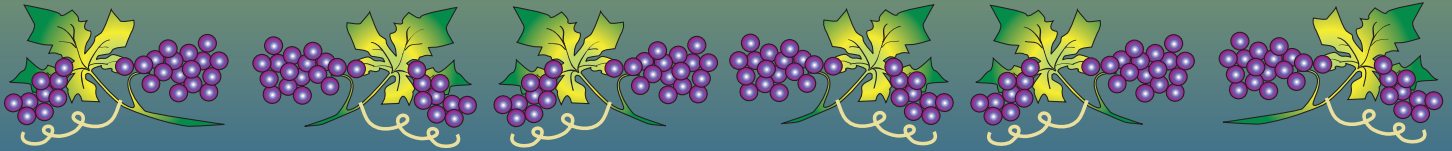


# CONSECRATA

A newsletter for member communities, friends and supporters of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious



VOL. 7 NO. 1 SPRING/SUMMER 2014

## LOVING MY HUNDREDFOLD

### Lessons from my Mom

By Sr. Agnes Therese Davis, T.O.R.

My Mom has taught me more than anyone about spiritual motherhood. She is a woman who has really given her life to the Lord. She (and my Dad) taught me that God is the most important person in our lives and relationship with Him is the one thing necessary. So I was genuinely surprised when I told her I was discerning religious life and she was less than happy. How could my Mom, who worked (and lived) full-time for the Church and loved our Lord so much not be okay with the possibility of her daughter becoming a religious sister? It was as though my call from God was a wall between us, as though Christ Himself were dividing us.

During my novitiate, my Mom went on an Ignatian retreat, and when I talked with her afterward there was no longer any barrier between us. A year-and-a-half later, my Mom explained what had happened. We were chatting about some of the challenges of pastoral work and she said, "If you're stuck on the one that the Lord is asking you to let go of, you're going to hate the hundredfold He gives. You'll resent them. That's how it was when you entered community. God was offering me so much, but I wanted you. It was only when I had a major conversion that I was able to open my heart more and love the hundredfold He is giving me."

My Mom's openness to life, her receptivity to her own hundredfold showed me how to bring to birth those whom the Lord has entrusted to me and to cherish them as pure gift.



## Mary, Comfort of the Sick and Dying, Pray for Us

By Sister Christianna Hamman, FSE  
as told by Sister Rosario Ongayo, FSE



"Good morning, I'm Sister Rosario." Mr. Barton opened the front door of the house and stepped back to let me enter. He greeted me and quietly took me to his wife, Shelly, who was lying in bed. Shelly had A.L.S., and though she was in her 50's, she was already using a feeding tube and breathing machine. Taking a deep breath and calming my mounting fears and nerves, I broke the silence with a warm smile. "Good morning, Shelly. I'm Sister Rosario and I'm going to help you this morning. Would you like a sponge bath?" Shelly nodded.

Thus began my first mission as a Certified Nurse Assistant for the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist Home Care Agency. Little did I know that this task would take me into three years of not only gaining medical experience as a C.N.A., but also employing my deep love for the elderly and caring for their needs. As I helped feed, bathe, clothe, and care for Shelly's needs, I brought my gifts as a woman religious not only to Shelly, but also to her husband, in their suffering and vulnerability.

*(Continued, p. 10)*

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

**Sister Regina Marie Gorman, O.C.D.**

Dear Friends and Supporters of CMSWR,

Please pause and read.

These articles will inspire and comfort you.

You will

breathe in freshness and zeal,

be encouraged by the joy and courage of those  
on transformative journeys,

gain deeper insights into the reality of Religious  
Life in the United States today, and

be refreshed by the beauty of lives willingly spent  
for Christ and His Church.

Then you will have cause to pause and praise God.

In this pause for praise, bishops, laity, priests and  
religious are all united and actually prepare for the Union  
of Eternal Praise.



When you have finished your  
reading, please do us the favor  
of passing this newsletter on  
to someone whom you want to  
encourage and inspire today. The  
sphere of praise of God will widen  
and the darkness will diminish.

Know for certain that your Sisters  
of the Council of Major Superiors

of Women Religious pray with whole heart for your needs  
and intentions every single day. Please say a pray for us  
as well!

