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VOCATION MINISTRY AT THE CROSSROADS

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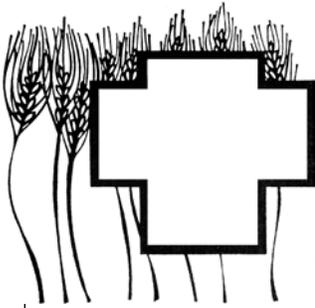
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HORIZON

HORIZON began as a vocation journal in 1975. Today, as a quarterly publication, it serves a readership of more than 2000 in the U.S. and other English-speaking countries.

HORIZON serves as a resource:

- To assist vocation directors in their professional and personal growth as ministers;
- To educate and engage educators, directors of retreat centers, formation personnel, community leadership, bishops, campus ministers, librarians, priests, religious, laity, and anyone interested in vocations and their role in vocation ministry.

HORIZON has a threefold purpose:

- To provide timely and contemporary articles relative to vocation ministry;
- To provide an opportunity for the exchange of ideas on pertinent issues in the field of vocations;
- To highlight some of the current resources available.

National Religious Vocation Conference

HORIZON is published by the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC). The NRVC is an organization of men and women committed to the fostering and discernment of vocations. It provides services for professional vocation directors and others who are interested and involved in vocation ministry. It proclaims the viability of religious life and serves as a prophetic, creative, life-giving force in today's church.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Have Merton, will travel

WHILE I'VE ALWAYS ADMIRED Thomas Merton—I cut my teeth on his peace movement writings—I don't know why it took so long for me to sit and read the entirety of *Seven Storey Mountain*. But this summer, at last, I read the whole thing, carrying him with me on vacation through the ample, flat farms of downstate Illinois, musing over his international childhood as the Ozark Mountains appeared on the horizon, and letting the hot, red dust of Arizona blow over his words as we reached our westernmost destination at the Grand Canyon (a place to truly revel in God's grandeur!). Finally, in a late-night session in Ohio, I finished Merton's vocation story. And I'm still thinking about its meaning in the contemporary world.

Based on what he wrote as a fresh, 31-year-old monk, I think he might have urged religious communities to be true to their calling, just as he struggled as a young man to be true to his calling. I think he would have been hard on them when he saw failings, just as he was hard on his own shortcomings.

Those two themes from *Seven Storey Mountain* are themes that also appear, after a fashion, in the essays of this edition. We bring you the reflections of three people who presented at the 2010 "Moving Forward in Hope" symposium. These essays are available in their entirety at nrvc.net, and we present them here to bring them to a wider audience and to put the questions and suggestions of these three thinkers into the context, too, of some practical actions. Just as Thomas Merton—like every vocation candidate—needed to come down from the moun-

tain of pondering a vocation and take concrete action, so, too, do religious communities need to leave the rarified world of reading and speculating and choose a course of action. To make no choices, to take no bold action to build a future—that can be a choice, however hidden, to choose death.

HORIZON and the National Religious Vocation Conference choose life. The 2009 NRVC-CARA study provided concrete information about vocation trends. Ever since then, religious communities (including our first three writers) have been discussing and analyzing the meaning of the study, and now many communities—having pondered what the study results mean for their institutes—have taken steps to ensure a future. In this edition, we shine a light on the action steps of the Carmelite Sisters for the Infirm and Aged and the Congregation of Divine Providence. They are very distinct communities. Each has studied the NRVC-CARA results and has taken action in keeping with their own particularities.

To return, then, to Thomas Merton, my impression of him early on as I read his book was: Can this guy ever write! Too bad he's not around anymore to write for *VISION* or *HORIZON*. But I bet he'd laugh at that thought. *This is my moment, our moment, in today's church, with the great minds and hearts of 2011. It's up to all of us in vocation ministry to read, reflect, pray and act—all in keeping with our true callings.*

—Carol Schuck Scheiber, editor, cscheiber@nrvc.net



Religious communities have experienced seismic change in recent decades, and now the opportunity to build a future lies before us if we listen and act.

The NRVC-CARA study and its meaning for religious life

BY BROTHER SEÁN D. SAMMON, FMS

WHEN THE NRVC-CARA STUDY of new members of religious communities came out in 2009, many in religious life took a keen interest in the findings. The survey results have many implications, and the conclusions to which the information points vary from institute to institute. To explore the meaning behind the numbers, the National Religious Vocation Conference brought together a diverse group of church professionals in September 2010 to study the report and suggest new directions for vocation ministry. The symposium was called “Moving Forward in Hope.” While the full keynote addresses of the symposium are available online at nrvc.net, we are also presenting them here in condensed form in order to bring them to a wider audience and to encourage discussion of and action on critical issues in religious life. The

Brother Seán Sammon, FMS was the superior general of the Marist Brothers from 2001 until 2009. He has also served his congregation as vicar general, and provincial of one of its U.S. provinces. A clinical psychologist, he is known as an author and teacher who writes and speaks on contemporary issues of religious life. Presently he is a scholar in residence at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, NY.



following talk by Brother Sean Sammon, FMS was one of the first presentations.

FOR AT LEAST THE LAST 50 YEARS, both here in the U.S. and throughout our world, men and women religious have struggled with the effects of a paradigm shift in understanding the meaning and purpose of their way of life. Vatican II was a seismic event; when the dust settled, we all found ourselves standing in a different place.

The picture is further complicated by the fact that all that has transpired during the last half century or so has been reflected within religious congregations through the experience of three different and distinct generations. The oldest, whose number grows smaller with each passing year, remembers what this way of life looked like prior to Vatican II. They can recall the Latin Mass, as well as the day when the priest turned from facing the wall and began to slowly introduce the vernacular into the celebration of the Eucharist.

A second group came to maturity as John XXIII was calling for the Council to take place. Many of them were quickly immersed in what is known as modernity. Putting aside certain privileges and casting off the symbols and ways of living

that had separated men and women religious from the People of God, this generation of religious was challenged to face the same questions about life and meaning as everyone else.

The renewal questions of 2009 and 2010, however, are not those of the 1960s or the 1980s. Today a new generation, many of whose members lack a strong Catholic identity as defined by the practices of the past, is looking at religious life and mission through eyes shaped by a different world.

The young men and women in the 2009 study, “Recent Vocations to Religious Life: A Report for the National Religious Vocation Conference,” (conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate¹) are members of this third generation and, like their contemporaries, they appear to have lived with questions since childhood. They are now looking for some answers and insist on having clear signs that mark them as religious men and women. If you or I were to speak with them directly, we would discover quickly that Vatican II is someone else’s history.

The results of the NRVC-CARA study should give us a better understanding of at least some of the members of this most recent generation and help us to decide how best to introduce the generation as a whole to the possibility of a vocation to religious life. At the same time, we would benefit from asking ourselves what insights the results of this study can



During his address, Brother Sean Sammon, FMS explored the changes in religious life and pointed to some steps that might help communities cope with forthcoming challenges.

offer us in terms of the process of renewal in which so many of us have been involved for almost a half century. For just as a generation that was young in religious life during the years immediately after the Council made its contribution to the work of renewal, there is no reason to believe that the current younger generation will not do the same.

In this address, I plan to approach the topic of religious life and the results of the NRVC-CARA study from three perspectives. First of all, I’d like to look at some of the findings of the project within the context of the 10-year investigation of religious life and its future carried out by Father David Nygren, CM and Sister Miriam Ukeritis, CSJ². In so doing, I want to point out that a number of the findings of this 1992 study are being mirrored in one way or another in the results of the present study.

Next, I’ll look at identity in light of the study’s findings and mention charism as an important part of that identity. Many Catholics, including most men and women religious, have been struggling for quite some time with the place and

purpose of religious life in a post-Vatican II church. The NRVC-CARA study reminds us that the most important questions associated with this struggle are those that deal with spirituality and meaning. Finally, I will make some recommendations for action.

Who is coming and why?

Let's begin with the results of the NRVC-CARA project. They tell us that those coming to religious formation today appear to be better educated than candidates were in the past; a number also have had some work or ministry experience. There are no surprises here since the age at which these new entrants began formation is older than in the past.

Candidates are coming also from a much more varied ethnic background than in the past. Hispanic/Latino(a), Pacific Islander/Asian, and African or African American participants made up part of the study's population, along with those classified as Caucasian. This profile is obviously different than the current ethnic makeup of most congregations with a presence in the U.S. We must ask ourselves: as these trends continue what changes will need to be made in custom and practice to accommodate increased multiculturalism?

More than two-thirds of those who participated in the study had thought about a vocation to consecrated life prior to age 21, and half or better had entertained the idea during their high school years, prior to age 18. While some women reported having considered this way of life as early as age 14, the majority of the men identified the college years as their time for discernment.

Finally, some prior personal contact with a member or members of the congregation they eventually entered continues to be important. For most of the men, this contact usually took place within an institutional setting such as a school; in contrast, for most women, more often than not a friend or advisor directed them to one group or another.

What drew this new generation to consecrated life? First and foremost, a sense of call and a desire for spiritual growth. Wanting to be of service and live as part of a community were also mentioned. What made them choose one congregation over another? The obvious sense of joy, zeal for mission, and humanity they found among its members were all cited as important reasons for joining a particular group.

Do differences exist between the members of this new generation and those who entered religious life as Vatican II was coming to a close? Apparently so, with the greatest differences falling under these four categories: desire to belong



Moving Forward in Hope participants take part in a liturgy.

to a group whose commitment and fidelity to the church is unquestioned, the wearing of a religious habit, the form of community life, and style of prayer.

The last major study of religious life

The NRVC-CARA study followed another major study of religious life conducted almost 20 years prior. In the fall of 1992 David Nygren and Miriam Ukeritis, a Vincentian priest and Sister of Saint Joseph respectively, released the results of their 10-year-long investigation of religious life in the United States. Known commonly as the Future of Religious Life in the United States or FORUS study, this Lilly Foundation funded project included input from approximately 10,000 women and men religious and was guided by a board whose members reflected a variety of viewpoints about religious life and its future in this country. Once work on the major focus of the study had come to a close, a supplementary project was undertaken aimed at better understanding the nature of religious leadership. Harvard's David McClelland served as a member of the team.

The two researchers identified several factors that, in their opinion, were working to ensure the future of religious life in this country; at the same time, they discussed those attitudes and behaviors that appeared to be undermining the ability of consecrated life to arrive at the same end. They also pointed out that the 1960s and 70s in the United States,

referred to by some as a period of “deconstruction,” was a time when structures of American life, industry, family, and religion were simply taken apart. This phenomenon and the post-Vatican II world came together and contributed to the massive unraveling of long standing forms and structures of religious life. Institutions sponsored or staffed in the past by men and women religious experienced a dramatic decline. Many of these facilities had up until that moment provided the members of those groups involved with a sense of corporate identity.

Nygren and Ukeritis reported that religious congregations with a strong sense of identity included men and women who, regardless of age, had an awareness of the distinctiveness of their vocation, as well as the capacity to enter into the lives of others for the sake of those whom they were serving and not solely to meet their own needs. Personal needs did not consistently take precedence over the goals of the group. Longing for union with God, these individuals were committed to their congregations where, by all objective standards, the costs of their work and membership were very high.

