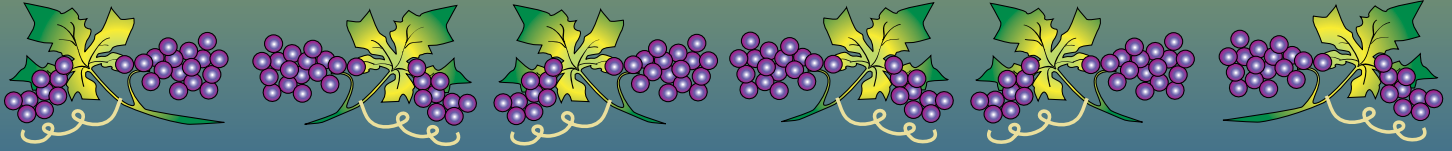


CONSECRATA

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



FALL 2021

2021 CMSWR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: *Bearers of a Promise*

By Sister Mary Dominic Pitts, O.P.

The CMSWR National Assembly met September 16-19 in St. Louis, Missouri, taking as its theme “Bearers of a Promise,” which comes from Pope Francis’ 2019 Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*. Here Mary is referred to as both the Bearer of a Promise and the Guardian of Hope whose example is so necessary for our times.

The National Assembly was a welcome opportunity for religious superiors to gather together in person for the first time in two years. Presentations and the annual business meeting alternated with daily Mass at St. Louis’ historic Old Cathedral and Lauds, Vespers, and a daily Holy Hour with musical accompaniment by the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus and the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia.

In his opening address, Apostolic Nuncio Christophe Pierre urged the assembly to be “guided along the path of authentic discernment and imitate the Virgin in being bearers of the promise, influencers of God, and guardians of hope.”

Titles for the major presentations came from *Christus vivit*. CMSWR’s current chair Mother Anna Grace Neenan, O.P., speaking on the theme “Bearers of a Promise,” reflected on the qualities that transform the religious into a truly prayerful person. She said the prayerful person is one who prays unceasingly in her relationship with God, “the One who promised first.” Love impels her to achieve a profound intimacy with God, and in her “Yes” she becomes a bearer of God’s promise, the Savior, whom she has come to know by faith.

In the afternoon, Father John Burns of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee spoke of the profound influence the vocation of consecrated religious has on the life and holiness of the Church. Father Burns said that religious women can even in one sense influence God: “You have no idea how beautiful He finds you – so beautiful that He asked you to forego everything on earth to just be His.”

On Saturday, “Guardians of Hope” took on another form in the presentation by Sister Stephanie Still, P.B.V.M. of the National Religious Retirement Office, who spoke to the importance of planning ahead for retirement to sustain an institute’s charism and mission.

Mother Clare Matthiass, C.F.R., delivered the final keynote address on Saturday evening. Her theme was also “Guardians of Hope,” and she offered poignant stories about how religious sisters can be examples of “hope that the world longs for.” Mother Clare said how important it is to remember the “hope that this is not all there is” and to remain convinced of the “hope that where He has gone, we too will follow.”

The Friday afternoon breakout sessions echoed the theme of hope for the future, with Father Burns speaking on “Healing and Forgiveness,” Dr. Eileen Jaramillo on “Key Elements for the Erection of a Religious Institute,” and Sr. Stephanie Still, P.B.V.M., on “Planning for Retirement and a Future Full of Hope.”

Altogether, the Assembly partook of “the strength of the young Mary’s ‘yes.’” Encouraged to a renewed spirit of prayerfulness and an appreciation of the beauty and depth of their vocation through the addresses and personal conversations, the religious superiors of the CMSWR congregations came away from this year’s National Assembly strengthened in the hope that Christ is faithful yesterday, today, and forever.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

Mother Anna Grace Neenan, O.P.

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Dear Friends,

This fall newsletter comes to you just at the time when the CMSWR is fresh from the graces of our September 2021 National Assembly, with its theme, ***Bearers of the Promise***. Our theme was inspired by Pope Francis's exhortation to young people, *Christus Vivit!* The Holy Father's opening words open up a rich area for reflection for the entire people of God who seek to live lives of faith with greater depth: "*Christ is alive!*" he writes, "*He is our hope, and in a wonderful way...everything He touches becomes young, new, full of life...*"¹

Reflecting on the virtues of Mary, Pope Francis draws our attention to *the young woman of Nazareth* who "*is the supreme model for a youthful Church that seeks to follow Christ with enthusiasm and docility*."² As religious women, who live nestled in the heart of the Church, how vital it is to allow ourselves to be led by the conviction that *Christ is alive*; that He longs to fill every void; and that He calls each of us in our own vocations to be bearers of Hope in our current culture.

1. *Christus vivit*, 1, March, 25, 2019.

2. *Ibid*, 43.

In this issue of *Consecrata* we share with you the happy news of sisters in our member communities who have made perpetual profession of vows within the past year. Please join us in giving thanks to God for their total gift of self in response to his call. These newly professed sisters offer the world the joyful witness of hope that only surrender to God's love can give.