Gratefully in Christ,

*Sister Regina Marie Gorman, O.C.D.*

Sister Regina Marie Gorman, O.C.D.  
Chairperson

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# SPIRITUAL MATERNITY AND THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

**Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, S.V.'s**  
**Address to the CMSWR National Assembly**  
**October 12, 2013**



Mother Agnes Mary Donovan (left) is the Superior General of the Sisters of Life. In this issue of *CONSECRATA* (beginning below) we will share various quotes from her address to our National Assembly meeting at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois, last October.

*We, who love with the love of Jesus, grow in virtue by acting on behalf of another. Yet this giving is within the context of having first interiorly received something of the goodness of the other. The one who loves in this way can authentically say, – “It is I who receive the greater part in having loved and served you.” Every person needs unconditional love and affirmation from someone in a one-to-one experience of fidelity and trust. Such love is but prelude to salvation which is relational existence lived in perfect love eternally.*

# SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD

**By Sister Clare Sullivan, M.S.**  
*(Marian Sister of the Diocese of Lincoln)*

As spouses of Jesus, and through union with Him in unselfish self-giving, we can be mothers who bear spiritual children. She also reminded us that if we do not seek out the goodness in others and respond to and foster that goodness, the person will feel that we love them because of our goodness, not because of their goodness.

My apostolate, which I carry out with two other Marian Sisters, is to serve women and children who are victims of domestic violence, and/or pregnant women who are under pressure to have an abortion. Our most recent guest came to us somewhat reluctantly. She is in the early stages of an unwanted pregnancy and has a six-year-old daughter. In my meetings with her, I have tried to make her feel welcome and assure her that we are here to help her in any way we can. She has not experienced many trustworthy people



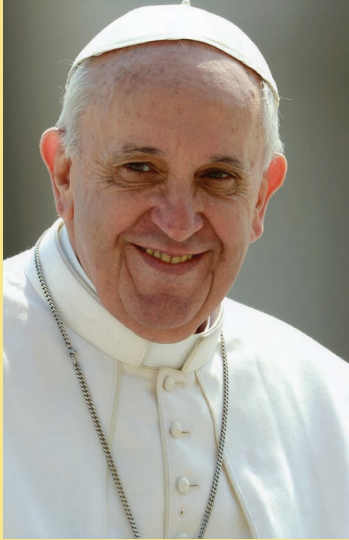
in her life and she came with her guard up. She chose to meet at 8:00 a.m., but warned me that she is not a morning person and that she “can be nasty.” With many prayers and with a willingness to listen to whatever she had to say, I had my first weekly meeting with her. She seemed surprised that it was not as painful as she expected it to be. We have had only a few weeks together so far, but with each encounter she seems more relaxed, more trusting and at peace, more positive about her pregnancy and more aware that life is worth living.

I am very mindful that God is the giver of life in both physical and spiritual motherhood. We see some of the women blossom as they sense that they are accepted and that they do not have to earn our love. It is beautiful, but humbling, to see that God works through us to help another person realize how, regardless of the past, their identity is found in God’s love.



# POPE FRANCIS ANNOUNCES A YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

*Adapted from Zenit article, Vatican City, January 31, 2014*



During the conclusion of his meeting with 120 superior generals of male institutes last November, Pope Francis called for a Year of Consecrated Life. This came as a suggestion of the heads of the Congregation for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on having heard from many of the consecrated.

His Holiness has three objectives for the year:

- ◆ To be an occasion for gratefully remembering the 50th Anniversary of the publication of the conciliar decree on the renewal of consecrated life *Perfectae Caritatis*;
- ◆ To be a time “embracing the future with hope ... motivated by the certainty that the consecrated life will never disappear from the Church because ‘it was desired by Jesus himself as an irremovable part of his Church;’”
- ◆ To “live the present passionately ... bearing witness to the beauty of the *sequela Christi* in the many ways in which our lives are expressed... ‘The consecrated take up the witness that has been left them by their respective founders and foundresses,’ he said. ‘They want to ‘awaken the world’ with their prophetic witness, particularly with their presence at the existential margins of poverty and thought, as Pope Francis asked their superior generals.’”

