



The National Association of Vocation & Formation Directors (NAVFD)

November 2018

VAC (VOCATION AWARENESS COMMITTEE) IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF EDMONTON

During the past five years several attempts have been made to have a committee that is committed to fostering a “Culture of Vocations” in the Archdiocese of Edmonton. Promotion for St. Joseph’s Seminary has been alive and well but support for the vocation of marriage, single life and consecrated life has had a very difficult time “coming to birth.” Earlier this year a decision was taken to invite consecrated women and men to come together and brainstorm some ideas. Although many ideas surfaced the “call to action” fizzled out. In the end a group of three women - Mae Valdes, SP, Michelle Langlois, FCJ and Mary Clare Stack, UJ, formed a small group to organize some “awareness building” events for 2018-2019. In May a group of nine women gathered at St. Joseph’s Basilica for a day-long retreat.

The participants were asked to evaluate the day and provide suggestions for moving forward. The committee took the suggestions and “ran with them.”

At the same time the Spirit was moving in the hearts of some students at St. Joseph’s College on the University of Alberta campus. They approached Theresa Robinson, a member of the Chaplaincy team, and asked if a “Culture of Vocation group” could be formed at St. Joe’s. Thanks to Theresa, and the enthusiasm of the students, the group has now met twice. The first evening we looked at baptism, the foundation of our

vocational call; the second evening we reflected on the meaning of discernment in our lives, and on December 2 a third gathering will be held, the theme of which is the Vocation of Marriage. A beautiful, young student couple from Brazil will facilitate the evening.

The women who had gathered in May asked for more retreat days so the committee decided to provide a Pre-Advent retreat on November 17. Our focus was discernment rooted in Sacred Scripture, Mary’s “yes” to the Incarnation, videos entitled Discernment for Dummies” and Taizé Prayer. Unfortunately, only one women registered so the retreat was cancelled. In the spring and summer of 2019 we look forward to a day-long retreat at St. Joseph’s College on February 23;

another gathering in the season of Easter; a twilight retreat the eve of Pentecost, and a presence at the Family Life Conference which takes place the last weekend of June.

“The harvest is ripe but the labourers are few” so we trust in the prayerful support of all who seek to foster a “Culture of Vocation” that we can listen attentively to the voice of the Spirit prompting us to know how to support women and men in their desire to live their baptismal call “in the church and the world today.”

Sister Mary Clare Stack



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THE SYNOD ON YOUNG PEOPLE: WHAT DOES THE FINAL DOCUMENT SAY?

The inspiration for the Final Document for the Synod on Youth is the episode of the disciples of Emmaus, recounted by the evangelist Luke. It was read in the Synod Hall by the Rapporteur General, Cardinal Sérgio da Rocha, by the Special Secretaries, Fr. Giacomo Costa and Fr. Rossano Sala, together with Bishop Bruno Forte, a member of the Commission for the drafting of the text. It is complementary to the *Instrumentum laboris* of the Synod, and follows the 3-part subdivision.

Part One: "He walked with them"

The first part of the document considers concrete aspects of young people's lives. It emphasizes the importance of schools and parishes. It acknowledges the need for laity to be trained to accompany young people especially since so many priests and bishops are already overburdened. The Document notes the irreplaceable role of Catholic educational institutions. The challenge the Document addresses is the need to rethink the role of the parish in terms of its vocational mission because it is often ineffective and not very dynamic, above all in the realm of catechesis.

The reality of young people regarding migration, abuse, the "throwaway culture" are also dwelt on in part one. Regarding abuse, the Document calls for a "firm commitment for the adoption of rigorous preventive measures that will keep such abuse from being repeated, beginning with the selection and formation of those to whom leadership and educational roles are entrusted." The world of art, music, and sports is also discussed in terms of using them as "pastoral resources."

Part Two: "Their eyes were opened"

The Synod Document calls young people one of the "theological places" in which the Lord makes himself present. Thanks to them, it says, the Church can renew herself, shaking off its "heaviness and slowness." Mission, it says, is a "sure compass" for youth since it is the gift of self that brings an authentic and lasting happiness. Closely connected with the concept of

mission is vocation. Every baptismal vocation is a call to holiness.

Two other aspects covered in part two that aid in the development of the mission and vocation of young people are that of accompaniment and discernment.



Part Three: "They left without delay"

The icon presented by the Synod Fathers of the young Church is Mary Magdalene, the first witness of the Resurrection. All young people, the Synod Fathers affirm, including those with different visions of life, are in God's heart.

"Walking together" is the synodal dynamic which the Fathers also bring to light in the part three. They invite the Conferences of Bishops' around the world to continue (from previous page) the process of discernment with the aim of developing specific pastoral solutions. The definition of "synodality" provided is a style for mission that encourages us to move from "I" to "we" and to consider the multiplicity of faces, sensitivities, origins and cultures. One request repeatedly made in the hall, was that of establishing a "Directory of youth ministry in a vocational key" on the national level, that can help diocesan and parish leaders qualify their training and action "with" and "for" young people, helping to overcome a certain fragmentation of the pastoral care of the Church.

