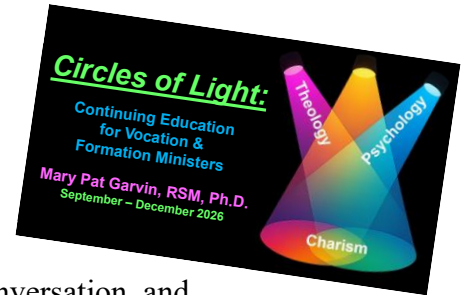


**Circles of Light:**  
***Continuing Education Course for Vocation & Formation Ministers***  
**September – December 2026**  
**Mary Pat Garvin, RSM, Ph.D.**

This year's continuing education course for vocation and formation ministers is *Circles of Light*. Together we will explore four topics through the lenses of theology, spirituality, and psychology so that your accompaniment of women and men discerning religious life and the priesthood will be grounded and holistic.



*Circles of Light* will be held on ZOOM and will include input, conversation, and small group discussion. Last year, 104 vocation and formation ministers (apostolic and contemplative), and 15 leaders registered for the course, hailing from 12 countries and 37 congregations.

Participation in this course includes **free access** to *SLIConnect: Resources for Healthy Life and Ministry* (<https://www.sliconnect.org/>), a service of Saint Luke Institute. *SLIConnect* is a rich resource of 200+ video courses designed to promote a healthy life and ministry for members of religious congregations, ordained clergy, and all those ministering in the Church.<sup>1</sup>

**Topics**

***Accompaniment: Keeping It Healthy and Holy***

- ❖ Accompaniment of those discerning religious life and priesthood is a sacred venture. In this session we will explore various types of accompaniment frequently offered to those discerning religious life and priesthood. We will examine the capacity of both the minister and discerner to offer and receive healthy and holy accompaniment. We also will consider the topic of spiritual abuse which is receiving renewed attention around the world in many congregations and dioceses.

***Grace and Grit: Unlikely Companions...or Maybe Not!***

- ❖ This session will explore how recent research on “grit” may deepen our understanding about how God’s “grace builds on [human] nature” – an insight of St. Thomas Aquinas over 800 years ago that continues to be explored in our own day. Materials on “grit” will be provided for use with those you accompany.

***Audio Divina, Sacred Song, and the Formative Process***

- ❖ This session invites us to enter into the practice of *audio divina*, exploring how this spiritual practice may be useful as you accompany those discerning religious life and the priesthood. As always we will draw from the rich wells of theology, spirituality, and psychology, listening for the ways God is present in our experience of music (*explicitly religious or not*) that shapes our lives.

***Psychological Assessments: Benefits and Limits***

- ❖ *Back by popular demand!* This session will explore relevant information on the proper use of psychological assessments within the process of vocation discernment and the formative process. Of utmost importance is the recognition that a psychological assessment can **never** determine whether or not an individual is called to religious life or the priesthood. What a psychological assessment can offer is valuable insights into a person’s *readiness* and *capacity* to engage in the formative process so to discern, along with the congregation or diocese, their felt-call.

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<sup>1</sup> Learn more about St. Luke Institute’s [SLIConnect.org](https://www.sliconnect.org/), [LukeNotes](#), [Speakers Bureau](#), and [Consultation services](#) at [https://sli.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/SLI\\_Educational-Resources-Pamphlet\\_2023\\_web.pdf](https://sli.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/SLI_Educational-Resources-Pamphlet_2023_web.pdf).

**Dates:** September 10<sup>2</sup>, September 14, October 5, November 9, December 7

**Time:** 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM (Eastern Time, New York time)

**Platform:** ZOOM

**Donation:** \$150 US Dollars per person

-make check payable to the **SISTERS OF MERCY**

-international participants please request needed information for payment

**Registration by June 30, 2026**

*(You may register at any time prior to June 30<sup>th</sup> and make payment after July 1, 2026)*

email – [vocation.formation2020@gmail.com](mailto:vocation.formation2020@gmail.com)

or

post – Mary Pat Garvin, RSM

Sisters of Mercy

204 B Elmwood Ave.

Narberth, PA 19072 USA

**Facilitator:** Mary Pat Garvin, RSM, a member of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, serves as an educator, consultant, and facilitator for national and international conferences of religious, as well as religious congregations worldwide. Her other ministerial experiences include: a member of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Institute Leadership Team (2011-2017), co-designer and instructor in the UISG international program for the preparation of formators; and educator in primary, secondary, and higher education, including the Gregorian University where she received a doctorate in psychology and served on the faculty for eight years. Currently, Mary Pat is a member of the national board for the Inter-Congregational Collaborative Novitiate (ICCN). In 2017 she received the Penet Award from the RFC for her contribution to the ministry of initial and ongoing formation. In 2025, Mary Pat received the Outstanding Leadership Award from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). Her research interest is the interplay of spirituality and psychology in the promotion of a healthy and holy living of religious life.



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**Please fill out a separate registration form for *each* participant.**

-if you are unable to fill out this form, simply email your information to [vocation.formation2020@gmail.com](mailto:vocation.formation2020@gmail.com)

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Congregation** \_\_\_\_\_

**Country** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**WhatsApp** \_\_\_\_\_  
(international participants only)

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Circle all that apply:** Vocation Minister   Formation Minister   Leadership   Other \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>2</sup> The **September 10<sup>th</sup>**-session is **optional**. While all participants are welcome, this session is designed for those who have never participated in an online course with Mary Pat Garvin, RSM. In this session we will explore the foundational concepts underlying all the material we will explore during the semester.