocation as we engaged one another in significant conversations that explored our spirituality, our mission, our communal life, and our hopes for the future. As we did so, our bonds with one another grew even deeper and our understanding of the potential of this life to serve the needs of the world grew even keener.

Media throughout the world covered the report and the press conference. Among the outlets carrying stories were: [Washington Post](#), [New York Times](#), [National Catholic Reporter](#), [America Magazine](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Commonweal](#), [USA Today](#), [The Guardian](#), and [the Vatican Insider](#), some of which included interviews with Sharon, as well as LCWR president-elect Marcia Allen, CSJ and past president Carol Zinn, SSJ.

Prior to the press conference, Sharon and the other press conference speakers attended a Eucharistic liturgy celebrated by Pope Francis.



Pope Francis greets Sharon Holland, IHM and Mother M. Clare Millea, ASCJ



Mother M. Clare Millea, ASCJ; Sister Sharon; Pope Francis; and Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV after the Eucharistic liturgy at Santa Marta

Message from Janet Mock, CSJ

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happening those days was evidence that the transition will be as seamless as possible. What a gift. In closing, I invite us all to thank God who calls us to this wonderful way of life, who invites us to be sister to one another in profound ways. Advent wanes, and prepares us for the great feast of Christmas. Let us truly celebrate Emmanuel, God-with-us, with gratitude and wonder.

Blessed Christmas to you – and thank you!

Year of Consecrated Life



LCWR New Leader Workshop Features Outstanding Faculty

The US Catholic Conference of Bishops has offered women and men religious an opportunity to provide educational and inspirational materials for use on the USCCB social media platforms during the entire Year of Consecrated Life.

In this new project, the USCCB, the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), and LCWR will take turns assuming responsibility for collecting and sending materials to the USCCB for a week at a time. The USCCB will post the materials to its Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts, as well as its website as part of a collaborative effort to heighten awareness and understanding of consecrated life.

Various communicators for institutes of women religious from around the country have volunteered to collect and collate materials for the 15 weeks for which LCWR has responsibility. They will solicit videos, photos, and stories of Catholic sisters via the Communicators for Women Religious, the organization of communications professionals serving orders of Catholic sisters.

The 2015 LCWR New Leader Workshop will be held from March 19 to 22 at the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois. This annual LCWR offering is recommended not only for those who are new to religious life leadership, but also for those who may be returning to leadership. The program is specifically tailored to the unique questions and challenges of religious life leadership today and includes presentations, processing experiences, ritual, and integration sessions where participants begin to apply the workshop learnings to their own institute's realities.

This workshop will cover topics of critical importance for religious life leaders in the areas of spiritual leadership, canon and civil law, human development, team-building, care of the elderly, and more. Presenters include Nancy Schreck, OSF; Janice Bader, CPPS; Simone Campbell, SSS; Mary Haddad, RSM; Mary Hughes, OP; Lynn Levo, CSJ; Christine Rody, SC; and members of the LCWR staff.

Participants are encouraged to attend as councils, although individuals are welcome to attend as well.

More information and registration materials are available at lcsr.org/sites/default/files/calendar/attachments/nlwregistration2015.pdf. Registration deadline is January 20.

LCWR Membership Made Possible Through Donations to the LCWR Scholarship Fund

LCWR expresses its sincere gratitude to the congregations that sent donations to assist those who requested financial support for 2015 membership in LCWR. Members who received support have noted their deep appreciation and promise their prayers for the donors. Members are encouraged to request assistance with membership dues by contacting Grace Hartzog, SC at ghartzog@lcsr.org.

LCWR Participates in World Congress for Pastoral Care of Migrants

The 7th World Congress for the Pastoral Care of Migrants, organized by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, was held at the Pontifical Urbaniana University, Vatican City, from November 17-21, 2014. The nearly 300 participants included delegates from bishops conferences, and partners from more than 90 countries. LCWR was represented by Ann Scholz, SSND, associate director for social mission. They met to reflect on the current migration situation and to seek a renewed pastoral approach to the care of migrants within the church at the international, regional, and local levels.

