

QUESTIONS FROM WEST COAST VICARS
ZOOM CALL ON OCTOBER 9, 2019
C/O Rosina In Early September 2019

Leadership and Canon Law

Bonding of Religious Congregations/Role of Leadership in Restructuring.

Responsibility of Religious to Community-protecting Congregation's right to survive for the sake of ministry----integrated people of all ages.

How is Canon Law encouraging us to face a new world / a new church -----in light of "Joy of the Gospel"

What is helping/hampering community life today? How can Religious Life grow?

Helping: *Living as honestly and appropriately as possible.*

Hindering:

- ✓ *"We're living in the age of the end of institutions." (see "Religious life in a post-human age" by Ilia Delio found in the Global Sisters' Report)*
- ✓ *Acceptance of members who require attention and care giving.*
- ✓ *With individuals making personal choices, it is difficult to live common life.*
- ✓ *Question: are we calling ourselves to live something that is no longer sustainable?*

Regarding consecrated virginity:

Is it still a requirement that a woman be a virgin? *This is a controversial topic, but according to new Vatican stipulation, a Bishop may accept a woman who is not a virgin, and she must be willing to live as a virgin.*

What is the most important question we should pose to a woman who is seeking this form of consecrated life? *She should be assessed by how healthy she is psychologically, spiritually and emotionally and she must demonstrate that she is capable of being independent and able to care for herself and willing to make a life-long commitment. Lynn cautioned us to be extremely careful in accepting women to consecrated virginity.*

Because the purpose of consecrated virginity is to blend in and not to stand apart, consecrated virgins are not to bear the title of Sister nor are they to wear a habit or distinctive clothing.

Is the commitment to consecrated virginity a permanent commitment? *It is intended to be but one can be dispensed just as a religious can be dispensed.*

What is the process for a woman who no longer wishes to be a consecrated virgin? *It must be determined that she is acting freely, is fully informed and understands the implications of her no longer being a consecrated virgin. Consecrated virgins are part of the life of a diocese and she must understand that this will no longer be true of her.*

What is the Bishop's role in her discernment to no longer be a consecrated virgin? *The Bishop's role parallels the role of a Major Superior dispensing a religious.*

Regarding Hermits/Consecrated Virgins:

What is the difference/distinction between these two forms of Consecrated Life?

- ✓ *Historically, hermits were men and Consecrated Virgins were women.*
- ✓ *There are canonical documents on how Consecrated Virgins are to live their lives including initial and on-going formation.*
- ✓ *Consecrated Virgins make a commitment to the local ordinary; hermits do not.*

Forms of Consecrated Life:

How do Societies of Apostolic Life differ from other forms of Consecrated Life? *Societies of Apostolic Life have had an historical evolution. Members do not necessarily make vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience; they may or may not make a permanent commitment; they do commit themselves to common life. Their common law determines how they live their lives.*

Regarding Associates:

With the growing number of Associates and the diminishing number of vowed members what can you tell us about boundaries? *Vowed members are committed to one another for life; Associates do not make such a commitment and they are regarded as a ministry.*

About the future of association? *Associates need to stand on their own two feet both financially and in their leadership.*

About how Associates will continue the charism when there are no longer vowed members of a congregation? *There is a false notion about charism. Our charism belongs to the Church – it doesn't belong to us. It is a graced moment in the life of the Church.*

Regarding the role of Vicars:

Since we are not given authority canonically, what can/should be our role/responsibility?

- ✓ *Canonical authority is in the hands of the local ordinary not in the hands of the Vicar.*
- ✓ *The role of the Vicar for Religious is never to replace the role of the Major Superior of an Institute.*
- ✓ *Vicars are never to step into the internal matters of an Institute.*

What do you see to be the major role of Vicars for Religious as we begin to experience allegations of misconduct/abuse on the part of religious in our dioceses?

- ✓ *It is the Major Superior who is totally responsible for allegations against her members.*
- ✓ *Never use the Diocesan Review Board to study allegations against religious.*
- ✓ *The Major Superior is responsible to provide canonical resources to her member.*
- ✓ *There are no canonical penalties for women religious accused of sexual misconduct. It is up to the Major Superior and her Council to determine the penalties.*
- ✓ *Keep the Bishop informed. If requested, assist the Major Superior with advice.*

Regarding Exclaustration:

Once exclaustration is granted what should be the involvement of the Vicar for Religious with the Sister?

