

CONSECRATA

A publication of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious

Fall 2023



National Assembly 2023

Starting Afresh from Christ: Pathway to Eucharistic Revival

CMSWR held its annual National Assembly in St. Louis, Missouri from September 21-24, 2023. The National Assembly, an annual gathering of CMSWR members and other invited guests, is always marked by the joy of coming together as friends and peers and is an important time for conversation, collaboration, and communion. This year's guests included representatives from the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) as well as other organizations that support religious life.

The theme of the 2023 National Assembly, *Starting Afresh from Christ: Pathway to Eucharistic Revival*, was inspired by the ongoing National Eucharistic Revival. The title was taken from *Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium*, the 2002 Instruction from the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. In their reflections, speakers drew on themes on the centrality of the Eucharist, especially in the lives of consecrated religious, in this document as well as in *Desiderio Desideravi*, Pope Francis' 2022 Apostolic Letter on the Liturgy. The speakers included Sister Maris Stella Karalekas, S.V. of the Sisters of Life; Father Ken Geraci, C.P.M. of the Fathers of Mercy; and Sister Alicia Torres, F.E. of the Franciscans of the Eucharist of Chicago. Sister Alicia also serves on the Executive Team for the National Eucharistic Revival.

In addition to the profound insights from the speakers, participants were grateful for greetings from Cardinal Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, and Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. In his video address, Cardinal Pierre assured the assembly of the Holy Father's spiritual closeness and his own prayerful accompaniment of its work. He noted,

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Message from Our Chairperson

by Mother Anna Grace Neenan, O.P.

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to greet you personally as we share this Fall 2023 issue of *Consecrata*. Reviewing highlights from a variety of CMSWR-sponsored activities during the past months, I am struck by a clear theme that emerges, one that has everything to do with the life and mission of the Church: “Remain in my Love” (John 15:9).

The entire Church clings to the memory of these words of Christ – for they are among the final words of the Bridegroom to his Bride. The Church herself reminds us in the Catechism that everything she is and everything she does both springs from love and has “no other objective than to arrive at love” – the “love that never ends” (n. 25).

This issue reflects some of the ways CMSWR has sought to feed the flame of Christ’s abiding love. At the center of them all, of course, was the Eucharistic Adoration and procession held during our National Assembly, a moving act of faith in the Loving Christ truly present among us. The first *Called by Love* program for young sisters, designed to nurture their vocations as spouses of Christ, proved to be an occasion of grace for the young professed who attended. The Summer Renewal Program at the CMSWR house of studies in Rome provided another grace-filled time for the sisters who participated. These and other events are described in detail within these pages.

In each of these endeavors, we have been grateful for the example and encouragement we receive from the many devoted clergy and lay faithful with whom we have come in contact, all of us seeking together to respond to Christ’s call to live on in his love. CMSWR is especially blessed in your witness, which strengthens us spiritually, in ways you will never know. Always, we are grateful as well for your material generosity in support of religious life.



The Catechism assures us that everything in the life of the Church is directed to the holiness of Christ’s members, a holiness measured “according to the ‘great mystery’ in which the Bride responds with the gift of love to the gift of the Bridegroom” (n. 773). May we remain each day in his love, supporting one another as we make our way to the “love that never ends.”

Sincerely in Christ,

Mother Anna Grace Neenan, O.P.

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“Your theme, pathway to Eucharistic renewal and starting afresh from Christ indicates what we need in the Church today: a renewed encounter with the person of Jesus who gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.” In a letter, Cardinal Aviz assured the sisters of his prayers, and entrusted the National Assembly to the two patron saints of the National Eucharistic Revival: St. Manuel Gonzales and Blessed Carlo Acutis.

In remarks delivered by Sister Anne Catherine Burleigh, O.P., Mother Anna Grace Neenan, O.P., the CMSWR Chairperson, recounted the touching story of one of her sisters. Mother Anna Grace asked the sister, “What comes to mind when you think of the Eucharist?” The sister answered, unhesitatingly and with sweet tenderness, “Jesus.” For almost 75 years of religious life, this sister has had the habit of whispering “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus” before the Blessed Sacrament. Certainly, this simple yet profound response has shaped her life and strengthened her love for her Spouse, who has given Himself to her each day in the Eucharist.

The highlight of the National Assembly was an evening that included Eucharistic Adoration, a Eucharistic procession, and Vespers at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, to which all sisters in the St. Louis area were invited. The beauty of the Cathedral Basilica served as a testament to the majestic beauty of God who abides with us. The beauty of the assembly liturgies was further enhanced by hymns and chants led by the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus and sisters from other communities.

The National Assembly also included the annual Business Meeting as well as the election of Board Members and Officers.