You will also find in these pages articles on some of the fruits of the CMSWR's efforts to provide on-going formation opportunities through such events as our annual National Assembly and Formators' Workshop, as well as programs offered through the Domus Sanctae Mariae Guadalupe. These have proven to be occasions not only for education, but also for mutual support and spiritual refreshment, preparing us to give ourselves more deeply in the service of the Church.

May each of you, in your own lives of faith, be bearers of Christ to those whom He places in your path day by day.

Sincerely in Christ,

Mother Anna Grace Neenan, O.P.

Mother Anna Grace Neenan, O.P.
CMSWR Chairperson

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*Dominican Sisters
of St. Cecilia*



Sister Anna Cecilia Kuhn, O.P.
*Dominican Sisters
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Sister Anna Maria
Schreyer, O.P.
*Dominican Sisters
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Sister Diana Marie
Andrews, O.P.
*Dominican Sisters
of St. Rose of Lima*



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Elliott, F.S.E.
*Franciscan Sisters
of the Eucharist*



Sister John Frances
LaFever, F.S.E.
*Franciscan Sisters
of the Eucharist*



Sister Francesca Silver, F.S.E.
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of the Eucharist*



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Julian Laurence, L.I.H.M.
*Leaven of the
Immaculate Heart of Mary*



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L.I.H.M.
*Leaven of the
Immaculate Heart of Mary*



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Ruggiero, I.s.p.
Little Sisters of the Poor



Sister Margaret Mary
Zieminski, M.S.S.R.
Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa



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*Marian Sisters of the
Diocese of Lincoln*



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*Oblate Sisters of the
Sacred Heart of Jesus*



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Mercy of Alma*



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Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco



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PROGRAM AT SANTA CROCE FOR RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS AND FORMATORS

By Sister M. Regina Pacis Coury, F.S.G.M.

This past year, CMSWR began a new program to help prepare sisters to serve as superiors and formators. This ten-month program is being offered in collaboration with the Pontifical University of Santa Croce in Rome and includes online and onsite components, including mini pilgrimages to sacred sites in Rome and environs with Sister M. Regina Pacis, F.S.G.M., our Director of Education. The program includes courses that address the human, spiritual, intellectual, and apostolic dimensions of formation; spiritual accompaniment; canon law regarding religious life, and “fundraising as faithraising” for religious institutions. Classes are taught by Santa Croce faculty. The sisters will earn European credits which are transferable to any European Pontifical University.

After completion of the course, each sister will be asked to plan and structure a regional workshop around topics related to the material she has learned in the course. Some of the papers that the sisters have written will also be posted on the CMSWR website after evaluation by the Santa Croce faculty. The reactions from the sisters participating in the courses have been very positive. Here are three comments, by way of example:



“The professors are excellent, and the material has been very stimulating.”

“The two weeks of courses were wonderful – very enriching, informative, and helpful. I am very thankful for the opportunity.”

“It’s been a wonderful, uplifting experience so far! So very edifying! Can’t express how grateful I am for these courses!”

The Santa Croce program is being assisted by a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, for which we are very grateful. The program will be offered again in the Fall of 2022.

COME AND SEE: *Virtual Pilgrimages*

By Sister M. Regina Pacis Coury, F.S.G.M.



“While we await the opening of Italy and other countries to travelers, we are offering a series of virtual pilgrimages which we call ‘Come and See.’ The text is written with religious sisters in mind. These offerings are a combination of prayer, spiritual reflections, history and archaeology, religious life and scripture. We hope that they will become a small contribution to continuing formation and to strengthening our consecrated life to God.”

That is our introduction on the CMSWR website (cmswr.org) to pilgrimages which we might call “armchair” spiritual expeditions to holy places. We hope these visual journeys will be an incentive to many sisters to come to Rome, Assisi, the Holy Land, and many other sites when the pandemic of COVID-19 has been vanquished.



Pope Benedict summarizes the purpose of a Christian pilgrimage in this way: To go on pilgrimage is not simply to visit a place to admire its treasures of nature, art, or history. To go on pilgrimage really means to step out of ourselves in order to encounter God where He has revealed himself, where His grace has shone with particular splendor and produced rich fruits of conversion and holiness among those who believe.

God can use even a virtual pilgrimage to manifest Himself. First, there are virtual pilgrimages to the four Major Papal Basilicas of Rome. While all four

churches have common characteristics, each basilica is unique and deserving of special attention. The very word “basilica” is not a Christian invention, but one borrowed from...well one can read that in the virtual pilgrimage! When sisters come to Rome for the first time, the sites on the top of their list are usually the four papal basilicas. That is why we have begun the virtual tours of Rome with St. Peter’s Basilica, St. Paul’s Outside the Walls, St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran. Other virtual pilgrimages include the Holy Land, Assisi, and Jerusalem, which includes the places and buildings connected with the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord.