- ✓ *There is no involvement on the part of the Vicar.*
- ✓ *A person on exclaustration is still a member of the Institute to which she/he made vows.*
- ✓ *May present themselves as religious.*

With the congregation/monastery to which she is still a member?

- ✓ *It depends on the agreement that was made at the time of exclaustration stipulating the conditions for re-admittance to full membership.*

What can be done to get exclaustration for an indefinite amount of time granted by CICLSAL? *Exclaustration continues to be given for a 3-5 year period.*

Regarding mental illness:

How do we best minister to those who are mentally ill?

- ✓ *Care of members who are mentally ill is the responsibility of each Institute...*
- ✓ *Vicars can offer resources to Major Superiors.*

What supports can we offer to the local community to which the mentally ill religious belongs?

- ✓ *Encourage the members of the local community to contact their Major Superior.*
- ✓ *Inform the Bishop of the situation.*

Under what conditions can a mentally ill religious be dismissed from her congregation? *Dismissal is seldomly allowed.*

- ✓ *It is allowed if she can demonstrate that she can care for herself.*
- ✓ *It is allowed if she can provide for herself (has family or friends who can assist her).*

Monastic/contemplative communities:

Do Vicars have the “authority” to require that monastic/contemplative communities employ psychological testing before an individual enters the monastery? *NO.*

- ✓ *Vicars can encourage psychological testing and can provide resources.*
- ✓ *For diocesan congregations, the Bishop may say that no new members are to be accepted without having psychological testing.*

So many difficulties in monasteries are due to the fact that candidates do not undergo psychological testing and are taken often without any vetting.

Vicars can be available to provide resources.

With the publication of **Cor Orans**, how much authority does the local Bishop actually have over the monasteries in his arch/diocese?

The Bishop's role is primarily that of vigilance and to conduct periodic formal visitation every 2 or 3 years. There is no set procedure for visitations and Cor Orans can be used as a guide.

Vows:

Please address vows as they are lived today. *Guides for living the vows are based on culture and custom. Follow the proper law of your congregation.*

Sisters who are dispensed from their vows:

What is the responsibility of the congregation when a Sister is dispensed from her vows: is there a financial responsibility?

- ✓ *Vicars can assist the individual going through dispensation process. After assistance is given there is no other responsibility on the part of the Vicar.*
- ✓ *A document, written before dispensation is granted and clearly stating what the congregation will provide for the individual must be signed by both the Major Superior and the individual. This document should specify:*
 - *What the congregation is responsible for.*
 - *What the congregation is no longer responsible for (eg. Health insurance, car, financial support. . .)*

Is there a moral obligation to provide for her financial needs? *This should be handled with equity and charity and is given as gift.*

How is the amount determined? *An amount that will not burden the congregation.*

What happens when a congregation refuses any financial help even if the Sister has been a member of a congregation for more than 25 years?

The individual could appeal to Rome or to the Bishop if she has not family that is able to assist her.

Rights/recourse of Sisters when pastors (usually new) want to dismiss Sisters who have been serving in the parish for years.

It is recommended that all have written contacts. The dismissed Sister should go to the HR department.

Process for communities to appear in the Kenedy Directory (canonical, non-canonical).

Go to the diocesan offices for paperwork involved then refer to USCCB.

Transfer process involving two distinct institutes.

- ✓ *Sister writes a letter to her Major Superior requesting a transfer.*
- ✓ *The Major Superior of the individual writes a letter to the receiving Major Superior and to the individual Sister being specific of the conditions of transfer (eg. Financial, etc.)'*
- ✓ *Transfer is a three year process.*
- ✓ *At the end of three years, the receiving Major Superior informs the Major Superior of the sending Institute that the transfer is complete (or not).*

Working with the Immigration process for Religious coming into the diocese.

- ✓ *Follow the diocesan directives*
- ✓ *Resources:*
 - *CLINIC*
 - *Local Catholic Charities*