



January 4, 2021

Last spring, as we attempted to navigate as an organization in the early days of the pandemic, we discerned most often among three options: cancel, postpone, or continue. Should we cancel our upcoming in-person programs and wait till next year? Should we reschedule for the fall, as surely we will be clear by then? Or should we skip this year and wait until we can meet again in person? In the face of so much uncertainty, we struggled to make the best decisions possible. We chose to continue on - online.

Former U.S. Representative Patricia Schroeder is known for several famous quips but the one that is reflected in the Conference these days is, "You can't wring your hands and roll up your sleeves at the same time." Likewise, we have adapted our programs in order to offer them online, this reaching out to larger groups of participants, including many who would never be able to travel to Chicago or the locale of the program.

As we stand at the edge of a new year, we ponder what it might bring with it: uncertainty, isolation, and suffering or light, healing, and peace. In this time of tentative hope, we know that we shall be changed and transformed by this experience. It brings to mind the famous aria in Handel's *Messiah*: "The trumpet shall sound...and we shall be changed," with "changed" sung over six measures. Change is an up-and-down, in-and-out process, as the music connotes.

**At the start of 2021 we also begin a new year for the Conference and urge you to renew your membership at this time. Please consult your renewal notice and the corresponding guidelines for information on how to renew.**

*Religious formation continues despite and in the midst of the pandemic. Women and men continue to enter communities; new and continuing formators seek preparation and renewal; and all of our members thirst for the learning and growth of ongoing formation. The RFC serves each of these groups of people in its triad mission of initial formation, ongoing formation, and the professional preparation of formators. Your membership enables programming and resource sharing in each of these areas.*

**Membership in the Conference is by religious congregation or government unit. Thus, upon your renewal, every member of your congregation/unit is a member of the RFC and enjoys the benefits of membership.**

The two persons whom you designate on the renewal form will receive all Conference materials directly; we suggest one be a formator, the second in leadership or communications. Others in your congregation/unit can also receive these materials directly for an additional fee of \$70. Each member congregation/unit is assigned a unique username and password; we ask you to share these with your vowed members so that all can take direct advantage of resources and information on the RFC website.

We have made every attempt to keep membership fees as reasonable as possible while honoring greater demands for conference services and rising costs. If dues pose a significant difficulty, please contact me; we do not want to lose any member because of financial difficulties. Please don't hesitate to be in touch should have questions about the renewal process. We can be reached by using the contact information above.

We wish you blessings in this new year and look forward to serving you in 2021. May we roll up our sleeves and work for the change we deeply desire for our world and planet, for our country and its people, for our communities and Church, and for ourselves and our families.

Sincerely,

*Ellen Dauwer, SC*



Sister Ellen Dauwer, SC  
Executive Director