In these difficult and uncertain times, may these spiritual virtual pilgrimages and God’s graces spur us on to an even deeper desire to follow in the footsteps of Our Lord and His saints. May they also be the beginning of a new way to encounter the Lord, and, perhaps, in the near future, you will “Come and See” for yourself what the Lord has begun to reveal in your minds and hearts.



FORMATORS’ WORKSHOP 2021: *Forming for Communion*

By Mother Miriam Seiferman, F.S.E.

After an interruption of a year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, CMSWR held its annual Formators’ Workshop from April 27-29, 2021. Because of ongoing health and safety concerns, as well as the restrictions that were still in place at the time, the workshop was held virtually. Although the participants missed the opportunities for shared meals, times of prayer, informal discussions, and the many ways of mutual support and presence to one another that being in-person provides, they were grateful to be together again in this virtual format.

The Workshop’s theme, *Forming for Communion*, was developed through inspiring presentations marked by profound insight and spiritual depth. Q&A with the presenters, breakout sessions with those in the same formation positions, and a panel presentation with experienced formators offered opportunities to address questions, discuss practical issues, and apply principles to concrete situations.

It was especially meaningful to have Mother Anna Grace Neenan, O.P., who currently serves as Chairperson for the CMSWR, give the keynote address, *Drawn by the Love of Our Eucharistic Spouse*. She presented an exquisitely woven tapestry of spiritual intensity for consecrated religious life. As a former mistress of novices and current major superior, her very presence witnessed to the intrinsic link and critical relationship of Leadership and Formation in our Congregations.

Father Andrew Hofer, O.P., associate professor at the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception at the Dominican House of Studies and an experienced formator, spoke to *Love of God in Communion and Love of Neighbor in Communion*, taking both topics from the perspective of Eucharist, Religious Vows and Formation. His spiritual clarity and his strong understanding of the human person combined to create a very helpful message, offered in an energizing and engaging style.

A panel of experienced formators, Sister Mary Christine Cremin, R.S.M., Sister Mary Angela Highfield, O.P., and Sister Barbara Johnson, F.S.E., responded to many practical concerns. Their empathic identification with the challenges of formation was supported by their longstanding experience. We are grateful for their witness as religious women who have poured themselves out in the service of formation.

Thanks to wonderful participation throughout many years, the Formators’ Workshop has become not simply an annual event, but a reference for the spirit of friendship, mutuality, solidarity, and understanding that exists among those who give themselves to the grace-filled maternal call to be Formator. Formation is a tremendously challenging and transformative work, and CMSWR desires to support and affirm those who accompany our younger members on the long journey into consecrated religious life. The desire to support our Formators is the essence and the driving energy of every Workshop. We are grateful to all who helped to make it happen this year, and to all who attended, and we look forward to spring of 2022.



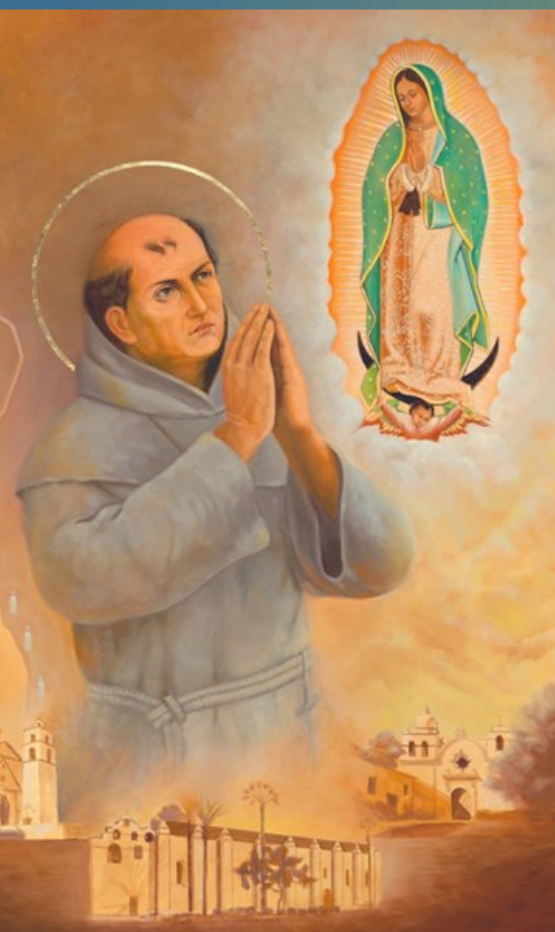
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This two-week summer course invites Spanish-speaking women religious to explore the contribution of Spanish-speaking Catholic missionary priests and sisters to the Church in the United States over the past five hundred years. The study will follow the work of those who served Catholic communities from Florida to California, and from the Southwest to New York City.

For more information please contact: esposasdecristo@cmswr.org,
or visit: cmswr.org/event/esposas-de-cristo-curso.