

Gyrovagi

Gyrovagi: An occasional newsletter from the President of the Federation of St. Scholastica

January 2015

President's Travelogue

LCWR

Before taking office on August 15, 2014, I attended my first meeting of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) held at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. If you have never been to this resort in the new South, please do not pass up the opportunity if it comes your way. The interior gardens throughout the Opryland complex are beautiful; and the many avenues to walk are inviting, if not serpentine and challenging.

One thing about this meeting being held in Nashville was particularly appealing to me – I could simply get in the car with my prioress and travel north on Interstate 65 for a little over 2 hours before arriving at our destination. There was no airport security to go through, though there were rather long lines for registration at the hotel. I honestly am not sure what I was expecting to find at the annual LCWR meeting, but whatever it was paled in comparison with the actual experience I had at my first LCWR. I had the opportunity to meet and be with around 800 other

LCWR members from around the U.S. as well as some visitors from outside the country. I was so proud of those in leadership of LCWR for the way

Schreck, OSF, whose addresses were much like shared *lectio divina*. I encourage you to go to the LCWR website and read the addresses avail-

able there. (<https://lwr.org/calendar/lwr-assembly-2014>. Note: Scroll all the way to the bottom of this linked webpage to get the texts of the presentations.)

Nancy Schreck's opening reflection at the beginning of the conference was a



Incoming President Lynn Marie McKenzie with outgoing President Glenna Smith at the Ritual of Blessing held on August 15 during LCWR. (photo by Susan Doubet, Erie).

they conducted the meetings, providing time and space for process and giving feedback. The give and take in such a large group was a huge effort but so worthwhile. It was a rich experience being able to discuss and discern further steps in response to the ongoing doctrinal assessment of LCWR begun in 2008 by the Vatican office of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Highlights for me included hearing Nancy

thoughtful and heart-filled reflection on this Scripture: "I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places so that you may know that it is I the God of Israel, who calls you by your name." Is. 45:3 Her main presentation is entitled, "However Long the Night." I commend it for your reading and reflection. Also, Carol Zinn, SSJ's presidential address is entitled, "The Music in the Heart of God that Sings through Our Lives." It is available on the LCWR website for download. Most of the presentations at the LCWR meeting in Nashville are available in Eng-

Gyrovagi is back by popular demand! At the Federation Chapter in June, I heard refrains of the need for more regular communication from the Federation, and some specifically called for the *Gyrovagi* to be published again. So here it goes!

Resurrexit!

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Federation Centennial

2022 is just 8 years away, and the Federation will mark its centennial.

Sister Glenna Smith and the previous Federation Council asked for proposals for creative ways that we might mark our centennial, a significant event in our history and evolution. A few excellent proposals were received. The last Federation Council decided to pass this task along to the new Federation President and Council. So, keep your eyes open for an effort to seek even more ideas about the most appropriate ways to celebrate this milestone. If you have immediate ideas, feel free to email to lynmckenzieosb@gmail.com.

Of note:

Federation Visitation Guidelines were revised in 2012, thanks to Sister Mary Catherine Wenstrup and her hard-working committee. The electronic version is now available at the publications tab of the Federation website.

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ish, Spanish and French. I also appreciated hearing Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ as she accepted the annual LCWR leadership award. I urge you to read her address as well.

The last day of the LCWR meeting was August 15, my first official day in office. I was very moved by the simple ritual, prepared by Cecilia Dwyer of Bristow



Blessing of new Federation President on August 15, 2014 (official date when presidential term of office began) while prioresses attended LCWR in Nashville .

and participated in by the Benedictines present in Nashville, which inaugurated me into my service as Federation president.

CIB

I had a three week break after LCWR in which I was able to begin to set up my office and get organized. (I have far to go to get really organized!) Then it was off to Rome for the quadrennial *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* (CIB) Symposium, a gathering of Benedictine Sisters from all over the world. I had never experienced anything quite like it and am so grateful for the opportunity. (Those of

you who know me well know that I am not fond of travel by airplane. I still am not! And the 9-10 hour trip from Atlanta to Europe was challenging for me. If I never have to make such a long flight again I would not be sad.) Once I arrived in Rome, I thrived on the rich experience of being with women Benedictines of many cultures and languages who I knew all have the same and one call to monastic life, even if we do live it in a variety of ways.

