

Western Region of the National Conference of Vicars for Religious October 1, 2020 Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Lane Akiona, ss.cc., Rene Backe, CSA, Sister Sharon Casey, OP, Mary Frances Coleman, RSM, Rosina Conrotto, PBVM, Sisters Anthony Mary Diago, RSM, Ellen Hess, VDMF, Gloria Loya, PBVM, Joan Patten, AO, Sharon Park, OP, Kathleen Warren, OSF, Wanda Billion, MSC.

The meeting was called to order by Rene who led an opening prayer.

After prayer, new members Sharon Casey, OP and Sharon Park, OP were introduced followed by each member present introducing themselves.

During the “check in”, each member shared the following:

- What have been your greatest challenges?
- What have been your greatest successes?
- What is one question you would like to pose to the group? The answers to these questions were the topics for discussion and sharing during the afternoon session.

Following the “check in”, Anthony Mary shared the power point presentation which will be shown at the 2021 National Assembly in preparation for the Western Region’s hosting of the 2022 National Assembly. All expressed gratitude to Anthony Mary for preparing the presentation and several suggestions were given about the music to be used as background to the photos.

Lunch break was until 1:00

At 1:00 the group reconvened to address the questions posed during the morning session. They will be given in order presented:

What is the role of a Council of Religious? Each member who has a Council responded.

- To be the “eyes” and “ears” for the Vicar keeping the Vicar updated on the religious of the arch/diocese.
- To be informative and supportive of the Vicar.

Note: Frequency of meetings varied from arch/diocese to arch/diocese. Some meet monthly, others meet quarterly.

Length of terms varied. Some have staggered terms; some have renewable terms.

Composition of the membership on councils varied: some were women religious only; others were comprised of both women and men religious.

What are the priorities for the Vicar?

- To ensure that religious have an opportunity to meet with the Arch/bishop.
- To keep all legal documents updated and in order.
- To keep records (database, files) up to date and in order.
- To get to know the religious in the arch/diocese.
- To serve as a resource to religious.
- To be in constant communication with the Arch/bishop.
- To keep the lines of communication between the Arch/bishop and religious open.
- To provide networking for the religious:
 - through newsletters
 - through announcements of events of interest to religious
 - through making links to other congregations/organizations available
- To involve religious in events sponsored by the Vicar.
- To make religious more visible throughout the Arch/diocese. An example given was that some Vicars and other religious spoke about consecrated life in parishes and in schools.

What questions should be posed to Major Superiors when individual or groups of religious request admittance into an Archdiocese or a Diocese?

- What is the ministry that the individual or group will offer to the arch/diocese?
- Has an employment for the individual or group been secured?
- What will be the housing arrangement?
- How will the individual or group be financially supported?
- Can you verify the individual or group's good standing within your congregation?
- Has the individual or group received your blessing for this request?
- Who will be the contact person for the individual or group?
- Do the individual or members of the group have health insurance?

Note: The necessity of enculturation was emphasized.

What attempts can be made to involve those religious who are resistant?

- Try to find out why they are resistant. Reasons will vary.
- Reach out through mail, email or phone calls.
- If you are aware that the individual has a specific gift or talent, invite her/him to share that give with others in the arch/diocese

What contracts or agreements does your arch/diocese have? What is your responsibility in regard to contracts and agreements? Answers to this question were varied:

- The legal department handles all contracts or agreements.

- Legal status of an individual is handled by offices within the Chancery: in some cases this is handled by the Vicar; in others through the legal department; in others, through a person dedicated to working with CLINIC.
- In one diocese a general agreement is with made between the sending Congregation and the Bishop. The agreement is renewed every three years.
- Contracts are made between the employer (parish, school, hospital, other) and the individual religious

What prompts gatherings of religious and diocesan priests? It was noted that in the past Knights of Columbus or Serra Clubs hosted an annual dinner for priests and religious. These events are on the decline.

- Invite diocesan priests to attend events sponsored for religious. Perhaps bring in a speaker or offer a title that would be of interest to priests.
- Invite diocesan priests to join religious in a volunteer opportunity such as serving a meal at a homeless shelter.

Other topics discussed and experiences shared included the following:

- What is the role of Vicar in terms of those on exclaustation? In some cases the Vicar oversees the renewal of exclaustation in others the superior of the congregation to which the individual belongs oversees the renewal. Those on exclaustation are not to use the title Sister/Brother and are not to wear a habit. It was acknowledged that in some arch/dioceses this regulation is not followed and is difficult to enforce.
- What is the responsibility of the Vicar in terms of Third Orders or Associates? There is no responsibility for the Vicar. Associates are connected to a religious congregation; Third Orders ordinarily have a religious who serves as moderator.
- What is the responsibility of a Vicar in terms of psychological testing of new members in congregations? The Vicar cannot enforce psychological testing but can strongly recommend such testing offering contact information of qualified psychologists or psychiatrists.

Election of Officers. The following were elected officers of the Western Region of the Conference of Vicars for Religious:

Kathy Warren	Chairperson for a two year term, renewable for two years
Anthony Mary Diago	Vice-Chairperson for a renewed two year term
Mary Frances Coleman	Treasurer for a one year term
Rosina Conrotto	Secretary for a one year term

Newly elected officers were thanked and applauded for their willingness to serve. Those present were urged to consider the two positions which will be open in October of 2021.

Rene extended a blessing on newly elected officers and Gloria extended a blessing on out-going officers.

DATES FOR THE NEXT REGIONAL MEETING

Two dates were offered for the next regional meeting:

Tuesday, September 14, 2021 – Thursday, September 16, 2021

Tuesday, September 28, 2021 – Thursday, September 30, 2021

Everyone, please check your calendar and indicate which dates would work for you.

NEXT REGIONAL MEETING Pro Sanctity Retreat Center in Fullerton, CA

Other:

- Rosina will send a set of by-laws for the role of Council of Religious
- All are to include Vicars to their database to receive mailings that are sent to religious

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosina Conrotto, PBVM
Secretary