



The National Association of Vocation & Formation Directors (NAVFD)

November 2019

ADVENT 2020: BEING LOVE IN THE WORLD

Sister Mary Rowell

Each year as the lovely season of Advent arrives we are invited in a special way to reflect again on the gift of vocation. The primary vocation of each baptized Christian is to live life fully in love, service, witness and holiness. All share in this universal call whatever our particular vocation. The beautiful Vatican 11 document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (#40) reminds us: "All the faithful in Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fulness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity."

In the Hebrew Scriptures in the Book of Leviticus (19:2) we read: "Be holy, for I, Yahweh your God am holy."

During Advent, and despite all the premature Christmas decorations that we see around us, we are gifted with a special time for reflection to examine just what that call to be "holy like God" may look like in our lives. The invitation to take this time; a time of waiting for Christmas is serious. French Archbishop Jean-Louis Brougués, O.P. says: "Every Christian life is an adventure. It begins with the Lord's call at the moment of our baptism. We spend our total existence delving into the meaning of this call: What does the Lord expect of me, and how can I best answer this call?" Advent provides the perfect time to step aside from all the "razzmatazz" of the season in order to respond to these questions in light of the

coming of Christ that we await now and celebrate at Christmas.

The call to be Holy like God! How impossible does that sound? Isn't it all too much, too abstract? Yet, we are reminded in this liturgical season that Christ is the image of the invisible God. His life is our model of God's holiness; holiness that we are each called to imitate. At Christmas we celebrate the incarnation of Christ – Emmanuel, "God with us."



In a homily given in Manger Square in 2014, Pope Francis said: "The Child Jesus, born in Bethlehem, is the sign given by God to those who awaited salvation, and he remains forever the sign of God's tenderness and presence in our

world." As we contemplate this we remember just how Christ did come, not in greatness with much fanfare, but in simplicity, in poverty, in humility; a vulnerable baby, born of a young mother, fostered by a faith-filled and loving father, Joseph and born in fearful times. His is the pattern of the holiness of God to which we are called. We give thanks for a model that is attainable and that is pure gift of God's presence in our lives, even in fearful times, as we live out our vocation of loving presence in the world.

May this season of Advent not pass us

over

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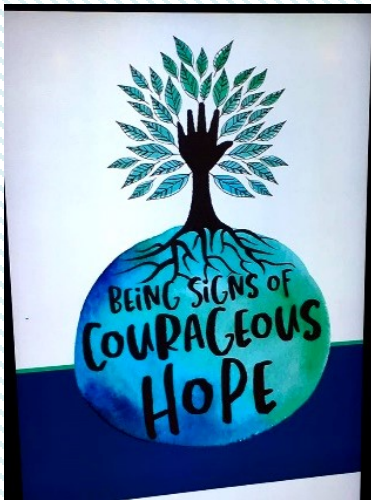
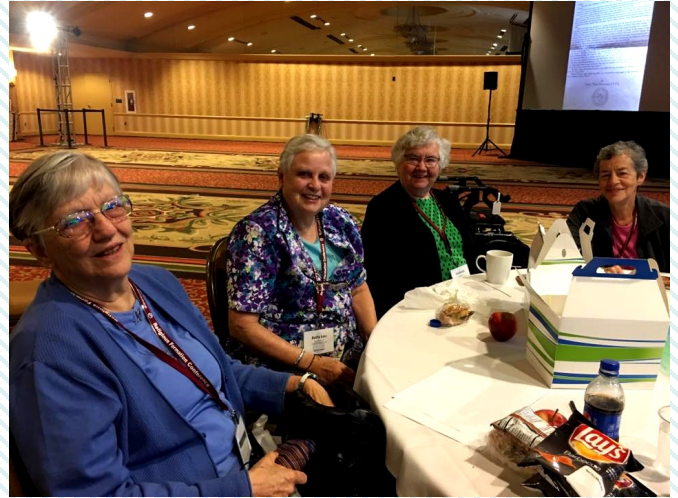
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by in the rush toward Christmas but may it be a time in which we give thanks for this great gift; a time when we again explore our call as we wait for Christ again and again. Whatever our vocation we, like Christ, are called to incarnate God's love in the world, that is, to be holy like God! God's presence, God's tenderness and mercy, God's humility and poverty are also ours; ours to give in each moment of our lives, in all circumstances and God, Emmanuel, is with us.

BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS IN MISSION

During October it was a joy for some of the NAVFD members to be able to join friends and colleagues in the United States for two important events. Sister Mary Rowell, CSJ was a guest speaker for the Fall Institute of the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) held in Leavenworth, Kansas. The NRVC annual Institute sessions provide workshops for the preparation of new vocation directors and also other opportunities for more seasoned directors

to enrich and update their experiences.



Immediately, following the NRVC Institute, the biennial Convocation of the Religious Formation Conference (RFC) took place in Louisville, Kentucky. The Convocation title, "Being Courageous Witnesses to Hope" said it all! It was indeed a time of much hope together with inspirational keynote presentations given by Fr. Bryan Massingale addressing hope in "a time that does not yet know its name" and Sister Norma Pimental M.J. speaking of hope in mission as she movingly presented the remarkable ministry taking place at the U.S./ Mexican border. NAVFD Executive Director, Sister Nancy Sullivan CSJ, Board members, Sisters Joanne O'Regan, CSM and Mary Rowell, CSJ were

in the company of a good number of our NAVFD members (Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto pictured above) from across the country for this wonderful conference.