I have to admit to feeling a bit of pride in our Federation, as we had so many present for the CIB symposium, several of whom were absolutely central to the planning and execution of this amazing international gathering. Judith Ann Heble of Lisle is the CIB moderator, having just been re-elected to that position at the CIB meeting this year. Judy clearly has the respect

of her peers in this international group, and she has my respect as well. Mary Jane Vergotz of Erie is the

executive secretary of CIB, and did an incredible amount of behind the scenes work before, during and after the Symposium. It takes a lot of coordinating to get over 100 Benedictines from 19 regions of the world together! Susan Barber of Atchison (together with Juliann Babcock of Beech Grove) was liturgist, musician and composer extraordinaire. Planning music in five (six including Latin) languages is no small task. Susan and Juliann did a fabulous job involving so many Sisters from around the world in the liturgies each day. Our delegates from the U.S. were Patricia Crowley of Chicago and Anne Shepard of Atchison. Kathy White of Baltimore served as the representative of our federation. Andrea Westkamp of Bristow served as a translator and also provided other services. Colleen Quinlivan of Ridgely was the official CIB photographer, along with wearing other hats of service. You can view her many good pictures on the CIB website. <http://www.benedictines-cib.org/meetings/2014Rome/2014SymposiumRome.html>.



Federation of St. Scholastica attendees at CIB

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The symposium included major addresses from Dr. Maria Pina Scanu (on faculty of Sant' Anselmo) on *Listening in Scripture*, Sister Aquinata Böckmann (well known scholar on the Rule of Benedict and Missionary Benedictine residing in Rome) on *Listening in the Rule*, and Sister Mary John Mananzan (Missionary Benedictine in Philippines) on *Listening in the Signs of the Times*. Dr. Scanu's and Sister Mary John's addresses are available on the CIB website, but Sister Aquinata's will be published in a future issue of *Benedictines* magazine published in Atchison.

Among other outings was a tour of Subiaco for all of the CIB participants. We had Mass in the chapel there with Abbot Primate Notker Wolf as president. There was song in beautiful harmony and various languages and also the renewal of our monastic profession. It was awe-inspiring to look at each Sister from around the world as she renewed her profession.

Visit to Monasterio de San Benito, Mexico City

Not long after I returned from Rome, I went to *Monasterio de San Benito* in Mexico City to visit our Sisters there who hosted me most graciously. I was able to visit their two schools, one nearby in the city and one in Tulpetlac. Sister Sandra took me on a tour of the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe as well as of the surrounding area.

I had been to the Basilica on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe with the Federation Council approximately 20 years ago. It was quite different being there at the basilica on an "ordinary day" in September and I appreciated the opportunity. I enjoyed trying out my Spanish in prayer with the Sisters and loved the delicious, freshly made Mexican foods. I am grateful to have had this time with them.

Federation Council Meeting in Chicago

In October I was at St. Scholastica Monastery in Chicago which hosted our first federation council meeting. We were grateful for their hospitality. I am most grateful for the generosity and giftedness of each member of the Council. The Council members are Susan Quaintance, First Councilor, of Chicago; Rita Brink, currently serving as Administrator at St. Marys, of Covington; Anne Wambach, Treasurer, of Erie; Kathy McNany, Secretary, of Baltimore; Maricarmen Bracamontes, of Torreon; Elizabeth Brown, of Glendora; and Anita Helgenberger, of Liberty.

As you might expect, at our first council meeting we had a host of items on our agenda. We started our days with extended prayer and *lectio* with time to share the fruits of our reflection. We also joined the community at St. Scholastica for evening prayers and meals. The Council members were

most generous in giving their insights and advice to me. Each of them wears many other hats and being on the Council is one additional responsibility that they have graciously accepted. I am most appreciative!

RCRI in St. Louis

I went to St. Louis for the Board meeting of the Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI, www.trcri.org) and I also attended the RCRI annual conference. It was good to see a number of Benedictines there, including those from our Federation. While I was there I attended the meeting of the Benedictine Coalition for Responsible Investment which is ably chaired by the very knowledgeable Susan Mika of Boerne. I also made a presentation on *Leadership & Confidentiality*. During my time in St. Louis I had the opportunity to visit my niece and her wonderful family. In addition, Diana Seago of Atchison graciously came to St. Louis to tutor me on the new iPad purchased by the Federation. Having always been a PC user, I have quite a learning curve to comprehend the Apple way! But Diana is trying to level that curve for me. I am grateful.

"Name the newsletter" contest announced:

Is it time to re-name this newsletter, or is Gyrovagi the perfect name? Would you please weigh in with your ideas for a new name? I have already received one excellent suggestion. Please email me lynnmckenzieosb@gmail.com

The winning prize will be the humble satisfaction of having suggested the winning name.



The Sisters in Mexico City offered a wonderful Benedictine welcome.

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Visitation at Pan De Vida Monastery in Torreon, Coahuila, Mexico

In November I, along with Karen Bland of Chicago, went to Torreon to conduct the regular visitation of Monasterio Pan de Vida. Karen and I found our Torreon Sisters to be most welcoming, and we also found that they had done their homework well in anticipation of the visitation. It was a joy for us both to experience the goodness of the Sisters and to be inspired by their life and work among the people of Torreon, particularly those who come to their center, referred to as CEDIMSE, located near the monastery. They are a wonderful community to visit. They even allowed me to stay some additional days to work on my meager knowledge of Spanish. I have a long way to go but I am working on it.