The Catholic Church's care and concern for migrants includes programs which address both the spiritual and temporal needs of people on the move. Pastoral experiences of welcome, reconciliation, liturgy, and the celebration of the sacraments, are complemented by legal assistance, housing, and job programs. All promote the dignity and support the rights of migrants. Local faith communities continue to be places of hope and action, advocating on behalf of migrants, particularly the most vulnerable, and raising awareness about the gifts they bring.

Presentations and discussions addressed the issue of family separation, the feminization of migration, and the particular concerns of migrant youth.

Participants encouraged civil society and governments to work towards enacting just immigration policies, fully implementing international conventions, providing job opportunities and better living conditions, and preventing exploitation and trafficking. Finally, they called on all people to embrace the universality of human rights and to encourage positive attitudes toward migrants.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Pope Francis addressed participants and said migration is an "aspiration to hope." The Holy Father praised pastoral workers for their service and called the church a "source of hope" for migrants, saying, "[S]he develops programs of education and orientation, she raises her voice in defense of migrants' rights; she offers assistance, including material assistance to everyone, without exception, so that all may be treated as children of God."

Last Call for Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to pilot the next module of Leadership Pathways entitled, "God's Mission at the Center: The Foundations of Mission Grounded Leadership." Groups will begin in late January and continue, for approximately nine months with time off between segments. All participation fees will be waived for those in the pilot groups.

Any LCWR members who are able to help pilot this module are asked to send a message with their name and e-mail address to Carol Glidden at cglidden@lcwr.org. Anyone who has questions or would like to talk further about this opportunity is asked to e-mail or call Marie McCarthy, SP at mmccarthy@lcwr.org; 301-803-9590.

Contemporary Religious Life Committee Plans 2015 LCWR Assembly

The LCWR Contemporary Religious Life Committee met in November in Washington, DC. Much of their work focused on planning the 2015 LCWR assembly.

Also on the agenda were conversations about continuing to integrate a contemplative stance more deeply into all LCWR work and activities.



Committee members: Mary Ann Buckley, SHCJ; Catherine Bertrand, SSND (facilitator); Janet Mock, CSJ (staff); Ana Lydia Sonera Matos, CDP; Annmarie Sanders, IHM (staff); Marie McCarthy, SP (staff); and Maria Hughes, ASC

Upcoming LCWR Dates

Leading from Within Retreat

*Bethany Retreat Center
Lutz, Florida*

January 11 — 16, 2015

Imagining Justice

*Presentation Center
Los Gatos, California*

March 2 — 5, 2015

LCWR New Leader Workshop

*Conference Center - University of St.
Mary of the Lake*

Mundelein, Illinois

March 19 — 22, 2015

LCWR Assembly

Houston, Texas

August 11—15, 2015

LCWR Assembly

Atlanta, Georgia

August 9—13, 2016



- Letter to President Obama calling upon him to stop detaining vulnerable children and mothers who are fleeing violence in Central America. LCWR (11/19/14)
- Letter to Members of Congress expressing strong support for the Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 (H.R. 3899/S.1945) and urging its swift passage by both chambers. Ann Scholz, SSND (11/18/14)
- Letter to President Obama urging him not to link vitally-needed administrative action protecting immigrants from deportation with further militarization of the borders. LCWR (11/19/14)
- LCWR statement in support of President Obama's executive action to provide administrative relief to undocumented immigrants. (11/24/14)
- Letter to the Senate appropriations committee expressing support for increased funding for the immigration court system, legal counsel for vulnerable immigrant populations, and legal orientation programs in the Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations bill or omnibus for the remainder of fiscal year 2015. LCWR (12/4/14)
- Letter to Appropriations Committee Conferees to encourage the Conference Committee on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) bill appropriating funds for the remainder of FY2015 to reject the provision of any funding for the detention of immigrant children and their mothers and to instead increase the capacity of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to use alternatives to detention (ATDs) on a case-by-case basis. LCWR (12/4/14)

National Migration Week Scheduled for January

National Migration Week 2015 will take place January 4 – 10. This year's theme, "We are One Family Under God," is particularly important when dealing with migration, as family members are too often separated from one another by distance and law. Resources prepared by the staff of USCCB's Office of Migration and Refugee Services are available at tinyurl.com/87vmkn9 and include bilingual prayer cards for migrant families and children, backgrounders on human trafficking, migration, and refugees.



Is Your Leadership Term About to End?