Board Update

We are pleased to announce that Mother Mary Christa Nutt, R.S.M., Superior General of the Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, Michigan, was newly elected to the Board of Directors. Board member Mother Ann Marie Zierke, M.S., Superior General of the Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln, was elected Secretary. Mother Anna Grace Neenan, O.P., Prioress General of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, was re-elected as Chairperson.

Mother Miriam Seiferman, F.S.E., Superior General of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, concluded her second term on the Board. We are deeply grateful for her many years of service and her ongoing support of CMSWR.



*Mother Mary Christa
Nutt, R.S.M.*



Called by Love: A New Initiative for Young Sisters

This October, CMSWR hosted a special program for sisters who recently made their perpetual profession of vows. This new CMSWR initiative, titled *Called by Love*, is designed to bring together young sisters from across CMSWR communities for a weekend of prayer, reflection, and sharing on their vocation as consecrated women religious in the Church.

This inaugural *Called by Love* gathering, held at Siena Hall Conference Center at Aquinas College in Nashville, Tennessee from October 6-9, 2023, included 21 sisters from eight CMSWR communities. In addition to sharing their own vocation stories, the sisters gave presentations on the history, charism, and apostolates of their congregations and also led prayer according to its practices. By learning about other sisters and congregations, each participant gained a deeper appreciation for the beauty of the various gifts in the Church and was affirmed in her own vocation and charism.



Sister Mary Madeline Todd, O.P., a Dominican Sister of St. Cecilia, and Father John Burns, a priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and founder of Friends of the Bridegroom, offered talks to help participants reflect more deeply on the gift that they are and the graces they have been given in their vocation. Drawing upon St. John Paul II's writings on women, Sister Mary Madeline emphasized the beauty and dignity of women and how Our Lady perfectly embodies authentic femininity. Father Burns reflected on how sisters are called to give themselves as a gift of love and how that gift transforms the Church and helps guide others to Heaven. It will be beautiful to see how the graces received during this time together will unfold in the lives of these sisters.

We are grateful for a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation that helped make *Called by Love* and other CMSWR programs possible.

“ Called by Love was an enriching occasion to renew gratitude for each of our own vocations and to rejoice in God’s abundant and diverse gifts to other communities. ”

-Sister Marie Benedict Elliott, F.S.E.



“ Called by Love was a life-giving experience for me...The talks truly affirmed our identity as children of God being eternally loved even in our brokenness, our dignity as women and religious, how we are that eschatological witness to the world, and much more. It was truly a beautiful time together. ”

-Sister Maria Augustine Batres, O.C.D.

Final Professions 2023



Sister Catherine Frances
Brodersen, A.S.C.J.
Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus



Sister Juana Teresa of Our Lady of
Guadalupe Galvan, O.C.D.
*Carmelite Sisters of the
Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles*



Sister Magdalene Grace of the
Eucharist McAndrews, O.C.D.
*Carmelite Sisters of the
Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles*



Sister Marie Carmen of Jesus
Vasko, O.C.D.
*Carmelite Sisters of the
Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles*



Sister Teresa Christine of the
Cross DesGeorges, O.C.D.
*Carmelite Sisters of the
Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles*



Sister Philomena Folse, C.F.R.
*Community of Franciscan Sisters
of the Renewal*



Sister Therese Wong, C.F.R.
*Community of Franciscan Sisters
of the Renewal*



Sister Kelly Schuster, F.M.A.
*Daughters of Mary,
Help of Christians*



Sister Bernadette Solanus
Jackson, D.M.N.
*Daughters of Mary of Nazareth**



Sister Catherine Andre
Liss, D.M.N.
*Daughters of Mary of Nazareth**



Sister Mary Elizabeth
Askew, D.V.M.
*Daughters of the Virgin Mother**



Sister Grace Maria
Hallock, D.L.J.C.
Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ



Sister Basil Marie Smith, O.P.
*Dominican Sisters of Mary,
Mother of the Eucharist*



Sister Mary Aquinas
Cheng, O.P.
*Dominican Sisters of Mary,
Mother of the Eucharist*



Sister Mary Avila
Corpany, O.P.
*Dominican Sisters of Mary,
Mother of the Eucharist*



Sister Anna Joy Tipton, O.P.
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia

Final Professions 2023



Sister Clare Dominic
Pottratz, O.P.
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia



Sister Eva Marie Gorman, O.P.
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia



Sister Felicity Heither, O.P.
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia



Sister Isabelle Marie
Assirati, O.P.
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia



Sister Lucia Christi
Blankartz, O.P.
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia



Sister Maria Lucia
Rosenhoover, O.P.
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia



Sister Mary Joseph
Wittman, O.P.
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia



Sister Moana Grace
Taufa'ao, O.P.
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia



