

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF VICARS FOR RELIGIOUS  
NATIONAL BOARD MEETING**

Felician Sisters Mother of Good Counsel Convent, Chicago, Illinois

November 16-17, 2017

Minutes

**Thursday, November 16, 2017**

**Present:** Sisters Maryann Seton Lopiccolo, SC, Louise Hembrecht, OSF, Mariette Moan, ASCJ, Ann David Strohminger, OSF, Marilyn Kerber, SNDdeN, and Rosalie Pizzo, SNDdeN

**Excused:** Sisters Nancy Mathias, OSU and Marlene Weidenborner, OSF

**New Regional Representatives:** Sister Maryann welcomed the two new regional chairs, Sister Ann David Strohminger, OSF chair of the Eastern Region and Sister Rosalie Pizzo chair of the Western Region.

**Prayer:** Sister Maryann Seton Lopiccolo, SC, President of NCVR opened the Board Meeting with a prayer. During the Reflection/Sharing part of the prayer each member present reflected the presence of the Spirit of God on her Community and briefly stated the Community's mission.

**Mission Statement:** We reviewed and discussed the Mission Statement of the NRVC. We focused on the questions "How do I fit this role?" Members shared both the ways that being a Vicar is enriching to us personally but that sometimes we feel in the "middle" or torn because sometimes the Sisters seem overlooked or taken for granted. There was some discussion on Sister Mary Pellegrino, CSJ 's presidential address, "The Future Enters Us Long Before It Happens: Opening Space for an Emerging Narrative of Communion" at the 2017 LCWR Assembly.

**Minutes:** The Minutes from May18-19 meeting were approved.

**Agenda:** The agenda was reviewed and approved

### **Officers' Reports**

#### **Sister Maryann Seton Lopiccolo, SC, President**

President's Report

Since May 2017, Sr. Maryann

1. Wrote to each Past President about the Voices of History Project for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in March 2018, or contacted the Diocese for those who are deceased. I received responses from or about each one. We have photos of those who are deceased and others are happy to be part of the video. Follow up letter with talking points for video is ready to go once directions are set.

2. Wrote to each speaker with theme, details and expectations for Assembly 2018. S. Mary Johnson and S. Nancy Schreck responded. Cardinal Tobin's secretary has no answer yet. Sr. Sharon Euart, RSM (RCRI) and Sr. Stephanie Still (NRRO) will do short presentations. I sent the dates to Fr. Hank Lemoncelli. Will follow up with speakers' forms, etc. Will write to CICL-SAL, Cardinal Cupich, Chicago with invitation.
3. Attended LCWR and had some good networking with other groups, UISG, AHLMA, Laboure, CMSWR, CMSM, RFC, RCRI, etc.
4. Prepared all the materials for the National Elections in March for Sr. Margaret Downing, RSM, Savannah, GA who will conduct the elections.
5. Circulated the questionnaire for the XV Synod on Youth in Rome, October 2018; collated the responses and sent them to USCCB from our Conference.
6. Contributed to the Reflection Guide for the International Sisters Study from NCVR. Developed questions for us to use at Assembly 2018.
7. Wrote to 67 Bishops without Vicars for Religious; created a short survey of consecrated life members in each diocese; included invitations to become members. 21 responses and 4-6 became members.
8. Attended ERVC Fall meeting.
9. Wrote to OFM Community on passing of Br. Patrick Shea, Vicar in Springfield, IL.
10. Prepared for CRLM and CCLV meetings in Baltimore, Nov. 10-11, 2017.
11. Worked on draft of Assembly schedule for 2018.
12. Prepared Agenda and materials for National Board Meeting November 16-18, 2017.

**Sister Nancy Mathias, OSU, Vice-President**

Sister Nancy was unable to attend. Thus no report was given.

**Sister Louise Hembrecht, OSF, Secretary**

Sister Louise sent out Sister Maryann's letter regarding membership renewal for 2017-2018 and the renewal forms in June. These were emailed to all whose email addresses I have. Letters were sent by U.S. mail to the Bishops. I sent acknowledgments when membership forms and fees were sent in and sent the checks on to Sister Mariette, our treasurer.

At the "deadline," only forty-some had responded; Sister Louise sent out reminders and resent membership renewal forms. Registrations came in very slowly, two or three a week through early October. Once the names of the new Regional Chairs were sent to me, Sister Louise sent an electronic copy of the 2017-2018 Directory and asked that it be checked. Corrections were sent in. (A change of address came Monday of this week.)

