

February 2020

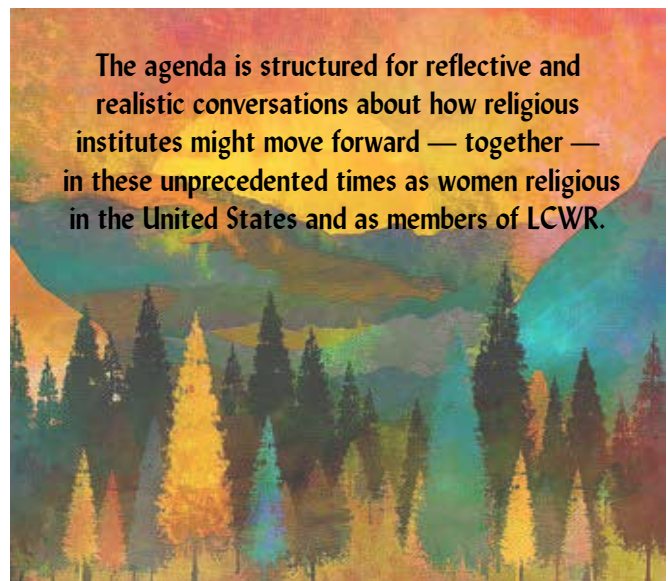
The Emerging Future of Religious Life: A National Conversation and Discernment

LCWR has initiated an important new effort to explore collaborative and creative ways for its members to discern together the implications of the shifts unfolding within its member institutes. This effort began in November 2019 with materials posted on the LCWR website about the initiative. It continues now with the hosting of five geographic gatherings in spring 2020 and then moves to the next step at the 2020 LCWR assembly in Dallas (August 11-14).

The conference thanks all the leadership teams who completed and returned the form sent in November requesting information. The response has been remarkable with a very high measure of interest and participation. Any congregation that did not return the form (asking for data on each institute) is asked to do so as soon as possible so that the national profile that LCWR generates is as accurate and complete



This new effort will explore collaborative and creative ways to meet the shifts unfolding in religious life



The agenda is structured for reflective and realistic conversations about how religious institutes might move forward — together — in these unprecedented times as women religious in the United States and as members of LCWR.

as possible. The form can be found in the members' section of the LCWR website under "Canonical Governance Matters."

The geographic gatherings are scheduled for:

- April 21-22: Hyatt Regency -- Dallas, Texas
- May 20-21: Sheraton BWI – Baltimore, Maryland
- June 1-2: Sheraton Westport Chalet -- St. Louis, Missouri
- June 3-4: Crown Plaza, O'Hare – Chicago, Illinois
- June 16-17: Sheraton BWI – Baltimore, Maryland

Each gathering begins at 1:00 PM on the first day and ends at 4:00 PM on the second day. Participants are asked to make travel plans that allow them to be present for the whole meeting.

Many leadership teams have requested, if possible, that their entire team might attend one of the gatherings.

(continued on page 3)

From the LCWR Presidency

Challenges and Gifts of Intercultural Living

Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ — LCWR President

The topic most capturing my attention these days is intercultural living. Our congregation has long had women from other-than-the-dominant culture entering, specifically, Chinese, Filipina, and Latina. These women were the minority within their “bands” and assimilated into the congregational culture over the years.

In the past 15 years, and especially the last 10 years, those entering the congregation are predominantly other than Anglo. Our newer members are Latina, Filipina, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese. Three other of our newer members were born and raised in Germany, Poland, and S. Korea. We have much work to do as this new decade unfolds if we are to embrace interculturality.

As a congregation, we are on a transformative journey that is awakening ourselves to the tremendous challenges and opportunities that are ours to explore and embrace at this moment in time.

A few of those challenges we’ve encountered are:

- Identifying blind spots within our dominant congregational culture and finding new ways of journeying together to create a new culture.
- Knowing what to let go of as we create space for the emerging culture (cherished ministries, initial formation processes, how we gather for assemblies, and how we form local community life)
- Recognizing that our tried and true methods of processing with one another can be hindrances for some of the women now entering religious life (such as our reliance on linear thinking and processing)
- Recognizing that our communication and language can be stumbling blocks toward understanding one another.