Leadership also plays a key role in the identity of any religious congregation, with the most effective leaders being those deeply grounded in faith, and characterized by the qualities of objectivity and compassion. They also sensed the impact that their group could have. These women and men led with a moral authority; having over time won the trust of the members of the group, they had been given the right to lead.³

What is needed for real renewal

The work of Nygren/Ukeritis, as well as the findings of the present study, would lead us to conclude that the genuine renewal of religious life has far more to do with being in love with Jesus Christ than it has to do with anything else. Throughout the history of religious life three tasks have been associated with effective renewal:

- 1) a reappropriation of the founding charism,
- 2) a reading of the signs of the times, and
- 3) the experience of personal conversion on the part of a significant number of the members.

During times of reform, reappropriating the charism becomes the primary focus, while an accurate reading of the signs of the times takes precedence at those moments of paradigm shift. But a revolution of the heart on the part of the membership is always necessary.

The present period of renewal appears to be one in which the dominant image of religious life is shifting. At the same time, more familiar forms of this state of life are also being renewed. We need to be patient with the process but not afraid to make decisions when they must be made. In any process of identity formation there is a time for exploration and crisis; there is also a time of choice and decision making.

Clear identity is essential

The results of the NRVC-CARA study appear to indicate that young people are more attracted to those groups with a strong sense of identity⁴: those for whom spirituality, life in community, a sense of belonging to the wider church, and a spirit of joy are evident. These qualities may also exist in those groups with fewer or no vocations, but they may be more difficult to identify. Young people are joining groups they believe visibly stand for something; they judge them to be worth the gift of their lives.

Young people are joining groups they believe visibly stand for something; they judge them to be worth the gift of their lives.

On a personal level, the word *identity* can be defined popularly as knowing “who you are and where you are going in life.” When the word is applied to an organization, however, we must consider three elements. First its character; what do its members cherish and hold dear? Next, what makes it different from other groups, especially those similar in purpose or that perform the same work? And, finally, what are the values within the group that have stood the test of time?

When the subject of identity is discussed within the context of consecrated life, charism plays an important role in helping to address all three points just mentioned. And yet the meaning of *charism* itself is easily misunderstood. Some use the word to describe a type of personality or to characterize certain movements, while others insist it refers to specific works thought to be in keeping with the inspiration of a founder.

When used in reference to a religious institute, however, the word *charism* takes on a meaning different from when applied to an individual. There are two reasons for this distinction: first of all, an institute’s charism has stood the test of time, and, second, it has been shaped by many different

people. The presence of these two factors—endured over time and shaped by many different people—moves a charism from the realm of the personal to that of the universal church.

Charism, for our purposes, is *a free gift of the Spirit given for the good of the church and the use of all*. It should not be confused with grace. A charism is bestowed because of God's love for the world, grace because of God's unconditional love for the person.⁵

During the years following Vatican II, the writings of Paul VI contributed significantly to our knowledge about charisms and helped clarify their meaning for our day and age. Pope Paul VI said the following: "The charism of religious life, far from being an impulse born of 'flesh and blood,' or derived from a mentality which conforms itself to the modern world, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is always at work within the Church."

If we are seriously interested in the renewal of our congregations and institutes today, we will need to put aside excuses such as age, temperament, fear of the future, and a thousand other reasons and get on with the task at hand.

He went on to identify several characteristic signs of a charism's presence: fidelity to the Lord, attention to the signs of the times, bold initiatives, constancy in the giving of oneself, humility in bearing with adversities, and a willingness to be part of the church. The charisms that entered the church and world through our founders, therefore, have to be made up of much more than certain works thought to be faithful to their original vision, more than a style of prayer or a particular spirituality — as important as both might be—and surely more than a composite of the qualities that marked the life of one or another founder or foundress.

We might say that the charism of any of our institutes or congregations is nothing more and nothing less than the presence of the Holy Spirit. And allowing that Spirit to work in and through us can give rise to some surprising outcomes.

Genuine renewal comes at a cost, and at times the price we are asked to pay can be very high indeed. However if we are seriously interested in the renewal of our congregations and institutes today, we will need to put aside excuses such as age, temperament, fear of the future, and a thousand other reasons and get on with the task at hand. But first of all we

must answer this question: Do you and I really believe that the Spirit of God, who was so alive and active in your founding person and mine, longs to live and breathe in you and me today? The results of the NRVC-CARA study indicate that this is just the type of challenge for which young people considering our way of life are looking.

Some suggestions for action

Since the days of Vatican II, religious life in the U.S. has been moving through a time of significant transition. One outcome has been confusion about the nature and purpose of this way of life. The results of the NRVC-CARA study provide us with an opportunity to address some of this confusion and in the process revisit the plans and programs that we have in place for encouraging vocations to congregations of sisters, brothers and priests. For example, we could benefit from not only asking ourselves whether or not the last half century was a necessary time of "falling apart," but also wondering if this process had to take place if we were to move with freedom into the period that lies just ahead. Another question: are those upcoming years meant to be a time of experimentation, a period we can use to find answers to the challenges that have been ours during the last 50 or so years?

For example, the findings indicate that there are thoughtful young men and women considering religious life today. Our challenge is to identify them, and to reach out and invite them. What can you and I do to establish the necessary lines of communication between this population and our congregations? The report tells us that we can accomplish that end by creating a "culture of vocation promotion" within our groups. A few practical suggestions are as follows.

- **Support full-time vocation promoter**

To do so, we must first ensure that at least one full-time vocation promoter is named for each province or district in the congregation. However, we must also write a new job description for this person. He or she is not to be made solely responsible for tracking down and inviting suitable applicants to join the group, but rather his or her chief work is to help all who make up the province or district take on personal responsibility for that task.

What about those groups that might insist that they cannot afford to free up at least one person full-time for the work of vocation promotion? They would do well to remember this point: if General Motors or IBM faced the personnel

crisis that we have had on our hands for the last few decades they would have long ago had their best people out recruiting men and women for a career with their corporations. I do not mean to imply that religious life is a corporation, but if IBM can employ some of its best people in the work of recruiting, hopefully we can also and with good results. At the same time, each of us must learn to take some responsibility for this work. More than a few of us continue to be much too shy about inviting people personally to our way of life.

- **Make contact with young adults**

Second, the report indicates that prior knowledge of a group or some contact with its members is an important factor in the decision-making process of young people considering religious life. It goes on to explain how helpful “Come and See” programs and the like have been. In addition to what is suggested in the report, all who are interested in promoting reli-

gious life and its mission—clergy, laity, members of religious congregations—need to take advantage of those opportunities available to educate as wide a population as possible about what has happened to consecrated life since the Council.

Where opportunities do not present themselves, we need to create some. An example might be to offer during a parish adult education series a course on religious life, yesterday and today. In so doing, we might consider targeting parents especially. They were once one of the strongest allies of those encouraging vocations; they need to be brought into that same position once again. That change can only come about if we help parents and other family members appreciate where religious life stands today, as well as the challenges it and our church must face during the years ahead.

- **Use modern media**

The Catholic Church to a large extent appears to have lagged

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Those in charge of formation must be very familiar with the path of seeking God to accompany others on this journey...

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— Vita Consecrata, 1996

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behind several other religious communions when it comes to the use of modern media. The target audience of a great deal of modern media is young people. As a group we need to educate ourselves about the resources available in this area and take advantage of them. We are significantly less visible in our culture and society than we were 50 years ago. The use of media can give us greater visibility and, if employed effectively, help us to educate a wide audience about our mission and way of life.

• Explore options for live-in experiences

The NRVC-CARA study results indicate that among those who have entered formation programs the idea of a religious

It is our responsibility to seek a common ground for dialogue, a place where different points of view are respected.

vocation was present as early as their high school and college years. And yet, in many of our congregations the opportunity for a live-in experience of formation of any significant length is not offered until university

studies are complete. We may do well to consider offering such opportunities sooner.

• Become more visible

The results of the NRVC-CARA study are clear: many young people coming to religious life today welcome some visible sign that distinguishes them as a man or woman religious. By way of contrast, a number of us from older generations of religious have, to a large extent, become invisible in the places in which we serve and the communities in which we live. If we want people to be aware of our way of life and mission, many of us must do a better job with visibility. Some signs that we have used to date have not been effective; and the argument that the way in which we live and carry out our mission should be sign enough has, for good reason, fallen short of the mark for we are blessed to work with many dedicated laypersons whose lives and work are an example to all.

Groups that have no effective sign or symbol that lets others know they are members of a religious congregation could benefit from an open and free discussion among community members about the topic. Each group must ultimately make its own decisions in this area, but if we are truly in-

terested in improving the witness value of our way of life, a number of us will need to find new and more effective ways to be more visible.

• Seek common ground

Finally, those of us in religious life profess publicly to radically live the Gospel. And yet, we live today in a world and church that is badly divided. There have always been, are now, and will always be men and women of good will who have differences of opinion. Such a situation is surely true in religious life today. As a consequence, it is our responsibility to seek a common ground for dialogue, a place where different points of view are respected, where honest debate can take place, where we can learn together the best ways forward. In so doing we will take up what is our true role in the Church.

In closing, I pose this question to those who have persevered in religious life over the past few decades. One hundred years from now, people will write the story of this time in history. What will they say about us? That we showed the same courage as those religious who came before; that we were creative in finding solutions to the challenges that faced us, that we were willing to look at points of view at odds with our own and to make bold, even unexpected decisions in the process of renewal, that we loved this way of life? The answers to those questions are really up to us. ■

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1. Sister Mary Bendyna, RSM. "Recent Vocations to Religious Life: A Report for the National Religious Vocation Conference." *www.nrv.net*. National Religious Vocation Conference. 2009.
 2. Father David J. Nygren, CM and Sister Miriam D. Ukeritis, CSJ. *The Future of Religious Orders in the United States: Transformation and Commitment*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993.
 3. *Ibid.*, pp. 246-247.
 4. See Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM. *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a new Ecclesial and Cultural Context*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2000. See also Schneiders' *Selling All: Commitment, Consecrated Celibacy, and Community in Catholic Religious Life*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2001. Schneiders makes the point that celibate chastity is the sign that most distinguishes ours from other vocations in the church; it is central to our identity as women and men religious.
 5. See John C. Haughey, Ed. *Revisiting the Idea of Vocation: Theological Explorations*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press, 2004.

Religious communities have learned a great deal since the early days of renewal. Today it's time for bold decisions and action so that the life can be a witness to the possibility of human goodness under the action of God's grace.

How can we strengthen the witness of religious life?

BY SISTER DORIS GOTTEMOELLER, RSM

IN HIS ADDRESS to the Moving Forward in Hope gathering (page 4), Brother Seán drew us into a deeper reflection on the challenges and opportunities inherent in religious life in the United States today. By way of response, I would like to address two questions: What have we learned from the journey of the last 50 years? And what is the problem we're trying to solve? Stating the problem accurately sets us in the direction of the solution.