Other correspondence from Sister Maryann was sent including information about attending the regional CMSM priest/bishop meetings regarding child and youth protection of minors and regarding the Synod on Youth.

Archival materials were brought to the University of Notre Dame in May.

Sister Louise distributed copies of membership statistics. In summary:

- 177 dioceses (did not count the military diocese)
- 77 dioceses with vicars (79 vicars)
- 3 Bishops paid the membership fee
- 11 were members in 2016-2017 but not in 2017-2018
- 40 vicars did not respond (from 39 dioceses)
- 1 responded “not this year”

**Sister Mariette Moan, ASCJ, Treasurer**

Sister Mariette presented a summary of the financial activity that has occurred between July 1, 2017 (the beginning of this fiscal year) and November 13, 2017. She explained the sources of income and the expenses during that period.

We reviewed our discussion/decision to cash in the CD since they were netting very little interest. Sister Mariette pointed out that the balance in our checking account is more than what is needed for ordinary expenses. A question regarding this had been asked at the General Assembly in March. At our May Board meeting, Sister Mariette had proposed investing some of the funds with Eugene Harris of Harris Wealth Management Financial Advisors.

At this meeting, she presented further background on this and reasons for doing it. She also presented the risks and return history of two types of Flexible Plan Investing: Faith Focused Investing and For a Better World Investing. After discussion, the Board approved both investing and working with Eugene Harris in doing so. It should be noted that Sister Mariette has known Mr. Harris for several years. The Board also approved Faith Focused Investing.

In conjunction with decisions regarding investing, the providing of scholarships for the Assembly was discussed. Last year, five scholarships were requested and approved. Our finances would enable us to provide ten scholarships this year if they are requested.

Sister Mariette also presented some background on the Annual Cecilia Meighan, RSM Institute of Canon Law and Religious Life (June 8-14, 2018, Misericordia in Dallas, PA – \$915 or \$770/commuter). The Board agreed that this would be a worthwhile conference for Vicars to attend and discussed scholarships for two or three to do so.

**Reports from the Regions:**

**Sister Marlene Weidenborner, OSF, Southern Region**

Sister Marlene sent in the status of preparations for the Annual Assembly in March and the assignments of the Southern Regional members. Sister Maryann shared this information as we discussed the March Assembly

### **Sister Marilyn Kerber, SNDdeN, Midwestern Region**

Sister Marilyn spoke of the difficulty of having the group of Midwestern vicars meet – distance and varied schedules are the main obstacle. Most of the vicars are part time. Sister Marilyn reported that the Midwest Regional Vicars had had a conference call on Tuesday, November 14, 2017. Nine members were able to participate. Each member had an opportunity to share what had been happening in her diocese. Despite the part time service the Vicars in the Midwest are active in serving the Religious in their respective dioceses and there are many activities happening.

### **Sister Rosalie Pizzo, SNDdeN, Western Region**

Sister Rosalie reported on the Western Region meeting, held at Mission San Jose October 3-5, 2017.

Theme: Our Call and Challenge to be Women of Hope

Presenter: Sister Molly Neville, SNJM

Highlights of Sister Molly's presentation were shared.

Some Practical Issues that surfaced

1. When a Delegate to Religious ends her term, what should be left for his/her replacement?
  - What sent to archives, what shredded etc?
2. What information/items?
  - Resource Manual (section 2)
  - Individual files of congregations serving in the diocese
  - Information on different forms of consecrated life
3. Helpful Resources in addition to back section of Resource Manual
  - Father Frank Morrissey, OMI [morrissey@istar.ca](mailto:morrissey@istar.ca)
  - Sister Nancy Reynolds, SP [nreynolds@spsmw.org](mailto:nreynolds@spsmw.org)
  - Father Dan Ward, OSB
  - Sister Marie Gertrude, Roldan, CSJ
  - Financial information : Sister Hertha Longo, CSA [hlongo@csasisters.org](mailto:hlongo@csasisters.org), Ms Claire Blohm [cblohm@pbvmsf.org](mailto:cblohm@pbvmsf.org)
  - Immigration Sister Sharon Kolb, CSA [slkolb2000@aol.com](mailto:slkolb2000@aol.com)

Questions that were shared by the group:

- What do you do/say when or if you visit a community?
- What questions do you ask when doing a formal visitation of a community on behalf of arch/bishop?
- What are the expectations of religious regarding the office of Delegate to Religious?
- How do you find out when a religious dies?