**Several initiatives and events** will take place during the Year of Consecrated Life, which will begin this October to coincide with the anniversary of the promulgation of the conciliar constitution *Lumen Gentium*.

- In close collaboration with the Congregation for Bishops and following a mandate by the Holy Father, the document, *Mutuae relationes*, on the relations between bishops and religious in the Church, is being revised.
- The Year’s official inauguration is planned with a prayer vigil on November 29, 2014, and Solemn Mass on November 30, 2014, the First Sunday of Advent. The Year will conclude on the World Day of Consecrated Life, February 2, 2016.
- A meeting of young religious and novices, those who have professed temporary or final vows for less than ten years, a meeting for spiritual directors, an international theological conference on consecrated life dedicated to “Renewal of the Consecrated Life in Light of the Council and

Perspectives for the Future”, and an international exhibit on “Consecrated Life: The Gospel in Human History”.

- Every four months throughout the year, the dicastery will publish a newsletter on themes related to consecrated life, the first of which will come out on February 2 of next year, entitled “Be Glad” and dedicated to the Magisterium of the Holy Father on consecrated life.
- In response to the Pope’s wishes, the Antonianum Pontifical University in Rome will host a symposium on the management of economic goods and capital by religious from March 8-9. There will be a series of initiatives planned particularly for contemplative religious, including a world Chain of Prayer among monasteries.
- The instruction *Verbi Sponsa*, which deals with the autonomy and cloistering of entirely contemplative religious, is being revised. Another document in preparation will deal with the life and the mission of religious while a fourth one will touch on the question of how consecrated manage goods in order to offer some guidelines and direction in the complex situations that arise in that area.
- Finally, during the Year of Consecrated Life, it is hoped that the Holy Father will promulgate a new apostolic constitution on contemplative life in place of *Sponsa Christi*, which was promulgated by Pope Pius XII in 1950.



***“The consecrated woman is mother, she must be a mother and not a “spinster!” Excuse me if I speak this way, but this maternity, this fecundity of consecrated life is important! May this joy of spiritual fecundity animate your existence. Be mothers, as the figure of Mother Mary and of the Mother Church. Mary cannot be understood without her maternity; the Church cannot be understood without her maternity and you are icons of Mary and of the Church.”***

*Pope Francis, May 8, 2013 to the International Union of Superiors General (UISG)*

*We were made in the image and likeness of a God who is love and communion – and our lives image the Creator to the degree that our human relationships mirror the life-giving love at the heart of the Trinity.*

*An orientation to culture leads us to understand that the starting point for the new evangelization must be the place of pain, the wound experienced by contemporary men and women, and teens. That wound is found in the struggle to discover the truth of one’s personal identity.*



# CMSWR FORMATOR'S WORKSHOP 2014

## Formation in Obedience

By Sister Miriam Seiferman, F.S.E.

On March 11 nearly 120 Sisters gathered for Mass with a strong and prayerful spirit in the Old Cathedral in St. Louis in the midst of renovation. Steel structures all around us resonated an unspoken message of “Go, rebuild my Church.” This seemed appropriate to the work of vocations and formation, which we would enter into during these days by deepening our understanding of the vow of obedience and the formation of young sisters in it.

Bishop Rice, Auxiliary Bishop of St. Louis, who has been tremendously supportive and who had given a much-appreciated address to the workshop last year, celebrated the Mass. He also arranged for us to have the Blessed Sacrament present in a “Chapel Room” at the Drury Hotel where the two days of meetings were being held. The aura of the Real Presence and this very accessible place of prayer changed everything!

Father Basil Cole, O.P., a priest from the Dominican House of Studies in Washington D.C., gave three presentations on Wednesday and closing remarks on Thursday, focusing on “The Theological and Philosophical Foundations of the Vow of Obedience.” We received the blessing of his presence with us as priest, as well as the wisdom and integration of his vast experience in formation and leadership in his own religious community, as pastor, and as professor of

spiritual, moral and dogmatic theology. He is the author of *Christian Totality: Theology of Consecrated Life*.