What we've learned

What have we learned from the journey of apostolic religious life in the United States over the last 50 years? First of all, not every circumstance that brought religious life to its present state was within our control. The dramatic decrease in the size

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of the average Catholic family is one example: parents with two children are not as eager and proud of having one of their offspring embrace a celibate way of life as were parents who had six or eight children. Also the changing role of women in society provided young women with far more career opportunities than previously. Further the prevailing culture of secularism and materialism, the strains of post-modernity such as individualism and skepticism about over-arching narratives, are part of the air we breathe. We can—and do—try to live lives in opposition to these cultural messages, but we can't escape contact with them.

Changes flowed from obedience

A second learning is that the church at large has little or no idea what prompted our changes. The short explanation is that we embarked on a process of change because the church mandated it in the Council's Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life (*Perfectae Caritatis*) and the associated norms for its implementation. We didn't change out of defiance, but in obedience to the church's direction. Many of the practices and customs prior to Vatican II encouraged immaturity, contributed to a public image of naiveté and irrelevance and were even psychologically harmful. However, looking back, we can see that we were so taken up in the changes we were making, that we rarely thought of trying to



Sister Doris Gottemoeller, RSM listens to symposium participants.

explain them to the parishioners in the pews.

A third learning is that the model of experimentation that was mandated by the Vatican documents was never effective. In any social science experiment there is an experimental group and a control group. At the end of the experiment the impact of the two groups can be assessed and thus the experiment is evaluated. But in the case of experimentation in religious congregations, we were all mandated to participate. Thus there was never a control group to permit evaluation. And if, after three or five years of the new practice, e.g., driving cars or going out without a companion, the results were not exactly what had been intended, it was impossible to return to the status quo ante. I think it's safe to say that our 'experiments' were never subjected to the rigorous evaluation which the term implies. There were unintended consequences which would also have figured in any assessment. There is much more that could be said about our learnings, but let me move on to the second, and more important, question.

Focus on the proper question

What is the problem we're trying to solve today, the question we're trying to answer? It's not how can we increase the number of new recruits for our religious congregations. That is a self-serving question which focuses on the needs of the existing congregations and which only has the potential to engage the energy of present members. Rather the question is

how can we strengthen the witness of consecrated life within the whole church? Put this way, the question has the potential to engage the energy of the whole church (and justifies the representative cross-section of the church that is present here this weekend).

In his 1994 Apostolic Exhortation on Consecrated Life, *Vita Consecrata*—which he addressed to the whole church—Pope John Paul II cites in several places the gift that this life is to the church: "In effect," he says, "the consecrated life is at the very heart of the church as a decisive element for her mission, since it 'manifests the inner nature of the Christian calling.'" He adds, the consecrated life "is a precious and necessary gift for the present and future of the People of God, since it is an intimate part of her life, her holiness and her mission." So what is at stake here is something that contributes in a unique and irreplaceable way to the life, the holiness, and the mission of the church.

A radical gift of self

What does consecrated life signify and contribute to the People of God by its very existence? Let me suggest three unique proclamations that consecrated life makes. The first is that God is worthy of the total gift of oneself. In the words of Paul VI's *Evangelica Testificatio* (June 29, 1971), religious life presents the church "with [a] privileged witness of a constant seeking for God, of an undivided love for Christ alone, and of an absolute dedication to the growth of His kingdom. Without this concrete sign there would be a danger that the charity which animates the entire church would grow cold, that the salvific paradox of the Gospel would be blunted, and that the 'salt' of faith would lose its savor in a world undergoing secularization" (#3). We need to make visible that, because God's love for us is so compelling, we want to commit ourselves totally to God in a life of celibacy, poverty, obedience, prayer, ministry and community.

May diverse charisms blossom

A second truth we proclaim is about the church, namely, that the church includes a diversity of charisms within the one communion. After reiterating the common call to holiness of all Christians *Vita Consecrata* goes on to assert that diversity is also a work of the Spirit. "It is the Spirit who establishes the church as an organic communion in the diversity of vocations, charisms and ministries." The vocations of lay, clerical, and religious life are described as paradigmatic choices, "inas-



Sister Donna Markham, OP addresses participants.

much as all particular vocations . . . are in one way or another derived from them or lead back to them, in accordance with the richness of God's gift" (#31). The diversity represented by these three fundamental options corresponds perfectly with the idea of the church as communion, which is the premise of post-Vatican II ecclesiology.

Diversity is also present within consecrated life, as well as in the three fundamental states of life. Religious institutes may be clerical, non-clerical, or mixed; monastic, mendicant, evangelical, or apostolic; contemplative or active; pontifical or diocesan, ancient or modern. New institutes arise, and old ones pass away. Whatever the canonical form or historical situation, religious life is inherently counter cultural. It will always be the choice of the few rather than the many. However, it is an enduring way of life that seems to flourish in one epoch or cultural milieu and diminish in another, only to revive again with new vigor. Its enduring presence reminds us of something essential to the nature of the church, namely, its wonderful, God-given variety within profound unity.

Human goodness with God's grace

A third truth which religious life represents is the reminder of the possibility of human goodness under the action of God's grace. The previous two points referred to revelations about God and about the church; this is a truth about ourselves, namely, that, with God's help, we human beings are capable of

living in a genuinely counter cultural, selfless, God-oriented way. This presumes, of course, that our community life and good works have some degree of visibility and that we are able to give words to the faith and hope and love that is within us. Our human weaknesses and failings are all too evident; it serves no purpose to deny them. Our good works should be even more evident, as we address the pressing needs of God's people today.

Renewing the vision of consecrated life laid out here will ask a great deal of present-day religious. Beyond commissioning vocation directors and using modern media, we have to have vibrant local communities to which we can invite young people to share our prayer and observe our life together. We have to show them not only what we do, but how we live. The locus of choice and change will be each individual institute. The leadership conferences—LCWR, CMSWR, and CMSM—

have no authority to mandate change. An individual member can make choices in favor of greater visibility, but she can easily be marginalized. Institute-wide change will require leadership, a willingness to ask hard things of ourselves. [We might look for encouragement to the lay ecclesial movements that have proliferated in the 20th century, particularly in Europe and Latin America. Their growth has been phenomenal, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Contrary to what we might assume, membership in one of these movements, e.g., Focolare or the Neo-Catechumenate, is very demanding, beyond the commitment some of our members would be willing to make.] I have a fear that some of our commitment to participative decision-making has the unwanted effect of leading us to decisions that everyone can embrace, and no one is left out. We need leaders who can issue bold challenges—not about our action on some public policy or social justice issue, although these can be appropriate—but about our lifestyle and ministry.

Renewing the vision will also require support from bishops and clergy (beyond an apostolic visitation with its elements of suspicion and implied correction). And most of all, it will require support from lay women and men who believe in the vision, who support it in the classroom and in their families, who understand the present day challenges to the vision, and who unite in prayer for its ongoing vigor and renewal. ■

Institute-wide change will require leadership, a willingness to ask hard things of ourselves.

With respect and acceptance of one another, we in religious life are called to live with love in the face of tensions and move forward in faithfulness.

The future depends on listening to the Spirit, the young and each other

BY MOTHER SHAUN VERGAUWEN, FSE

ON SEPTEMBER 17 FRANCISCANS around the world celebrate one of their great Feast Days, the Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis. When I noticed that this was the day in which I would share my reflections, I knew in my heart that it was a wonderful coincidence. The Office of Franciscan readings this morning has a quote from the writings of St. Bonaventure, “Because of this new and astounding miracle unheard of in times past, Francis came down from the mountain a new man adorned with the sacred stigmata, bearing in his body the image of the Crucified not made by a craftsman in wood or stone, but fashioned in his members by the hand of the living God.” Thus St. Francis was marked in his body by his love of the Passion of Christ. For us as Franciscans this is a mystery that speaks to a way of life in which WHO we have loved and HOW we have loved is reflected in how our bodies are “stigmatized” in our daily life.

Mother Shaun Vergauwen, FSE is the co-founder and superior general of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, a community in several states and countries whose motherhouse is in Meriden, CT. In addition Mother Shaun also founded and formerly was executive director of Meriden's Franciscan Life Center, a counseling, educational and spiritual enrichment center.



As Brother Seán Sammon shared [in his talk on the condition of religious life, page 4], the past 50 years has been experienced by three-plus generations in religious life, and those 50 years include the seismic event of Vatican II. Many of us in this symposium have been “stigmatized”; that is, we bear in our bodies the history of the past 50 years. We have experienced and now reflect the pain and joy of what we have lived following this seismic event. Even as we come together for this weekend, we come to share our unique perspectives in the union of our shared hope for the future of religious life. As Brother Seán observed, the renewal questions of 2010 are not the same as those of the 1960s and 1980s. Today’s questions are being asked by a new generation that patiently listens to our experiences as history but finds them foreign to their lived experience. Yet I tend to think that some of the questions from these different time periods at least resemble each other. Both sets of questions are looking to the future and looking forward. The NRVC-CARA study revealed four categories of differences between the persons who entered religious life after Vatican II and those of this new generation. They are: desire to belong to a group whose commitment and fidelity to the church is unquestioned, the wearing of a religious habit, a strong community life and an appealing style of prayer. For many of us these desires may seem in some ways like a move backward, but my experience of young persons who come to our community is that they have not been immersed in this religious life milieu. Many young persons looking for a religious community are committed to looking forward and

believe that what they are seeking is new and very relevant to today's culture. They are championing a united church that integrates the relevancy of the prayer life of the ages—including symbols that speak to them of deep truths—and the sacramental life of the church. They likewise embody a depth of commitment which will place religious life within the relevancy of today's world and address the problems that need to be faced in order to refound a culture integrated by faith and the principles of Christ.

Sisters split, then united

At this point I would ask you to bear with me as I share my own perspective. Today I do not come as a theologian, a historian, a researcher or a philosopher. Therefore I can only share my own personal experience which may be very different from some of your experiences. After Vatican II, I was involved with young persons as a dean of students in a women's college and a consultant to the formation team. During the upheaval of those days I watched many young sisters leave our community in six weeks and felt the devastation. Some of us began to ask, "What are they looking for?" We asked our General Chapter permission to experiment with a way of life that would meet their questions. At that point we were doing what we are also called to do today ... listen to the deep questions of the young and take them seriously. I won't go into the details of the rest of the story, but in time we were named a separate community with papal status being held until our



Mother Shaun Vergauwen, FSE, called on religious to find union in spite of differences and to offer the hope of faith to the young.

new constitution was approved. This was a deeply painful process for both communities. We have since reconciled and have worked together on a common mission for the past 15 years. Our rootedness in a deep love of each other now allows each community to be different and respected by the other. Our union is of differences as we move forward in a history of mutual love born out of deep pain, and this is our glorious stigmata. I tell this story as I believe it relates to our considerations this weekend. The future is dependent on our listening to the young and to each other. We must believe that the message is being spoken by persons who voice a new reality.

