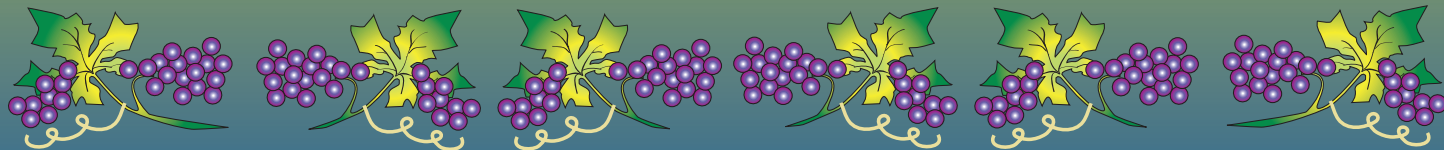


CONSECRATA

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



VOL. 9 NO. 2 FALL 2016

GIVEN THE “YES” OF CHRIST: First GIVEN Forum Sponsored by CMSWR

By GIVEN participant, Marie Walthen



The GIVEN Forum, held June 7-12 in Washington, D.C., offered a rich, authentic, and compelling vision of our role as women and leaders in the Church. In a world that associates leadership with qualifications, credentials, and resumes, we were offered a simple message: to lead for Christ is to be led by Him. Following Christ means offering our “yes” to His call.

As 300 Catholic young women from across the United States, we were challenged to recognize that we can only answer the Lord by encountering His love. As Sister Mary Gabriel, SV beautifully expressed, “our ‘yes’ finds a home in the ‘yes’ He has already spoken in and about us.” Even as we struggle with comparison and perfectionism, He loves us as we are. He notices us and chooses us in our entirety, in our femininity, in our struggles, and in our desires.

Throughout the forum we heard from genuine, vibrant women who embrace and echo the Lord’s “yes.” Speaker after speaker directed our gaze to Him who has loved them, called them, and equipped them. Coming from a wide array of backgrounds and vocations, they all shared the conviction that they could give because they first received. As we heard various speakers’ stories and insights, we were invited to experience the gift of His love in the depths of our hearts. The forum allowed the space for us to meet Him who pursues us. We were invited to encounter Him each day through Mass, Confession, and moments of silent prayer.

Having experienced this encouragement and affirmation of His love, we were sent forth to express our “yes” through action plans. For me, it will take the form of a leadership role in diocesan young adult ministry. For all of us, it entails walking with others as He walks with us. Even as we pursue our various projects and endeavors, at the center remains Christ, who has chosen us and blessed us first.

Originally from Lincoln, NE, Marie recently graduated from Hillsdale College. She now lives in Boise, ID, where she works in written communications and human resources.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV

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Dear Friends,

“Our response to a world at war has a name: its name is fraternity, its name is brotherhood, its name is communion, its name is family.” Pope Francis, July 30, 2016

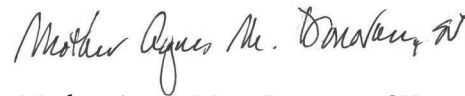
One of the most essential roles of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR) is that of creating a forum for communion and sharing among Major Superiors and their sisters from more than 120 religious communities across the United States. Opportunities to share knowledge, best practices and friendship and for deepening together in our communion with the Lord Jesus Christ all lead to the greater vitality of religious life. This issue of the Consecrata highlights the strength found within community and how encountering others who share in the mission of Jesus Christ clarifies the importance of one's own call and service to the Church.

A sister who attended the CMSWR-sponsored summer course Esposas de Cristo, Hijas de la Iglesia (“Spouses of Christ, Daughters of the Church”) summed up her experience: “I think everyone should have the opportunity [for] the joy of being together in community life – with sisters who have a different charism, a different spirit but the same mission of loving Jesus and serving the Church. ... every community has their own way of serving the Lord. So, if I do my ministry, if I do my mission, I am doing everything because I am working together with sisters from other communities.”

This June at the Catholic University of America, 300 young Catholic women attended GIV-EN: a Catholic Young Women's Leadership Forum sponsored by the CMSWR. One of the attendees told of how through the immersion in a community of other young adult women, who learned and prayed together, she experienced herself more firmly rooted in Christ, and now brings the affirmation and encouragement of His love to the young adults she walks with in her diocesan ministry. Read also about the Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary who celebrate 100 years of loving service strengthening the bonds within their beloved African-American community of Harlem, NY. And finally, experience with Sr. Marie Suzanne the blessings she received by joining a CMSWR-sponsored pilgrimage to Rome. At the heart of the Church she found her place among the martyrs, saints, priests and faithful in the Mystical Body of Christ.