The Synod Document reminds families and Christian

communities of the importance of accompanying young people to discover the gift of their sexuality. The bishops recognize the Church's difficulty in transmitting "the beauty of the Christian vision of sexuality" in the current cultural context. It is urgent, the document says, to seek "more appropriate ways which are translated concretely into the development of renewed formative paths".

In the end, the Document brings the various topics covered in the Synod into one vocational thrust, that is, the call to holiness. "Vocational differences are gathered in the unique and universal call to holiness". Through the holiness of so many young people willing to renounce life in the midst of persecution in order to remain faithful to the Gospel, the Church can renew its spiritual ardor and its apostolic vigor. Vatican News, Oct. 27, 2018.

OUTSTANDING RECOGNITION AWARD FOR NAVFD PRESIDENT FROM NATIONAL RELIGIOUS VOCATION CONFERENCE (NRVC)

These are the words used by Sr. Donna Del Santo when she presented Sister Mary Rowell with her award: In Mary's own words on her Blog for the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada "Through the unifying love of Christ, Sisters of St. Joseph are animated by a life of prayer and a contemplative spirit in all times and places. We live with simplicity and compassion, nurture community, caring for God's creation. We minister with active, inclusive love bringing healing and hope in God's beautiful but broken world. We are "ordinary women, doing ordinary things for the extraordinary love of God." I am going to be bold and say this is a beautiful description of the Sister I know as Mary Rowell.

Sr. Mary is originally from Cambridge in England. She has been a Sister of St. Joseph in Canada since 2004. At Villa St. Joseph, Sr. Mary is engaged in retreat facilitation, spiritual accompaniment and she is deeply engaged in the ecology ministry at the Centre.

Before entering the Congregation, Sr. Mary worked as a nurse and nurse educator in England and later in ophthalmological and blindness prevention programs in South-East Asia, China and the Indian sub-continent. She is also a clinical bioethicist. Sr. Mary has a bachelor's degree in

philosophy, a Masters in Medical Law and Ethics and a doctorate in Theology, and until recently, taught theology at Regis and St. Michael's College, University of Toronto.

Sr. Mary serves as the Vocation and first formation Director for the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada. In addition, she serves on the Life Long Formation Committee of the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Sr. Mary is the board president for the National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors (NAVFD) for Canada and is a member of National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC), currently serving on their Editorial Board.



She was an active participant in the International Conference for English Speaking countries in Rome planned by NRVC for the Year of Consecrated Life in February 2015, and its follow-up task force in Paris, November 2015.

The purpose of these two gatherings was to think broader in ways to collaborate through a global and international approach to vocation ministry.

On a more personal note... Mary is a dear friend and colleague who is passionate about her religious life and inspires me and others to be passionate about our life as well.

SEEKING EMMANUEL IN A WORLD IMMERSSED IN CHAOS



Sister Barbara Jean Franklin, ASC, has been a member of her religious community, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, for over 50 years. During that time she has ministered as a teacher and administrator in Catholic Schools in Illinois and Missouri and has served her religious community in a variety of administrative areas. She currently serves as administrator of a retirement facility for her community members in Ruma, IL. She is co-director of the Adorers' Ministry of Vocations team. She writes and offers retreats to religious communities and parishes.

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RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE (RFC) WEBINAR:

Webinars are open to all those who wish to attend. One does *not* need to be a member of the RFC to participate. RFC **members** enjoy the added benefit of having access to an **archive** of recorded webinar sessions and other materials.

Webinar:

**Wednesday, December 5
2:00 pm eastern, 1:00 pm central**

LANDSCAPE OF RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS IN CANADA NEWSLETTER REPORT – NOVEMBER 2018



Dear NAVFD members and friends,

Advent Greetings!

With the beginning of a new liturgical year, our

research team would like to thank all those who continue to spread the word about our research findings. It is our hope to support you in your vocation animation and retention, making our research findings available from coast to coast.

We have invested financial resources in the development of

materials (electronic and printed) with accessible information from our reports. We will continue to make this information available through our website and newsletter, and plan to extend our dissemination and capacity-building strategy into the New Year. Stay tuned for more information!

FROM OUR RESEARCH:

Did you know that...

- 47% of religious congregations across Canada have someone dedicated to vocation animation
- 52% of the vocation animation initiatives within the last five year include online 'resources
- A congregation that focuses

their vocation programs on those under 19 years old is significantly more likely to have new members

- 38% of new members of Canadian religious congregations were born outside of Canada, and a majority of these new members joined after their arrival in the country

If you have any questions, or would like to find out more about our research results, please contact our me at navfd.research@gmail.com.

We ask for your prayers and support as we extend the reach of this important project. Happy Advent!

Héctor Acero Ferrer, Project Manager