

NCVR Eastern Region October 29-31, 2019

Present were: Sr. Ann David Strohming, OSF, Chairperson; Sr. Anna Hang-Nga Nguyen, SCC; Sr. Catherine Cleary, PBVM; Sr. Elizabeth Castro, HMSP; Sr. Gilmary Kay, RSM; Sr. Jean Thompson, OSF; Sr. Joan Daniel Healy, SCC; Rev. Justin Ross, OFM; Sr. Mary McGarrity, IHM; Sr. Nancy Fisher, SSJ; Sr. Nancy Strillacci, ASCJ; Sr. Patricia Wormann, O.P.; Sr. Paulina Hurtado, OP.

Excused were: Sr. Maryann Seton Lopiccio, SC; Sr. Patricia Moran, CIJ and Sr. Gabrielle Braccio, RSM.

On arriving at the Franciscan Retreat House October 29, 2019, everyone was welcomed by Sister Ann David Strohming, Chairperson. We gathered for lunch after which she opened the gathering. She gave an introduction sharing on how the meeting preparations had evolved after an arduous search for presenters, as well as what to expect during this time together.

Speakers:

Sr. Lynn McKenzie, OSF, would be speaking on “COR ORANS,” for the implementation of the Instruction on the Apostolic Constitution “*Vultum Dei Quaerere*” on women’s contemplative life. A suggestion came up as to whether the neighboring Poor Clares could be invited to the presentation and share their impressions on the impact of these documents in their cloister life.

Sr. Mary Hughes, O.P., would be speaking on the role and assistance of Commissaries in Institutes with a low number of members.

Then, Sr. Ann introduced herself and invited everyone to do the same. A special welcome was given to new attending members, Sr. Nancy Fisher, SSJ, from the Diocese of Erie, PA, and Rev. Justin Ross, OFM, from the archdiocese of Baltimore. A special greeting of congratulations to Sr. Nancy Strillacci celebrating her 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of Profession and caring sentiments were also expressed for Sr. Theresia Maria Holtschlag, CSP, previous Vicar in the Diocese of Newark, who is terminally ill at this time. It was Sr. Patricia Wormann, O.P., who succeeded Sr. Theresia as Vicar and who would convey our special regards and prayers to her. A card was later prepared for her as well.

Sr. Gilmary Kay, RSM opened with a short prayer followed by Sr. Catherine Cleary PBVM, who led us into a time of Contemplative Listening, reflective of the present historical moment of Religious Life, inviting us to dream of new ways we would be foundresses/founders of the Institute today. What could we be doing, inspired on the wisdom and creativity of the Founder/Foundress? What is your dream for your Institute? Sr. Catherine provided reading material

with lead questions for reflection which followed at each table. She also shared articles from various sources imagining Leadership in a Global Community and on Institutes facing the reality of decline.

After a short break, Sr. Ann Strohmingler updated the group on the outcome of the Election Process subsequent to the request to submit nominations. Since the existing Board had remained open to a renewed term of service, the next step would be an open validation from the group at large for the same group on the Board continuing service. This was to be done at the business meeting later in the Agenda.

Free time followed at 4:00 p.m. for visiting the bookstore or other visiting, followed by dinner at 5:00 p.m.

At 6:15 we gathered for Evening Prayer followed by the Treasurer's Report presented by Sr. Catherine Cleary, PBVM. A move was made to approve the report and also a suggestion to have a second signer to the bank account. Both were unanimously approved by the group. Then we continued with the validation of the members of the Eastern Board for another two-year term which was approved by everyone.

The Date for the National Assembly in Chicago was announced for March 22-25, 2020: Called To ***Be Prophets of A Future not Our Own.***

Featured Speakers: Sr. Carol Zinn, SSJ, Executive Director of LCWR; Sr. Norma Pimentel, M.J., Vicar for Religious, Diocese of Brownsville, TX and Sr. Sharon Euart, RSM, Canon Lawyer, from the Resource Center for Religious Institutes. For further information on these resources please go to: [www.trcri.org](http://www.trcri.org) Username: Vicars, password: toolbox2015 or, <https://www.trcri.org/page/SharonEuart> and <https://www.trcri.org/page/toolbox>

The evening continued with open discussion on the actuality in our dioceses as related to Vicars.