- Creating a safe environment that lends itself to enhancing relationships and facilitating trust-tending.

A few of the gifts and graces along our journey toward intercultural living are:

- A renewed sense of “leaning in” toward one another across the age continuum as we discern where our congregation is being called.
- Listening for the “long note” that is just beneath our knowing and yet propels us toward the future with a sense of faith, hope, and joy.
- Looking inward with a deep longing and eagerness to change where change is needed.
- Embracing the concept of porous boundaries and the global pull of life today and how might our own charism of unity and reconciliation may be furthered in the world today.

As members of LCWR and as members and leaders within our own congregations, working with and through our cultural biases will enable us to be signs of transformation and hope that our world so desperately needs. This journey is like a pilgrimage, one where the graces received are often found in unexpected encounters with others and even deep within oneself.

In embracing the LCWR emerging orientation of “global,” I’m filled with hope and a deep knowing that this journey is one for the courageous of heart and mind! It is hard work – individually, communally and corporately -- to pilgrimage into interculturality. It is a deep call within myself, my own congregation, and within LCWR. I’m grateful that I’m not on this journey alone; it is the journey our brothers and sisters are undertaking across the globe. May the fruits of our journey be seeds of hope, faith, peace, and inspiration to all who call Earth home.

The Emerging Future of Religious Life: A National Conversation and Discernment

(continued from page 1)

While it is a wonderful sign of energy and interest, in order to have a meaningful, collaborative conversation among many religious institutes in a geographic area, each congregation is asked to send only two team members. This is not a matter of space as much as it is a matter of process and significance of the cross-institute conversations. Team members who attend will be able to take focused and significant information back to their other team members for further conversation and reflection. It will be particularly important this year for entire leadership teams to attend the 2020 LCWR assembly since significant time will be given over to this national conversation and discernment.

The purpose of this new effort is twofold:

1. To initiate conversation among LCWR members in geographical settings about possible creative collaboration around leadership.
2. To generate a national profile of the capacity for leadership that exists in congregations to better understand the needs that the national body of LCWR religious institutes have collectively.

Each geographic gathering provides the opportunity for a facilitated conversation about the capacity for chapters/leadership within the geographic area and the possibility of collaboration among the religious institutes in that area. Each gathering will take place in a spirit of contemplation, dialogue, and discernment. The agenda is structured for reflective and realistic conversations about how religious institutes might move forward — together — in these unprecedented times as women religious in the United States and as members of LCWR.

Bea Eichten, OSF and Anne Munley, IHM will facilitate these gatherings and bring a deep understanding of religious life, leadership, and LCWR to their facilitation. Mary Hughes, OP, and Carol Zinn, SSJ will provide input and national perspective to help frame the reflection and conversation.

The two sisters whose names and emails have already

been submitted on the feedback form have now received an email from LCWR with:

1. Brief preparation materials for the geographic gathering they will attend.
2. Hotel registration information through Nix Conference & Meeting Management (the same group that helps with LCWR assemblies).

Anyone who did not receive hotel information should contact [Janette Houhoulis](#). Congregations changing the participants originally scheduled to participate should also contact Janette. Additional preparatory materials will be sent closer to the meeting dates.

Any questions about this initiative can be directed to LCWR executive director, [Carol Zinn, SSJ](#) or to the director of transition services, [Mary Hughes, OP](#).



Order Additional Occasional Papers

Copies of the Winter 2020 edition of LCWR's *Occasional Papers* are in the mail to all LCWR members, associates, subscribers, and those who placed orders. Some additional copies are available [for purchase](#).