Thank you for being a part of the family of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR). We are grateful for your friendship and support. Be assured of our grateful, daily prayers for you and all the intentions of your heart.

In Christ, our Life,



Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV
Chairperson of CMSWR



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THE GIFT OF HIS MERCY IN THE HEART OF THE CHURCH

CMSWR Pilgrimage to Rome

By Sister Marie Suzanne Stewart, OCD

I had the blessing to make a pilgrimage, sponsored by the CMSWR, to the Eternal City during this great Jubilee Year of Mercy. The love of God is indeed visible and tangible in bella Roma! His love is real and seen and heard in the many lives, past and present, who make up His church. For 10 days beginning Easter Monday, I, along with a small contingent of Religious Sisters of Mercy, was led by Mother M. Regina Pacis, FSGM through the many sacred places and historic sites in Rome, taking in its abundant beauty and manifold graces in the heart of Holy Mother Church. Here we saw and heard how, through the centuries, God's mercy invited souls to come to know His heart, and how they sustained their faith by the living of their vocations.

Each day we began with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass followed by a conference at the Domus Sanctae Mariae Guadalupe House of Studies. Conferences were given by priests and religious sisters on various aspects of mercy: Martyrs and Mercy, Mercy and the Popes, Corporal Works of Mercy, etc. After the enriching conference, we were out and about via bus, metro, and on foot visiting the breathtaking basilicas and churches blessed by the relics of many saints, as well as historic ancient ruins and sites of Rome where many of the followers of Christ, since the time of the early Christians, gave witness to placing their trust and hope in God's mercy with their faithful and courageous lives. Walking through the hallowed streets of Rome draws one into a sacred awe and realization of being part of the Mystical Body of Christ. Being present in the exact places where others have lived and died proclaiming the mercy of God was a grace. But proclaiming and living in God's mercy is what our Holy Father calls each of us to do today!



Sister Marie Suzanne in front of the Church of San Ignazio

Overall we visited close to 30 churches and went through all seven Holy Doors designated in Rome for the Jubilee Year of Mercy. A highlight of the pilgrimage was being able to attend Mass on the vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday at the official pilgrim site of Divine Mercy, the Church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, followed by a prayer vigil at St. Peter's with our Holy Father. We then attended Mass on Divine Mercy Sunday in St. Peter's Square. One of the messages that our Holy Father emphasized during these services was this: "God is greater than our sin!" I pray that many others may have the great blessing to travel to Rome during this extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, to accept the invitation to encounter Christ, and to be healed and restored by the gift of His mercy.



"Mercy desires to reach the wounds of all, to heal them. Being apostles of mercy means touching and soothing the wounds that today afflict the bodies and souls of many of our brothers and sisters. Curing these wounds, we profess Jesus, we make him present and alive; we allow others, who touch his mercy with their own hands, to recognize him as 'Lord and God.' This is the mission that he entrusts to us." Homily of Pope Francis at Jubilee of Mercy, April 3, 2016

MERCY IN MOTION CMSWR Communities Celebrate the Year of Mercy

Clothe the Naked

Sr. Virginia Peckham, LSJM, of the Little Sisters of Jesus and Mary give clothing to a homeless man from the Hospitality Room at their Joseph House Crisis Center in Salisbury, MD. Here homeless can receive breakfast, lunch, hot showers, clothing washed and replacement clothing, if needed.



Instruct

Many members of the CMSWR Communities are active in the community. Here the Parish of St. John the Evangelist in Monroe, NY.



Counsel the Doubtful

The Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Peekskill, NY sponsored an "Ecumenical Sharing of Mercy" in which presenters shared aspects of mercy according to their particular faith. Pictured are Presbyterian Minister Rev. Ted Miller, Fr. William Winters, OFM Cap., FMSC Provincial Sr. Laura Morgan, Muslim prison chaplain Sister Shabbazz, and Rabbi Helene Ferris.



Give Drink to the Thirsty

Sr. Maria Therese, CMRM, feeds an infant at Little Flower Childcare Center run by the Sisters of Mary, Queen of Mercy in Lincoln, NE.



Feed the Hungry
meal at a local home

of Mercy Around the Country



struct the Ignorant

member communities serve in teaching apostolates, which take a variety of forms. The Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate hosted an event at their Motherhouse in [illegible], NY in conjunction with World Youth Day.



Bear Wrongs Patiently

Sisters of the Religious Teachers Filippini offer prayer and witness during a 40 Days for Life event in Philadelphia.



Visit the Sick

Sr. Alma Marie, OP of the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne, visits with Debbie, a resident at Sacred Heart Home in Philadelphia.



