

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS  
2020 VIRTUAL ASSEMBLY

**Presidential Address:**  
**Vulnerability Borders and the Long Notes of Religious Life**  
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Introduction

Greetings to all of you wherever you are gathered! It is an honor and privilege to have this opportunity to share with you my own experience of leadership. Throughout this address, I am going to use a concept given to us at last year's assembly by keynoter Sr. Pat Murray who spoke of listening for "the long note." By this, she was inviting us to listen attentively to the long notes which play out in daily life and which point us to what is happening at a deeper level, calling us to discern how best to respond. This concept continues to capture my imagination.



In contemplating on the theme for this assembly, *God's Infinite Vision: Our Journey to the Borders and Beyond*, I'm speaking from a pandemic within a pandemic, Covid-19 and racism, both of which continue to flourish in our country and in other parts of the world.

Covid-19 has brought to the fore our own vulnerability as persons, institutions, states, and countries. At the same time, it has shown us the damage we do to our common home, Earth. As the Black Lives Matter movement gained traction across the world, I saw God's Infinite Vision – our journey to the borders and beyond. The borders of neighborhoods, the borders of our hearts, the borders of our personal racism and systemic racism, and the borders of our conscious and unconscious complicity with racism that impacts all aspects of literally all persons of color.

In a column I wrote for the LCWR newsletter this past June, I spoke to the *holy disquietude* that crept into my inner most being and had become a long-term inhabitant. This holy disquietude had to do with the pandemic and the major shifts in how to live and lead during this time of quarantine. I was extrapolating out the impact this pandemic would have on families, churches, the economy, businesses and the disproportionate impact this virus would have on the economically poor, and especially on Black, Latinx, and Native American men, women and children.

On May 25, this *holy disquietude* moved to *holy anger*. God's *infinite vision* broke through the walls of my ignorance and resistance, revealing what our black and brown brothers and sisters, and all persons of color have known since birth – white privilege reigns within us and across this country and the world. This part of God's vision is infinitely clear to me – we have work to do, sisters, in our complicity in enabling the insidiousness of racism to flourish within and around us.

This theme of *God's Infinite Vision and our Journey to the Borders and Beyond* calls each of us to reflect on the borders within us, perceived borders within and outside of us, and the external borders we encounter in life.

I've grouped what I'd like to share with you in four sections with the overarching umbrella of vulnerability. Covid-19 and the rawness of racism has brought us face to face with our vulnerabilities and my hunch is that by engaging with one another from a stance of vulnerability, we are better able to explore what is ours to explore at this moment in time:

- Vulnerability and the Borders of Racism
- Vulnerability and the Borders of Religious Life Today
- Vulnerability and the Borders of the Emerging Orientations
- Vulnerability and the open Borders of our Future as Women Religious.

The over-arching umbrella of all that I'll share with you today is vulnerability. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Brené Brown PhD, LMSW, a professor, lecturer, author, and podcast host. Dr. Brown has spent the past two to three decades studying courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy. As the pandemic took hold, I reread her book, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead.*<sup>ii</sup> I believe she has much for us to consider and work with as women religious.

### **Vulnerability Border: Racism** **Long Note: Complicity**

The word racism is fraught with discomfort, fear, anxiety, and tension. We often become very uncomfortable in confronting what awaits us when we explore our own racism and biases. How have we -- you and I -- reflected on our most profound experiences of racism? Have we dug deep within ourselves and owned what is painful, disturbing, and sinful?

The scripture passage that enables me to delve into my own racism is Saul's conversion on his way to Damascus (Acts, Chapter 9). Saul was knocked to the ground and he hears a voice saying: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" He asks who it is calling to him and he hears a voice saying: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." When Saul arises from the ground, he is blind.

Those accompanying Saul take him to Damascus and three days later a disciple named Ananias blesses Saul saying: "...the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately things that resembled scales fell from Saul's eyes and he regained his sight.

When I reflect on St. Paul's conversion, I see a reflection of myself in his journey. As Saul, he is living what he believes is a self-righteous life; he is too blind to see his own sinfulness in the persecution of the Christians.

I chose this picture of his conversion because it shows Saul knocked low, sitting in the dirt, on the road to Damascus. I experienced myself knocked low and in the gritty understanding of my own complicity in racism through white privilege. This self-understanding has been years in the making; being knocked to the ground as I watched in horror at the lynching of George Floyd on May 25 of this year.