Register Now for LCWR Leadership Workshops

New Leader Workshop
March 26 – 29, 2020

University of St. Mary of the Lake Conference Center
Mundelein, Illinois

[Information and registration materials](#)

Only a few spaces left

Practicing Leadership Workshop
May 11-13, 2020

Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center
Sierra Madre, California

[Information and registration materials](#)



Rivers of Hope/Ríos de Esperanza Offers A Leadership Formation Opportunity

The Porticus Foundation provided a grant to be utilized for leadership formation programs relative to Hispanic ministers/ministries. LCWR, in collaboration with the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), the Association of Latin American Missionary Sisters (AHLMA), Religious Brothers Conference (RBC), and the Mexican American Catholic College (MACC), will hold two gatherings for women and men religious who serve in Hispanic ministries. These gatherings, entitled Rivers of Hope/Ríos de Esperanza will take place:

- July 6-11, 2020 at Bon Secours Retreat Center in Marriottsville, Maryland
- October 18-24, 2020 at MACC in San Antonio, Texas

MACC has expressed interest in incorporating this program into its curriculum based on the learnings gleaned from these two gatherings. This is a wonderful opportunity to work with the women and men religious of the United States and contribute to the leadership formation for ministry with and among the Hispanic community. With the growing Hispanic population in this country and the Catholic Church, LCWR saw this invitation as a way to participate in this work at the national and inter-congregational levels. Working together is the way of the future emerging religious life.

Each organization is invited to send five participants to each of the gatherings. The 10 participants from LCWR communities should be sisters who have experience in Hispanic ministry, are able to communicate in Spanish and English, and who welcome an opportunity to meet

with other women and men religious who are deeply involved in ministry with the Hispanic community.

All costs will be covered by the Porticus grant.

Program details will be sent to all LCWR members by mid-February. Leaders are encouraged to begin identifying members of their own communities whom they think would be served by this opportunity and whose presence would be a contribution to the gatherings.

Response of Catholic Sisters to Border Crisis Featured in *Time*

Time magazine recently published in its online edition an article about the response of women religious to the crisis at the US-Mexico border. The article reads in part, “It began in the summer and fall of 2018, when the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), an association of American nuns, publicized requests for volunteers and financial support—a “call to the border,” as many sisters describe it. Since then, more than 700 nuns from the organization’s 300 member congregations have volunteered their services, some traveling hundreds of miles to join sisters who already lived in border towns. Most of this new influx of nuns began work on the U.S. side of the border—in New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and California—but others ... are scattered from Mexico to Honduras. And that’s only counting nuns whose congregations are American and LCWR members.

“Nuns now occupy major leadership positions on the border: Sister Norma Pimentel, who has gained national recognition for her immigration advocacy, directs Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, and an Irish nun named Beatrice Donnellan runs a shelter for migrant women in El Paso. Some of the sisters have arrived at the border with no previous experience in immigration work, while others have already devoted their lives to it. Sister Gloria Rivera, a Detroit-based nun from Mexico, served as a translator in immigration court and directed a migrant shelter in Michigan before traveling to El Paso to volunteer in January 2019. The nuns’ congregations fund their travels largely on donations. Since the summer of 2018, congregations have given more than 1.5 million dollars to immigration-related nonprofits, according to the LCWR.”



Order LCWR 2020 Reflection Books Now

LCWR is accepting orders for its new 2020 reflection book, *You Will Have Light for Your First Steps*. This collection of reflections written by more than 40 LCWR members builds on a line from the poem "Trasna" by Raphael Considine, PBVM cited by Pat Murray, IBVM in her 2019 LCWR assembly keynote address. The poem challenges us to view this historic moment in life as a crossing place - a place where we come to the end of what we have always known and move forward toward something that will be quite different from what we may have ever imagined.

In their reflections, the writers share their experiences of crossroads, of following their heart's longing, of stepping into the dark, and of trusting the lead of their inner knowing. Artwork by Catholic sisters, as well as questions and suggestions for deepening the reader's own prayer, accompany the reflections.