Hungry Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration prepare a meal for the homeless shelter and soup kitchen in South Bend, IN.



Pray for the Living and the Dead

Sisters spend time in adoration during a retreat for sisters hosted by the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity in Corpus Christi, TX.

“ESPOSAS DE CRISTO, HIJAS DE LA IGLESIA” 2016

A Time of Study, a Time of Fraternal Charity in Common

By Sister Maria Theotókos Adams, SSVM

Held in Corpus Christi, Texas, the summer course *Esposas de Cristo, Hijas de la Iglesia* (“Spouses of Christ, Daughters of the Church”) brought together twenty Spanish-speaking religious from eight congregations. From June 27 – July 8 these sisters studied the theology of mercy in the writings of John Paul II and Pope Francis and in the lives of great women saints throughout the ages. Participants represented Hispanic sisters from seven religious communities serving in 11 Dioceses in the United States and Canada.

Event coordinator Mother Mary of Ephesus Baird, SSVM explains: “We wanted to offer this event again because after the 2015 course we realized how important it was for the sisters not only to study in their own language but also to experience living in community with other Hispanic congregations and charisms working in the United States. This course is uniquely different from other conferences or events for Hispanic women religious in the United States because it offers an extended time of living together in strong fraternal charity while pursuing serious intellectual formation.”

Sr. Anna Lilia Frias Vargas, HFIC, a vocations director in Los Angeles, reflected, “This course will help me in my apostolate serving young women in their vocational discernment...to really help them to know of the tender mercy of God’s love for them.”



Sr. Miriam Rivera Martinez, SdeM, summed up the experience of the course and its special qualities most eloquently: “It is not just studying, it is also praying while you are studying. I think everyone should have the opportunity [for] the joy of being together in community life – not just with the sisters you live with, but also with sisters who have a different charism, a different spirit but the same mission of loving Jesus and serving the Church. ... It has been a blessing for me since I always wonder ‘what I am doing for our world that is suffering?’, and I have noticed that every community has their own way of serving the Lord. So, if I do *my* ministry, if I do *my* mission, I am doing *everything* because I am working together with the other sisters.”

FRANCISCAN HANDMAIDS OF THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY CELEBRATE 100 YEARS

By Sister Gertrude Lilly, FHM

The Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary are marking their 100th anniversary as a religious congregation. Considered a “New York Treasure,” the community of predominantly black Sisters is one of the three original orders of its kind in the US. Formally founded in 1916 in Savannah, Georgia by the Rev. Ignatius Lissner, SMA and Mother Mary Theodore Williams, a black woman from Baton Rouge, the entire congregation moved to Harlem at the request of New York Archbishop Patrick Cardinal Hayes in 1923.

Sisters teach and provide pastoral care, social services, parish ministry, and altar bread distribution to parishes in the Archdiocese of New York and serve in preventative health missions in rural Africa, the Caribbean, and the U.S. The sisters are joyously reflecting on one hundred years of providing vital assistance to the community and Church with unwavering faith and steadfast love, and they strive to revitalize their purpose and expand their missions of service for the next 100 years.



FHM Centennial: A few sisters stop for a photo at one of their centennial celebrations.

YOUR GENEROSITY MAKES A DIFFERENCE!



Thanks to the funding from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and GHR Foundation,

as well as individual donors, the GIVEN 2016 Catholic Young Women's Leadership Forum was a tremendous success! Three hundred young women gathered in June from all 50 states to attend a first-of-its kind five-day leadership training event together with 80 sisters from numerous communities.

Your ongoing support helps CMSWR provide formative and educational opportunities to women religious throughout the United States.

Please check your mailbox for our Annual Appeal letter coming soon!

Thank you for your support of our mission! To keep in touch with us, sign up for our new e-bulletin on our website: www.cmswr.org.



In preparation for the 25th anniversary of our founding, we want to hear from you. Please share with us your favorite story, memory, or anecdote of a sister in your life. Send stories to Julia at jdesilets@cmswr.org.



Thanks to generous benefactors, three sisters were given scholarships to attend the 2016 Esposas de Cristo course, held at the Pax Christi Retreat House in Corpus Christi, Texas.



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"I don't think that I can express adequately what my heart was feeling as I sat in the arms of Holy Mother Church and heard Pope Francis declare Mother Teresa a saint. All that I could do was cry with joy as my heart was so filled with the great gift the Lord has given to me and to the Church through St. Teresa of Calcutta... She has guided me for years since I took her name in religious life. Being here to witness her canonization has been more renewing than I could ever have imagined. It is as if her life-breath has been stirred up again within me."

**Sister Maria Teresa Tortorice, TOR
Canonization of St. Teresa of Calcutta**