Dr. Suzanne Harvath, a clinical psychologist who has worked for many years in the area of human formation, was with us on Thursday, addressing “Cultural Obstacles to



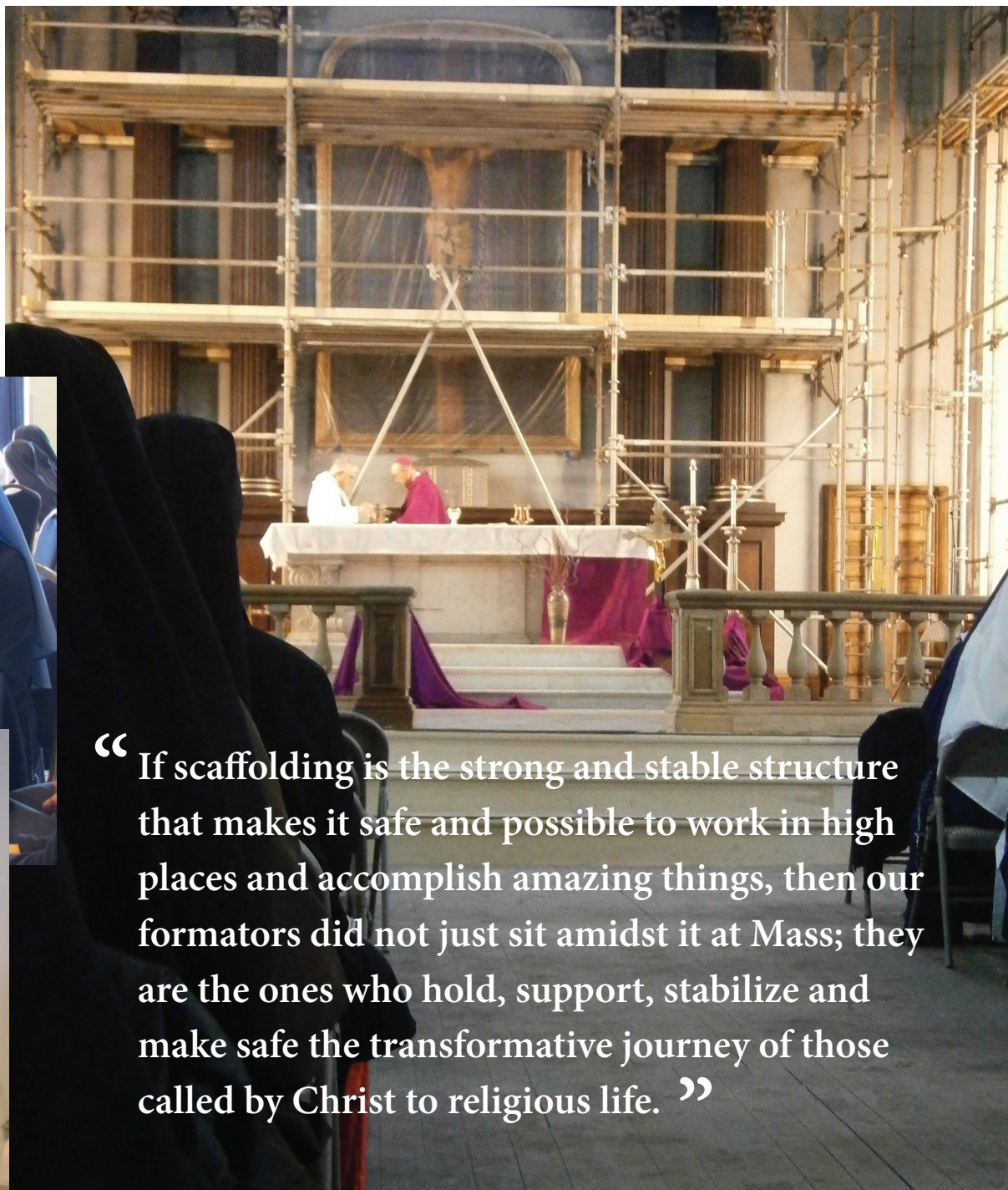


Living Obedience.” She offered remarkable insight into the ways young people are formed and influenced by the trends of our current culture, and the challenges that ensue when those young people try to enter into the culture of religious life. She also offered an incisive, practical approach to the dilemmas facing today’s formators, and she did this with compassion, respect and a delightful sense of humor.