All LCWR members and associates will receive a copy of the book. Many leaders order additional copies for their members, associates, boards, staff, and others. The cost of each book is \$6.00, plus shipping and handling. Discounted prices are available for orders larger than 10 copies. Revenue from this LCWR project helps defray the costs of the resources and programs the conference provides its members. Questions about orders may be directed to LCWR's administrative assistant, [Carol Glidden](#). LCWR will only print the number of copies that are pre-ordered. **Orders must be received by March 1, 2020. Orders may be placed [here](#).**



LCWR Included in World Religions & Spirituality Online Resource

The World Religions & Spirituality Project (WRSP) invited LCWR to contribute a [chronology of its history](#) to be included on the WRSP website. WRSP was established in 2010 at Virginia Commonwealth University to provide objective, reliable, and comprehensive information about the world's diverse array of religious and spiritual groups. The resource is utilized by religion scholars and university students studying world religions. The central feature of the WRSP website is profiles of contemporary religious and spiritual movements, established world religions, and historical religious and spiritual movements.

The LCWR entry, along with the profiles of other groups, includes the organization's history and leadership structures.

Nominations for LCWR President-Elect and Board Due by February 7

All LCWR members are reminded that nominations for LCWR president-elect and board are due by February 7.

A link to the nomination form is available in the members area of the LCWR website under Nomination and Election Process.

On the website is a description of the process and a variety of resources, including a list of eligible members and a prayer for use with team discernment. Nominations may be submitted by leadership teams or individuals.

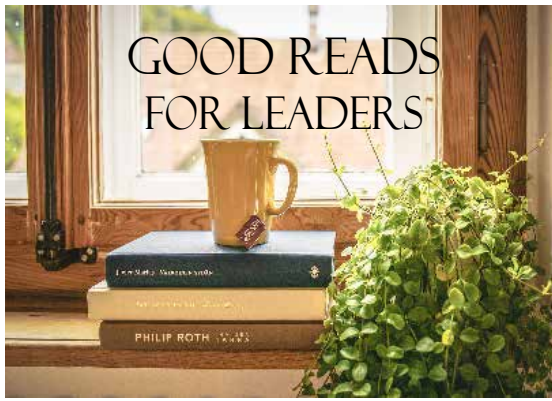
LCWR Members Enjoy the Leading from Within Retreat

The LCWR Leading from Within Retreat drew together 33 LCWR members from around the country to the Redemptorist Renewal Center in Tucson, Arizona. From January 12-17, the group was led through the retreat by Janet Mock, CSJ and engaged in ritual, prayer, and optional sharing sessions with one another.

The following comments from the leaders at the conclusion of the retreat exemplify the sentiments of many who participated:

- "I doubted what I had to bring to leadership. The retreat helped me recognize what I could bring."
- "I learned how to lead with conviction."
- "I am blessed with a sense of oneness and connection with other leaders."
- "I'm ever more convinced of the essential need for leadership grounded in a contemplative approach."
- "The retreat was life-changing in that it gave me ways to move inward and forward."





Becoming

by Michelle Obama

Reviewed by Maryann McMahon, OP

This autobiography by Michelle Obama takes her from the streets and schools of south side Chicago to the White House as America's First Black Lady. The audio book has Michelle Obama reading her story from her early childhood days with her brother, Craig, with whom she shared a bedroom in an upper flat with her parents, Fraser and Marian Robinson, all the way to the White House and beyond. She recounts stories of growing up black in her own neighborhood and how venturing out into the broader world around Chicago helped her become outspoken and unafraid in life. Michelle's parents taught her she could become whatever she set her mind to. And Michelle had a great mind, one that took her to Princeton University, Harvard Law School, corporate law offices, the University of Chicago, and the University of Chicago Medical School. She also founded the Chicago Chapter of *Public Allies*, an organization that prepares young people for careers in public service.

As a leader in a women's religious community, I was challenged by Michelle's faithfulness to self-reflection and the realization she was not a finished product. Her self-reflection helped her identify and understand her values and morals. That understanding became the ground of her being, a steadfast place within her that compelled her to act with dignity and respect no matter the circumstances. Michelle was always *becoming* more of the person God intended her to be. Her rootedness in her self-identity and values helped her weather and grow despite the political turmoil around her and the family. When others would attack her from below, she would respond from a place of higher moral

ground and greater respect. Michelle felt hurt and discrimination and was always being held to a higher standard because of her color. Yet she learned to choose her response to any situation so it revealed the tender and true heart of who she was as a black woman. There was always a better way to help build community and empower everyone to become their best selves. Michelle Obama's life was, is, and will forever be about *becoming* someone more.

