



2021 RFC CONGRESS
NOVEMBER 4-7 | CHICAGO

PRE-CONGRESS WORKSHOPS

INTERGENERATIONAL LIVING: “FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION...”

Mary Pat Garvin, RSM, PhD

It surprises many that North America is experiencing a rapid and significant increase in intergenerational living arrangements. Some are choosing to live intergenerationally out of need. Others are embracing what is termed “cross-generational communities” that welcome toddlers to seniors, promising each age cohort the support and resources needed to thrive.

What of Religious Life today? Religious Life has always been intergenerational, yet the generations were more equally distributed across membership. In 2020 *CARA* reported that 87% of perpetually professed members are 60, while almost half of those in initial formation are under age 30. *CARA* also reports that new members strongly cite charism and community life as the factors that influenced them “very much” in entering Religious Life.

Religious Life is uniquely poised to intentionally embrace intergenerational living, making it a defining characteristic of its way of being in the world; choosing to make intergenerational relationships integral to its mission from “generation to generation.”

This Pre-Congress workshop is designed for leadership, vocation and formation ministers, as well as those engaged in ongoing, life-long formation programs. The workshop we will explore some of the current research into the value and challenges of intergenerational living. Using a theological lens, we will examine this topic through the writings of Pope Francis, as well as the reflections of new members who have published their experiences of intergenerational living. Topics will include:

- intergenerational community: “boomers” to “zoomers”
- fostering a culture of intergenerational living
- intergenerational living as “relational learning”
- intergenerational solidarity and the grace of resilience
- intergenerational dialogue: blessings and challenges
- and, best practices for healthy and holy communities.



Sister Mary Pat Garvin is a member of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. She holds a doctorate

in psychology from the Gregorian University where she was on the faculty from 1994-2001. Since 2001, Mary Pat has taught for Seton Hall University and worked with national and international conferences of

Religious, as well as Religious congregations throughout North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia. In 2017 she received the Mary Emil Penet, IHM Award from the RFC in recognition of her contribution to the ministry of initial and ongoing formation for women and men Religious in North American and internationally. Mary Pat is a Fellow in Human Formation with Saint Luke Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland. Her research interest is the interplay of spirituality and psychology in the promotion of a healthy and holy living of Religious Life.

CALL TO BE RADICALLY COMPASSIONATE: LIVING RESPECTFUL MUTUALITY **Jeanne Connolly, EdD and Vicki Wuolle, CSA**

This reflective workshop will explore the movement of the Holy Spirit through recorded history and the current movement of the Spirit that calls each of us to BE radically compassionate collaborators as we share God’s love in the world today, each in our own way.

- We will explore the gift of communal charism and a committed way of life as charism.
- We will explore the call to be “a movement” in this time of deconstruction.
- We will touch upon the blessing

and challenge of mutuality in community.

- Finally, we will explore opportunities to prepare ourselves personally and communally to carry the Good News of God's love into the future.

The day will include opportunities for prayer, input, and time for sharing in small break out groups.



Doctor Jeanne Connolly serves as the Director of Charism and Mission with the Wheaton

Franciscans. She earned a doctorate in adult education from Northern Illinois University with an emphasis on human and organizational development.

Jeanne also facilitates groups and workshops on the associate-religious relationship and our mutual call to share charism and mission for the greater good. She believes we are all called to be instruments of peace, transformation, and hope -- each in our own way. Being open to the Spirit, remaining open to personal transformation, and pursuing opportunities for life-long learning helps us to understand and affirm that call "deep within."

Jeanne is a Covenant Companion (Associate) with the Wheaton Franciscans. Currently, she serves as President of Board of Directors for the North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR).



Sister Vicki Wuolle entered religious life during a time of deep change and potential transformation at

the turn of this century. During her early years she was involved with an inter-community pre-novitiate, and two novitiate programs. She studied systematic theology at Catholic

Theological Union upon receiving her first profession and spent time teaching high school theology in St. Michael's, AZ and Milwaukee, WI. She began her doctoral work in Leadership Studies and moved to teaching theology and leadership at the university before completing her dissertation on conscious evolution as a catalyst for emerging community.

Vicki has worked with the Leadership Collaborative since January 2017 serving communities of women religious, associates, and ministry partners in developing and growing leadership capacity across the various systems within which these communities live and function.