Love our differences, press for unity

In spite of how I look, our community strives to live on the razor's edge between fidelity to the church, community life centered in communal prayer, and the culture of our times. Paradoxes are the food of our daily life: how to embrace in love and yet challenge to the truth, how to live with tensions that can only be resolved in joy and peace if we face the hard questions. How do we love the differences and press on for a deep unity? How do we search the mysteries of poverty, chas-

tity and obedience as we minister to persons who only know the negative aspects of poverty, the experience of being used sexually and the pain of obedience without the freedom of will which allows them to be truly human? How do we encourage individuality and know incorporation in a community? How do we teach the basics of our faith and yet be alert to question what does not seem to be authentic in living them?

Tending wounds of sexual revolution

Another observation that reflects both Brother Sean's observations and my own experience is the culture in which prospective members are living and calling out to us. In 1973 the evolving sexual mores of the culture were exploding. Young persons knew and wanted to experience a new sexual freedom. They wanted to be alive, and fruitful and fulfilled men and women. At the time, the challenge was to propose a religious life that allowed

Daily I pray for the
openness to listen
and hear the present
generation.

personal development and fulfillment while giving oneself to the life of a community and its apostolate. Now today what we must listen to is the woundedness of the young persons who

have been born and raised in a culture whose sexual mores have been hurtful to them and caused confusion. So often they have been given too much too soon and need a renewed developmental process which allows them to become the persons they are called to be.

In addition, they are very aware of the woundedness of the human dimension of the church. Surprisingly they are not disillusioned but believe they can make a difference in the healing and conversion process. They are looking for answers to very deep questions. A return to fidelity to the church and her teachings is so often their launching pad. As in the 1970's we searched for a way of formation that would help develop a way of life open to the fulfillment of womanhood. Today we need to be open to the woundedness our culture often inflicts and be willing to embrace the young who are searching—often with wounded hearts—for truth, stability and hopeful joy.

Need openness, evangelization

In conclusion the strategic plan we need for the future of



Participants in the Moving Forward in Hope symposium enjoy a mealtime conversation.

religious life must include listening to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit speaks to the present generation and to the church. Daily I pray for the openness to listen and hear the present generation. So often they ask us to reflect with them and integrate new ideas and, above all, the convictions of their hearts. As those religious who went before us moved over to integrate us and our generational gift, now we must look at how to move over in our way of life to integrate the gift that they are to us.

As we propose plans to move forward in hope, we all know the need for catechizing and evangelization. Often we nurture the seeds of a call that is smothered by the plethora of calls now open and possible to young persons today. Perhaps we could revisit our catechesis of religious life and invigorate not only our call, identity and mission, but also the theology of our call in the church and to our culture. Even as we clarify the charism of our individual communities, perhaps we should also clarify the very charism of religious life itself. How do we re-energize sacred concepts? Even as we know that religious life is at the heart of the church, how do we live in such a manner so as to allow the new revelation of each person, each community and the church?

Brother Seán Sammon clearly asked, "What is God asking of our institutes and congregations?" Our response to that question is a challenge and an opportunity. We are called to be joyful, in love with our life and the church, while living in an environment of deep respect and acceptance of one another. May this celebration of stigmata call us to enjoy the wounds of the past as the Glorified wounds of Christ now reflected in our bodies. ■

The Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm used findings from the NRVC-CARA study to help their community move forward with a vocation action plan.

How one community is using the NRVC-CARA study to move forward

BY SISTER MARIA THERESE HEALY, O.CARM AND CAROL SCHUCK SCHEIBER

IN 2008 THE CARMELITE SISTERS for the Aged and Infirm decided at a Chapter that new membership would be a top priority. This decision came amid a reality common in many religious communities in the U.S.: aging membership and few new members coming up the ranks. Since that decision, the Carmelite Sisters have made much progress toward their goal of inviting and receiving a new generation into their community. Among steps the community took was a two-day gathering in April 2011 dedicated to helping those on the Vocation Steering Committee renew their vocational enthusiasm and to examining the results of the NRVC-CARA study.

When *HORIZON* approached Sister Maria Therese Healy, O.Carm about documenting that program—which was called “Rekindling the Fire: Imparting our Zeal to the Next Generation”—she emphasized that the “Rekindling” program was

*Sister Maria Therese Healy, O.Carm is vocation director of the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm, a position she has held for many years. She invites those interested in learning more about her community's outreach to contact her at vocationdirector@gtel.net. Carol Schuck Scheiber is editor of *HORIZON*.*



really part of a much larger and longer effort to promote vocations to her community. Therefore, in an attempt to paint a fuller picture of one community's journey toward energetic vocation outreach, we present here:

- the context of the Carmelite's “Rekindling” program,
- a brief description of “Rekindling,”
- a condensed form of the presentation that three young women gave during “Rekindling”
- and the overall strategic plan of which “Rekindling” is a part.

Following are the steps that the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm took toward building their future. These steps flow from their particular charism and history, and we hope by presenting them here to perhaps encourage other congregations to continue their own creative efforts to build a future so that religious life as a whole may be strengthened.

Setting the stage for “Rekindling” program

In August 2009, the NRVC released the results of the NRVC-CARA Study of New Membership to U.S. Religious Institutes. (See the executive summary and the full study at nrvc.net.) The Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm were well-positioned to take note of the study and begin acting on its find-

ings. The community had already declared vocations a priority, and leadership was highly supportive of vocation ministry, both in allocating sufficient funding for a full-time director and in supporting the various initiatives she undertook. In 2009 the leadership and vocation minister had attended “Awakenings: A Vocation Seminar,” a program sponsored by the Benedictine Sisters of Ferdinand, IN.

In 2010, leadership and Sister Maria Therese studied the NRVC-CARA findings and formulated a strategic plan building on the best practices identified in the study. The form of the strategic plan naturally flowed from the community’s internal culture: since healthcare to the elderly is the community’s singular focus, the strategic plan (see page 22) was put together like a nursing plan, with goals, targets and resources.

“Rekindling” program launched

In accordance with the strategic plan, the community put on

a two-day “Rekindling” program at the community motherhouse in April 2011, following the schedule below. Members of the Vocation Steering Committee and other key members attended. One reason the program was so effective in motivating and inspiring this select group was that participants were open to the messages about vocation promotion that came from outside voices. Three young women with an interest in religious life—all of whom had been serving as interns with the community—spoke to the gathered sisters. Sister Charlene Diorka, SSJ, then associate director of the National Religious Vocation Conference, and a Carmelite priest also spoke.

Sister Maria Therese attributes the program’s success to the Holy Spirit working through each of the speakers. “I could say the same things, and members wouldn’t hear it the same way,” said Sister Maria Therese. “The three young interns have been such a gift. Our members were able to see these three young people interested in our mission and willing to serve God. These young women want to be the best they can be. A beautiful image is that these young people are like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in a furnace seven times hotter than normal, and they can remember the sacred songs. They are a depository of sacred songs for us.”

The next waves of renewal in community

The “Rekindling” program was the first wave of a vocational emphasis within the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm. The second wave began in June 2011. It involved two programs for reaching out to young adults. The first was “S.A.L.T. Carmelite Missionaries,” a week-long program for women ages 18-40 to experience service to the elderly, prayer and the Carmelite community and spirituality. The second program is scheduled for September 2011. Called “Connect: Uniting Generations & Blending Traditions,” the program aims to bring together older and younger generations in the church. Finally, the third wave of vocational emphasis will be to engage the full membership of the congregation by viewing and discussing the talks given during “Rekindling” and encouraging local vocation action.

The “Rekindling” seminar was meant to be motivational and to inspire members to take part in building a future for the congregation. Sister Maria Therese reports a sense of optimism within the community, and she invites *HORIZON* readers to contact her with any questions they might have about the “Rekindling” seminar or about her community’s vocation programming at vocationdirector@gtel.net.

Rekindling the Fire:

Imparting our Zeal to the Next Generation

- Eucharist
- Talk by Father Ashley Harrington, O.Carm on spirituality of the religious call, getting in touch with what drew vowed members to join the community
- Large- and small-group discussion
- Interactive talk and Powerpoint on vocation study by Sister Charlene Diorka, SSJ, former associate director of the National Religious Vocation Conference
- Presentation on vocation perspectives by three young college graduates
- One hour of brainstorming about vocation practices already in place and possibilities for the future

For details and photos, see: <http://carmelitesisters.com/discussions/?p=1005>

What we see in religious life and some ways to reach out

by Alycia Murtha, Kristen Leaderstorf, and Nicolette Langlois

Three recent college graduates who spent a year with the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm as interns were invited to speak at the community’s vocation seminar, “Rekindling the fire: Imparting our zeal to the next generation.” This article is an edited form of the presentation they gave about what they see attracting young adults to religious life and what sorts of vocation outreach might be effective.

AS GRADUATES OF FRANCISCAN University in Steubenville, OH with degrees in theology and catechetics, and discerning the call to religious life ourselves, we were very excited when Sister Maria Therese Healy, O.Carm asked us to present at the “Rekindling” seminar held April 2011. We have a lot of hope and love for our generation, and we love to engage them and talk with them about the work of God in their lives. Through our own personal relationships, experiences and encounters, our time at Franciscan University, and our time spent ministering to our peers through retreats and other activities, we have gained some insight into what our generation thinks about faith in general, and also into what they think about religious life. During the “Rekindling” weekend, we were given the opportunity to

present these insights and found them to be strikingly similar to those found by the recent NRVC-CARA study.

Yearning for something more

Our generation has been raised in a society saturated by post-modernism and broken families. Some have never received solid teaching on faith and morals; yet still others have undergone powerful conversions. There is a wide spectrum in the religious experiences of young people today, yet they share a common thread of seeking the truth and searching for spirituality. They often find themselves lost in the middle, but they have a sincere longing for something deeper and greater than what they commonly experience in their day-to-day lives. Religious life in all its fullness is something truly greater.

Young people who may have a vocation to religious life are surrounded by pressure from many different sources in our present post-modern culture, and they may not receive the support of their close family and friends in their process of discerning religious life. Many young adults may not yet realize their vocation or may not have even considered that they have one. However, if presented with the idea of religious life or given the opportunity to discern a religious vocation, many would. These young people have the potential to become faith-filled Catholics or religious. Other young people have felt this call their whole lives and are seeking to take ownership of it but not to be pushed into it.

What we see young people seeking

We observe that young people who are actively discerning religious life are looking for communities that live and move and breathe Catholicity. These would be communities deeply rooted in the teachings of the Magisterium and that do not promote anything contrary to it. These communities are

Alycia Murtha, Kristen Leaderstorf and Nicolette Langlois (left to right in photo below) have completed an affiliate experience with the Carmelite Sisters and have worked as interns with the Avila Institute of Gerontology, an organization sponsored by the Congregation that provides educational programs related to the care of the elderly. All three are graduates of Franciscan University, Steubenville, OH.



rooted in Christo-centric prayer, are passionately Eucharistic, deeply Trinitarian, and fully embrace the sacramental life of the church through full, active participation in the liturgy.

For many young women, entering religious life is about becoming the bride of Christ, allowing the Bridegroom to lead

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his beloved into the daily living of the wedding feast. Their intimacy is the cross, and the fruit of this intimacy is the sanctification of souls. Mother M. Angeline Teresa, O.Carm, servant of God, said, "Isn't a vocation to religious life falling in love with the Sacred Heart?"