Sister Anne Theresa Walsh, ASCJ, also presented on the forum of our CMSWR website. She highlighted the aspect

designed specifically for formators, and encouraged its use to facilitate exchange of information and ongoing communication. Her enthusiasm was convincing even to those who might still be hesitant.

Around the presentations and the shared times of prayer, there is woven another essential dimension of the workshop: the growing matrix of relationships. It is a time of sharing and support through small group discussions and informal networking; a time to exchange helpful information, or to



“ If scaffolding is the strong and stable structure that makes it safe and possible to work in high places and accomplish amazing things, then our formators did not just sit amidst it at Mass; they are the ones who hold, support, stabilize and make safe the transformative journey of those called by Christ to religious life. ”





*(Formators, Continued from p. 7)*

simply be side-by-side in the common bond of dedication to religious life and the hard work of formation. We hope that more communities will be able to send formators, vocation directors or superiors to join us.

If scaffolding is the strong and stable structure that makes it safe and possible to work in high places and accomplish amazing things, then our formators did not just sit amidst it at Mass; they are the ones who hold, support, stabilize and make safe the transformative journey of those called by Christ to religious life.



## SAVE THE DATE:

**+ 2014 National Assembly:**

**September 25 - 28, 2014**

**Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows**

**Belleville, Illinois**

**Contact the National Office**

**for more information.**



*“I think that the Formator’s Workshop is an excellent resource, especially for a new formator. I learned a great deal. Fr. Basil Cole, O.P. and Dr. Suzanne Harvath’s talks gave me a deeper understanding of the vow of obedience, both the practical and the theological aspects. I learned how, as a Formator, I can help the young women in our community grow in their understanding and living of the vow of obedience. I am also very grateful for the small group sharing time with other formators.” -A Sister participant*

*It is clearly the desire of the Church and of the Holy Spirit that all her members apply themselves to this “supreme duty” to evangelize. As women religious, this call is felt in the marrow of our bones, and the core of our hearts. “The Love of Christ impels us”(2 Cor 5:14).*



# LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR AND THE HHS MANDATE

by Sister Mary Bernard, lsp

In 1839, God used a humble French peasant woman to bring into existence the religious family of St. Jeanne Jugan, the Little Sisters of the Poor, whose sole mission is to welcome and care for the needy elderly. Twenty-nine years later the Little Sisters came to the United States. With relative rapidity their homes for the elderly poor multiplied across the country. Each home reproduced the characteristic family spirit, the founding inspiration of Jeanne Jugan, whereby elderly Residents, Little Sisters, collaborators and friends image the virtues of the Holy Family of Nazareth and witness to the solidarity of all God's children.



Residents are welcomed as Christ into an atmosphere of love, respectful of their human dignity and religious liberty. The Little Sisters seek out all available human and spiritual means in order to provide for their needs, make them happy, and accompany them in their advanced age and in their final hours as they so richly deserve. In fact, the Little Sisters comply with health care regulations and requirements in order to retain a precious part of our mission: care of the ill and presence with the dying.

Over the decades, Little Sisters and others with us have made great efforts to accommodate repeated changes in health care requirements. But now we are faced with a federal mandate (called the "HHS Mandate") that attempts to force us, Little Sisters of the Poor, to participate in a system of providing insurance coverage for drugs and services in ways that violate our religious faith, our adhesion to the teachings of the Catholic Church, our contribution to building a culture of life, and our humble mission of service to the elderly, who merit our care and respect regardless of their weakness and of the indifference of society.

We believe that this mandate is wrong and violates the religious liberty protections provided by federal law and the First Amendment. Consequently, on September 24, 2013, the Little Sisters of the Poor, represented for free by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty\*, filed a lawsuit asking federal courts to uphold our rights to carry out our mission in service of the elderly poor without having to violate our beliefs. In brief, we are simply asking to continue our ministry as we have always done: caring for the elderly poor, while providing health care benefits to our employees

without coverage for abortion-inducing drugs and devices, sterilization, and contraception.

