



# The National Association of Vocation & Formation Directors (NAVFD)

January 2018

## VOCATION MINISTRY AND CONSECRATED LIFE CONFERENCE

ROME, DECEMBER 1—3, 2017

Sr. Bonnie Chesser, CSJ

This conference in Rome was attended by 800 Religious men and women from all over the world.

The conference opened with the reading of a letter from Pope Francis addressed to the attendees: <https://zenit.org/articles/popos-message-to-vocational-conference/>. He emphasized that Vocation Animation must be seen as leading to a personal encounter with Christ. It is important that all members of the church live their lives flowing from this encounter, in whatever vocation is chosen. All youth ministry goes hand in hand with Vocation ministry. Prayer has to have an important place in our service to the Church; this implies that we are continually responding in gratitude for our own vocation call, and that we pray for those whom God is calling.



Pope Francis' emphasis on accompaniment of young people was echoed by most speakers. We need to walk with them, listen to them, challenge them, invite them to give their lives to respond to the call of the Gospel. One speaker noted that Jesus has always been a source of fascination through generations, and for this reason, Religious Life will continue in some form. Young people need to be introduced to this "fascinating Jesus". He is the One for whom they are searching, although they may not know that.

In the call of the first disciples, when they wanted to know where Jesus lived, he said "Come and see". We heard that this is also the invitation that young people extend to us: Come and see my life, come and see my struggles, my fears, walk with me, listen to me, enter in and "spend the day" with me.

We heard ideas from various countries and cultures. All were trying, and some succeeding, to find creative ways to connect with young people. A couple of communities have set up youth hostels so that when they leave home and move to a large city, there is a safe place to live, to share, to maintain family values. A couple of countries, one being the US, have a "year for Christ", in which they dedicate themselves to service and study.

These are paying off in terms of religious vocations. Some who are close to university campuses are opening their homes to students, inviting them to share meals and prayer on a regular basis, and some have students living with them.

From most speakers we heard about the need for a full-time vocation director and team to be involved with vocation animation.

One of the guest speakers was

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Timothy Radcliffe, OP. He emphasized three needs for a congregation: 1. **Strong identity.** Religious life is a radical call and young people will be attracted to this. It goes against western culture of safety and comfort. Religious life should have some risk. 2. **A strong theological understanding of the vows.** Obedience is not infantile submission. It is a commitment to allow ourselves to be touched by our Sisters, to listen. Chastity is to love those who are different, open our hearts to them. Poverty, the

freedom to travel lightly; we don't even possess the idea of who we think we are. 3. **Strong Leadership.** We need creative leaders who are not afraid to take risks, and who are able to be calm in the midst of the storm, because, as he said, "Christ has died, is risen and will come again."

Since all this is part of the preparation for the Youth Synod in the fall of 2018, Cardinal Baldieri spoke of their efforts to reach out. The synod is hoping to hear from young people who are in the age range of

16 to 29, also non-Catholic and non-believers. There are common traits in youth around the world. They have been meeting with Bishops and youth ministers, encouraging as many as possible to take part in the on-line survey. They have had 380,856 "visits" to the website. Our prayers are essential for the success of the Synod.

It was a wonderful, encouraging opportunity to see the keen interest of so many communities in vocation animation.

### NAVFD CONGRATULATES FR. TOM MCCARTHY, O.S.A.



Congratulations to Fr. Tom McCarthy, O.S.A. a member of the Editorial Board of Horizon who was appointed recently, to the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization. Fr. Tom will be the English-language official on the Council which has the mandate of "spreading the Gospel through modern and innovative forms of communication". Sr. Mary Rowell, CSJ, NAVFD President, serves with Fr. Tom on the Horizon Editorial Board. She says, "Fr. Tom's dedicated ministry in conducting retreats and missions across the United States and his passionate commitment as Vocation Director for the Midwest Province

of the Augustinian Friars, which resulted in a great increase in young vocations to the order", forms a wonderful grounding for his new role. For the Augustinian newsletter story of Fr. Tom's appointment see: <https://www.midwestaugustinians.org/news/2017/12/27/fr-tom-mccarthy-osa-named-to-pontifical-council>

NAVFD sends congratulations, Fr. Tom! Thank you for your deep commitment and creative ministry. May you be deeply blessed in the days ahead.