Represents LCWR at Archdiocesan Reception



Chris Beckett, SCN, LCWR associate director for business and finance, represented LCWR at a recent reception held by the archdiocese of Washington, DC, and hosted by Archbishop Wilton Gregory. Shown here are Chris, Archbishop Gregory, and Kathleen Lunsmann, IHM, executive director of SOAR!



Update is an official publication of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious published monthly and distributed to members nationally. All rights reserved © 2020 LCWR

Editor: Annmarie Sanders, IHM
 8737 Colesville Road, Suite 610
 Silver Spring, MD 20910
 Phone: 301-588-4955 Fax: 301-587-4575
 E-mail: asanders@lcwr.org Website: lcwr.org

Upcoming LCWR Dates

LCWR New Leader Workshop

Conference Center
University of St. Mary of the Lake | Mundelein, Illinois
March 26 — 29, 2020

Imagining Justice

Bon Secours Retreat & Conference Center
Marriottsville, MD
April 20 — 23, 2020

LCWR Geographic Gathering

Hyatt Recency Dallas DFW
DFW Airport, Texas
April 21— 22, 2020

LCWR Practicing Leadership: How to Embrace a Vital and Vibrant Future Workshop

Mater Dolorosa Retreat House | Sierra Madre, CA
May 11 — 13, 2020

LCWR Geographic Gathering

Sheraton BWI
Linthicum Heights, Maryland
May 20 — 21, 2020

LCWR Geographic Gathering

Sheraton Westport Chalet St. Louis
St. Louis, Missouri
June 1—2, 2020

LCWR Geographic Gathering

Crowne Plaza O'Hare
Rosemont, Illinois
June 3 — 4, 2020

LCWR Geographic Gathering

Sheraton BWI
Linthicum Heights, Maryland
June 16—17, 2020

LCWR Assembly

Dallas, Texas
August 11 — 15, 2020

LCWR Practicing Leadership: How to Embrace a Vital and Vibrant Future Workshop

Bethany Center | Lutz, Florida
September 14 — 16, 2020

Leading from Within Retreat

San Pedro Retreat Center
Winter Park, Florida
January 10 – 15, 2021

LCWR New Leader Workshop

Conference Center
University of St. Mary of the Lake | Mundelein, Illinois
March 25 — 28, 2021

LCWR Assembly

Orlando, Florida
August 10 — 13, 2021

Leading from Within Retreat

Redemptorist Renewal Center | Tucson, Arizona
January 16 — 21, 2022

LCWR Assembly

St. Louis, Missouri
August 9 — 12, 2022

LCWR to Initiate New Resource Sharing Forum

The current LCWR listserv – the LCWR Resource Sharing Forum – is operated through Yahoo groups. Because of some recent changes at Yahoo, organizations have been advised to move their listserves to a different platform.

LCWR is in the process of establishing a new listserv on another platform and will notify all LCWR members and associates of this change prior to making the forum operational.

The forum allows participants to post messages that can be received by all members and associates and has become a helpful way to pose questions when a leadership team is searching for recommendations, processes, policies, and other matters.

Any member or associate who does not wish to receive the forum messages can unsubscribe at any time.

LCWR Joins Faith Statement Condemning Escalating Aggression with Iran

On January 3 President Trump ordered a drone strike to assassinate Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, the military commander of Iran's Quds Force and a powerful figure in Iran. Many saw this as a dangerous escalation of the United States' ongoing confrontation with Iran; one that created increased instability in the Middle East and could easily lead to bloodshed.

The debate over war powers took center stage in Washington in the week following the president's decision to strike Iran's top security commander without informing Congress. Members remain deeply divided over the wisdom and the legality of the assassination, and the president's authority to order military action on a leader of a sovereign state. Democrats in both houses have insisted that the president must involve Congress in any escalation of hostilities against Iran. The majority of Republicans continue to resist attempts to restrain the president's power as commander-in-chief to act unilaterally.