Pittsburgh & Ridgely

Finally, while in the Pittsburgh area for a meeting, I received true Benedictine hospitality from the Sisters of St. Benedict Monastery in Pittsburgh. I was able to tour their new monastery located in Bakerstown and was so happy to do so. They have built a simple, beautiful, fully functional building which will serve them well for many years to come. In addition, I was there for the initial rite of incorporation of two of the Sisters from St. Marys into the Pittsburgh community. Shortly thereafter I visited our Sisters in Ridgely at St. Gertrude Monastery. I have felt a connec-



Directional Statements 2014-2018

We will dedicate time and resources to develop and utilize current technology needed to promote our Benedictine identity and mission for the life of the world.

We will continue to promote and share intercommunity and inter-federation formation programs, and explore the revival of a women's monastic experience.

We will assist and encourage collaborative re-visioning, reconfiguring, and restructuring for the vitality and viability of Benedictine life in our monasteries, including oblates and others.

We will strengthen networking and communications within and among monasteries, Federations, and beyond.

We will respond out of our monastic identity to Church and world issues.

Accepted June 24, 2014
Federation of St. Scholastica Chapter
Atchison, KS

Of note:

*Hopefully a **website committee** will be in place in 2015 to work on improving our website, making it as user-friendly and as helpful as possible to members of the federation. Knowledge of HTML is not necessary :-)* If you believe you have the skills and interest that would benefit such a committee and are interested in serving, please email lynnmckenzieosb@gmail.com.

Your generosity in serving your Sisters will be greatly appreciated!

*Many **thanks** to **Kathy Horan** of Erie for her labors serving as the Federation webmaster these last several years. With Kathy's assistance **Thérèse Haydel** of Cullman will be taking over as webmaster.*

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tion with the Ridgely Sisters ever since going to study canon law at Catholic University when I lived with two of their Sisters and they allowed me to make their monastery my home- away-from-home. That was 20 years ago now. They received me most graciously as if 20 years had not passed. It was good to be back.

Epilogue

In writing this travelogue it is clear to me why Joan Chittister of Erie as president of our Federation chose to name this newsletter, The Gyrovagi. Taken from chapter 1 on "The Kinds of Monks" of the Rule of Benedict, the term *gyrovague* is not a compliment! In fact, Benedict names the *gyrovague* as the worst of the four kinds of monks, "always roving and never settled." The kind of travel required of the president of a federation does call for a certain level of rootedness in one's vocation and in one's own monastery in order to be sustained. On the other hand, there is nothing more enriching, inspiring, and fulfilling than being able to be in our member monasteries to witness how the monastic call is lived out in a variety of settings. I am grateful you have asked me to serve in this ministry.

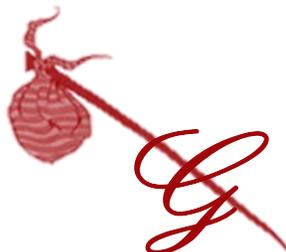
Elections & Visitations Scheduled for 2015

It is a big year for elections in our federation! We have 5 elections scheduled between April and May. St. Scholastica Monastery, Chicago, IL, is first, followed by St Benedict Monastery, Bristow, VA. Then there will be Sacred Heart Monastery, Cullman, AL; Emmanuel Monastery, Baltimore, MD; and Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, PA.

For elections to happen in our monasteries it takes a lot of preparation by the monastic community. The work is shared by a facilitator who works with the monastic community as they discern future leadership in the monastery. We are grateful to the many Benedictine women who give of themselves by serving as facilitators for their sister monasteries in the Federation and beyond. We need more Sisters who are willing to learn to serve as facilitators in election discernment. If you believe you might have the gifts to serve in this capacity please let your prioress or the Federation President know. We will do our best to have appropriate training to enable you to learn to serve in this essential role in our monasteries.

Also in 2015 we have two canonical visitations scheduled at St. Walburg Monastery, Covington, KY and Mount St Scholastica in Atchison, KS. In 2016, the following monasteries in our Federation are scheduled for their visitations: Baltimore (April 14-17, 2016), Bristow (Oct. 20-23, 2016), Colorado Springs (Nov. 25-27, 2016), and Cullman (March 10-13, 2016).

We are grateful for the good work done by a committee of our Sisters in the Federation, chaired by Sister Mary Catherine Wenstrup, prioress of St. Walburg Monastery, Covington, KY, for the revised guidelines for visitation. These will be available soon through the website. If your self-study committee should need these guidelines in the meantime, the guidelines are available to be sent to you in digital format.