- Now that many congregations have merged, how do you know who the local contact person is?

Questions that surfaced to ask at the National Board Meeting:

The group asked about the Board inviting Bishops to appoint Vicars and wondered if other regions have difficulty having members attend regional meetings.

**Sister Ann David Strohming, OSF, Eastern Region**

Sister Ann David shared the minutes of the Eastern Region October 16-18 meeting at Mt. Alvernia Retreat Center in Wappinger Falls, New York. 14 members participated. The theme was “Transformation in Religious Life.”

Sister Catherine Cleary, PBVM led the group in a contemplative dialogue and provided readings on contemplative listening and contemplative speaking. The readings focused on what is happening in religious life today with an emphasis on reports given at the LCWR Assembly in August.

Sister Mary Hughes, OP, Director of Transitional Services for the LCWR spoke of communities and their need to assess their vulnerabilities and make plans for the future. Her topic was “Options for the Future.” She reported that NRRO has identified at least 84 communities that are small, poor, and not connected to anyone. She said that the healthiest plans come out of relationships. Support comes geographically rather than from charisms. She also explained that Religious life “reinvents itself” about every 500 years. Our lives have become more collaborative, more suitable to our age. We are more focused on Mission rather than ministry. Presence is important. She said that RCRI has workshops for completing communities. There is a toolbox that is an on line resource.

Sister Maria Clara Kries, CDP, Ph.D. Research on Life Satisfaction for Apostolic Women provided by a grant from the Hilton Foundation. Her topic was “Consecrated Life: Its Core Values & Meaning for a Global World.” She commented on the decline Europe’s Religious Congregations and spoke of the open, deep sharing of women religious who have responded to her dissertation project. The key questions are “why sisters come and why they stay.”

The Eastern Region elected the following:

Chairperson: Sr. Ann David Strohming, OSF

Secretary: Sr. Paulina Hurtado, OP

Treasurer: Sr. Catherine Cleary, PBVM

During and after the reports of the Regional Chairs, several practical questions were raised and discussed. Some of these can be “answered” in the “red” Resource Manual. Others might be able to be brought to the General Assembly for shared vision discussion.

## **The Website**

Sister Mariette connected her computer to the large TV and explained the two sections of the website: the Public and the Members Only section. She focused on the content of the Regional sections and reviewed the processed for adding content (through the Regional Chairs).

Various Resource Materials, such as the Resource Manual, are present on the website. Attention will be drawn to these at the General Assembly in March.

Another such resource material is the Directory. Sister Louise will send an updated electronic copy of the Directory to all members. Further corrections and updates will be made to the website copy.

## **FRIDAY, November 17, 2017**

**Prayer:** Sister Maryann opened the meeting with a prayer, “Antiphons for Autumn.”

### **Update from the Bishops’ Conference**

Sister Maryann reported on the Commission on Religious. She was invited with Conference Representatives. NCVR president goes as a guest and gives a report. This the first time Cardinal Tobin presided. From USCCB, Bishops will have a workshop from NRRO about Communities in need and are diminishing to the point of completion.

We were asked to send Father Ralph O’Donnell from USCCB a link for Consecrated Life events to link to the USCCB website. Cardinal Tobin also presided over a meeting of Consulting Organizations. The NRRO is in a strategic planning time, taking care of communities in need, as well as offering services, to renew the continuing services to Religious. Several members did not respond to the NRRO survey and there is concern about their need. In addition to deaths among the aged, active Religious are getting ill and going to the Lord. It was noted that some religious find retiring a challenge to their identity. Young leaders often call with questions and are in need of support.

NRRO asks that we send any information about diminishing Communities to them. A list of Hispanic congregations – Latino based was also requested by AHLMA.

Time was spent discussing invitations to the Presidents of conferences such as LCWR, CMSWR, CMSM, RFC, NRVC etc. as guests. It was suggested that we ask CSMWR to bring the Cross of Mercy that is circulating the country this year. The conference fee - \$200 – would be suspended for guests, but they would be asked to pay room and board - \$325.

### **A variety of topics were mentioned.**

Work on *Mutual Relations* continues with a pastoral and charismatic focus.

Bishops promise to recognize and coordinate gifts of religious congregations in their dioceses when they are ordained Ordinaries; not control them.