At 7:15 we ended with a social.

On October 30, 2019, we started the day with the Liturgy of the Eucharist at the small chapel of the Retreat House, presided by Father Justin Ross, OFM, Conv., followed by breakfast.

From 9:30 a.m. to noon, we had the presentation by Sr. Lynn McKenzie, OSF, and Sr. Mary Elizabeth Kloss, OSB, of Saint Scholastica Monastery in MA. The conference was zoomed and mediated by Sr. Gilmary Kay, RSM. Three local Poor Clears joined in the conference. The topic was the Overview and Discussion of **“Cor Orans.”** Sr. Lynn McKenzie, prepared a PowerPoint presentation with detailed information which she would later share with the group. The Dialogue of the Presenters with our group was very valuable. It clarified the law as prepared by CICLSAL in 12 areas: Formation, Prayer, etc. A previous questionnaire had been sent out regarding formation and monastery life including topics relating to Canon Law such as autonomy and ecclesial vigilance, relations between Monasteries and Diocese, geographic distances, being part of a federation or a congregation and matters of abuses and dispensations. A robust time of discussion and analysis was the one where the Poor Clears posed questions and expressed their own feelings as they move towards the implementation of **“Cor Orans”**.

After lunch, at 1:00 to 4:p.m. (with breaks)- Sister Mary Hughes, OP, was introduced by Sr. Nancy Strillacci. Mary is Director of Transitional Services, for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). Her services are available to all, especially to small communities in need. The title of Mary’s presentation was: **“Implementation of Commissaries: Communities Moving to Completion”**.

Mary spoke of the needs of Institutes with low numbers in membership, such that holding Chapters in the immediate future (next 1-2 Chapters) and in the near future (next 2-3 chapters) the numbers in membership may not have the required capacity for governance. A careful and truthful study of the needed qualities and willingness of members to assume elected leadership would be needed.

When a General Superior cannot be elected from among their members The Vicar for Religious may assist through support and recommend but not appoint Commissaries. The appointment of a Commissary comes from a Bishop or from a Pontifical Office for Religious. The Commissary assumes the general powers of the General Superior. He may be a priest or a Religious woman. The Congregation should have a Council of at least three members. There are Institutes which have experienced this living out of the Paschal Mystery.

After a break Mary continued with a period of sharing on experiences of Commissaries and on the accompaniment they do to the Institutes they are appointed to support.

After 5:00 o'clock dinner we had evening prayer led by Sr. Jane Thompson, OSF, followed by Business Meeting.

Sr. Ann Strohminger has made arrangements for the Eastern Region Meeting in 2020 at Wappinger Falls **from October 20-22.**

Speakers:

Sr. Sharon Holland, IHM, Doctor in Canon Law, working at the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life for most of the past 20 years she has been one of the highest ranking female Vatican officials to be head of the Office. She will speak on "Contemporary Issues".

Sr. Margaret (Marge) Perron, RJM. A non-profit administrator, and an Immigration Attorney, works with CLINIC.

Open discussion followed with suggestions regarding our meeting such as schedule changes, news including Men Religious, etc.

Elections of Eastern Regional Board Members 2019-2021

Since the present board members were willing to serve a second two year term, the membership unanimously affirmed and validated the election.

Chairperson - Sr Ann David Strohminger OSF

Vice Chairperson - Sr Nancy Strillacci ASCJ

Secretary - Sr. Paulina Hurtado OP

Treasurer - Sr. Catherine Cleary PBVM

Social followed.

The ERVR gathering closed with Liturgy of the Eucharist with the Franciscan Friars followed by breakfast and departure on October 31.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sr. Paulina Hurtado, O.P.