LCWR joined other faith-based organizations to issue a strongly worded condemnation of the president's aggression against Iran. The statement reads:

As people of faith, we condemn the United States' dangerous aggression towards Iran, including the assassination of Gen. Qassem Soleimani and the deployment of additional troops to the region. We urge the Administration to step back from the brink of war.

Our faith communities see the futility of war, and its power to dehumanize. We know that human flourishing entails breaking cycles of violence, being courageous peacemakers, and focusing on the root causes of conflict. Violent conflict is a path of mutual destruction.

Instead, all actors must move forward in a way that upholds our shared, sacred human dignity:

- All parties must begin by re-humanizing each other without excusing unjust and violent actions.
- The US administration must halt violent attacks and military escalations. It must return to a diplomatic process, recognizing that lasting peace requires a commitment to the shared well-being of every human, from Iran to the United States and everywhere in-between.
- The US Congress must act to reassert its war powers by refusing authorization for war with Iran and related attacks, and to block funding for war with Iran.
- US actions and strategy in the region must address the root causes of the conflict, such as distrust, trauma, economic resources, and political influence.
- All of us must support nonviolent creative actions of resistance to any unjust and violent actions.

As communities of faith, we renounce the escalation of violence, and call on the United States to work towards lasting peace with Iran.



- Quote in Interfaith Immigration Coalition's press release on the occasion of the anniversary of the death of seven-year-old Jakelin Amei Rosemary Caal Maquin and in remembrance of the children who have died at the border. Carol Zinn, SSJ (12/8/19)
- Amicus brief challenging Executive Order 13888 that requires governors and local officials to provide written consent in order to continue resettling refugees in their communities. LCWR (12/12/19)
- Faith Statement on condemning the United States' dangerous aggression towards Iran and urging the Administration to step back from the brink of war. LCWR (1/3/20)

World to Mark Beijing + 25

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the **Fourth World**

Conference on the Status

of Women, the largest-ever gathering of gender equality advocates and perhaps the most significant. The **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** has been hailed as a visionary agenda for the empowerment of women and girls everywhere. The Platform for Action was adopted by 189 governments and committed them to taking bold, strategic action in 12 critical areas of concern: poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power, and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media, environment, and the girl child.

Despite the almost universal commitment to the platform's blueprint for removing the systemic barriers that hold women back from equal participation in all areas of life, whether public or private, there has been far too little progress. Real change has been agonizingly slow for the majority of women and girls. Today, not a single country can claim to have achieved gender equality. Multiple obstacles remain unchanged in law and culture. As a result, women and girls remain undervalued, they continue to work more, earn less, have fewer choices, and experience multiple forms of violence at home and in public spaces.

UN Women is the global focal point for mobilizing governments and civil society to keep the promises of Beijing. They have recently launched the **Generation Equality** campaign to mark the anniversary and accelerate progress. The campaign will bring together the next generation of women's rights activists with the gender equality advocates and visionaries who were instrumental in creating the Beijing Platform for Action to tackle the unfinished business of empowering women. Organizers will convene a series of forums across the world and have created action packs, a toolkit, and social media posts for groups to use locally.



Join the Roses in December 40th Anniversary Celebration

LCWR and the SHARE Foundation invite women religious, and members of the broader community to join the "The Roses in December" delegation to El Salvador and Honduras to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the martyrdom of the four US churchwomen: Ita Ford, MM; Maura Clarke, MM; Dorothy Kazel, OSU; and Jean Donovan. Organizers hope that each of LCWR's 15 regions will be able to send at least one delegate on the pilgrimage.



The group is scheduled to arrive in El Salvador on November 29 and depart from Honduras on December 7, 2020. The **proposed itinerary** includes visits to the sites of the martyrdom of the four church women and San Romero; the village where the Ita, Maura, Dorothy, and Jean worked in El Salvador; and meetings with indigenous communities and women religious ministering in Honduras.