In January 2014, the Supreme Court temporarily protected the Little Sisters from the mandate. On February 24, 2014, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty launched our full appeal before the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver, asking the court to extend the protection of our religious freedom. Without this protection, we would be forced to either pay crippling financial penalties to the IRS or violate our faith by participating in the government's delivery scheme for contraceptives and life-terminating drugs and devices. As our lead counsel, Mark Rienzi, has explained, "The federal government is a massive entity that has lots of ways to deliver contraceptives to people—it doesn't need to force the Little Sisters to participate."

The Little Sisters are joined in the lawsuit by our religious health benefit providers, Christian Brothers Services and Christian Brothers Employee Benefits Trust, and hundreds of similarly-situated Catholic ministries that obtain their health benefits from the same providers. We are also represented by Locke Lord, a national law firm, and by Kevin Walsh, a law professor at the University of Richmond.

While we wait for a ruling which could go as far as the Supreme Court, we confide our cause to the merciful and

*(Continued on p. 10)*

*It goes without saying that those who are evangelizing must first be evangelized, thoroughly. Living in the Holy Spirit, under the Lordship of Jesus. As superiors we have an extraordinary responsibility to our Sisters to structure our religious community and apostolic lives so as to strengthen our members in upholding their first responsibility which is "to make visible the marvels wrought by God in the frail humanity of those who are called. (And to) bear witness to these marvels not so much in words as by the eloquent language of a transfigured life, capable of amazing the world" (VC20).*

tender love of our Heavenly Father. Residents, friends, associate members, employees and an army of caring individuals join us Little Sisters in prayer. Pope Francis puts it clearly before us: "Courageous, humble and strong prayer can accomplish miracles." (Message on Monday, May 20th, 2013, during morning Mass in Casa Santa Marta.) Therefore, humbly and confidently we offer strong prayer that God will work the needed miracle. His Providence has never failed us, Little Sisters of the Poor; in any situation, in any part of the world, these past 175 years.

We are grateful to all who have assured us their prayers and to those who join now to beg for this favor. Please remember as well, the lawyers representing us and the 400-some other religious organizations that will benefit from a favorable outcome to our appeal. May Mary, Mother of the Church, and our Mother, intercede for us.



*\* The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty*

*is a non-profit public-interest law firm dedicated to protecting the free expression of all religious traditions – from Anglicans to Zoroastrians. For 19 years its attorneys have been recognized as experts in the field of church-state law. The Becket Fund recently won a 9-0 Supreme Court Victory in Hosanna-Tabor v. EEOC, which The Wall Street Journal called one of "the most important religious liberty cases in a half century."*

*The witness of "someone who knows Someone:" is the preferred method of the new evangelization. With witness, evangelization takes on the character of a sign. It is the life of the believer captured by the love of Jesus Christ that is the sign; for she is "someone who knows Someone." --- and it shows! To the observer without faith, the believer is experienced as "having something I don't have; and I want it." Her life reveals that she lives from a source that informs her being and that gives her direction in the world.*

After some time, I learned that the Bartons were non-practicing Catholics. I began asking Shelly if she would like to hear the Mass readings of the day or a short meditation. Shelly said, "Yes," and I also told her about the lives of various Saints, and in particular about Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Sometimes I prayed with Shelly.

One day, after several months, I asked Shelly if she would like to speak with a priest. When Shelly emphatically responded, "No," I dropped the subject and entrusted her to Mary. I asked Mary for strength to care for Shelly just as she had stood with her Son as he was dying. Over time, Shelly became worse as the A.L.S. progressed. On another occasion, I asked her again, and her response was still negative.

After several months, Shelly again ended up in the hospital. I went to visit her. As I spent time speaking with Shelly and her husband and trying to bring them some joy, Shelly suddenly asked to see a priest. Overjoyed with thanksgiving, I quickly made arrangements for a priest from one of the local parishes to visit her.

I went to the hospital to introduce the priest to Shelly. They spent time talking one-on-one and Shelly received the Sacrament of Reconciliation. After they were finished, they invited me back into the room. I asked Shelly if she would like to pray with me. She said, "Yes," and we began praying. Father, too, joined us for a while. It was a particularly grace-filled moment and I could sense the radical change in Shelly after that time. A short time later, Shelly died. I attended her funeral and did my best to console her husband. I had gotten to know them very well and, though it was difficult to say goodbye to Shelly, I entrusted her to Mary and prayed for her eternal rest, thankful that she had said yes to speaking with the priest.