In building these relationships across our borders vocation and formation ministries are strengthened nationally and internationally in prayer and in action together as we learn from one another and build friendships in mission for our world and church today.

This is also a reciprocal process. We, in turn, look forward to welcoming Sister Deborah Borneman, SS.C.M. Director of Member Relations and Services for NRVC and Sister Ellen Dauwer, S.C. Executive Director of RFC to our upcoming conference to be held in St. John's, Newfoundland, April 29-May 2, 2020. Sisters Debbie and Ellen will both be presenting workshops for this conference.

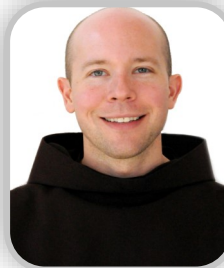


CONFERENCE 2020



All persons who are passionate about creating a culture of vocation are invited to attend the 'Calling to New Horizons' conference sponsored by the National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors (NAVFD)

from April 29 to May 2, 2020 in beautiful St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada.



Fr. Dan Horan, OFM speaks of 'Discernment, Vocation, and Formation in the Thought of Pope Francis.'

Interesting workshops as well!

For more information, visit navfd.info or email navfdco@gmail.com.

Registration package for the conference is attached to this newsletter.

There will be **FREE REGISTRATION** for a newer member of a congregation/diocese as long as someone else from that congregation/diocese is also attending as a paying participant. Newer members will still need to register and write on the form 'newer member.'

SIMULTANEOUS FRENCH TRANSLATION will be available for opening night events, keynote presentations and AGM.



Dr. Richard Gaillardetz' presentation is 'Toward a New Theology of Vocation'

Sr. Margo Ritchie, CSJ explores the image of the 'Adjacent Possible'



RESEARCH GATHERINGS: Conversations about the results of the *Recent Vocations to Religious Life in Canada* project continue in **Edmonton on Nov 30 and in Hamilton on Dec 2.**

These conversations bring the study to life as together people ponder what the results are saying to all of us.

THE SURPRISING JOURNEY OF PRAYER

SAVE THE DATE for religious 55ish and under

This retreat will be an opportunity to reflect in prayer on the blessings of both the hills and valleys of our Religious vocations. Sessions will include Scripture, time for silent prayer, community sharing and opportunities for personal conversations. Guiding our retreat experience will be Sr. Bernadette O'Reilly NDS and Fr. Larry Gillick SJ.

Sunday July 26th (evening) - Saturday August 1, 2020 (morning) Queen's House of Retreats, Saskatoon, SK



VOCATION CULTURE: REFLECTION TO ACTION

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National Religious Vocation Conference)

Although this was a report regarding religious women, it would also be useful for both Canadian men's and women's Religious Congregations to consider.

Back in 2012-2013, the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) sponsored the *Women Religious Moving Forward in Hope* program underwritten by the GHR Foundation. They gathered groups of religious women throughout the USA to explore the opportunities, challenges and implications for new membership in Religious life that are presented by the changing ethnic and generational demographics of Catholic women in the United States. The concise document arising from these gatherings identifies critical issues for women's religious institutes which are:

- a) Establishing boundaries and clear identities as women Religious.
- b) Increasing the cultural knowledge and sensitivity of our members.
- c) Considering how our communal decisions affect younger members.
- d) Increasing the communication among leadership and vocation personnel.
- e) Encouraging all members to be inviters.
- f) Continuing the work of reconciliation and healing within a divided Church.
- g) Working with dioceses and parishes to promote vocations.
- h) Trusting in God's providence.

In the document, there are insightful questions to ponder under each issue which could be very helpful to congregations.

To order copies of this report, please contact the NRVC store at <https://nrvc.net/store> .

BUILDING RESILIENCY: SKILLS FOR HEALTHY RELIGIOUS LIFE

The following is from a presentation by Emily Cash, Psy D at the Religious Formation Conference, Oct. 24, 2019. Used with permission of Emily Cash. Copyright 2017 Saint Luke Institute.

- A. Ten Ways to Build Resilience:
 1. Make connections.
 2. Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems.
 3. Accept that change is a part of living.
 4. Move toward your goals.
 5. Take decisive action.
 6. Look for opportunities for self-discovery.
 7. Nurture a positive view of yourself.
 8. Keep things in perspective.
 9. Maintain a hopeful outlook.
 10. Take care of yourself.
- B. Learning from your Past:
 - * What kinds of events have been most stressful for me?
 - ◆ How have those events typically affected me?
 - ◆ Have I found it helpful to think of important people in my life when I am distressed?
 - ◆ To whom have I reached out for support on working through a traumatic or stressful experience?
 - ◆ What have I learned about myself and my interactions with others during difficult times?
 - * Has it been helpful for me to assist someone else going through a similar experience?
 - * Have I been able to overcome obstacles, and if so, how?
 - * What has helped me feel more hopeful about the future?