{ *Life Changes – Transition*

For all of us, no matter what our stage in life, we are in the midst of some type of transition. Some transitions are more obvious and more life-altering than others. I have been pondering this reality, both from the point of view of myself as a person as well as that of each of our monasteries. I don't have any incredibly deep insights. But I thought that perhaps writing something here might encourage us all to reflect on what these transitions mean to our lives, for our futures, as persons, as communities, as a Federation.

The most obvious transition for me personally happened in June at the General Chapter of the Federation held at Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, when I was elected President of the Federation. I left behind my work as a mediator and as a lawyer to begin this new work with my Benedictine Sisters around the US and Mexico. No longer driving a car to law offices around north Alabama but flying the skies to monasteries around north America. What a life

this is! Enter the monastery and see the world!

Not all transitions are welcome and they come bidden or not. Recently, I was reading James Martin, SJ's bestseller, *Jesus – A Pilgrimage*. I came across this line: "We feel inadequate to what God seems to be asking - even if we are sure it is God who is asking." This is how I felt and feel about being elected President! But haven't we all felt inadequate at one time or another? Nevertheless, we usually manage to move forward despite our inadequacy. But fear of our inadequacy can be paralyzing. Here I am asked, we are asked, to trust that God will fill up in us what is lacking. For myself I can honestly say that once the election happened, I came to experience this change as something very positive for me. After having practiced law for nearly 30 years, I saw this new ministry as a welcome one. For the first time in my monastic life, I would be devoting myself full time to the work of our lives as Benedictines. How fortunate

could I be to be able to spend my days in communication with our Sisters in the United States and Mexico! In another article in this issue of *Gyrovagi* I have written a travelogue about my travels since taking office on August 15, 2014.

Doing this work among you is a privilege. At times it has been awe-inspiring and at other times I have been quite saddened. Still, at other times I have felt overwhelmed, frustrated, joyful, etc. But, regardless of the circumstance, I am mindful of one of our Benedictine mottos that appears above the arch in our monastery chapel in Cullman: "Ut in omnibus glorificetur Deus." I am aware that as I make this life shift, all of our monasteries and all of the Sisters in them are also undergoing life transitions. As was pointed out at Chapter, change is not often something we actively seek but which arrives. We can embrace it or try to deny it. I choose to embrace this new change in my life, though I admit I don't really know what it all means and what

it will require of me. Will we as Sisters and communities choose to embrace the inevitable and needed evolution and do so consciously? Will we refuse to change and thus die? Will we be able to relinquish what was once dear and embrace what Sister Sandra Schneiders refers to as the "new normal" in religious life? Letting go is never easy. But we are called to be women of faith, trusting in the God who has called us to follow in the way of Jesus. A reflection that might be of interest and helpful as we consider changes in our lives, our evolution from what we were to what we will become, is Nancy Shreck, OSF's keynote address given at LCWR in Nashville in 2015, entitled, "However Long the Night." It is available on the LCWR website: <https://lcwr.org/calendar/lcwr-assembly-2014>.



President's Schedule for 2015



February 3-8, 2015	Conference of Benedictine Prioresses annual meeting to be held jointly with the Abbots in Cullman
March 12-15, 2015	Covington, KY visitation
April 9-14, 2015	Chicago for election of prioress
April 16-19, 2015	Bristow, VA for election of prioress
April 23-26, 2015	Cullman, AL for election of prioress (because this is the monastery of the Federation President, the 1 st Councilor of the Federation, Susan Quaintance, will preside at the election)
April 30 - May 3, 2015	Baltimore for election of prioress
May 8-10, 2015	Erie, PA for direction statement setting in anticipation of election of prioress
May 13-16, 2015	Silver Spring, MD Board meeting of Resource Center for Religious Institutes
May 22-25, 2015	Erie, PA election of prioress
May 31- June 5, 2015	Atchison, KS visitation
June 7-12, 2015	Cullman – annual community retreat
July 14-20, 2015	General Chapter of the Federation of St. Benedict
August 11-15, 2015	Houston, TX for annual meeting of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Sept 30 -Oct 3, 2015	Torreon for Federation Council meeting
Oct 6-10, 2015	Detroit for Guest House workshop for leaders – “Walking with the Wounded.”
October 25-29, 2015	Orlando for annual convention of the Resource Center for Religious Institutes

In addition to the above dates, there are also some scheduled informal visits to member monasteries.



Of note...

Ever wonder whether your monastery archives is missing a lot of valuable material due to the onset of the digital age and the use more and more of email rather than conventional paper mail? Has your monastery developed policies or practices regard-

ing the capture and retention of material that is only in electronic format? Are you aware of resources already available to archivists to assist in incorporating such matter into the archives? Are you an archivist interested in exploring these questions? Would you be

willing to serve on a **federation or inter-federation committee to explore how our monastery archives can incorporate digital/ electronic information?** Please email lynmckenzieosb@gmail.com.