As I have reflected on my time caring for Shelly, I have come to understand that her suffering was Christ inviting her into his Paschal Mystery, to be with him in eternal life in the Kingdom of God our Father in Heaven. For my part, I always pray to the Holy Spirit and our Mother Mary for guidance and perseverance as I serve all of my patients. May Shelly and all those who receive end-of-life care rest in eternal peace. Amen.

**Check out our new website:**

**[www.cmswr.org](http://www.cmswr.org)**

**For our many vocation retreats**

**this spring/summer/fall check this webpage:**

**<http://cmswr.org/vocations/vocation-retreats>**



# RENEWAL IN NORTHERN SCOTLAND

## Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia

***“Lord, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth!”***

Indeed, renewal is at the heart of the call and mission of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia as they take up residence in the Diocese of Aberdeen, Scotland. “Every renewal of the Church has had a renewal of religious life at its heart,” noted Bishop Hugh Gilbert in his homily to welcome the sisters to his diocese August 24, 2013. Likening the life of consecrated religious in the Church to the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, he went on, “The Holy Spirit is the Giver of Life, the Inspirer, the Comforter. He is from the Father and the Son and the Bond between them. And when the consecrated life is being lived by women or men with freshness and zeal, everyone – laity and clergy – is inspired and comforted, bonded and united.”

Greyfriars Convent in Elgin, Scotland, now home to the Dominicans, has often been a place of renewal. The Franciscan Friars built Greyfriars in 1479 on the site of a former Franciscan convent and established a flourishing ministry. After the Reformation, John Crichton-Stuart rebuilt Greyfriars for the Sisters of Mercy who re-established Catholic schools during the Catholic Restoration in the 19th century. Now after a short period



of vacancy, the convent is again the site of renewed living of religious life and work.

The response of the people of Elgin and of the diocese? “Lang may your lum reek!” –Scottish for “May you have long life here”—has been the general sentiment. While the sisters establish Dominican life in the convent, with its rhythm of prayer, community life, study, and apostolate, they have been meeting and listening to the hopes of various groups. The sisters have begun planning and running various initiatives: Bible studies and lectures, retreats and days of reflection, pilgrimages and service projects for young people and adults while teaching religion lessons in Catholic schools and religious education classes. The sisters have also been edified by the ecumenical aspect of northern Scotland’s religious landscape, forming links with Anglican, Presbyterian, and Lutheran pastors who have been supportive of the sisters’ work.

Even in the midst of the “dreicht” (bleak) Scottish winter, as the sisters and people of the diocese work together, the feeling of a new springtime for the Church is in the air.





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## WE NEED YOUR HELP

Contributions to the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious help support the Vision and Values of the CMSWR. In this Spring edition of *Consecrata* the focus is spiritual motherhood. The member communities of CMSWR, in an effort to bring Christ to the world, strive to live in imitation of Mary. She brought Jesus into the world. With her each sister, through her witness and community apostolate, nurtures souls and always points them to Jesus.

Your gift today will allow us to:

- Offer support to our member communities by way of shared resources.
- Provide on-going formation workshops for our member communities. With the multitude of young women in initial formation, these formation workshops provide the tools our formators need to better form and train young vibrant women religious who know and love their vocation, their religious communities, and Holy Mother Church.
- Expand opportunities for participation, dialogue, and education on the patrimony of the Church's teaching on religious life.

- Promote unity among major superiors, thus testifying to their union with the Magisterium and their love for Christ's Vicar on earth.
- Coordinate active cooperation with the USCCB.
- Maintain and develop the CMSWR sponsored Domus House of Studies for our member Communities studying in Rome.

**If you are inspired to support the CMSWR or any of our member Communities in their apostolic and educational needs, please contact the National Office or contact the individual Communities through our website: <http://cmswr.org/giving/how-to-give>**

**May God reward you for your prayers and support of religious life. A Holy Mass is offered each month for our friends and benefactors.**