

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT AUGUST 2017

### Our national context

To our members who live in the Houston area, we stand with you in prayer and solidarity at this difficult time. May God protect you and hold you in the palm of his hand.

In the wake of the Charlottesville violence, Father Mark Francis, C.S.V. put into words what is within many of our hearts, so I share his message with you. [Francis is president of Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, on whose campus NRVC has its offices.]

We cannot look at the violence in Charlottesville without a sense of grief and sadness--not just about the injuries people have suffered and the loss of life--but also about what is happening in the United States. And, not only Charlottesville has offered us discouraging evidence of how much our national commitment to sharing our country and its values with one another is in jeopardy during these times. The increasing violence we have seen against our sisters and brothers of the Jewish and Muslim communities, the gun violence that plagues our [Chicago] streets and a growing unwillingness to welcome immigrants who come to live in our country testify to the danger we face as we attempt to build a society that advances the common good.

Catholic Theological Union joins the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (U.S.C.C.B), religious leaders everywhere, [the NRVC], and all Americans who deplore what has happened in Charlottesville and what is happening in the United States. In the light of our faith that emphasizes that all human beings are made in God's likeness and our common commitment to equality enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, we will continue to advance dialogue among peoples.... We remember the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—*“Reform will not happen, nor the cure for racism and other oppressive injustices be found, unless we make the reform happen, unless we find the cure.”* Our work together goes on.

### Connecting with national organizations

I was invited to and attended the following conferences and want to share a few highlights:

**Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America**, held in Orlando, Florida from July 1-4. During this gathering of Catholic leaders, which was organized by the U.S.C.C.B., I attended breakout sessions on vocation and formation issues. It was an amazing gathering, with over 3,000 participants. I was able to network with new leaders of national organizations and reconnect with former colleagues. Additional highlights included:

- Meeting and speaking with Cardinal Joseph Tobin, C.S.S.R., archbishop of Newark, New Jersey and head of the U.S.C.C.B. Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations
- Meeting and reconnecting with Alexia Kelley, the executive director for Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities (FADICA)

- Hearing wonderful presenters, including Cardinal Donald Wuerl of the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., who received a standing ovation as he spoke enthusiastically about the call to evangelization and about issues related to immigration [Cardinal Wuerl was the Vatican's relator general of the 2012 World Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization and has published and spoken extensively on the subject.]
- Meeting up with some of our new and former NRVC board members

**Conference of Major Superiors of Men**, held in Phoenix August 1-4. It was an honor to be invited, included, and introduced. Some highlights were:

- Meeting and sharing with Brother Ronnie Hingle, S.C., board chair for NRVC, and his community's leadership team
- Meeting with former NRVC Executive Director Brother Paul Bednarczyk, C.S.C.
- The focus on the brother's vocation
- Connecting with the Knights of Columbus and being invited to the group's national office in Connecticut
- The wonderful singing, connected to a communal spirit I personally felt with all my brothers

**Leadership Conference of Women Religious** held in Orlando, Florida from August 8-11. It was an honor to be invited, included, and introduced. Some highlights were:

- Sitting with a table of other executive directors for table discussion, including Sister Jane Wakahiu, L.S.O.S.F., interim director of the Catholic Sisters Program of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
- Networking at our NRVC booth and being introduced to many participants by NRVC director of member relations and services, Sister Deborah Borneman, SS.C.M.
- Reconnecting with other leaders from my previous positions and sharing the wonderful work of NRVC
- Participating in the breakout lunch and dinner with the Hilton Family Foundation staff members

## **Organizational program participation**

I was able to hit the ground running and attend the following programs:

**NRVC Vocations Ambassadors Program** held June 9-12 at Holy Cross College in South Bend, Indiana. Impressions and highlights:

- It is an amazing program that merits continuation, as the program provides a comprehensive service to NRVC membership.
- The vocation team concept was helpful to each of those attending.

**NRVC Summer Institute** held at DePaul University in the Chicago Loop. Some impressions and highlights:

- It is critical for vocation ministers to understand the content in NRVC’s core curriculum, including candidate assessment, ethics, psycho-sexual issues, self-care, etc.
- It was wonderful to meet both presenters and those taking the workshops.

## **National office update**

Each person in the office works very hard and has been in what I call “over-drive” during the absence of an executive director. I have been encouraging them to stay healthy as they contribute to NRVC. I continue to watch and learn from each person and become more familiar with each person’s gifts and talents:

- Sister Debora Borneman, SS.C.M., director of member relations and services
- Mark Teresi, director of NRVC development and director of National Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations
- Ms. Debbie Prieto, P.A., staff assistant
- Marge Argyelan, database administrator
- Maureen Cetera, director of finance and operations

We also had a student intern this summer, Mani Diaz, and he has been very valuable during those busy months. Thank you, Mani! I am truly impressed by all those who work within the office and with the vast network of church and professional organizations with which NRVC interacts.

Overall, it has been a very productive and exciting beginning as the new executive director, and I’m grateful to work with a wonderful group of committed individuals.

### **Board of directors meeting in August**

The NRVC has completed a five-year strategic plan, and the board will begin a new planning process when we gather in October. In addition, I am truly humbled to serve with such an enthusiastic and invested board.

The NRVC, all of us, are here to help you, members of the NRVC, to implement our mission of *promoting vocation awareness, invitation, and discernment*, while providing multiple professional growth opportunities to our members. Our labors are for the greater good, uplifting the call to religious life as a brother, sister, or priest.