If your leadership term is ending this month, we ask you to submit a change of leadership form found in the LCWR Members Information section (password-protected) of the website at lcwr.org/members/lcwr-membership-information.

Interfaith Climate Vigils Held Around the World

As part of the international #LightForLima project, faith groups in Washington, DC hosted a vigil on the evening of December 7 near the White House. About 75 people gathered to pray in solidarity with those around the world concerned about climate change. They came with candles and solar lanterns to shine light on the UN Climate Change Conference of Parties being held in Lima, Peru from December 1-12.

Leaders from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Baha'i, Sikh, various Christian denominations, and other spiritual backgrounds offered prayers at the DC vigil. Ann Scholz, SSND, LCWR associate director for social mission, offered a prayer on behalf of the Catholic community.

#LightForLima is coordinated by OurVoices.net, a multi-faith, global climate campaign. Organizers hope that an outpouring of concern from people of diverse faiths around the world can help political leaders reach a climate deal. "Many people turn to their faith or spirituality for hope in the face of challenge and suffering," said Rev. Fletcher Harper, OurVoices.net coordinator and executive director of the religious-environmental NGO GreenFaith. "Our prayers, meditations and expressions of sincere concern can help our leaders find the courage to reach a strong climate treaty."

The faith community urged world leaders to lay the ground work in Lima for a global agreement that will be finalized in Paris in 2015 and include increased pledges to the UN's Green Climate Fund, and assurances of justice for poor nations, who have done the least to contribute to the climate crisis, but are most vulnerable to its effects.



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January is Poverty Awareness Month

January is Poverty Awareness Month. It is an opportunity for the US bishops, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, and the Catholic community in the United States to take up Pope Francis' challenge to live in solidarity with those who daily struggle with the injustice of poverty. Resources, including daily reflections and a printable calendar in Spanish, provide food for prayer and action for each day of the month. More information can be found at tinyurl.com/m96e7mm.



Register for EAD—Breaking the Chains: Mass Incarceration and Systems of Exploitation

More than 1,000 Christian advocates are expected to gather April 17-20 for the annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days conference entitled, Breaking the Chains: Mass Incarceration and Systems of Exploitation.

Those gathered will discuss solutions to national and worldwide issues of imprisonment, exploitation, and forced labor. A world that incarcerates so many and allows some to profit from the exploitation of slave, trafficked, and forced labor remains far from the "beloved community" of God's people. More details and registration information are available at: advocacydays.org/2015-breaking-the-chains.



Register Now for Catholic Social Ministry Gathering 2015

Registration for the 2015 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering (February 7-10) is now open. Presenters include USCCB president Archbishop Joseph Kurtz (Louisville), Archbishop Thomas Wenski (Miami), Monsignor Ray East, Father Daniel Groody, and other notable speakers. Hundreds of Catholic leaders are expected to gather to pray, learn, and advocate around the theme To Go Forth: Encountering Christ in the Heart of the World. Registration materials can be found at: tinyurl.com/l5yr6nj. There will be an informal gathering for religious on Saturday, February 7 at 11:00.



Faith Leaders Sign Joint Declaration Against Modern Slavery

On December 2 religious leaders from across the globe assembled at the Vatican to sign a Joint Declaration of Religious Leaders Against Modern Slavery. This is the first time that leaders of the Christian Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim faiths have come together to jointly declare their intention to end modern-day slavery.

Shortly after his election, Pope Francis sent Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, a handwritten note saying, "It would be good to examine human trafficking." That was the spark that led to the formation of the Global Freedom Network (GFN), an initiative spearheaded by Pope Francis, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, and Andrew Forrest, chair and founder of the Walk Free Foundation, with the mission of eradicating modern slavery and human trafficking by 2020. More information is available at: www.globalfreedomnetwork.org

GFN is inviting religious leaders of all faiths and nations to add their names to the declaration: www.globalfreedomnetwork.org/declaration

News from the UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child gives policymakers the impetus to address the ongoing battle to protect children from hidden violence and conflict. Child protection needs to be a priority for the post-2015 development goals argues Susan Bissell, UNICEF global chief of child protection and associate director of programs. More information can be found at: tinyurl.com/o6ryc2u