REIGN-FOCUS: FILM AS A NEW PARABLE OF JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

Antonio D. Sison, CPPS, PhD

What if film can help women and men in religious life to envision the mystery of the Reign of God within the contradictions of the world, and rouse their passion for justice, peace, and reconciliation? We will begin this imaginative and thought-provoking experience with an interactive primer on how to engage in an honest and regardful dialogue with film on its own terms.

We will then consider how film can rise up to be *locus theologicus*, a site for theological discovery and insight, that may usher-in deep contemplation, and kindle possibilities for social action in the service of the church and God's Reign. As Pope Francis exhorts in *Evangelii Gaudium* (167), each particular church must recognize the important role of the contemporary arts in transmitting the faith as a new "language of parables."



Brother Antonio "Ton" Sison is a religious Brother of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood,

and Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago where he has been teaching for fourteen years. He is also a contributing columnist for global cinema and the arts for *National Catholic Reporter*.

He has written and spoken widely on the confluence of theology/ religion and visual culture from an intercultural perspective. His authored books include *The Art of Indigenous Inculturation: Grace on the Edge of Genius* (Orbis Books, 2021), and *The Sacred Foodways of Film* (Pickwick, 2016). He was the featured keynote lecturer for the 2018 Film and Theology Colloquium of the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City, and the 2018 Association for Southeast Asian Cinemas (ASEAC) biennial conference in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

RISE UP: RECLAIMING PUBLIC SPACE FOR GOOD

Mary Pellegrino, CSJ

While a religious vocation is deeply and profoundly personal it is essentially a vocation to a public, communal life of prophetic witness – both in the Church and in society. In her address, Sr. Mary will explore the prophetic dimension of our lives as public theology and reflect on its need and meaning in a deeply divided Church and society. She will suggest implications for both individual and communal formation and transformation.



From 2008-2018 Sister Mary Pellegrino served as Congregational Moderator of her

community, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, Pa. From 2015-2018 Mary also served in the presidency of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in the United States. In both of those roles Mary worked to support, encourage and promote the ongoing renewal of religious life in the face of unprecedented challenges and changes in the church, American society and the global community.

Prior to serving in congregational leadership, Mary served in vocation/formation ministries for her congregation as well as parish and campus ministries. Over the years she has written and presented extensively on topics related to various aspects of religious life. Mary holds a Master's degree in Christian Spirituality and a certificate in Spiritual and Retreat Direction from Creighton University, along with a Master's degree in Religious Education from Fordham University.

Currently, Mary, assists religious communities in planning for the future through the lens of mission and charism in her role with the Religious Institutes Service Group of Plante Moran, PLLC.

BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS THE MIGRANT

Peter Phan, PhD

Our time has been called “The Age of Migration.” This presentation will begin with a brief survey of migration as a global challenge to our society and the church, with reference to Pope Francis’s teaching and example. Next, it will explore the image of Jesus as the Primordial Migrant who shares the fate of all migrants. The last part will offer suggestions on how religious formation can prepare people for ministry to migrants.



Father Peter Phan brings the U.S. church into dialogue with global perspectives and contextual

theologies. A former president of The Catholic Theological Society of America and The American Theological Society, Phan knows what is happening in a variety of other Christian denominations and non-Christian religions and has served on global commissions and projects.

The Vietnam native is the Ignacio Ellacuria, S.J. Chair of Catholic Social Thought at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. He emigrated to the United States in 1975 and has earned three doctorates. Phan taught philosophy at age 18 at Don Bosco College in Hong Kong. He has taught at The University of Dallas, The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., Union Theological Seminary in New York, Elms College in Chicopee, Mass., and St. Norbert's College in De Pere, WI. In 2001, Phan

became the first non-Anglo elected president of The Catholic Theological Society of America. In 2010, he received the John Courtney Murray Award, the society's highest honor for outstanding and distinguished achievement in theology.

Phan's writings deal with the theology of icons in the Orthodox Church, patristic theology, eschatology, and the history of Christian missions in Asia. His books include Christianity with an Asian Face; In Our Own Tongues; Being Religious Interreligiously; and The Joy of Religious Pluralism. His writings have been translated into Arabic, Italian, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Serbian, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, and Vietnamese.

