

February 22, 2018

Dear Friend,

The Religious Formation Conference has wonderful news! Since we are in the season of Lent and cannot use the word “Alleluia” to accompany the message, we will borrow the timeless message of the angels to the shepherds: “Behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”

Last November, at the final session of the Religious Formation Conference (RFC) Congress, Mary Johnson, SNDdeN and Sandra Schneiders, IHM presented a proposal for a theological education program for new religious that would take place within a community setting. Remembering the roots of the RFC in the Sisters Formation Movement which led to the development of a full course of studies for those entering religious life at that time, the speakers proposed a program for new religious today that would provide a strong theological foundation. Building on the enthusiastic support of the formators and leaders in attendance, the RFC has been in conversation with Catholic Theological Union in Chicago (CTU) to establish a program based on this proposal. Today, we are thrilled to announce it to you, leaders of congregations/provinces of men and women religious.

***Together: A Collaborative for Theological Education, Formation and Community***, cosponsored by CTU and the RFC will be offered as a pilot program beginning with the Fall semester, 2018. Sisters and Brothers who are currently in formation and have completed their canonical novitiate year are invited to participate. Participants would enroll in a graduate theology program at CTU, share community in a designated space in the residence hall, and participate in ongoing formation together as an intercultural, inter-congregational, and intergenerational cohort.

We anticipate grant support for the program; therefore, costs for the pilot group would only be for CTU tuition (\$915 per credit) and room and board (\$10,170 per year). While there are many program offerings at CTU, ranging from continuing education and certificates to doctoral degrees, we encourage participants to enroll in one of the Master’s degree programs. This generally involves two to three years of full time study (27 credits per year). Participants will be guided to choose the best academic program to meet their ministerial interests and one that is aligned with their community charism. Both CTU and the RFC are able to offer some merit- and need-based scholarship assistance. Applications are due by April 30, though earlier action is recommended.

Our newest members are an integral part of the evolution of religious life. They need a strong theological background, ministerial preparation, and grounding in the charism and mission of their institute to be leaders into the future. We invite you to participate in ***Together*** through your prayerful support as well as through the encouragement of your new members to be a part of the pilot group. To learn more about the goals and outcomes of the program and to inquire about the application process visit: [www.together-formation.com](http://www.together-formation.com). You may also contact me at [edauwer@relforcon.org](mailto:edauwer@relforcon.org). Please consider being a part of this new venture: bringing good news of great joy that will be for all the people of God!

Sincerely,



**Sister Ellen Dauwer, S.C.**  
Executive Director  
Religious Formation Conference



**Sr. Barbara E. Reid, O.P.**  
Vice President and Academic Dean  
Catholic Theological Union