Sister Rachel Marie Boyd, O.P.
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia



Sister Rosaria Bermejo, O.P.
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia



Sister Sofia Thomas
Coulter, O.P.
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia



Sister Veronica Mary of the
Holy Face of Jesus
Carlson, F.D.M.
Franciscan Daughters of Mary



Sister Mary Teresa
Bettag, O.S.F.
*Franciscan Sisters
of Christian Charity*



Sister Jeanne d'Arc
Paquette, F.S.E.
*Franciscan Sisters
of the Eucharist*



Sister June Benedicta
Bell, T.O.R.
*Franciscan Sisters, T.O.R. of
Penance of the Sorrowful Mother*



Sister Philomena Clare,
DeHitta, T.O.R.
*Franciscan Sisters, T.O.R. of
Penance of the Sorrowful Mother*

Final Professions 2023



Sister Mary Angela
Gross, A.C.J.
Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus



Sister Therese Marie
Wanner, A.C.J.
Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus



Sister Bernadette Rose
Spelic, L.S.P.
Little Sisters of the Poor



Sister Mary Emmanuel
Lorbeer, M.S.S.R.
Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa



Sister April Marie Josefina
Candelaria, H.M.S.S.
*Mercedarian Sisters
of the Blessed Sacrament*



Sister Lourdes of the Holy
Eucharist Furnells, H.M.S.S.
*Mercedarian Sisters
of the Blessed Sacrament*



Sister Yvelyn Marie
Bernard, H.M.S.S.
*Mercedarian Sisters
of the Blessed Sacrament*



Sister Agnes Mary
Graves, R.S.M.
*Religious Sisters of Mercy
of Alma, Michigan*



Sister John Marion
Feldner, C.K.
School Sisters of Christ the King



Sister Maria Virgen a
Masiasihen Loreto, S.S.V.M.
*Servants of the Lord and
the Virgin of Matará*



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*Servants of the Lord and
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the Virgin of Matará*

Final Professions 2023



Sister Mary Way of Salvation
Leder, S.S.V.M.
*Servants of the Lord and
the Virgin of Matará*



Sister Anna Palka, S.J.H.
Sisters of Jesus Our Hope



Sister Ann Immaculée
Stiles, S.V.
Sisters of Life



Sister Catherine Joy
Marie Janik, S.V.
Sisters of Life



Sister Fidelity Grace
Thelen, S.V.
Sisters of Life



Sister Gaudia
Maria Magdalena
Matuszewska, S.V.
Sisters of Life



Sister Mary Grace
Langrell, S.V.
Sisters of Life



Sister Mary Pieta
Breen, S.V.
Sisters of Life



Sister Mercy Marie
Sweeney, S.V.
Sisters of Life



Sister Zélie Maria Louis
Schmitt, S.V.
Sisters of Life



Sister M. Evangeline
Rutherford, O.S.F.
*Sisters of St. Francis
of Perpetual Adoration*



Sister Ana Verónica Fossi
Paez-Pumar, C.S.
*Sisters of the Company
of the Savior**



Sister Belén Menéndez
Botella, C.S.
*Sisters of the Company
of the Savior**

*“Remain in my love... I have told you
this so that my joy may be in you and
your joy may be complete.” - John 15:10-11*

**CMSWR Affiliate*



Fostering Vocations at the NCDVD Convention

Sister Mary Bendyna, O.P. and Mary Parker represented CMSWR at the annual convention of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors (NCDVD), held this year at the Immaculate Conception Retreat and Conference Center in Huntington, New York from August 28-September 1, 2023. They were joined by sisters from several CMSWR communities (pictured above). In the crowds of priests in black clerics, the sisters certainly stood out!

You may ask, “Why would sisters be at an event for vocation directors whose primary task is to help young men discern the priesthood?” Many of the priests also asked this question as they met the sisters. The response is quite practical. Young women who sense that they may have a vocation to religious life may not know any sisters. Looking for guidance, they often turn to the diocesan vocation director. CMSWR attended the conference to assist these vocation directors in helping young women learn more about religious life and discern their vocations as well. CMSWR also provided Vocation Directories and other resources.

Honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe by Supporting CMSWR

Did you know that Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of all America and Star of the First and New Evangelization, is also the patroness of CMSWR and many of its programs?

The CMSWR house of studies in Rome is named the *Domus Sanctae Mariae Guadalupe*, which translates “House of Holy Mary of Guadalupe.” This is fitting since St. John Paul II declared Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas, the “Star of the First and New Evangelization.” The Domus was founded in 1999 in response to St. John Paul II’s call for sisters to study in Rome, in the heart of the Church, as a part of the New Evangelization.