The scales covering my eyes were peeled away as I watched in horror the eight minutes and forty-six seconds for Mr. Floyd to die. For the next few weeks, I devoured anything I could find about racism and white privilege...and I sat and listened.

I allowed myself to be vulnerable by taking a long, deep look within. This is a time for all of us to get real, to walk this current day road to Damascus as we join with others seeking an end to racism. I catch glimpses of God's Infinite Vision as I journey to the borders of my own complicity and wade into the beyond – the very depths of my being.

What has helped me take this long, deep look within is identifying those touchstone moments in my life where racism reared its ugly and destructive head. I begin with this first story. I am a 13-year-old freshman in high school, we were playing a basketball game against another school. At one point, a girl from the other team started screaming these horrific racial slurs at Margaret, an African American teammate. I literally was stopped in my tracks. I had never heard such poisonous and racist remarks toward another human being – much less my teammate. After the girl was ejected from the game, and the coach talked with Margaret, play resumed.

I had come out of the game and was standing on the sidelines – immobile. My coach, Diedre Douglas, also African American, came up behind me and wrapped me in a big bear hug. Amid the chaos unfolding, she must have seen that something was going terribly wrong within me. She held me in her embrace for a long time - until I found my grounding again and could come back into myself. It was a moment that is seared in my memory...my childhood bubble of not experiencing racism was no more. I distinctly remember thinking – Margaret and Coach Douglas deal with this every day and I do not.

Now fast forward about 15 years and another touchstone moment in my life. I am a novice and find myself in Tijuana, Mexico with a group of sisters from another congregation. I did not know anyone, including these sisters. I had never been out of the United States and I did not speak Spanish. This experience of border crossing was both scary and exciting, and felt like an adventure I wanted to be on. It soon became something very different. During that first day, I saw families living and scrounging through heaps of trash, looking for usable items to eat or to repurpose. I saw men, women and children seeking to better their lives in any way possible.

That first night, as I sat alone on a Tijuana hillside, mostly in darkness on the Mexican side of the border, I looked at the lights of San Diego and the tears begin to flow. Why such poverty where I was sitting and within miles, untold wealth? What is wrong with humanity that this stark distinction even exists?

I had not experienced this level of poverty up close and personal; it was life-changing for me. The borders of my heart were expanded and the seeds of what would become a theology grounded in socio-economic and racial justice were planted. And yet, I had so much more to experience, learn and change about myself and how I engaged in the world.

Later that same year, my novice director, Jo Ann Tabor, and another sister from my community, drove from Orange, California to Guaymas, Mexico – about a 14-hour road trip. We had just started a ministry in Guaymas and part of my initial formation was to experience this newly formed mission. As we approached Nogales, Arizona, not far from the Mexican border, I

became very anxious and fearful; I literally felt sick. I was embarrassed by how I was physically reacting to crossing the border and out of shame, I did not want to share with Jo Ann, my novice director, what was happening within me. I didn't understand why I was so fearful; I had been to Tijuana and though painful, I wasn't afraid. Why now?

After much soul-searching, I realized there was an embedded fear within me about Mexico. I had lived my first 24 years of life in a small town in Ohio and I hadn't even seen the ocean until I was 16...my worldview was quite narrow.

Then a conversation with one of my former college friends popped into my mind. She came to visit me in Lubbock, Texas, and just prior to entering the congregation, my friend said, aren't you afraid to live here? I asked her why I would be afraid, and she said, "because you're so close to Mexico." I remember thinking, Lubbock isn't close to the Mexican border...I was missing the deeper connection with racism.

In hindsight and reflection, it all crystalized for me. It was in the very culture of where I grew up that the seeds of fear were planted and not by my family. The seeds were embedded in the culture and like seeds placed in the ground, I couldn't see them. It was then that I understood why my body was reacting as our car drew closer to the Mexican border.

The more I crossed the border between Mexico and the US, the less fearful I became; and now, it feels natural to me and I look forward to who I will encounter when I'm in Mexico. The fear is gone; what remain are the discrepancies between opportunities and economic stability between our two countries. This fuels my desire for economic, political, and social justice at our country's borders and beyond.

As the years have unfolded, I've continued to reflect on these experiences of racism and there's an urgency within me to rid myself of its stranglehold. I cannot be, live or lead authentically if I'm not willing to do the inner work required in naming and eradicating the racism that dwells within. We all must commit to this painful, yet liberating work, as we journey together and work toward embracing the profound call from John 17:21: "... that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us...".