SEMINAR SESSIONS

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: WISDOM FOR FORMATORS FROM NEWER MEMBERS

Michelle Lesher, SSJ

Women and men entering religious life today come from rich and various backgrounds, cultures, ages, and life experience. What truly transpires for them when they enter into formation with our Congregations?

During this session we will have the graced opportunity to explore the world of formation through the lens of some of our newer members. What has the journey been like for them? What have they learned? What are their hopes and desires for this very significant life experience? What do they need from us? What do they want us to hear and to know?

Through input, reflective sharing, dialogue, and the opportunity for candid questions, we will have the chance to explore how the actual lived formation experience and insight of newer members have the potential to strengthen both our presence as directors and our formation process.



Sister Michelle Lesher is a Sister of Saint Joseph of Philadelphia currently serving as the Novice Director for the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

Michelle has a Masters degree in Pastoral Ministry from Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. Having attained her Master of Divinity equivalency, she is currently in the process of finishing the Doctor of Ministry program at Fordham University. Her concentration is Spirituality and Spiritual Direction.

PASSING ON THE GIFT OF CHARISM: BEST PRACTICES AND TOOLS FOR FORMATORS

Frank Santucci, OMI, PhD

Part of the formative journey involves gaining a deepening understanding of a congregation's charism and its implications for living in community, one's prayer life, and apostolic service. In this seminar Fr. Frank Santucci, OMI will provide best practices, tips and tools for those with the responsibility to teach founders, charisms, and Rules. In what ways can formators and new members journey together in unpacking and deepening the charismatic gifts and graces of their community? This session will explore that question and offer practical insight and resources.



Father Frank Santucci is a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate since 1970 and a priest since 1976. Born in South Africa, he has spent the past 28 years in ministry in Rome, at the OMI foundation and animation house in Aix en Provence and, now, at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio where he is the holder of the Chair of Oblate Studies. He has been involved in formation at novitiate and post-novitiate level and congregational animation around the world. His doctorate is in the theology of consecrated life and focused on the charism of his congregation.

BLACK CATHOLIC HISTORICAL TRUTH TELLING AS AN ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE OF FREEDOM, REPARATION, AND SOLIDARITY

Shannen Dee Williams, PhD

This presentation will (1) identify four core myths about the U.S. Catholic Church and its foundational relationship to the African American community as it relates to the transatlantic slave trade, slavery, segregation, and the long African American freedom struggle and (2) demonstrate why historical truth telling about the Black Catholic experience must inform and guide any Catholic interrogation of white supremacy and reparation project.

This presentation will also focus on the moral necessity of Black Catholic historical truth telling in religious formation programs, paying particular attention to the history of slaveholding among religious orders of men and women and the largely unreconciled history of anti-Black exclusion and segregation within religious life



Doctor Shannen Dee Williams is the Albert Lepage Assistant Professor of History at Villanova University.

A historian of the African American experience with research and teaching specializations in women's, religious, and black freedom movement history, Williams is completing her first book, *Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle*, with Duke University Press.

Dr. Williams's research has been supported by a host of fellowships, grants, and awards, including a Scholar-in-Residence Fellowship at the Schomburg Center for Research

in Black Culture in New York City, a Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Fellowship in Religion and Ethics from the Woodrow Wilson National Foundation, a Albert J. Beveridge Grant from the American Historical Association, the Huggins-Quarles Award from the Organization of America Historians, and the John Tracy Ellis Dissertation Award from the American Catholic Historical Association. Her work has been published in the Journal of African American History, American Catholic Studies, America Magazine, the National Catholic Reporter, the Catholic News Service, and Religion Dispatches.

**FORMATION AS RITUALIZATION:
PONDERING EMBODIED PRACTICES
Edward Foley, Capuchin, PhD**

The process of forming initiates into religious life can be understood and approached in various valid and useful ways. Some imagine the process as spiritual companionship, others liken it to an apprenticeship, while still others take a more instructional approach. Without critiquing any of those, this presentation will consider the process of religious formation – initial and ongoing – through the frame of ritualization.

Religious life is not only filled with rituals – from those that occur in chapel to those enacted in the dining room or recreational spaces – but itself can be considered a process of ritualization. Contemporary theories recognize ritual as a powerful way of acting that shapes folk through structured embodiment, whether or not folk are self-reflective about such practices. Formators not only configure ritualized practices for initiates but also the ritual spaces that impact embodiment. Embedded in such practices and their environments are enduring messages, e.g., about spirituality, fraternity/sorority and the use of power and authority. This

workshop will serve as a guided theological reflection on such ritualization. Special attention will be given to men’s communities, particularly those with clerics, and the unique power issues in their ritualization.