The new Sancta Maria Giving Circle, which is also under the patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe, recognizes the monthly benefactors of CMSWR. These monthly donors provide a sure support for CMSWR programs, such as those hosted at the Domus, the Formators Workshop, and the new Called by Love initiative for young sisters.



In gratitude for the members of the Sancta Maria Giving Circle, a Mass will be offered for them and their intentions each month at the Domus Sanctae Mariae Guadalupe. They will also continue to be remembered in the prayers of the members of CMSWR.

If you would like to become a monthly benefactor and continue Our Lady’s work in the New Evangelization in America and beyond, please visit the CMSWR website or use the remittance envelope included with this issue of *Consecrata*.

Domus Summer Renewal Program: *Beauty in the Eternal City*

The Domus Summer Renewal Program is one of the programs offered at the Domus Sanctae Mariae Guadalupe, CMSWR's house of studies in Rome. This program is open to all perpetually professed sisters in CMSWR communities.

Recognizing that beauty helps bring the soul closer to God, the 2023 program focused on the theme, *Beauty in the Eternal City*. This three-week experience emphasized the beauty of Rome's art and architecture, the beauty of sacred music, the beauty of its saints and martyrs, the beauty of its literature, the beauty of religious life, and the beauty of the Church, and how they all bear witness to the beauty of God.

The program included talks on each of these subjects as well as guided spiritual pilgrimages to churches and historical sites where the apostles and saints lived and died. In addition to sites in Rome, the sisters visited Assisi, Nettuno, and Castel Gondolfo. As the sisters will attest, pilgrimages to these sacred places helps renew and strengthen the soul.



A Reflection by Sister Marie-Aimee Martorana, O.C.D.

Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles:

Two Dominicans, two Carmelites, two Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate and a Franciscan walk into a church... It sounds like the beginning of a Catholic joke, but this time it was a true story. We all were in Rome for the Summer Renewal Program at the Domus Sanctae Mariae Guadalupe, CMSWR's house of studies in Rome. This year's theme was *Beauty in the Eternal City*. Sister M. Regina Pacis Coury, F.S.G.M. was our guide in Rome, showing us the myriad of ways that beauty inspires our faith and how our Faith inspires beauty.

The Summer Renewal Program started with miracles and continued to deliver grace upon grace each day. The theme of Beauty was presented in talks and woven throughout our days in our experiences of the liturgy, art, architecture, the saints, and our own consecrated life. One of my favorite things about Rome was that there were saints everywhere we turned, and there were so many places where the saints had walked, prayed, and died. This was so clear as we attended a Papal Mass, visited St. Paul Outside the Walls, and the catacombs of the Roman martyrs. I had a very real sense of adding my fingerprints and footprints to the long train of Christians who have gone before me into eternity. The program was only three weeks but its effect on my mind and heart is forever.



CMSWR Regional Workshop: *Encountering the Eucharist through Scripture*

It has been a long-standing tradition for CMSWR communities in different parts of the United States to host regional workshops on topics or themes relevant to religious life today. These workshops, which are open to any sisters in the area, provide opportunities for friendship and collaboration with one another.

A Reflection by Sister Janelle Buettner, M.S.
Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln:

CMSWR communities in the Midwest participated in a CMSWR Regional Workshop focusing on the Eucharistic Revival. The Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln hosted the workshop at St. Patrick Church, a local parish in Lincoln, Nebraska on September 2, 2023. The event included speakers from the Emmaus Institute. The sisters gathered together for prayer, comradery, and reflection. The communities who attended the workshop included the School Sisters of Christ the King, the Franciscan Sisters Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother, the Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln, and the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Mercy of the Diocese of Lincoln.

The focus of the one-day workshop was the Eucharist and the crisis of many Catholics not believing that Our Lord is truly present, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Blessed Sacrament. To help sisters better understand Sacred Scripture so they can share the faith with their fellow Catholics, the father and son duo of Chad and Vern Steinen from the Emmaus Institute, provided food for thought and gave great insights into the Eucharist and Sacred Scripture. The Steinens encouraged the sisters to “walk” with Jesus on their journey to His Eucharistic presence.

Father Christopher Goodwin, a priest of the Diocese of Lincoln who is currently serving at the Apostolic Nunciature in Washington, DC, was back to celebrate Mass. He encouraged the sisters to “be the Eucharistic Revival,” to allow Christ’s presence to be with them in their Eucharistic Communion, and allow themselves to be Christ’s presence to all those whom they encounter. In addition to Mass, the sisters also had a Eucharistic Holy Hour, small group discussion, and time for sisters to enjoy one another’s company.





Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious

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During the National Assembly, CMSWR members and sisters from the St. Louis area gathered together at the Cathedral Basilica for an evening of Eucharistic Adoration, Vespers, and a Eucharistic procession.