My own lived experiences have planted seeds of love, connection, and enduring relationships. A new garden is growing within me. I desire to know and be with persons of other countries, ethnicities, and cultures. In acknowledging my unnamed fears, I am able to settle in and *encounter* people from other countries and cultures – as they truly are – and not through the lenses of bias and racism. The borders within my heart are expanded and inclusivity has taken root; I continue to till this natural and God-given soil unencumbered by the sin of racism as I continue to root out any residue of racism that remains within me.

I wonder, if at times, we become too uncomfortable in our own skin when we pilgrimage into this terrain of racism, leaving too quickly, crossing back over to a place of comfort and protection – a false protection because what remains within us is a border that divides and separates us.

The invitation to cross the border of racism is an invitation to us all. My hope is that we have the collective fortitude to embrace this evolving consciousness. Let us look at those very

experiences that are painful, embarrassing, or difficult, because they are avenues we must journey - into the deep waters within us where vulnerability resides. When we *choose* to venture into the depths of our being, it is then that God's transformative grace can fill us with genuine love of all our brothers and sisters. It is a journey across the immense divide that societal structures and systems work so unceasingly and insidiously, to uphold.

This is our Damascus journey, our Emmaus journey, where we find God in our midst. The Holy Spirit beckons us to live authentic lives where racism and biases find no home in us or our institutions. As a conference, will we continue this journey of transformation where we work together to dismantle what needs dismantling, and build the systemic infrastructures that allow ALL to flourish in life?

### **Vulnerability Border: Sacrament of the Present Moment of Religious Life** **Long Note: Embrace**

As leaders today, we are experiencing tension as we grapple with the reality of our institutions. The needs of newer, younger members are different than the needs of our elders and those of us in the middle of the age continuum. There is heightened attention to discerning what the next one or two chapters might be for each of our institutions. Just as importantly, what are the implications for religious life itself?

God's infinite vision might be calling us to step over the borders of what we know as religious life today. This moment in time can be transformational for LCWR and our respective institutions. I'm wondering if we might reframe our conversations around age and number of members through the lens of God's infinite vision, and might what we see very differently when the haze of diminishment and scarcity are replaced with lenses of opportunity and imagination?

Perhaps each of us, all women religious, grounded in our realities of health, wellness and capabilities, to seek what God is asking of us at this moment in time. We all have hopes and dreams for whatever tomorrow brings no matter what age. Is it not time for a collective, national, and perhaps international conversation about God's call to us as women religious?

In naming all that impedes our journey to the borders and beyond, we regain a sense of nimbleness and freedom that this journey requires of us. We can pray, listen, dialogue, and move with renewed energy and sense of purpose in response to the God who continually invites us to the more.

We have the capacity to engage the complexity of religious life in the present moment. Our elders and those of middle age are eager to continue to define what religious life means for them now – and in the future – as limited or long as it might be! Our newer, younger members desire imagination partners for a future they are experiencing as hopeful, and perhaps a bit daunting.

I sense a growing willingness and desire to embrace these changes, while understanding the impact they will have on all aspects of our lives, including our ministries, communal life and how we engage with one another and with the world. Is not this the time to gather our sisters,

across the age continuum, and look to the horizon and listen intently for the whispers and echoes of the Spirit's longing, calling us, beckoning us, to new frontiers?

Part of the DNA of religious life is comprised of faith, hope, love, curiosity, commitment, daring, passion, zeal, wisdom, and many other attributes. These attributes course through us today just as they did our founders and foundresses. This moment in time in which we live is exciting, ever-changing and calls to us for engagement. It is a time to harness our collective creativity for the religious life itself.

Let me share some of my imaginings with you. In June, I was on a Zoom call with the members of the Contemporary Religious Life Committee of LCWR. During the call, I shared the image I have of religious life today. First a disclaimer, I have never been on a cruise though I have seen these ships from afar. Religious life as one of these cruise ships. The ship has served us well over the years; a sturdy, steady vessel in which incredible ministries have flourished, incredible community life has sustained us, liturgies and prayers have expressed our love of God, humanity, Earth and the cosmos. It was and is good because it flows from our response to God's loved outpoured.

Just as all cruise ships return to shore, I wonder, might it be time for us, as women religious, to board new vessels as we respond to current needs on the margins and periphery of life? Margins where our large vessel cannot sail. Our cruise ship was built when we were many; we are fewer now and the need to "right-size" to sail into the future is upon us.