LCWR is also encouraging religious to host local gatherings and prayer vigils to honor the memory of Ita, Maura, Dorothy, and Jean and to share their story with the broader community. The goal is to log 40 vigils in 40 cities to mark the 40th anniversary. Anyone who is able to hold an event is asked to send a brief description to **Janette Houhoulis**.

More information about "The Roses in December 40th Anniversary Celebration" as well as registration materials for the pilgrimage can be found on **SHARE's website** or by **emailing SHARE**, or calling +1-510-848-8487.



Faith Groups Challenge President's Attempt to End Refugee Resettlement

On September 26, the White House issued an [executive order](#) (EO 13888) that would drastically reduce, if not entirely end, the resettlement of refugees in communities across the country. The order requires state and local officials to provide written consent for refugee resettlement to continue in their jurisdictions. This means that refugee resettlement would stop in an entire state unless the governor sends a letter providing consent to the Department of State. County executives, or their equivalents, must also provide consent in order for refugees to be resettled in their localities.

The EO has already created chaos and confusion about where refugees can be resettled and whether families will be reunited, and it will leave refugees, former refugees, and US citizens without the supportive services of refugee resettlement agencies. To make matters worse, the administration has set a refugee admissions cap of 18,000 refugees for the next year, a shamefully abysmal number that stands in stark contrast to the historic average goal of 95,000 refugees. Together, these actions are likely to severely damage the bipartisan refugee resettlement program for years to come.

On November 21, 2019, HIAS, Church World Service (CWS), and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), represented by the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), filed a lawsuit in the US District Court for the Southern District of Maryland challenging the executive order to allow states and localities to block refugee resettlement within their jurisdictions. In December LCWR joined other faith-based organizations in filing an amicus brief in support of the plaintiffs' challenge.

The plaintiffs argue that this executive order is a purely political move designed to further dismantle the refugee resettlement program at a time when this administration has already slashed the program by more than 80% in less than three years and that refugee agencies already conduct regular community consultations to ensure the voices of states and local communities are incorporated into the refugee resettlement process.

If this EO is allowed to take effect and some states and localities refuse to provide written consent to the resettlement of refugees, congregations, volunteers, and community sponsors will be stripped of their ability to welcome refugees and live out their faith callings. Instead of acting in good faith to engage states and local communities in achieving the best outcomes for newly admitted refugees to be resettled within the United States, this administration is increasing its attacks against refugee and immigrant communities.

Oral arguments on the plaintiffs' motion for a preliminary injunction, asking the court to block enforcement of the EO were heard on Wednesday, January 8. A ruling is expected within the next few weeks.

The Church Celebrates Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita

February 8 has been designated by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the International Union of Superiors General as an annual day of prayer and action against human trafficking. It is the feast of St. Josephine Bakhita, who was kidnapped as a child and sold into slavery in Sudan and Italy. She learned from the Canossian sisters that she was created in God's image and possessed human dignity. Once she asserted herself and refused to be enslaved, Josephine became a Canossian sister and dedicated her life to sharing her testament of deliverance from slavery and comforting the suffering and impoverished people.



On the occasion of her canonization in 2000, Pope John Paul II noted that "in St. Josephine Bakhita we find a shining advocate of genuine emancipation. The history of her life is not passive acceptance but the firm resolve to work effectively to free girls and women from oppression and violence, and to return them to dignity in the full exercise of their rights."

US Catholic Sisters against Human Trafficking has compiled [resources](#) to help communities, parishes, and schools commemorate the courage Bakhita.

Updates from NRRO

On January 2, the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) mailed Direct Care Assistance information to all religious institutes registered in the NRRO database. The [application](#) for this funding is available online. Questions or request for assistance with the form may be emailed to NRRO grant specialist [Monica Glover](#), who can also be contacted by phone at 202-541-3216. Early submission of the application is greatly appreciated.



On February 11, the NRRO and the Avila Institute of Gerontology will offer a free webinar entitled *The Spiritual Journey of Caregiving: Finding Compassion for Ourselves and Others*. The presentation will explore how to approach caregiving from a spiritual perspective and will offer strategies for avoiding burnout. It is available for institute leaders as well as professional and volunteer caregiving staff. [Additional information.](#)

Is Your Leadership Term About to End?