### NEW WEBSITE

We are delighted to announce the launch of our new website on February 2, 2018. This website is for NAVFD itself which we have never had before. This is where the latest newsletters will be posted as well as information about the conference and other interesting things. The address is <http://navfd.info/>. Vocations.ca, our popular website continues to be available for persons pondering their vocation choices. Thank you Jason Gennaro for creating such a beautiful site.



## CONFERENCE 2018

*Registration for the Conference:* remember to register for the Conference by Feb 1 to have your name in the hat for a chance to win 3 nights accommodation at the Sheraton Hamilton Hotel for the Conference as the Early Bird Draw. To register: [http://www.vocations.ca/News\\_Events/navfd\\_2018\\_conference\\_registration.pdf](http://www.vocations.ca/News_Events/navfd_2018_conference_registration.pdf)

Registration for Accommodation at the Hotel: Reservations for hotel accommodation are to be made directly with the Sheraton Hamilton Hotel and are **not** included in the conference registration fees.

To make your room reservations: <https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/NAVFDConference2018>. Reservations can also be made by contacting 24 hour, toll-free reservations line at [1-888-627-8161](tel:1-888-627-8161) and asking for the 'NAVFD Conference 2018' group block.



In case you missed it on our Facebook page, here is Fr. Tom Rosica inviting the world to the Conference. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxnKY54aXV4#action=share>

*Entertainment at the Banquet:* After several interesting days of listening/interacting with others, it will be time to celebrate Liturgy together with Bishop Douglas Crosby, OMI, Bishop of the Diocese of Hamilton. Following this will be a banquet with local

entertainment. Delightfully, The Harlequin Singers have agreed to share their talents with us. This is a community choir specializing in popular and Broadway music. We look forward to hearing them.

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*Inviting all Religious 55(ish) and Under serving the People of God in Canada to...*

### **SEARCHING FOR A COVENANT OF MUTUAL SUPPORT – A DEEPER ONENESS**

**WITHIN THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST with Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI**

This *Reflective Gathering* will be a blend of silence, prayer, community, and in-put. Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI is currently the President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio TX. He is an author, retreat director, teacher and theologian. He was born and raised in Saskatchewan and is proud of his Canadian roots.

**Place:** Queens House, Saskatoon Sk  
**Cost:** \$625

**Date:** July 17 (4:00 pm)- July 23 (1:00 pm)  
**Register:** [bookings@queenshouse.org](mailto:bookings@queenshouse.org)

**Deadline:** May 15, 2018

We are grateful that some participants from the Religious Under 55 Retreat 2017 are part of the planning team for 2018. Questions? Contact Sr. Michelle Garlinski, SNJM [mgarlinski@smamb.ca](mailto:mgarlinski@smamb.ca)

## LANDSCAPE OF RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS IN CANADA

Project Manager, Héctor Acero Ferrer,

Happy New Year from the team of the “Canadian Vocations to Religious Life” research project!

As we embark on the last stage of the research, we would like to express our gratitude to all the religious institutes that have contributed—and continue to do so – to the success of this project. We hope that the data collected through our research will create a platform for the development of a strategic plan for vocation animation across Canada.



We would also like to mention the *Conrad N. Hilton Foundation*, without whose financial support we would have not been able to undertake this project, and the *Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)*, our main research partner. These two organizations have been instrumental in the process, promoting through their commitment and support the future of vocation animation in North America.

Between January and March, 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 larger-than-



the-average numbers of new members. If you think that your institute fits into this category and have not yet been contacted, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

A number of religious institutes have inquired about our research results. In addition to our concluding report, which we will send to our membership and other stakeholders, we will create a series of materials that will make the data accessible to the wider public. We will also be presenting the research results the “2018 National Association of Vocation & Formation Directors Conference”, where we will meet with religious from across Canada, answer their questions, and collect their feedback.

If you have any questions, or wish to participate in one of our site visits, please do not hesitate to contact our Project Manager, Héctor Acero Ferrer, at [navfd.research@gmail.com](mailto:navfd.research@gmail.com).

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

Have a blessed 2018!

