



The National Association of Vocation & Formation Directors (NAVFD)

November 2017

VOCATION ATTRACTION: IF YOU BUILD SOMETHING BIGGER, THEY WILL COME.

Fr. Toby Collins, CR

Ancient or new, religious communities are scrambling to figure out a way to clearly articulate who they are and what they stand for in the hopes of attracting new members. When invited, people do come to investigate them and their reasons for coming are endless. Some because of a deep desire to love God and abandon their faith in temporal things, others because it fulfills a lifelong dream to lead, teach or inspire, and some just to find out why the heart of a religious they know is ablaze with God's love and peace. That said, I still think they all have one underlying thing in common: they sense that there is something about religious life that no other vocation has to offer. Namely, a vowed life that seeks to fall in love with God alone and spend one's life becoming more aware of a much bigger presence of love than they can discover on their own. This initial discovery is often what transforms them in a way that keeps them coming back for more. Whether through prayer, work, and/or interactions with the members of a religious community their truest self begins to emerge as discerning God's will becomes a top priority. A priority that, at least in the western part of the world, challenges them to think and feel less as an individual and more as a member of a community that desires to heal, strengthen, and restore.

So how do we continue to build a culture



in and around religious communities that is attractive to potential members? Work together as a community to name in a concise way what is most precious and moving for its members and collaborators. Then share this wherever people are looking for that "something more" in their lives. Churches, schools, residences, retreats, conferences, etc. Pray with people inquiring. Listen to, and tell, short stories about personal transformation that lead to a deeply felt sense of peace, love, and joy.

Involve youth and lay experts to help you communicate your message using current technologies. And never forget to feed the body along with the soul as inquirers develop appetites for both. And if you're curious about how you're doing send out an electronic survey and respond to it.

With stable and consistent programs in place new ideas will emerge and numbers will increase. The world is still hungry for what we have to offer! And if members and collaborators take the time to work together and rejoice in their success, the ministry itself will unite us all and unknowingly reveal to potential candidates a hint of something that is distinctly attractive today. Namely, one of the greatest blessings in the world is to belong to a religious community that is bigger than me.

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CONFERENCE 2018 TO ACCOMPANY IN JOY AND HOPE

People who care about fostering a culture of vocation across Canada are abuzz with excitement about the NAVFD Conference happening April 22-25, 2018 in Hamilton, Ontario. Every day we are hearing from people either registering for the conference or making some inquiry about it. The Board of NAVFD is preparing to welcome the world and the Conference Planning Committee continues to refine the details to ensure an exceptional experience for participants.

Even though the conference is still months away, registrations are already flowing in. Among others, we have received registrations from the Hospitallers of St. John of God, the Presentation Brothers, the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, the Salesians of St Don Bosco, the

Congregation of Notre Dame, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary and the Catholic Women's League.



We are delighted to confirm our liturgist for the conference in the person of Loretta Manzara, CSJ. Sr. Loretta finds joy in the sound of a community engaged in sung prayer. Her ministry has been

enriched by accompanying worship with religious congregations, seminary communities, and in liturgical workshop settings. She looks forward to the blessings of being with NAVFD.

Dominican Fr. Michel Coté will be providing simultaneous English/French translation for the keynote speakers Cardinal Gérald Lacroix and Sr. Nathalie Becquart, XAU.

To book your hotel room, contact www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/NAVFDConference2018 or by contacting 24 hour, toll-free reservations line at 1-888-627-8161 and asking for the 'NAVFD Conference 2018 group block. To register for the conference see www.vocations.ca. Any questions? navfdca@gmail.com.

Conference of the National Association of Vocation/Formation Directors (NAVFD)

Hamilton Ontario Canada | April 22-25, 2018

preparation for a life of evangelization
developing & fostering a culture of vocation
Pope Francis' pastoral letter
engaging & praying with young people
dialogue on visibility
enculturation panel
best practices re international candidates
celibate loving
social media toolkit
sound bases for initial & ongoing formation
why I came. why I stay



COST
before Mar 15,
\$360 US/ \$450 Cdn
after Mar 15,
\$380 US/ \$475 Cdn

Keynote Speakers: Cardinal Gérald Lacroix (Quebec) / Sister Nathalie Becquart (Paris, France) / Reverend Tom Rosica (Toronto) and many other excellent presenters.

For all persons and organizations passionate about fostering a culture of vocation.

Registration form and further information: www.vocations.ca or contact navfdco@gmail.com

LANDSCAPE OF RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS IN CANADA

Héctor Acero Ferrer, Project Manager

Early Advent greetings from the team of the “Canadian Vocations Ministry Study”!

Thanks to the generous contribution of more than a hundred religious congregations across Canada, we have been able to secure representative samples for our surveys in both languages. Our partners at the *Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)* have dedicated the last two months to compile and analyze the data collected and will soon have some preliminary results. We will share some of these results with our members over the next few months.

In this edition of our Newsletter, we would like to direct your attention to a number of upcoming activities of our research team. Before the end of 2018, we will host our last Focus Group, this time in Eastern Canada. We should mention that this became a reality through the tireless efforts of a handful of newer religious from this region, committed to the goals of this research and hopeful to apply the research outcomes in their own religious institutes.



Between January and March of 2018, we will conduct a series of site visits in collaboration with *CARA*. In these visits we will take a closer look into the congregational life of the institutes that continue to attract and retain large numbers of new members. Our hope is to trace and document their best practices in vocation animation. If you represent an institute with large numbers of new vocations, stay tuned –as we might be contacting you in the next few weeks.

Finally, we have been able to extend the duration of our research grant until April of 2018 when the results will be shared in the context of the 2018 National Association of Vocation & Formation Directors Conference. At that time Religious from across Canada will be able to give feedback about the research.

If you have any questions, or wish to participate in one of our site visits, please do not hesitate to contact me, Héctor Acero Ferrer, at navfd.research@gmail.com.

We ask for your prayers and support as we continue this important research.

Have a blessed Advent season!

Attention National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors (NAVFD) members:

Invoices for membership fees will be sent out in early January.