Last year, Sr. Sharlet Wagner CSC, in her presidential address took us on a roller coaster ride that examined our life as leaders.<sup>iii</sup> This year, I'm asking us to choose a sea-worthy vessel as LCWR sets sail into deep, uncharted waters that await us.

Here are some choices for you: surf boards, kayaks, sail boats, row boats, team-rowing vessels, parasailing, paddle boards, pontoons, speed boats, or ski doos. The destinations that beckon will help us choose the appropriate sea-worthy crafts needed for our voyage. Pause for a moment and listen to the rhythm of the waves, the rhythms of religious life. Let us gather at the seashore and feel the salty ocean breeze as it caresses each of our faces. Let us look to the horizon, a horizon that speaks to us of God's infinite vision, inviting us to sail beyond our limited vision.

Let's allow our imaginations to set sail. What and where are the islands of need that are calling for us to come to their shores? Some vessels will not be able to land on these shores because they are too large or are unable to maneuver in shallow waters. Other destinations are in the deep, perhaps below the surface of the ocean. Perhaps some of us need to use diving equipment to reach the most vulnerable who are invisible and lost beneath the waves of capitalism, infrastructures of exclusion, and power systems that deny entry.

When I imagine us on our sea-worthy vessels, what I see is a freeing of our newer and younger members to set sail, sometimes with us who are older, and sometimes with their peers and other like-minded and like-hearted men and women. Some of our newer members are hearing the Spirit's invitation in the movements that emerge and where their presence, gifts and skills are most needed. Do we, will we, provide the types of crafts they need to reach these distant shores?

In other places, what is needed is simply our presence; no longer the call for initiating, building, directing, and sustaining; instead, it is call of being one with, one among. Is our witness, prayer, and presence the service that is needed when we land upon these distant shores? For some, the shore might be within, the sandy beach of your prayer, song, dance, art, or poetry which cries out to be released into the cosmos.

My hope is that we utilize the whole of who we are as women religious, in our diversity in age, race, ethnicity and culture. Let us continue and enhance our networking with those who desire to be on this journey with us, side by side, responding to the call of the Spirit at this moment in time.

As women religious, I feel the embrace of this moment in time. With God, there are no borders in loving one another. The fruits of the Spirit I'm experiencing as I journey with you, sisters, are faith, hope, love and courage. Let us board our vessels and know that where one of us is present, we are all present. The holy wind of the Spirit is blowing; will we sail with or against?

**God's Infinite Vision: Our Journey to the Borders and Beyond  
with the Emerging Orientations  
Long Note: Risking**

I would like to speak here about LCWR's emerging orientations. For those who are new to LCWR, these orientations – or guides for the future – were named by LCWR after the conference engaged in a wide consultation process with both members of LCWR and diverse groups of persons who offered their insights about how the conference can best meet the needs of a very different future for religious life.

If you recall, a few years ago the LCWR board recognized a need to explore the emerging future of the conference. As members, we've begun to delve into these orientations, casting our eyes to the horizon and standing in the midst of these orientations, we begin to catch glimpses of our emerging future as the borders in the distance call to us.

The five emerging orientations we identified as:

1. Global Consciousness – Encounter
2. Porous Borders – To Widen our Tent
3. Integrative Partnerships – With other conferences and persons who serve LCWR
4. Mission in the Public Square
5. Technologically Astute

It helps me to think of these orientations as movements occurring in the world, and in religious life in particular. They assist us in meaning-making as we reflect and engage in everyday life. As leaders, we continue to facilitate and hold in creative tension both the whole of our congregations and its parts. At the same time, we hold the three movements of dying, liminal space and emergent.

As a leader, how are you holding these movements in your congregation? This pandemic has caused us all to alter how we lead and has ushered in a liminal space with an underlying

heaviness. During this strange, and unsettling time, have we not experienced another energy, one fueled by creativity and ingenuity?

### **Global Consciousness – Encounter**

#### **Harmony Long Note: Joy**

As noted in previous LCWR publications and gatherings, the current movements in religious life, especially with younger members, include transnational, transcharism, and transcultural. These are movements of encounter both nationally and globally.

In my own congregation, small though active and engaged, I see before me a foreshadowing of what is happening within LCWR. For those members under 60, this is the world in which they move and have their being. They are women who grew up in Hong Kong, China, Mexico, South Korea, Germany, Vietnam, Taiwan, Philippines, and the United States; though all are now citizens and live in California. When I look at these sisters, I see what LCWR is becoming and what religious life looks like now and even more so, within the very near future. How are we grappling with what this means for all of us? I hope it is impacting our ways of praying, living, and ministering in this global reality.

