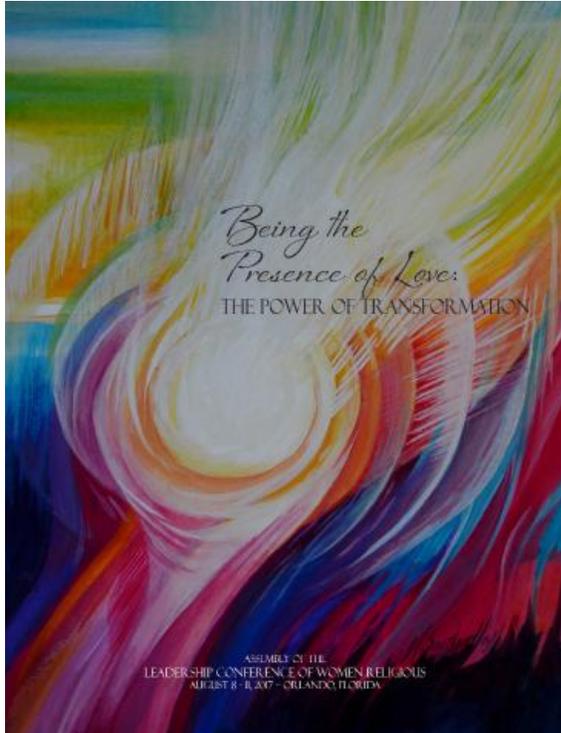


LCWR Assembly Explores the Call to Embody Love for the Sake of the World



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Orlando, FL] At the annual assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), held August 8-11, 768 participants explored the assembly theme of “Being the Presence of Love: The Power of Transformation.”

Drawing on the rich heritage of contemplation in which these Catholic sisters are steeped, the participants engaged in processes that drew them together across the lines of their individual orders to ask how their lives and their ministries could best serve the needs of the world today.

In her presidential address, Sister Mary Pellegrino, CSJ spoke to the need to let the “diminishment narrative” regarding religious to pass, and to open space for a new “narrative of deepening communion.” She urged the leaders to consider what it might mean for not only for religious life,

but also for the polarized church, country, and global community if Catholic sisters lived out of the “more complicated and complex narrative” of communion.

Sister Mary further noted that the path to communion is the deep, unrelenting grief and heartbreak that mark the lives of US Catholic sisters today. The transformative power of grief was a theme explored as well by the assembly keynoters.

The first keynoter, Dr. Christopher Pramuk, chair of Ignatian Thought at Regis University, spoke of the mystery of Christian faith in the resurrection and its power to show that “life reverberates beyond death,” and that “love will endure beyond any earthly power to extinguish it.” Using songs that suggest that the dead remain with the living, particularly some of the great African-American spirituals, Dr. Pramuk encouraged the participants to believe in “a God whose love overturns the power of sin and death so we can dare to live from a hope that seems, by all reasonable accounts, impossible.”

The second keynoter, United Methodist minister, artist, and author Jan Richardson, spoke of the transformative power of grief from her personal perspective after the 2013 death of her husband after only three and a half years of marriage. Noting that death is a process that can come in many forms: “a physical death, the death of a dream, loss of a familiar lifestyle,” or “the ending or changing of a community that has held our hearts,” she urged the participants not to “hurry the grief along” lest they risk missing the presence of love. She challenged the assembly to ask

themselves, “When absence erupts in our lives, how do we call upon the presence of love that goes deeper than our loss? How do we open ourselves anew to the presence of love that endures far beyond death?”

Participants practiced contemplative dialogue in small groups following the two keynote presentations asking the questions: What is required of us as leaders having heard these addresses? What matters most for the future of our communities, religious life, and the world we serve? Throughout the assembly participants were also invited to commit to spending time each day in personal and communal contemplation that placed them in deeper communion with the world, especially the places of great suffering and pain.

On the final day of the assembly, the participants engaged in a process designed to lead to the making of commitments to “be the presence of love” as individuals, groups, and as a conference. A panel of younger LCWR members initiated the commitment process by speaking on their vision for women religious and LCWR as it moves into the future. The panelists, Sisters Yesenia Fernandez, MGSps; Virginia Herbers, ASCJ; Alba Letelier, SP; and Ann Jackson, PBVM, offered the assembly a hope-filled vision that builds upon the communion developing now in the present, and a trust in a future that “is coursing through our veins.”

An outcome of the dialogue and prayer of the participants was the decision to issue a public statement imploring President Donald J. Trump to engage in dialogue and negotiation, particularly when dealing with the escalating tensions between the governments of the United States and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

At this critical moment for our country and global community, we – the approximately 650 members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious gathered in assembly – have discerned the Gospel call to embody love for the sake of the world.

We believe that love is more powerful than fear, dialogue more productive than rhetoric, and connection more transformative than threats of destruction.

We call on President Trump to engage in constructive dialogue and negotiation to resolve the current crisis between the governments of the United States and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in a manner that guarantees the peace and security that all people seek.

We commit ourselves to promote nonviolence and a compassionate response to the thirst of the world for integrity and communion.

Outstanding Leadership Award

During the assembly, LCWR bestowed the 2017 Outstanding Leadership Award on Sister Constance FitzGerald, a Carmelite nun from Baltimore, Maryland. Much of Sister Constance’s work has been with the formation and education of contemplative sisters in the United States and beyond. Her scholarship and writings, particularly on the great Carmelite mystics, have significantly influenced the lives of women religious globally.

Election of Officers

At the conclusion of the assembly, Sister Teresa Maya, CCVI, the congregation leader of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas, assumed the office of LCWR president for 2017-2018.

The conference voted in Sister Sharlet Ann Wagner, CSC as its president-elect. An immigration attorney, she currently, serves on the general leadership team of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, in Notre Dame, Indiana.

LCWR has approximately 1350 members who are elected leaders of their religious orders, who represent approximately 80 percent of the 48,500 Catholic sisters in the United States. The conference develops leadership, promotes collaboration within church and society, and serves as a voice for systemic change.

Texts of presentations as well as photos of the event are available at <https://lwr.org/calendar/lwr-assembly-2017>. 30

Contact: Sister Annmarie Sanders, IHM - Director of Communications -- 301-588-4955 -- asanders@lwr.org