

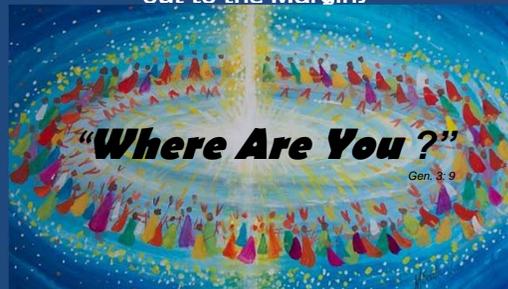
Rooted in the Mission of Jesus: Reaching out to the Margins



Apostolic Religious Life in the 21st Century



Rooted in the Mission of Jesus: Reaching out to the Margins



Apostolic Religious Life in the 21st Century

Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life.

The appropriate renewal of religious life involves two simultaneous processes.
(Original inspiration)

- ***“An adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of the times.”***

Context for Living Religious Life in the 21st Century

- 9 billion customers with many unmet human needs.
- Finite natural resources increasingly scarce.
- Everyone knows everything all the time - are people valued?
- Demand for the “good” is growing.

Others

- Extremes of economic disparities
- Global forced displacement
- Effect of the new cosmology – and other “pushes” from science and technology.
- Role of religion needs to be examined.

“Think of mother earth as in painful labor, giving birth to a world community: Various attending midwives are local communities, national communities, scientific-economic communities and religious communities. These midwives desperately need attention. Some seem to obstruct rather than facilitate the birth process. Surely major paradigm shifts are necessary.”

Dr. Earl Brewer.

Midwives at the birth of world community...

- *Need to undergo vast transformations.*

Top 10 languages that will be spoken by the youth of 2050

??????

Top 10 languages that will be spoken by the youth of 2050

- 10. Malay (Indonesia, Malaysia)
- 9. Japanese
- 8. Russian
- 7. Bengali (So. Asia, Bangladesh)
- 6. Portuguese
- 5. Spanish
- 4. English

Top Three languages

- 3. Arabic
- 2. Hindi
- 1. Chinese

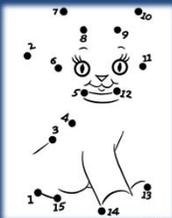
- **What does it mean to live religious life in 2014,2020,2050**
- **We've not done this before!**

“It is not the
answers
that show
us the way
but the
questions”

Rilke

“Is there anything
more painful
than realizing you
did not know the
right questions to
ask at the only
time on earth
you would have the
opportunity
to do so.”

Alice Walker: The way Forward is with
a Broken Heart.



“During those times when I
am not sure what is
happening in my life – when
I am unable to envision it, I
recall a dot to dot picture -
a gift from a four year old.
The child had created the
picture by moving her pencil
from dot to dot, one at a
time. It comforts me to know
that when I can’t see the
whole picture all I really need
to see is the next dot.”

Sue Monk Kidd

Partner conversation

What does this mean for the
formation and integration of
new members?

2
minutes!

Rooted in the
mission of Jesus,
reaching out to the
margins!

Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life.

The appropriate renewal of religious life
involves two simultaneous processes.

- **A continuous return to the source of all Christian life and to the original inspiration behind a given community.**
- *“An adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of the times.”*

Benoit Fortin OFM Cap.

What good is it to go to great expense to have the founder or foundress canonized and his/her statue prominent in the garden if we do not update his/her prophetic courage and folly.



- We cannot just repeat their behavior: “We honor our founders, not by replicating the words or conditions of the past but by gleaning the essence of the charism that shaped the past, discerning its presence in this time and place and applying its character to today’s needs and realities. (Mary Pellegrino - CSJ)

You can tell an organization is in trouble when it has more memories than dreams!

Reaching out to the margins



- Reaching out from where?
- Where are you?

Religious life is not only “to the margins” but is a **marginal life** in and for the church.

Crisis of Function - Metz

- Institutionalized form of a dangerous memory for a church over-adapted to the world.
- Shock therapy instituted by the Holy Spirit.

Metz

- On the fringe... at the point where social change first becomes noticeable.
- Have not religious orders moved too far into that middle ground where everything is nicely balanced and moderate... so to speak "tamed" by the institutional church.

- Innovative function
- Corrective Function



Two essential service functions for the church
The Center for The Study of Rel. Life. May 2009

- **Institutional Maintenance**
 - Priests, chancery officials, pastoral associates, catechists etc. Administration of Sacraments.
- **Institutional Change**
 - Religious life: efforts to move the church, to make necessary changes in its theology or functioning.



Don Goergen OP

- Religious life exists for the sake of the Gospel, not the church.
- It emerges from "attentiveness" to the surplus in the gospel.

Surplus of Gospel

Institutional Church

Is it a surprise?



Not only in terms of what we do...

- Where we live
- How we live together
- How we understand the "content" and context of vows.
- How we read the scripture
- Spirituality
- Vision of church
- How we prepare people for future ministry - what ministry will be needed.
- How we see ourselves in relation to the planet / cosmos -
- Others...

Not only in terms of what we do...

➤ How we pray...

It is said of Thomas Merton:

One of his most important insights into his own vocation was that "living the spiritual anguish of the unanswered questions and insoluble dilemmas of his historical context (societal and ecclesiastical) was an even more important expression of the prophetic character of monastic life than active engagement with social issues.