Father Ed Foley is a Roman Catholic priest and member of the Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin

Order. The Duns Scotus Professor Emeritus of Spirituality and Retired Professor of Liturgy and Music at Catholic Theological Union, he was the founding director of the Ecumenical Doctor of Ministry degree jointly offered by Catholic Theological Union, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and McCormick Theological Seminary. An award winning author and celebrated preacher, he has been honored with lifetime achievement awards from national and international organizations and is a recent recipient of a major grant for preaching from the John Templeton Foundation. He also serves his Capuchin community as the Vice-Postulator for the Canonization process for Blessed Solanus Casey.

**MIGRATION FOR MISSION:
INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC SISTERS
IN THE UNITED STATES - AN
OVERVIEW**

Mary Johnson, SNDdeN, PhD

The groundbreaking book, *Migration for Mission: International Catholic Sisters in the United States* (Oxford University Press 2019) by Mary Johnson SNDdeN, Mary L. Gautier, Patricia Wittberg SC and Thu T. Do LHC, illuminates several aspects of the lives of over 4,000 sisters from six continents (83 countries) who currently minister or study in the United States. The study, upon which the book is based, involved surveys

and interviews. This session will focus on the pathways these sisters took to the United States, the challenges they confronted and often still confront, and the gifts they bring to religious life, the Church and society. Implications for formation ministry will be discussed.



Sister Mary Johnson is a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur and Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies

at Trinity Washington University in Washington, D.C. At Trinity, she is also co-director of the Billiard Center for Social Justice. Previously she was on the faculty of Emmanuel College in Boston.

She speaks nationally and internationally on religious life, Catholicism and Catholic Social Teaching. Currently she is working with a team of scholars on a meta-analysis of vocation data from five nations. Along with numerous articles and book chapters, she has co-authored three books: Young Adult Catholics: Religion in a Culture of Choice (University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), New Generations of Catholic Sisters: The Challenge of Diversity (Oxford University Press, 2014) and Migration for Mission: International Catholic Sisters in the United States (Oxford University Press, 2019). She is co-editor of Solidarity Toward the Common Good: Women Engaging the Catholic Social Tradition, forthcoming in March, 2022 from Paulist Press. Sister Mary is a member of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative.

SEXUALITY: AN EVOLVING UNDERSTANDING

Lynn Levo, CSJ, PhD

Today there is much discussion about various aspects of sexuality, including areas of diversity such as orientation and gender identity. These complex issues require a context as well as study and dialogue in order to understand and address what is evolving. Emerging aspects need to be explored within a broader fundamental understanding of what we know about sexuality - sexuality as integral to being human and how it is centered in relationship and presence. This workshop will offer an opportunity to explore these fundamentals as well as an emerging understanding of some aspects of sexual diversity. The information shared will assist those who accompany new members and leaders to explore implications for relating with new members, current members and our church.



Sister Lynn Levo is a Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet, is a licensed psychologist, lecturer

and consultant. She received her PhD from the University of New York at Albany, completing her clinical training at The University of Kansas School of Medicine. Lynn has presented nationally and internationally to women and men religious, intercommunity novitiates and seminaries, on fostering healthy integrated sexuality, celibacy, relationships, intimacy, and mutuality in community. With women and men in leadership roles, she has offered insights into collaborative leadership, living at the edge of chaos, our call to be evolutionaries, hope providers and being a transforming presence.

On numerous occasions, Lynn has shared her gifts with the Religious

Formation Conference and the National Religious Vocation Conference through projects and presentations for formation and vocation personnel. In 2015, she was the recipient of the Mary Emil Penet, IHM Award from RFC in recognition of her contribution to the ministry of initial and ongoing formation for women and men religious in North America and internationally. In 2016, Lynn received a service award from NRVC for her ongoing efforts to foster a healthy humanness for all.

For 10 years, Lynn ministered as director of education at Saint Luke Institute, a residential treatment facility for women and men religious. Currently, Lynn is a consulting psychologist in private practice, offering consultations and presentations/workshops both in the United States and abroad.