Many young women look up to religious and are drawn to good examples who live their vows with fidelity and joy. These young women need a communal outlet to be themselves and to get to know the people that surround them. In a discernment or early formation setting, they particularly look to experience this with professed sisters to ensure that all of them live the institute's rule, constitutions, and spirituality with the zeal with which it is meant to be lived.

Reaching out to young people

Fostering vocations is a work of the whole church. It is about helping young people find where God is calling and how they may serve Him best. Many people attracted to religious life are looking for a radical lifestyle. In our experience with the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm, we see them living a radical lifestyle by praying constantly, denying the world, espousing Christ, and serving their Spouse in the face of every elderly person they care for with love. We see the sisters living out their vocation in their daily lives and most especially through their prayers. A faithful life is not necessarily about doing big things—young people immediately look at religious when they see them, and the habit is a walking billboard drawing the young people in. The habit gives the sisters an exterior witness of something interiorly greater. The presence of sisters anywhere they go—whether it be a nursing home, parish, grocery store, airport, gas station or street—causes young people of faith to stop and evaluate what they are doing for God and the church.

We have been blessed to spend the past year at the motherhouse of the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm, living and working with the Sisters. This year has been something we never could have planned ourselves, and it is definitely the Holy Spirit that led us here. We are very excited by all we have learned and the ways the Lord is working.

Projects to foster vocations

Two projects we are especially excited about we think will serve to foster vocations and challenge our generation to take ownership of their faith. One of these, a conference called "Connect: Uniting Generations & Blending Traditions," will take place the weekend of September 23-25, 2011 at the Archdiocesan Center at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, CT. The purpose of this conference is to unite the generations within the church. It is meant to bridge the gap between the elder and younger generations so they may better understand the common ground that they share in our rich Catholic heritage. The various generations may have many differences, but they have much to learn from and offer one another. This conference is aimed at uniting these generations so that they may pray, learn, and grow together, enriching both their lives and their faith. We will accomplish this purpose through the richness of the liturgy, through various devotions we hope will appeal to both the old and the young; and through talks by speakers. We'll even have a guest musician for the weekend. We expect to spend time together both in prayer and in enjoying one another's company, drawing from the wealth of wisdom and enthusiasm of both our elders and our young people.

Another project very dear to our hearts is S.A.L.T. Carmelite Missionaries. This mission program will bring many young people into contact with the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm and familiarize them with the daily passion and joy that the sisters find in their ministry and religious life. It will further their mission and charism within the church.

LEARN MORE

For more information on the Connect Conference and S.A.L.T. Carmelite Missionaries, call (518) 567-5586 or visit carmelitesisters.com and click on the events page.



S.A.L.T. Carmelite Missionaries will bring young women ages 18-40 into the nursing homes run by the Carmelite Sisters and foster relationships between young adults and the elderly through daily encounters, prayer, service and recreation. The missionary retreat experience strives to inspire young adults and the elderly to see Christ in each other and to be Christ to each other. In the words, again, of Mother M. Angeline Teresa O.Carm, “bringing Christ means giving them His compassion, His interest, His loving care, His warmth—morning, noon and night.” The Carmelite community also recently offered two mission opportunities in June in the Massachusetts area.

Looking to the future

Participating in the “Rekindling” seminar was a hope-filled experience for us. It confirmed much of what we have experienced with our peers, and it inspired hope for the future in all of those who attended. Pope John Paul II spoke often of the springtime of the new evangelization. He had great confidence in our generation and how they would serve the church and guard the deposit of faith. He had hope that young people would respond with hearts wide open and embrace vocations to the priesthood and religious life. He said to young people, “Remember: Christ is calling you; the church needs you; the pope believes in you, and he is expecting great things of you.” We have great hope for the young men and women of our generation. There are budding vocations everywhere, and with the help of God’s grace, these individuals will respond to the



Above: Leaders share a moment with the “Rekindling” keynote, Sister Charlene Diorka, SSJ, former associate director of National Religious Vocation Conference, third from left. Others pictured here are: Sisters M. Peter Lillian DiMaria, O.Carm., director of the Avila Institute of Gerontology (far left); Maria Therese Healy, O.Carm, vocation director (inside left); and Julie McCarthy, O.Carm, vice president of Mission for the Carmelite System, Inc. (far right).

Right: The authors (left) assist with music during “Rekindling,” along with Sister Maria Therese Healy, O.Carm, vocation minister.

Far right: Sister Julie McCarthy, O.Carm videotaped the “Rekindling” seminar for membership to view later.

calls God has placed in their hearts and serve him with great zeal. It would not surprise us in the least to see a wave of new vocations in the church in the next decade.

Carmelite Sisters Action Plan for Vocation Ministry

This action plan was developed by the vocation director, Sister Maria Therese Healy, O.Carm with leaders of the community. It is presented here to show the overall congregational approach to vocations and how the “Rekindling” seminar—which was dedicated to examining the NRVC-CARA study results—was part of a larger strategic plan. “It’s written like a nursing plan, since that’s what our membership is accustomed to,” says Sister Maria Therese. For each of the tools and resources, a sister taking responsibility was named.

GOAL 1

Develop and enhance “vocation culture” within the community. Each sister will accept the responsibility and ownership of this task. Kindle the spirit of joy. Recapture community spirit.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Administrators and prioress, Vocation Steering Committee members, members of the congregation.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

Organize program to educate congregation on God as source of vocation and to ignite community members to be nurturers of vocation (“Rekindle” program).

- Invite Sister Charlene Diorka, SSJ of the National Religious Vocation Conference to present results of NRVC-CARA study.
- Invite motivational speaker (Father Ashley Harrington, O.Carm)
- Set aside last day of program to distribute handouts on vocation, plus qualified speaker to talk about vocation.
- Videotape presentations for the congregation at large.
- Utilize videotaped program to educate congregation about vocations.

COMMENTS

Continuing support from administrators and the prioress makes it possible to implement the action plan in individual facilities. Local members’ increased awareness of the larger picture of the state of vocation outside their own local community broadens perspectives. Collective awareness is enhanced when facts are presented. Attitudes can easily get in

the way. Making vocation part of monthly meetings gives it a prominence and importance.

GOAL 2

Promote congregational participation in vocation works.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Local community members led by Steering Committee contact, Liturgy Committee, Mission Effectiveness coordinator.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

Diocesan vocation events.

- Contact local diocese to be on e-mail list.
- Network with regional Steering Committee member for joint attendance.
- Poster Ads on Foundation Day, Vocation Awareness Day, World Day of Consecrated Life, etc. by local community members. (Steering Committee Contact with local community / Mission Effectiveness)
- Share a summary of Vocation Steering Committee Meetings at local community meetings. (Steering Committee Contact)

COMMENTS

Allowing members to engage in opportunities related to vocation work opens new doors and allows sisters to find their talents and skills.

GOAL 3

Develop local vocation goals considering local strengths and weaknesses. Questionnaire to be developed by Vocation Steering Committee for brainstorming at local communities.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Members of local community.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

Local community meetings or separate vocation meetings held

in local community (Steering Committee contact).

COMMENTS

Each local community has varying types of membership with particular needs. Only a local member would know these strengths and needs.

GOAL 4

Facilitate “up close and personal” relationships with young people working in the nursing homes. Revive the Carmelite Program adapting it to current needs. Introduce sisters and what we do during orientation classes. Create opportunities for contact such as “Avila Vocation Day.” Create “reward trip” to Avila for volunteers in the homes.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Young adults.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

- Work with Volunteer Department
- Youth and Aging Committee sponsored by AIG
- Talks on Carmelite Spirituality at College.
- Busy Person’s Retreat
- All Saint’s Academy Volunteering Program, Albany, NY
- Vocation blitz at local grade school (annually)
- Vocation Discipleship for Teens and Young Adults, IL (annually)

COMMENTS

Every volunteer in the facility is assigned a particular department and task to do. Why not “Buddy-A-Sister”? Seek other opportunities of contact with young people in the local homes.

GOAL 5

Continue online presence, contact. Create print materials.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Members of Vocation Steering Committee

TOOLS & RESOURCES

- Community Web site
- Youtube
- Social networks
- Vocation blog
- Vocation kit
- Catholic networks

COMMENTS

Statistics show that the Web is the primary “hang-out” place for discerners and young adults. It affords immediate contact. Print materials can be left in public places or sent by mail.

GOAL 6

Identify Carmelite values specific to congregation.

TARGET AUDIENCE

All Carmelite Sisters. Those who listen to vocation talks.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

- Carmelite Heritage Committee
- Carmelite publications
- Carmelite articles

COMMENTS

NRVC-CARA study showed that new members of religious communities emphasize spirituality more than ministry. Can we explicitly identify Carmelite values particular to our congregation?

GOAL 7

Establish a mentor program.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Those inquiring about religious life, those specifically discerning our community.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

Selected sisters will be chosen and trained to be mentors. ■

A recent study about interest in and attitudes toward ministry is helping us understand the young Catholics who are making a life choice for ministry and why.

Who are the emerging pastoral leaders?

BY MARTI R. JEWELL

Vocation ministry is always affected by the larger church and society. In this article one of the leading experts in young adult practices and attitudes toward church and ministry shares what she has learned about the emerging generation of Catholic ministers of all types: consecrated, lay and ordained. This article is based on a presentation she gave at a gathering of Catholics on Call in 2010.

“**W**E ARE HERE TO STAY. We are committed. We are not going away.” Thus speak the young adults who are finding their way into ministry today. It is their church, but the parishes they grew up in are not the parishes of their parents or grandparents. The world

*Marti R. Jewell is an assistant professor of theology in the School of Ministry at the University of Dallas. Previously, as associate director of the National Association for Lay Ministry, she directed the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project, a five-year study of U.S. parishes and parish leaders. Jewell, co-author of two books on the findings of the project: *The Changing Face of Church* and *The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders*, provides keynotes, workshops and lectures on the project's findings and key ministry issues in the church. She also works in formation, education and training for ministry.*



is changing, and theirs is a task and a future unlike any seen before. We learned a lot about them and about those considering ministry in their future during a significant study called “The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders,” conducted by the late Dr. Dean R. Hoge for the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project¹. We wanted to know if young adults are thinking about ministry in terms of a career or vocation. Is this work they were interested in committing to? The findings are stunning. But first, let's put them in context.

As we listened to young adults in interviews and focus groups, we realized that not everyone understands the world of ministry. We found many who were romanticizing the life of the cloister or the monastery, the rectory or the parish office. For example, during the course of interviews we met young people who could only talk about clothing: “What deep pockets those cloistered aprons have!” Others had no sense of what communal life really entails: “You get to do whatever you want, whenever you want!” Oh yes, and “religious don't ever have to do dishes!” We also met some who have already ventured into parish ministry and were unprepared for the negativity and lack of collaboration they encountered. How do we tell them what ministry is really like? How do we tell them the real deal, about a life that is both graced and challenging? In their landmark document “Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord,” the U.S. bishops ask us to imagine a future that is “faithful to the church's theological and doctrinal tradition ... responsive to contemporary pastoral needs and situations ... while being shaped by the workings of the Holy Spirit.”²

What might this look like? The church in the U.S. is

changing. The numbers of clergy and religious are declining rapidly. Numbers of deacons and lay people in ministry are climbing. As of the last accounting, the number of active diocesan clergy in U.S. dioceses is just under 17,000, with nearly half expecting to retire in the next few years.³ There are religious order priests serving parishes sacramentally, but many orders are turning parishes over to dioceses as their own numbers change and they cannot continue to maintain parishes. The number of men being ordained each year has leveled off, for the moment, at about a one-third replacement rate. The number of parishes is declining as parishes are merged into mega-parishes, linked into clusters, or closed. Half of our 17,958 parishes share their pastor with at least one other parish or mission.⁴ At the same time the number of Catholics in this country is increasing, due in large part to the increase of Catholic immigrants to this country. This number increased by some 400,000 this past year alone to approximately 65.5 million Catholics in this country.