Paul VI

They are enterprising and their apostolate is often marked by an originality, by a genius that demands admiration.... **Often they are found at the outposts of mission**, and they take the greatest of risks for their health and their very lives.

Benedict XVI

- Without outward movement in mission the church would face certain death....
- In recent years the anthropological, cultural, social and religious framework of humanity has changed. Today the Church is called to face new challenges and is ready to dialog with different cultures, and religions, in the search for ways of building, along with all people of good will, the peaceful coexistence of peoples. The field of mission ad gentes appears much broader today.

Vita Consecrata 1996

- The prophetic character of the consecrated life was strongly emphasized by the Synod Fathers.
- 'There is a prophetic dimension which belongs to the consecrated life as such resulting from the radical nature of the following of Christ...'

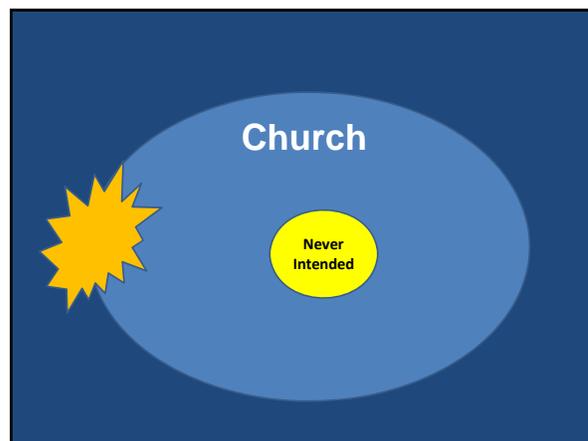
- Prophetic witness is expressed through the denunciation of all that is contrary to the Divine will and **through the exploration of new ways to apply the Gospel in history** in expectation of the coming of God's Kingdom.

P. 155-156

•A problem

Vita Consecrata: 1996

further states unequivocally that this “prophetic stimulus” can be guaranteed only when it functions in “full harmony with the Church’s magisterium and discipline.



- If change is to come – it will come from the margins ... it was the desert not the temple that gave us the prophets.

Wendell Berry

Survival is precarious



Charismatically inspired marginality

- They (religious orders) have arisen for the most part not so much when the Church is flourishing as when it is profoundly disoriented and unsure of itself.

J. Metz

Partner conversation

What does this mean for the formation and integration of new members?

2 minutes!

• From the margins to the margins



... to the margins and from the margins

is like walking a tightrope

Is a tipping place...



Too far

One way -- too compliant
Lose credibility

The other way – appear self
righteous -- Dismissed.



- Fall one way – inside the church
- Fall the other way – outside the church



- There is risk and danger:
 - Too much of an insider
 - Too much of an outsider

•On the margin of belonging



•“The son of man has no place to lay his head. - Jesus



To be a religious today is to live in a certain moral loneliness. It is to be what sociologists term a “cognitive minority,” that is, to be religious today is to stand outside of the dominant consciousness. Ron Rolheiser OMI



Must be able to keep one's balance



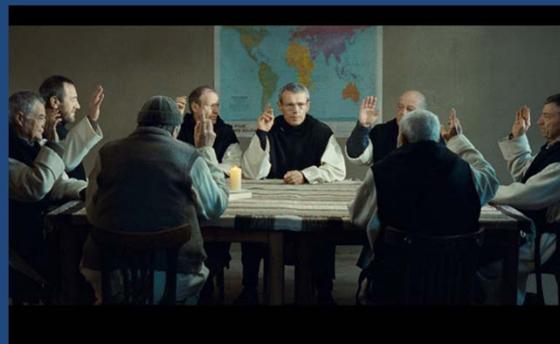
Able to be at the anxious edges of mission – without being anxious!



....constant danger of betraying our being

Jon Sobrino

If religious life by its very nature involves a certain abnormality, then that life **will experience crisis** when it seeks to become normal and when it is **no longer lived in the desert and on the frontier.**



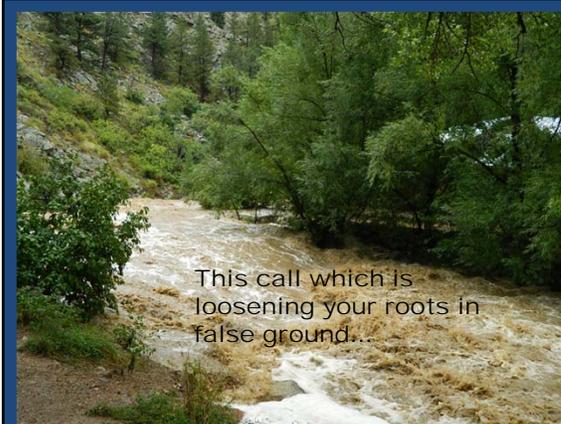
Where are you?

Implications for formation

- Formation for the global reality
- Formation that immerses the person in the gospel – relationship with Jesus
- Abstract altruism is not enough: involvement with suffering people.
- Development of skills for tightrope walking
- Developing courage and bravery
- Ability to live with “not belonging.”
- Courage to discern: vocation to religious life



The path you took to get here has washed out.



This call which is loosening your roots in false ground...



That you might
become free
from all you
have
outgrown...



For your arrival in the new dawn.

If Not Now– Carrie Newcomer from the CD
Before and After.