If your leadership term is ending this month, we ask you to submit a change of leadership form found in the [LCWR Members' Information section](#) (password-protected) of the website.

Please remember LCWR's generous donors and their intentions in your prayer.



Summer Institute

Registration for the summer institute of the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) will begin in February. All workshops will be held at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

- Orientation Program for New Vocation Directors, July 8-12, 2020
Presented by Deborah Borneman, SSCM; Adam MacDonald, SVD; and Minnette Welding, IHM
- Ethical Issues in Vocation and Formation Ministry, July 13-14, 2020
Presented by Rev. Raymond P. Carey, PhD
- Behavioral Assessment 1, July 16-18, 2020
Presented by Rev. Raymond P. Carey, PhD
- Is it Generational, Cultural, Personality or Pathology? July 16-18, 2020
Presented by Sr. Donna Del Santo, SSJ; Sean Sammon, FMS; and Crystal Taylor Dietz, Psy.D.
- Understanding, Assessing, and Fostering Psycho-Sexual Integration, July 20-23, 2020
Presented by Lynn M. Levo, CSJ

National Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations (NFCRV)

The [National Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations](#), established to assist communities receive candidates with educational debt, will accept applications from NRVC members until April 15, 2020. Since its inception, 42 candidates have received grants. Anyone seeking information about the NFCRV can contact Phil Loftus at 773-595-4028.



by Joan Mumaw, IHM
President
www.solidarityfriends.org

New Education Curriculum in South Sudan Calls for Critical Thinking

Sixty-one students are set to begin their first year at the Solidarity Teacher Training College (STTC) in Yambio, a two-year program leading to a certificate in primary school education. Several challenges are facing the college in 2020. The Ministry of Health has changed the education curriculum from that of a knowledge-based (rote learning) to an outcomes-based curriculum. Critical thinking and creativity, the hallmarks of good teaching and so essential for the future of the country, are being promoted. There is even a call for demonstration schools to be located near the country's TTCs. While this is commendable, it poses daunting challenges for teacher training and in-service of those teachers already in the classroom. Solidarity is already incorporating the principles into their training, even though a new curriculum for teacher training has not yet been developed. The emphasis on outcomes and skills will necessitate small classrooms for labs and activities. The STTC is also planning to add one year to the program so that students receive a diploma, and not just a certificate, thus enhancing their possibilities for employment and further studies. Funding and staffing are being sought to further these programs.

The quality of the teaching and learning at the STTC has recently been noted by the vice chancellor of the Catholic University of South Sudan. In a pilot project, 20 graduates from the STTC are being offered the opportunity to obtain a BA in education provided they qualify, through testing, for Year 3 of a four-year program. The first contingent of students, eight in all, are doing so well that the university is considering them candidates for further studies and future staff of the university. A feather in the cap of Solidarity, to be sure! Friends in Solidarity, with your help, has funded the first contingent of students and seeks funding for the second group of 10 graduates of the STTC to take

advantage of this opportunity. For more information, Solidarity/Catholic University Pilot or contact jmumaw.solidarity@gmail.com

Continue to keep South Sudan in prayer. Another deadline looms, February 22, 2020, for the seating of the Transitional Government of National Unity, something that was to have occurred on November 12, 2019. Pope Francis and the Sant' Egidio Community in Rome, in addition to international governments, are actively promoting the reconciliation of all actors toward this end. May the power of the Spirit enlighten leaders for the good of all the people of South Sudan.

News from the UN

February 6—International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM

Ending the practice of female genital mutilation would have profoundly positive effects across societies as girls and women reclaim their health, human rights, and vast potential. The UN and NGOs affiliated with the UN have learned important lessons about what can be done to end this practice which reflects deep-rooted inequality and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women and girls.

February 20—World Day of Social Justice

The UN recognizes that social justice is essential for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. For the United Nations, the pursuit of social justice for all is at the core of its global mission to promote development and human dignity. Social justice lies at the heart of the work of the UN and includes promoting gender equality and the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants, and removing barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or disability.