So what are the sources of ministry? There is good news and bad news. The good news is that serving with our pastors are 31,000+ lay ecclesial ministers serving at least half-time in parishes, with many more in diocesan offices. The bad news is that diocesan lay ministry programs are declining for any number of reasons. The good news is that there is a rapidly growing cadre of permanent deacons in this country, with over 16,000 already ordained and many more in formation programs. The bad news, if you want to call it that, is that young people think the permanent diaconate is for their elders, not them.⁵

Traits of young Catholics

What are young adults thinking about? If we are to invite them into ministry, we must understand their world. We are told they are more Hispanic, more technological, more interested in service, and less affiliated and connected than previous generations. They are beginning marriage and family life later, and are losing trust in institutions. Defining events for those in their 20s and 30s seem to have been the 9/11 tragedy, Iraq and Afghanistan wars and Hurricane Katrina. Studies by Dr. Hoge and others show us that young adult Catholics exhibit:

- A persistent sense of being Catholic
- A continuing belief in core teachings such as Trinity, incarnation, resurrection, and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist
- Declining levels of religious practice while redefining older practices
- Decreasing levels of attachment to the church as institution
- A movement from obedience to personal autonomy
- A faith life touched by John Paul II

Recruitment for ministry must begin long before young adults reach college age. The first task of recruitment is not talking about ministry or even priesthood or religious life. Our largest challenge is helping young people to know that they have a church home.



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The study

To understand the desire of young adults to go into ministry, the Emerging Models Project, funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., asked Dr. Dean R. Hoge of the Catholic University of America to conduct a nation-wide, online survey of active Catholics in their 20s and 30s. What made this study unique is that it didn't focus on the vocation question, thus avoiding some of the more complex issues surrounding vocation ministry. Is it a life style? Is lay ecclesial ministry a vocation? Instead we focused on the career question... I know, I know, a vocation is not a profession, but stay with me here. In a project studying the future of parish leaders, we wanted to know where the leaders would be coming from in the near future. In order to find out we studied two pools of young adults—one accessed through campus ministry offices and the other through diocesan ministry offices.

The first pool, developed through the rigorous formulas known to sociologists, included young people in their 20s and 30s from a random sample of universities and colleges, both secular and Catholic, public and private. A formula was developed whereby each school was asked to contact a given number of students active in Catholic campus ministry and ask them to respond to an online survey. On accessing the survey they were greeted by a welcome from Bishop Blase Cupich (now of the Diocese of Spokane). What followed was a series of questions about ministry and their interest in pursuing it as a lay ecclesial minister, a religious, a priest, or a deacon. The second sample included young adults from a random selection of dioceses, one in each of the episcopal regions who were known to be active in their parish or diocesan community.

The findings reported include responses from approximately 800 respondents. In the diocesan pool we studied only those respondents who had completed college, were baptized and active in their parishes or dioceses. In the college pool we looked at students who were baptized Catholic and active in their campus ministry programs. We learned a great deal from our respondents, and we learned a great deal about ourselves as we looked at who did and did not respond to the surveys.

The findings

We began the survey by asking these 20- and 30-somethings whether or not they were interested in ministry and if so, would they like to do ministry as a lay ecclesial minister, a priest, a religious or a deacon. The answers were astounding! Half of the young men surveyed told us that they had seri-

ously considered priesthood⁶. A third of those in college and half of the graduates said they had seriously considered lay ecclesial ministry. Now this should make us all sit up and take notice! We know that the numbers of young adults actually entering this occupation are very low. Our task is to understand what happened between the desire and the reality.

The next set of questions dealt with why young adults thought people—themselves or others—would want to do ministry. We asked them why a person would consider ministering in the priesthood or religious life. Their answers, not unexpectedly, were:

- It is a call from God (85 percent)
- In order to help people (80 percent)
- In order to preach God's word (60 percent)

We asked why they thought a person would be interested in lay ecclesial ministry. Their answers?

- It is a call from God (80 percent)
- In order to help people (70 percent of the men / 80 percent of the women)
- In order to teach and pass on the faith (66 percent)

This certainly indicates how young adults view ministry—whether ordained or lay. They see it as a vocational call to help others. And the most important task, according to the responses, is passing on God's word. So how are we to connect with these young adults who are very possibly ready to consider ministry? Based on the responses and commentary, I would like, here, to suggest five recommendations worth thinking about.

1) Create a sense of belonging.

If young people are active in their church, diocese or campus ministry, they are going to be thinking about ministry as a career. The study clearly found that the more active they are, the higher the chances that they will consider this ministry as a life work. Men who are leaders in campus ministry groups are more likely to consider the priesthood (56 percent) than those not very involved (39 percent), and are more likely to have been asked to think about it (61 percent to 33 percent). The same applies to interest in lay ministry, with half of the student leaders showing an interest as opposed to 16 percent of those less involved. And while this may seem self-evident, it still must be taken very seriously. We need to invite young

people into the faith first, and then into ministry, a task not needing to be addressed in previous generations.

Recruitment for ministry must begin long before young adults reach college age. The first task of recruitment is not talking about ministry or even priesthood or religious life. Our largest challenge is helping young people to know that they have a church home, to know they are welcome, and to give them a feeling of belonging. This means that we need to get youth and young adults involved in parish life, in youth and young adult groups, in other parish activities, boards, ministries, etc. What else? We

We need to get youth and young adults involved in parish life, in youth and young adult groups, in other parish activities, boards, ministries, etc.

can maintain connections with young adults as they go off to college. We can provide good church experiences for those who are not in college, whether pre- or post-college age. We can create proactive efforts to reach youth and young adults through cross-parochial ministries, digital ministries, and age-appropriate catechetical programs.

2) Market ministry

Once young adults are actually engaged, how do they see ministry? The study asked a series of questions intended to sort out their understanding of priesthood and of lay ecclesial ministry. Since we are seeing the development of a slightly different understanding of priesthood, especially among the more recently ordained, we wondered if the shifting attitudes were shared by their peers. Sixty percent of the college students and 75 percent of the graduates felt that priesthood conferred a new or changed status. However, roughly half of the respondents did not have a strong opinion about whether priesthood should be more or less "cultic." In this they differ, at least statistically, from their ordained peers. And half felt that the church should move more quickly in empowering lay ministry. We can definitely assume that most young people never knew a church that did not employ the ecclesial gifts and call of the laity. Not surprisingly about 60 percent of both the men and the women felt the church needs to move faster in empowering lay ministry.

The survey did not direct specific questions toward

religious life, as this was not a survey about vocational lifestyle, but even so some very significant findings surfaced. While some of the young women (38 percent) and a few of the young men (18 percent of college age and 30 percent of graduates), had considered religious life, not many had been asked to think about it. Young men told us the primary person to ask if they would be interested in priesthood or religious

While some of the young women (38 percent) and a few of the young men (18 percent of college age and 30 percent of graduates), had considered religious life, not many had been asked to think about it.

life was a priest. Clearly a personal invitation to consider ministry is very affirming. Less than half of the invitations to think about ordination came from family or friends, and less than 5 percent came from women religious or parishioners. Not many young women even answered the question about who had invited them to consider ministry—telling in itself.

Of those who did about half mentioned a priest and half mentioned a religious.

Those who indicated they had considered ministry were asked with whom they had discussed their interest. They told us that they first spoke to friends (80 percent of the men and about 60 percent of the women) and then to someone in ministry—a priest, religious or lay minister (80 percent of the men and 50 percent of the women). About half searched for information online. They rarely spoke to career counselors (<10 percent) or vocation directors (20 percent of college students and 40 percent of graduates)! This is a clear indication about where we need to put our recruitment efforts. It appears that we need to provide better high school and college career counseling. Can we find ways to help career counselors recognize the call to ministry and the ways in which this can be supported? Online information is important as coming generations move more deeply into cyberspace.

3) Provide formation opportunities

Some respondents told us they had not pursued this interest because their career paths and education were in a different area. Often this career is teaching, business, the arts, the medical field and so on. Whether asked about ministry in

the priesthood or in lay ecclesial ministry, two-thirds of the men in college and just over half of the women in college felt their path was already set. This number declines by half in the post-college respondents. One could guess that they thought they would have had to study ministry rather than teaching or nursing or business. It did not seem to occur to them that these are transferable skills!

Here is an opportunity ripe for the picking. How do we help people understand what ministry is all about? The skills for nearly all the fields mentioned are transferable to ministry. Do not those in ministry teach, heal, administrate? In fact these are much needed areas of ministry!

How do we find ways to show how skills and education and interests are transferable to ministry? There are many ways in which ministry can be carried out, and young adults will benefit from understanding they can teach or heal or plan as a part of ministry. We may also consider ways in which we could support or create scholarships for graduate degrees for those interested in this call, even as we pay for those degrees for young men entering priesthood. There are many possibilities for education and formation that do not involve getting degrees. We can develop and support diocesan ministry formation programs and parish adult education as well as ensuring accessibility of college degrees. We can move toward more outreach to people in service-based industries. The study clearly demonstrates a connection between service-based activities and interest in ministry.

4) Think about diversity

Who didn't we hear from in our survey? The answer to this question is as significant as it is startling. We didn't hear from people who were not, or had not been, in college. And we had a very low number of respondents from racial or cultural minorities, such as Hispanics, even though the surveys were available in Spanish. How are we, as a church, truly reaching out to multiple socio-economic and multi-cultural groups? This is the future of the church in the United States, which grows more diverse every day. We must adapt our ministry and our recruiting to the growing multicultural face of the church.

While questions could be asked about whether or not the online study itself was accessible to this wide variety we call church, the question must inevitably be asked of all of us. We must find ways to connect with specific cultural and ethnic groups, such as Hispanic, Vietnamese, and African American Catholics. Every culture has its own ways to call

forth leaders. We can learn these various routes into ministry and leadership. Every culture views ministry in its own way. We have much work to do to catechize the faithful about the vocation to lay ministry and the reality of religious life today, even as we speak of vocations to the priesthood.