Climate Conference

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon hailed the outcome of a United Nations-backed climate conference in Lima, Peru, praising delegates for setting the groundwork for a final agreement to be reached in 2015 in Paris. The Conference of the Parties (COP 20) brought together the 196 parties to the UN Climate Change Conference in an attempt to hammer out a new universal treaty which would enter force by 2020. The final agreement is expected to be negotiated in Paris at the end of next year. More information can be found at: tinyurl.com/nor7hhj

UN Report on Human Trafficking

The 2014 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons was released November 24 in Vienna, Austria and shows that one in three known victims of human trafficking is a child, a 5 percent increase compared to the 2007-2010 period. Girls make up two out of every three child victims, and together with women, account for 70 percent of overall trafficking victims worldwide. The report is filled with statistics and regional information and can be downloaded at: tinyurl.com/asjbytr

Imagining Justice: A Learning Lab for Leaders and Justice Promoters

March 2-5, 2015

Presentation Center -- Los Gatos, California

Catching God's Dream: Acting from Our Contemplative Center

Presenter: Kathleen Pruitt, CSJP

lcrw.org/sites/default/files/calendar/attachments/imagining_justice_flier_2015_0.pdf

Registration deadline: January 5



Resources for the Year of Consecrated Life

NRVC and VISION Vocation Network have produced several resources for the Year of Consecrated Life. Although a packet with printed resources will be mailed to parishes in the United States at the beginning of the New Year, they can also be accessed and downloaded free of charge at: www.vocationnetwork.org/articles/article_sections?q=year_of_consecrated_life.

NRVC Awarded Grant to Highlight Women Religious

NRVC has received a \$59,000 grant for two projects intended to highlight women religious and to serve as a follow-up to the two previously sponsored GHR Projects, Women Religious Moving Forward in Hope and the Keys to the Future. These projects, which will coincide with the Year of Consecrated Life, will also continue NRVC's efforts at building a "vocation culture" both in the church and, in this case, in religious congregations where women will be attracted to and retained in religious life.

Symposia on 'A New Generation of Catholic Sisters'

NRVC will partner with four colleges/universities sponsored by women's religious congregations to host four academic symposia featuring Dr. Mary Gautier; Mary Johnson, SNDdeN; and Patricia Wittberg, SC; the authors of *The New Generation of Catholic Sisters*. Invited to the symposia will be the host campus communities, religious, press, and all other interested parties in learning more about contemporary religious life for women. These days will be advertised both locally and nationally and will be held in the spring and fall of 2015.

Vocation Culture Assessment Tool for Women's Religious Institutes

NRVC will publish a Vocation Culture Assessment Tool written by women religious for women's reli-

gious institutes. This assessment tool, intended to assist women's congregations in deepening the vocation culture within their congregations, will consist of a series of behavioral questions geared to evaluate the practices of a religious community that are consistent with what research has confirmed on what newer members are seeking in religious life as well as the tradition of religious life and its charism. This project will be completed in the summer of 2015.

NRVC/CARA Study on the Integration of Cultural Diversity in Religious Life

This study is intended to glean how religious institutes integrate candidates from other cultures and ethnic backgrounds into the life and ministry of the congregation. The completed study, executive summary, and a compendium video may be found on the NRVC website at: nrv.net/278/article/executive-summary-and-compendium-video-5574.

NRVC Studies the Role of Families in Nurturing a Vocation to Religious Life and Priesthood

NRVC is currently partnering with CARA to conduct a study on the role and impact of parents and families in nurturing vocations to religious life and priesthood. Recently professed religious and newly ordained diocesan priests, as well as their parents and guardians, will be surveyed. In addition, a random sample of Catholic parents will be asked about why they would or would not support their child's decision to pursue a vocation to religious life or priesthood. The results of this study will be completed and released to coincide with Pope Francis' visit to Philadelphia for the 8th World Gathering of Families in September and the Synod on the Family in October.

NRVC Hosts International Vocation Meeting in Rome

To highlight the importance of vocation promotion during the Year of Consecrated Life, NRVC will host in February 2015 an international vocation meeting in Rome for directors of vocation conferences in primarily English-speaking countries. Invited participants will

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NRVC Hosts International Vocation Meeting in Rome

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include representatives from the United States, Canada, England/Wales, Ireland, Germany, France, Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands. Also attending will be representatives from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) and the general secretaries of the UISG and USG. The purpose of this meeting is explore how we might unite our efforts globally to support of vocations to religious life.