There is a new course of study on Priestly Formation 2017-2018 (Ratio Fundamentalis) which may include the history of religious life.

Laboure Society that supports young people desiring to enter communities with student debt. There is a training session in January 2018 if anyone is interested in going.

The meeting of the African conference NAACUS Conference in Phoenix – August 1-4.2018: One Board member is invited to attend.

Continued focus on youth protection.

The Document on Secular Institutes has been distributed to Bishops for this 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year.

### **Updated pages of the Manual**

Sister Maryann redid those having to do with the National Assembly pages will be posted on the website

Folder with responses from Bishop re appointing a vicar for religious was available.

### **Added Information**

Sister Maryann distributed copies of the Reflection guide from the CARA study of International Sisters. We briefly discussed how to make it practical and discussed some of the international religious concerns. Time will be given at the Assembly to discuss the Study.

The Assembly Schedule was reviewed and discussed.

### **NCVR Assembly Agenda**

Sunday, March 18, 2018

- 2:30 p.m. New Vicars' Orientation
- 4:00 p.m. Opening of the 2018 Assembly
  - Welcome and Prayer (Southern Region) *From Gratitude to Hope*
  - President's Address – Sister Maryann Lopiccolo, SC
  - Voices of History Video – Past Presidents
- 5:30 p.m. Dinner
- 6:45 p.m. Sister Mary Johnson, SNDdeN *Study on International Sisters in US*
- 8:00 p.m. Social

Monday, March 19, 2018

- 7:00 a.m. Liturgy with Felician Sisters  
Breakfast
- 8:45 a.m. Morning Prayer (Southern Region)
- 9:00 a.m. Sister Mary Johnson, *Study*, continued
- 10:00 a.m. Break
- 10:30 a.m. Process time / table sharing and large group  
Follow up to International Sisters Study
- 11:30 p.m. RFC: Sr. Ellen Dauwer, SC
- Noon Lunch
- 1:30 p.m. NRRO: Sister Stephanie Still, PBVM
- 2:00 p.m. Sister Nancy Schreck, OSF *From Gratitude to Hope*
- 3:00 p.m. Break
- 3:30 p.m. Sister Nancy Shreck – process, reflection
- 4:30 p.m. Break before dinner
- 5:10 p.m. Dinner
- 6:45 p.m. Small group sharing – case studies
- 8:00 p.m. Introduction of Candidates (Sister Margaret Downing, RSM)
- 8:15 p.m. Movie – “The Shack”

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 8:45 a.m. Prayer (South)
- 9:00 a.m. RCRI: Sr. Sharon Euart, RSM
- 10:00 a.m. Break
- 10:30 a.m. Father Hank Lemoncilli, OMI:
- 11:15 a.m. NRVC: Sr. Sharon Dillon, SSJ-TOSF
- Noon Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. Regional Meetings
- 2:00 p.m. Break
- 2:15 p.m. National Board Meeting – Business Meeting
- 3:30 p.m. Passing of the Torch to the Eastern Region
- 4:00 p.m. Liturgy, A Bishop of Chicago
- 5:00 p.m. Banquet
- 7:00 p.m. Social –Entertainment

Wednesday, March 21, 2018 – Travel Day

A list of tasks was reviewed.

Sister Maryann will continue contacts for the March Assembly and for the past presidents' project and prepare a letter to go with the registrations to be sent in early January. Scholarships and a special drawing for early registrations were discussed. She will continue to plan with Marlene as needed for the details of the Assembly and with Connie about the entertainment, socials for the Assembly. She will support Margaret Downing with the election process which begins in January.

Sr. Louise will prepare the registration form and mailing for the Assembly and will coordinate the lists. She will send out the minutes from the meeting and prepare the Winter Newsletter.

Sr. Mariette will contact the videographer for the "Voices of History" project and work with the website master to bring the site up to date. At the beginning of each month she will send a reminder to each Chair to update and send news for the website. She will continue to maintain the new FaceBook closed site for the Conference members. She will follow through on the transfer of money to an investment account. A new logo was suggested for the Assembly which Sr. Mariette will send when completed.

The Regional Chairs will distribute the scholarship forms as requested and return them to Maryann. They will use the new template for the Regional page on the website. They will reach out to the new vicars in their regions, by phone, email to encourage them to come to the Assembly and include them in regional activities.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sister Louise Hembrecht, OSF  
Secretary, NCVR