These sisters are inviting all of us to an evolving understanding and global consciousness that we are all one...our common humanity unites us and there are real differences in how we engage in life. As leaders, how are we accepting this invitation to the frontiers of intercultural encounter? As members of congregations and those within organizations supporting religious life, how are you being influenced by these women so full of hope, joy, opportunity, imagination? Part of our makeup as women religious is being life-long learners; for religious life to thrive in the future, let us embrace our growing diversity and find the threads of unity without destroying the unique giftedness of each person God has called to this life.

I'm learning how to lead and be sister to our newer members who are so ethnically and culturally diverse. I have no "playbook" or "how to" in doing this. We live and learn, daily. Do we make mistakes? Yes! Though I experience these missteps as opportunities to grow and learn how to live life fully, joyfully and in harmony with all our sisters. It is becoming clearer to me that more work is needed in our initial and life-long formation programs and systems to unearth the remaining residue of white privilege and white supremacy. It is humbling work and it is work we must do to enable all sisters to thrive in their God-given vocation.

The more we can embrace the theological understanding of one common home and connections as human beings, the closer we come to living our biblical mandate of "love one another as I have loved you." God's infinite vision is proclaimed strongly in these words from scripture, inviting us to the borders and beyond of what it means to be inclusive, invitational, and diverse.

Within our congregations and within LCWR, we are eager learners and participants in how to live and engage interculturally. In this present moment and as we move into the future, let us continue to embrace the work of intercultural being and living. Let us make choices that enable us to encounter one another in various cultural settings. It is essential for us to embrace this movement of transnational, transcharism, and transcultural religious life if we are to flourish in the years ahead.

## **Porous Borders – Widen the Tent**

### **Harmony Long Note: Inclusivity**

As a member organization, LCWR has been discerning how we might expand our own organizational borders while staying true to our mission of serving those in elected leadership. As I have listened to many different sisters from various congregations across LCWR, what has become clear is that the days of “going it alone” have long passed us by. It is a disservice to religious life itself if we focus solely on our home congregations as if we are islands unto ourselves. Within LCWR we have heard the yearning from members of each of our congregations, across the age continuum, to find new ways of making available the tremendous resources LCWR possesses and continues to develop.

The numbers of women religious in the United States from other countries continues to grow. Many of these sisters are not elected leaders in their congregations, though if they had more access to us, they would find a treasure-trove of resources to assist them in navigating the systems and infrastructures within the church and in the political, social, and economic systems of our country.

The LCWR board, as well as other committees within LCWR, continue to delve into ways we can expand access to resources and remain committed to the purpose for which we exist. In addition, the 15 regions across LCWR are exploring ways to include younger and more ethnically diverse sisters and leaders who are not members of LCWR into their regional meetings. As religious life evolves in the United States and beyond, so too must our structures and focus as an organization assisting elected leaders in their ministry of leadership.

## **Integrative Partnerships for Religious Life and Mission**

### **Harmony Long Note: Relationships**

This emerging orientation has a long history within congregations and LCWR. The changing demographics and membership within our congregations have moved us to connect more and more with other like-hearted and like-minded people. Our ministries, advocacy, and our commitment to life-long formation compels us to seek out partnerships with others for a more just and humane global society and Earth.

Sr. Carol Zinn and the national office ministers of LCWR, the presidency and the LCWR board continue to build the relationships with other conferences and organizations that support religious life both here in the United States and beyond. If you listen in on almost any LCWR conversation, you will hear us speak to *anticipatory* leadership. What skills and tools are needed for religious to meet the leadership and ministerial demands of our future? How are we readying members to do the same?

We do this together, not alone or in isolated systems and structures. We need the national and international dialogue, prayer, and discernment to listen to the Spirit’s movement in our lives. Are we taking the time to engage with others? It is one thing to read or listen to a webinar, it is quite another an active participant.

The question of what religious life will be like in 10 years is not a question whose answer we will discover on our own. We need one another. We need to continue risking being vulnerable

with one another – as a conference, as leaders, as religious institutes on this journey together – and then, and only then can we begin to discern what God might be calling us to at this moment in time. We can anticipate the future only if we are actively engaged in the present, sleeves rolled up and “all in.”