5) Prepare for a healthy future

The survey also asked why these men and women thought people would not consider ministering as priests, religious or lay ecclesial ministers. They told us they would not consider priesthood or religious life because either they had a different career in mind (70 percent of those in college/ 50 percent of graduates) or they would not be able to marry (66 percent of those in college, 50 percent of graduates). These were the same answers when they were asked to consider lay ecclesial ministry. Sixty-five percent of the students and 40 percent of the graduates had different careers in mind. While the college students were not concerned about being able to support themselves as lay ecclesial ministers (20 percent), that number doubles after graduation (40 percent). Perhaps this is an indicator of what happens after graduation when people need to deal with the real world of earning enough money for a decent lifestyle.

What do we need to pay attention to here? Nothing can be done right now to change whether or not a priest can be married. Although when asked if they would consider priesthood if they could be married, roughly 25 percent of the young men said that would make a difference. Something can be done, however, about ensuring that lay ecclesial ministers received just wages and benefits. You should be in the room when young adults with graduate degrees in theology or ministry talk about the kinds of positions and salaries they were offered!

We interviewed young adults already in ministry. They had a lot to say. We must support their ministry by providing healthy workplace experiences. We can provide good mentoring and apprenticeships for the newly ordained. We can hire lay ecclesial ministers with appropriate bachelor and graduate degrees. We can develop clear position descriptions and reasonable time commitments. We can provide just wages and benefits and recognize the efforts of lay ministers, nurture and mentor their careers, and accept them as peers. Our work is not finished once a person has decided to follow a ministerial vocation. Whether lay, religious, or ordained, young adults have very appropriate expectations of how they will be treated and how the gift of their life will be accepted.

The survey concluded with an open-ended question asking young adults what they would like to say to church leaders if they could. The most frequent and significant answer was: Pay attention to us! These are the young adults that are telling us they are here and they are not going away. They are already taking on ministerial roles, both professionally and as parishioners, and they fully expect to be taken seriously. The future of our parishes depends on the decisions we make today. Even as parishes are re-framing their traditional ways of being, we must rethink how we invite people into ministry. To paraphrase a well known quote: "We must prepare for a future not our own." ■

Young adults have very appropriate expectations of how they will be treated and how the gift of their life will be accepted.

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1. The Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project, funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., is a joint effort of the National Association for Lay Ministry and five partner organizations including then National Federation of Priests' Councils. For more information please see www.emergingmodels.org.
 2. U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops. "Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord," 2005.
 3. Parish statistics are based on those collected by the *Official Catholic Directory* and reported by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). For more information see www.CARA.Georgetown.edu.
 4. Katarina Schuth. *Priestly Ministry in Multiple Parishes*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006, p. 21.
 5. Note: All study findings and statistics can be found in *The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders* by Dean R. Hoge and Marti R. Jewell. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010. Statistics are averaged here for the sake of brevity.
 6. See *The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders* for specific statistics for men and women, college students and graduates.

The Sisters of Divine Providence of San Antonio, TX have started five inter-connected initiatives to help them build relationships with young adults.

Five winning ways to extend contact with young adults

BY SISTER ELSA GARCIA, CDP AND SISTER GLORIA ANN FIEDLER, CDP

FINDING WAYS TO MEET AND BE PRESENT to young adults is an ongoing concern for all vocation ministers. Our congregation, the Sisters of Divine Providence in Texas, wanted to find new ways to meet young women interested in aspects of religious life. This effort has taken shape in five forms: Life Awareness Weekends, the Providence Leadership Program, Young Adult Associates, Young Adult Leadership Core Teams in parishes, and Area Vocation Teams.

Building relationships

Vocation work is challenging for our congregation because our presence and numbers in Catholic schools and parishes has diminished. The congregation's New Membership Team—which is responsible for promoting vocations—recognizes

Sister Elsa Garcia, CDP is a full time vocation director for the Congregation of Divine Providence in San Antonio. She has also ministered as a social worker. Sister Gloria Ann Fiedler, CDP is a full time vocation director with experience in campus and young adult ministry.



that young people today are using new forms of media, and so we are connecting with them on Facebook and other social networks, and through blogs, e-mail, text messaging, etc.

To make up for our diminished numbers in schools and parishes, we have made public visibility a priority. Not only are we present in the virtual world, but we also have sisters on the New Membership Team give presentations at parishes and Catholic schools and participate in information fairs. By taking part in opportunities to present our community to the wider public, we have been able to begin forming relationships with young women who might consider membership. A sister's face, voice and personal presence are what is needed to invite people into a relationship with the Sisters of Divine Providence, whether as a potential member or as an Associate. In order to build relationships with young adults, the New Membership Team realized it needed to go beyond our important Internet presence and our valuable public speaking. To better make those personal connections, we have established five different initiatives

Life Awareness Weekends

In recent years more than a dozen women have begun serious discernment with CDP after attending a retreat presentation by the New Membership Team. Our sisters met these women and personally invited them to explore their call with the CDP. Knowing the importance of these sorts of personal connec-



During a Life Awareness Weekend, Sister Anita Brenek, CDP talks about the steps involved in formation. Two postulants and three women in annual vows came to the CDPs through contacts made during Life Awareness Weekends.

tions made during a retreat, the New Membership Team took the initiative in 2006 to begin working with the Archdiocese of San Antonio in sponsoring a successful retreat model that had been pioneered elsewhere by the Serra Club: Life Awareness Weekends. These weekends introduce men and women to brothers, priests and sisters of different congregations.

Thus the CDP vocation team worked with the San Antonio Archdiocesan Vocation Directors to launch the first Life Awareness Retreat for San Antonio in 2007. Parishes promoted the event from the pulpit; religious priests, brothers and sisters were asked to promote it at Masses and diocesan gatherings. The first retreat took place at our congregation's Our Lady of the Lake University. Forty-one participants who were seriously discerning God's call in their lives attended.

The success of this and subsequent Life Awareness Weekends was due largely to the cooperation of the archdiocesan vocation staff and the hard work of many vocation directors. Their efforts made it possible for young adults to come together and support each other in their vocational exploration. Since the first Life Awareness Weekend in San Antonio, 14 men have entered a seminary or religious community, and 13 women have entered religious communities. Others are discerning calls with various religious communities.

Providence Leadership Program

A second way that the Congregation of Divine Providence has



Right photo: Young Adult Associates take part in a pro-life march.

reached out to young adults is through our Providence Leadership Program (PLP), an effort to connect with students at Our Lady of the Lake University. This program was one aspect of a larger project funded by the Lilly Foundation. The Divine Providence Leadership Program involves four meetings a semester designed to help student participants grow in their understanding and practice of Providence spirituality. Through the PLP, our congregation has provided more than 200 college students with basic formation in prayer, ministry and service. The best part of the program—from our perspective and according to the participants—is the contact between students and sisters at Our Lady of the Lake Convent. Several participants have indicated interest in priesthood and religious life, and some have chosen to become CDP Young Adult Associates—our third initiative for reaching out to young adults.

Young Adult Associates

In 2007 the New Membership Team began an initiative which has yielded remarkable results. It invited adults ages 18 - 40 to join the congregation's Associate Group. This was something of a departure from tradition, since most religious order Associates are women over age 50. Like any Associate program, the Young Adult Associates of the CDP are friends who share the goals, values and ideals of the sisters. The Young Adult Associates meet monthly to plan community and service activities and events rooted in their baptismal call. They have organized

Habitat for Humanity weekends, raised funds for orphans in Africa, taken part in pro-life prayer vigils and even gone on fishing trips. An added bonus is that this group has provided the young women interested in vowed life a peer group to grow with—something the congregation could not offer. Also the New Membership Team sees the Young Adult Associates as a natural follow-up group for university students in the Providence Leadership Program. After graduation becoming a Young Adult Associate is a good way to maintain one's affiliation with our community.

In addition Young Adult Associates are a good networking tool, since they often tell friends and family members about the community. For one thing, young adults in general are good at using social media to spread the word about our congregation. Finally, the Young Adult Associate group has been popular: in our first year the congregation welcomed 15 new Young Adult Associates, and each subsequent year several more young people join. Four of our current Young Adult Associates have expressed interest in vowed life.

Our Associates, however, are not strictly young, single women. Single men, priests and married couples are a part of the Associates Group as well. The breadth of each member's relationship with the CDP varies, as does the geographic location. However they all have experienced a call to live the charism of the CDP. It is especially pleasing for the CDP to have 114 Young Adult Associates who are growing in the charism of Providence and who help in vocation promotion. It is these Associates, in particular, who bring a presence of the CDP to other young adults who are making life choices.

Young Adult Leadership Core Teams

A fourth initiative to increase our contact with adults aged 18-40 has been to form Young Adult Leadership Core Teams in parishes. These teams help the pastor to implement ministry and services to young adults in the parish. Sisters and pastoral ministers meet monthly with these core teams to get them involved in parish life. The teams plan special music for Masses, do service projects and sponsor retreats. These activities are parish centered. The CDP Sisters who work with these teams can invite these young adults to also become CDP Young Adult Associates.

Young Adult Leadership Core Teams have now been established in 10 parishes. In some cases Young Adult CDP Associates are helping to develop these Leadership Core Teams. In the past, our vowed membership was routinely in parishes connecting with youth. Now, with that presence diminished,



The Young Adult Leadership Core Team from a San Antonio, TX parish takes a moment for a smile. The Leadership Core Teams do parish-based outreach to other young adults and help the CDPs network.

our Young Adult Leadership Core Teams are able to help the congregation promote the charism and invite vocations.

One bonus of our two young adult groups (both the Associates and the parish-based Core Teams) has been this: young women considering a life commitment with our community can now receive peer support because our 40+ Young Adult Associates and the 50 members of Young Adult Leadership Core Teams are eager to provide that valuable support.

Area Vocation Teams

Our fifth initiative for connecting with young people has been to broaden our geographical outreach by forming Area Vocation Teams. These teams have a focused vocation outreach in a particular part of the country. They are composed of the congregation's vocation personnel, sisters out on mission and area Associates. The goal is to have several groups work together to promote the CDP. The collaboration of these groups is a true win-win for the CDP because our sisters are attending to the spiritual hunger of young adults, and the Providence charism grows in the relationships being formed; in addition, our vocation outreach is extended.

CDP sisters and Associates are part of the Area Vocation Teams, which now exist in Houston, Waco and San Antonio. These Area Vocation Teams are present in local parishes and attend vocation functions. Team members also meet from time to time with interested women. The Area Vocation Teams also display the congregation's information at events and invite interested women to gatherings. The New Membership Team hopes to create more Area Vocation Teams, thereby continuing to extend the community's field of contacts.

These five forms of extending the reach of our congregation are our way of promoting our charism and helping build a healthy future for the congregation. However, just as our reach has been extended and made bigger, our vision of the future has been enlarged to aspire to a time when not only our own congregation but religious life in general will thrive. ■

UPDATES

Snapshot of U.S. vocation ministry

To give readers an overview of what is happening nationally in vocation ministry, HORIZON presents this report on vocational efforts around the country. Please send news items for consideration to cscheiber@nrvc.net.

Project to address education debt

The first meeting of the working group of the NRVC Educational Debt and Vocations Project took place in April, 2011 at the Franciscan Friars, Holy Name Province, Provincial Office in New York City.