The meeting will be facilitated by Gemma Simmonds, CJ, director of the Religious Life Institute at Heythrop College in London. Michael Paul Gallagher, SJ, a cultural theologian and rector of Bellarmine College in Rome, will be the theological reflector.

NRVC Anniversary Culmination at the Biennial Convocation

The NRVC culminated its 25th anniversary at the biennial Convocation held in Chicago, November 6-10. DVDs of the presentations can be ordered by calling AVM at 1-888-763-1464. A special anniversary video expressing appreciation to religious sisters, brothers, and priests is posted at: www.youtube.com/channel/UC2VDqIlcHBZITiowXHP4HrA

World Day of Peace Message Published

Pope Paul VI began the custom of dedicating the first day of the New Year to world peace in 1968. In that first World Day of Peace message he wrote, “The world must be educated to love Peace, to build it up and defend it.”

The 2015 World Day of Peace Message of Pope Francis, “No Longer Slaves, but Brothers and Sisters,” focuses on how recognizing the God-given dignity of every person should lead to an end to human trafficking, exploitation, slave labor, and the enslavement of women and children. Such recognition, he says, will lead to deep and abiding peace.

To address these assaults on the dignity of those who are exploited and enslaved, society and each citizen must assist those who are exploited and address the problems that create conditions ripe for exploitation. The full text of Pope Francis’s message is available at: tinyurl.com/mafon7y. Resources in English and Spanish to be used with his message can be found at: tinyurl.com/pz5p32o.



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SOLIDARITY with South Sudan

By Joan Mumaw, IHM
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Solidarity – A Call of the Spirit?

“I am counting on you to wake up the world.” This is the challenge made to religious by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life. (1)

The Pope reminds us that the “Gospel is demanding... and it demands to be lived radically and sincerely.” He calls us to “live the present with passion... which means becoming ‘experts in communion,’ witnesses and architects of the ‘plan for unity’ which is the crown-point of human history in God’s design.”

The members of Solidarity with South Sudan gathered in Juba in late November for their annual meeting and reflection on ministry. The words from the Pope’s letter are inspiration and encouragement to them. “Be men and women of communion! Have the courage to be present in the midst of conflict and tension as a credible sign of the presence of the Spirit who inspires in human hearts a passion for all to be one.”

Solidarity with South Sudan takes its inspiration from the Congress on Religious Life (2004). The Congress invited religious to search for “a new paradigm....born of compassion for the scarred and downtrodden of the earth - around new priorities, new models of organization and open and flexible collaboration between men and women of goodwill.” (2)

Pope Francis re-iterates this invitation in this apostolic Letter: “A distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy....Prophets tend to be on the side of the poor and the powerless, for they know that God himself is on their side... And so I trust that you will find ways to create ‘alternative spaces’, where the Gospel approach of self-giving, fraternity, embracing differences and love of one another can thrive...”

“Men and women religious are called to be ‘experts in communion’....I hope for a growth in communion between the members of different Institutes... Might this

year be an occasion for us to step out from the confines of our respective Institutes and to work together, at local and global levels?...”

“I also expect (you) ...to come out of yourselves and go forth to the existential peripheries. “Go into all the world.” A whole world awaits: men and women who have lost all hope, families in difficulty, abandoned children...I ask you to work concretely in welcoming refugees, drawing near to the poor ...”

Now more than ever the Spirit that moves Solidarity is needed. The diversity of more than 260 congregations working together in different ways is a model for the people in South Sudan.

We thank you for continuing this journey with us. If you are not yet involved, we invite you to be part of this initiative. Your prayer and financial support are urgently needed to continue serving the people of South Sudan.

There is an urgent need for nursing tutors and staff to accompany students on clinicals at the Catholic Health Training Institute. If you know of someone who might be interested in responding to this need, please contact Joan Mumaw, IHM at jmumaw.solidarity@gmail.com for more information.

May the coming year be one of blessing for all religious men and women of our world.

1 Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis. “To All Consecrated People...”
 Nov 21, 2014

2 “Working Paper” in Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity (PCPH), # 11, 45



Members of Solidarity with South Sudan gather in Juba