During this pandemic, the zoom meetings have flourished. LCWR continues to remain in national and international dialogue with others from around the world. Tending the evolving partnerships we have with other conferences and other organizations throughout the world is part of the day to day reality of the national office ministers. We are living and engaging through the lens of integrative partnerships for religious life and mission.

### **Mission in the Public Square** **Harmony Long Note: Courage**

During our national dialogue with men and women from various walks of life, we heard repeatedly the call to LCWR to be in the “public square.” This literally was a plea for us to be visible and use our collective voice to make a difference in the world.

The spiritual, ecological, psychological, social, and economic realities of this pandemic will be felt for generations to come. My deep hope is that we discern together what might be ours to do. Who might we partner with, and be a presence alongside, in working for a more just world? Viewing what is happening and what will unfold in the years ahead through the lenses of these emerging orientations gives us glimpses into God’s infinite vision through our limited, yet sincere vision for LCWR, the world, and Earth.

Perhaps part of the new dawn that will emerge will be a renewed sense of care for Earth and the cosmos. A renewed sense for the dignity of all persons, from birth to death. A renewed sense of the beauty of God found in all persons and creation. During this pandemic, as the air, water, and soil pollution decreased, were we not mesmerized by the beauty of nature? It reminded me of the first time we saw Earth from space as the astronauts captured the incredible beauty of Earth and space itself. These images are intricately connected in God’s infinite vision of creation and the often-pointless borders created by us human beings.

### **Technologically Astute** **Harmony Long Note: Explorers in the Virtual World**

If you were at last year’s annual assembly, you may recall our brief conversation about whether “technologically astute” needed to be called out as a separate orientation. Now fast forward to today and just think how many of us have become more technologically astute these past six months!

Using new means of communication, religious life has become a transnational network with a global identity. As Sr. Pat Murray noted during her keynote address last year, “we are pilgrims in a globalized world seeking new ways to express our life and mission.”<sup>iv</sup> Technology enables us to host and engage in more inclusive dialogue and prayer. The various platforms developed to host both large and small virtual meetings continue to evolve.

Technology in and of itself is neither good nor bad; it simply exists. How and why we use it, and with whom, makes a tremendous difference. A year ago, how many of us would ever have considered hosting virtual assemblies or chapter gatherings...and look at us now!

While we remained “safer at home” and under quarantine, we bridged this isolating gap through phone calls, emails, zooming, Facebook, WhatsApp, and other media platforms. Consider how even more isolated we would have been without the use and access to technology – and our ability to navigate and use it effectively!

Let us tap further into how best to use technology to explore, vision, dialogue, and act into what is emerging in religious life today. Technology is one way to bridge the distance between us as we dream, more inclusively, our future. If we view technology as a tool of inclusivity, the possibilities of connection abound!

**Vulnerable Border: Future**  
**Long Note: Leap of Faith**

Assuming we are all now in our sea-worthy vessels, responding energetically to the Spirit’s movement, we can see our way through the economic, social, moral, and spiritual impact of this pandemic, coupled with the ruthless politics occurring in the United States as we approach the November elections, negativity abounds.

We can stay small as women religious if we default to numbers, ages and focus on limitations. While these are part of our reality, they are not the full picture. Our history shows us that the sisters before us set out boldly, with little money and scarce resources, and leaned into the Spirit’s movement. They accepted their vulnerability and tapped into their faith, wisdom, and creativity. They forged new communities and new ministries in frontiers that were rugged, rough, and wild. They ventured beyond the borders of the birthplaces of their congregations and followed the Spirit in far off lands.

Let us embrace what we have, who we are, right now! As we live into God’s infinite vision, let us take that next leap of faith waiting at the borders of our imaginations. We are women of faith. We are co-creators, contemplative, and apostolic, discerners, and risktakers. We are women of faith, hope, and abundant love. The borders beckon. The time to venture to the “beyond” is upon us. Let’s go! Launch your craft because we are in this together!!!

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<sup>i</sup> Pat Murray, IBVM, “Imagining Leadership in a Global Community,” Keynote Address at the August 2019 assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in Scottsdale, Arizona.

<sup>ii</sup> Brené Brown, PhD, LMSW, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead*. New York: Avery: An Imprint of Penguin Random House, 2015

<sup>iii</sup> Sharlet Wagner, CSC, “Divinest Sense at the Heart of Religious Life.” Presidential Address at the August 2019 assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in Scottsdale, Arizona.

<sup>iv</sup> Pat Murray, IBVM

All biblical references are taken from NAB World Bible Publishers, Iowa Falls, Iowa, 1976.