To assess the extent of the issue of student debt and its impact on vocations, NRVC will contract with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) to survey all religious institutes regarding their policies, practices and experience of working with candidates with student loan issues. The survey is scheduled to be completed in fall, 2011. After the survey results, NRVC will develop resources for religious institutes, their treasurers and vocation directors, as well as for those who are discerning religious life. This project is funded through the generosity of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

Chaired by **Dr. Kathleen Mahoney**, project director, and NRVC executive director, **Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC**, the members of the working group are: **Sister Ellen Dauwer, SC**, vocation director and general councilor for the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth of Convent Station, NJ and secretary, Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) executive board; **Dr. Mary Gautier**, senior research associate, CARA, Washington, DC; **Sister**

Mary Johnson, SNDdeN, chair and professor, Department of Sociology, Emmanuel College, Boston, MA; **Brother Campion Lally, OSF, J.D.**, in-house counsel and business manager of the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn; member of the Board of Directors, Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI), Brooklyn, NY; **Sister Patricia Twohill, OP**, vocation director, Dominican Sisters of Peace, New Haven, CT; **Sister Anne Walsh, ASCJ**, vice-provincial superior and postulant director, Apostles of the Sacred Heart, Hamden, CT. Also present was **Dr. Sharon Miller**, associate director of Auburn Seminary's Center for the Study of Theological Education. Dr. Miller reported on the 20 years of research conducted by Auburn on seminarians and education debt.

VISION and NRVC at World Youth Day

By the time this edition reaches readers, *VISION* vocation magazine and Web site and NRVC will have been present to thousands of young adults at the World Youth Day in Madrid August 15-19. *VISION* planned to distribute stickers, pens, T-shirts, etc. See the *VISION* dedicated World Youth Day Web page at LikesGod.com for more information about the event.



Committee to help form transition program for long-term volunteers

A committee composed of people involved with long-term

volunteer programs was scheduled to meet in Baltimore July 27, 2011 (as *HORIZON* went to press) to develop an effective transition program for those completing stints as full-time Catholic volunteers. The program will have a vocation component and build on existing best practices for such programs.

This effort was established in keeping with the Action Plan that flowed from the Moving Forward in Hope symposium. The committee is chaired by **Sister Patricia Wittberg, SC**, a sociologist at Indiana University-Purdue University. Members of the committee are: **Sister Kristin Matthes, SNDdeN**, formerly of Notre Dame Americorps; **Sister Teresa Daly, DC**, formerly of the Vincentian Volunteers; **Jim Lindsay**, executive director of the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service; **Alisa Macksey** of the Lasallian volunteers, and **Chrissy Nesbitt**, a former volunteer. **Kathleen Haser** of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and **Patrick DiDomenico** of the Augustinian Volunteers hope to participate on the committee but could not

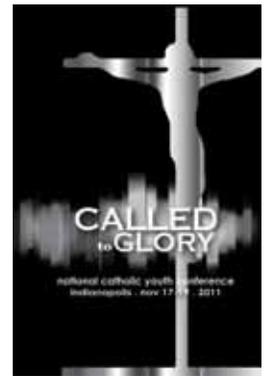
attend the July meeting. More will be published as the committee develops plans. Contact Sister Patricia Wittberg, SC to learn more: pwittber@iupui.edu.

Vocation exhibitors give thumbs up to National Catholic Youth Conference

A number of vocation exhibitors who have been present at previous National Catholic Youth Conferences have praised the venue for its impact on young adults, and they encourage vocation ministers to be part of the event. The 2012 conference will take place in Indianapolis November 17-19. To learn the details of hosting an exhibit, go to <http://ncyc.nfcym.org/>.

"We meet young people who are ready to change the world because their faith has changed them," Father Godfrey Mullen, OSB told *HORIZON*. Mullen and others from St. Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana attend NCYC each year.

The event, say those who have attended before, not only helps vocation ministers make valuable contact with faith-filled young people, but it also can be invigorating for the ministers who attend. Brother John Glase-napp, OSB told *HORIZON*: "This was my only real involvement in vocation ministry, and so it was extremely worthwhile for me personally. Again, the sense of community and cooperation and common purpose was amazing. It's so easy to look around in our world and see the tremendous needs there are and to get discouraged. But then, when you have this unique opportunity to get so many religious and monastic orders together, you get this very moving sense of how large and encompassing the response to the Gospel has already been."



HORIZON and VISION win awards

VISION magazine won three awards and *HORIZON* one from the 2011 Catholic Press Association Awards. *VISION* was recognized for excellence in feature writing, essay writing and a photo feature. *HORIZON* was awarded first place for the feature story: "Use New Media to Promote Vocations," by D. Scott Miller. For details, see http://www.catholicpress.org/resource/resmgr/journalists/m11_june_journalist_2011.pdf. ■

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BOOK NOTES

Book explores theology of vocation

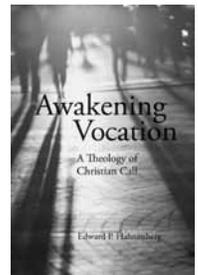
BY SISTER JUDITH SCHAEFER, OP

ANYONE WHO HAS WORKED with young adults has heard the question, “How do I know if I am doing God’s will?” or “What is God’s plan for my life?” *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call* (Liturgical Press, 2010) deals with these familiar and important questions, and explores the varied meanings of words intrinsic to these questions, such as “vocation,” “call,” “God’s will,” and “discernment.” Edward P. Hahnenberg, Associate Professor at Xavier University in Cincinnati, examines the complex meanings behind these words, provides a rich historical review of how they developed, and offers new language that sheds light on how vocation can be re-imagined.

Those working with young people in any capacity and, in particular, those working in vocation ministry within religious communities, will find this book insightful in responding to the important human question that poet Mary Oliver articulates: “What is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?” (page xi).

Hahnenberg explores the relationship between the *vocation* and *call* with a dense and intricate historical review. Through an exploration that goes from Luther, Calvin, and Barth to Francis de Sales and Ignatius of Loyola to Miraslov Volf, Yves Congar, and Karl Rahner, Hahnenberg demonstrates how the theology of vocation has evolved in both positive and negative ways. The chapter, like much of the book, is detailed and academic and requires perseverance on the part of the reader, but the effort is well worth it. The historical and theological understanding gained about how the current multivalent meanings of *vocation* and *call* developed is invaluable in giving vocation ministers language and concepts for questions such as: What does God want me to do? What is my unique path? What is God’s plan for me?



Hahnenberg is both appreciative and critical in his historical and theological analysis of vocation. He shows how each theology struggles to “articulate a theology of vocation that affirms both nature and grace”—and how, from Hahnenberg’s perspective, each falls short. The goal of his book is to offer new language that will articulate an inductive approach to the vocation of each unique individual that augments the current objective, general, and detached approach. “What is needed is a thoroughly subjective, personal, engaged theology of vocation orienting the whole person toward the future that is God’s call” (page 46).

Sister Judith Schaefer, OP, is dean for University Affairs and chair of the Theology Department at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota in Winona, MN. She previously served the Sinsinawa Dominican Congregation in formation ministry and has published a book on the vow of obedience entitled, *The Evolution of a Vow: Obedience as Decision Making in Communion* (LitVerlag, 2009).



To begin his project, Hahnenberg explores the interior dimensions of vocation and call with a review of Ignatius of Loyola's understanding of the primacy and pervasiveness of grace and the importance of the individual's inner experience in discernment. He counterbalances this approach with a summary of the French theologians, Pierre de Bérulle and Jean-Jacques Olier, and their emphasis on the connection between the inner experiences of the individual with the experiences of Christ. Hahnenberg cites the inability of 17th century

Hahnenberg is both appreciative and critical in his historical and theological analysis of vocation. He shows how each theology struggles to "articulate a theology of vocation that affirms both nature and grace."

theology to overcome the dualistic split between nature and grace as contributing to an understanding of vocation that reduced it to a secret, and too often, silent voice.

Vatican II's revolutionary breaking open of the universal call to holiness was significant in developing a more wholistic Catholic theology of vocation.

However, Hahnenberg

believes that the earlier 17th century theology of vocation still holds sway today—at times, in overly institutionalized and overly interiorized ways. He cites examples of how contemporary church documents continue to confine God's call to a few states of life, and how a theology of supernatural grace continues to reify vocation and "turn discernment into a pseudo-mystical scavenger hunt" (page 90).

Part Two of *Awakening Vocation* focuses on three essential elements of vocation: God, the individual and others. Vocation begins with the God who calls. Hahnenberg explores the shifting response to "God's plan" from anxiety ("What if I don't find out what God's plan is?") and fear ("What if I don't measure up?") in earlier periods to today's fear of meaninglessness ("Is there a plan at all?"). Young adults today face many varied options, and the question easily becomes, "What's the point?" The contemporary question of ambiguity must be taken seriously; yet, this does not mean that the language of "call" is foreign to seekers today. It simply means the focus needs to be reframed to the God of the call, not the call itself.

The second element involved in call is the individual, the "me." Hahnenberg credits the Protestant doctrine of vocation for raising an emphasis on the particularity of the individual

Christian. As Luther argued, God calls specific persons, not a state of life. Hahnenberg explores the question of "me" through Karl Rahner's theology of grace and his explication of the supernatural existential. Rahner's theology, though complex in its articulation, is fundamentally the simple truth that God's love is what makes each of us special. "The love of God does not become less a miracle by the fact that it is promised to all" (page 137).

The third and final element of vocation, the other, is perhaps Hahnenberg's most creative contribution. He begins with a definition of discernment as "the search for resonance between a particular choice and one's fundamental spiritual identity" (page 160). "I hear my vocation in the harmony between the path that is before me and the mystery that is me" (page 160). Hahnenberg takes post-modern consciousness seriously and acknowledges that the individual cannot be seen in isolation but rather as shaped and socialized by one's surroundings. "Vocation is my story amidst other stories, as all of these stories unfold within the story of God" (page 161).

In exploring the contemporary milieu, Hahnenberg introduces the work of Lieven Boeve on "open narrative" and applies Boeve's insights to conversion. "The conversion called for at the present moment is the transformation that comes through an openness to the interruption of 'the other.' In order to hear the call of God, what we need most ... is to become open. For through openness to the other, we grow more and more open to the Other, the God who calls" (page 191).

Hahnenberg concludes his book with a chapter entitled "For Others." What is different today in our understanding of vocation is not what we know about God, and not completely what we know about ourselves or our place in the world, but rather how we name the whither to which we are being called—not out of a sinful world but into a suffering one. Where do seekers today begin? With one small step: allowing ourselves to be troubled—troubled by the suffering in the world and troubled by the way the world is running.

Edward Hahnenberg has made a significant contribution to the understanding of vocational questions today with his in-depth, scholarly, and thorough work on vocation and Christian call. The text is rich, complex and well worth reading and pondering. The power and mystery of God working in the lives of individuals deserves such a profound effort. Hahnenberg concludes with an inspiring image of how vocation can be imagined: "We are awakened. We wake up and step out into a great procession, joining a sea of unique and beautiful selves surging forward into the reign of God" (page 233). We can be confident that we will find our way by walking. ■



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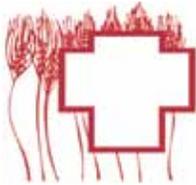
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