



**2021 RFC CONGRESS**  
NOVEMBER 4-7 | CHICAGO

## PRE-CONGRESS WORKSHOP

### **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.*

## 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.*



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