



The Mountaineer

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From the President:

Dear Friends,

Our summer *Mountaineer* is a little bit later than usual this year because we wanted to share with you the experiences we had participating in the Convocation for Catholic Leaders sponsored by the United States Bishops' Conference.

Eight USCSI members attended and we also had an exhibit, sharing what our vocation can mean for the Church and world. We were proud to be with the diverse group of Catholic leaders who were challenged to become missionary disciples and carry Christ and his Church to the periphery of our society.

Two things became clear to us. First of all, our vocation as consecrated seculars places us squarely in the peripheries where we can discern the needs of those who are marginalized and seek to answer their needs in the name of Christ.

And secondly, our vocation is not well known. We did our best to engage others in discussion about secular institutes and hand out our USCSI pens and refrigerator magnets. Most were open to hear of this option and a few even thought it might be what they were personally looking for.

Unlike other conferences the emphasis of the convocation was on

listening to the audience, not the speakers. Round table discussions and networking during the breaks were really where the fruit was harvested. There was time at the end for each delegation of a diocese or organization, to plan what and how they will do to take this message back home.

May this be an impetus in the new evangelization in our country to take the admonition of Pope Francis seriously to proclaim the Gospel of Joy.

Marcia Vinje



USCSI Executive Committee

- President: Marcia Vinje, Staten Island, NY
- Vice President: Fr. George Hazler, Troy, MI
- Secretary: Jessica Swedzinski, Sleepy Eye, MN
- Treasurer: Evelyn Loyola, Merced, CA
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- www.secularinstitutes.org www.cmis-int.org/en/



Convocation for Catholic Leaders

The United States Bishops' Conference sponsored a "Convocation for Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America" from July 1-4, 2017 in Orlando, Florida. Over 3,200 were in attendance: including five cardinals, 150 bishops, 100 priests and 100 or so in consecrated life. Attending delegates from the USCSI were: Marcia Vinje, Fr. George Hazler, and Jessica Swedzinski from the Executive Committee, Fr. Enrique Sera, principal officer of the Institute of the Heart of Jesus for Priests, Kathy Tierney, principal officer of the DeSales Institute, and Yvette Fouchi representing the Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ. Diana Navarro and Emily Donaire, both from Caritas Christi, were present as our exhibitors.

This convocation, the first of its kind in a century, has been planned for over five years. The Bishops' Conference wanted to *"convene, challenge, and motivate Catholic leaders to embrace the full vision of what it means to be Catholic and fully engaged in the Church's mission of evangelization and to proclaim the Church's vision of the human person."* *"Leaders" are both official leaders within the Church – people occupying diocesan or parish offices, educators and directors – but also those who exercise leadership in apostolic efforts outside of the diocesan structure (both local and national), for example: Catholic leaders from various segments of the laity – such as those in higher education, business and cultural leaders, as well as Catholic young adults and emerging leaders.* (from the USCCB website)

It had been 100 years since the U.S. Bishops had gathered such an array of Catholic leaders. Inspired by the encyclical of Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, the bishops wished to hear from others how they can form missionary disciples who will be active in the new evangelization, and encourage dioceses and organizations to make concrete plans to do so.

Marcia and Jessica arrived on June 30 with the hopes to set up our USCSI exhibit for the convocation. Diana and Emily, who live in Florida,

brought along the brochures, give-a-ways and our display by car. Our exhibit was in the dining room in the Orange County Convention Center which was connected to the Hyatt Regency Hotel where the liturgies, plenary sessions, and break-outs were held. We were all set to begin welcoming browsers at 8 am Saturday morning, but there was a glitch. The air conditioning was not turned on and there were no people coming to the exhibits in the 95 degree heat. Apparently they wanted to wait closer to the dinner scheduled at 6:00 pm before cooling the room.



Those exhibitors who were willing to spend thousands of dollars instead of hundreds for display space were located in the hotel, so we could visit them until the official opening of the convocation with the 2:00 pm Holy Mass celebrated by Cardinal Dolan of New York. We also made use of the chapel conveniently located just across from the main ballroom, and also the confession room located in what is usually a small café next door.

The schedule was well-organized and varied. The breaks with refreshments between sessions were an hour long and that was when a lot of networking went on and visiting the over 75 exhibits.

The first day was dedicated to the vision of Pope Francis for the new evangelization by forming

The Joy of the Gospel in America—July 1-4th in Orlando FL

missionary disciples. The backdrop for all the Masses and evening gatherings was enriched with classic artwork displayed on the wall. This was planned out by the Magnificat Foundation; in fact they also decorated the altar in the ballroom and the adoration chapel. The flowers were bright reds, golds, and oranges, representing the graces that Mary gives us.

The evening Marian devotion on Saturday honored Our Lady as the Mother of Evangelization. Bishop Gustavo Garcia-Seller of San Antonio shared the story of how his family experienced the power of prayer to Mary. His parents were unable to conceive children, so they made a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe to pray for children and “here I am.” Then he went on to say of his 14 siblings, another is a priest and one is a sister. Following this introduction the rosary was prayed in 8 languages with Marian songs between each decade. Together everyone prayed a dedication to Mary. The bishop laid a bouquet of flowers at the feet of the statue of Our Lady of Fatima which remained on the stage throughout the convocation. The evening closed with a witness by Bishop Holley of Memphis, Tennessee. He described how his parents and seven siblings were received into the Church when he was in his mother’s womb! In his city the Catholic School children have a big May crowning procession on the streets and many non-Catholic people from the neighborhood join in.

On Sunday the theme was *Charting the Landscape and Mission Field*. The first presenter was Hoeffman Ospino, an associate professor of theology at Boston College. He gave statistics to give a view of the Church in America. Basically, the Church is growing in the south and west while parishes are being closed in the Northeast and Midwest. Some of the changing demographics is due to immigration and some to mobility as people move for their professions. Besides Hispanic immigrants there are presently large Catholic groups from the Philippines, India, Africa, and Vietnam.



Fr Ric Sera and Supreme Knight, Carl Anderson, were happy to meet after some years.

After Dr. Ospino’s presentation there was a panel of five who shared more details of the state of the Church in America. Following a break participants of the convocation could choose from 22 breakout sessions to share their experiences with others. In the afternoon there was another plenary session titled *The Radical Call to Missionary Discipleship*. Donald Cardinal Wuerl of Washington gave the keynote address. Another panel shared their successes in forming missionary disciples.

That night we had an Evening of Adoration and Reflection, emphasizing God’s mercy. Sean Cardinal O’Malley of Boston gave a beautiful meditation and prayer as we adored the Lord who is the center of this convocation.

Early on Monday morning there was a Eucharistic procession on the streets of Orlando. We gathered at the Convention Center and processed to the hotel amidst song and silence. It was really impressive to see thousands of people walking quietly behind the Eucharist for almost a mile. (That also gives you an idea of how large these venues were. We certainly got our exercise just finding our way to breakouts, exhibits, and meals.)

Monday’s theme was *Going Deeper into the Peripheries*, a reference to the call of Pope Francis for the Church to reach out to the marginalized. The breakout sessions were especially geared to marginal groups, such as the addicted, victims of violence, broken families, the

rural Church, people with disabilities, the elderly, and immigrants. These sessions had two bishops and then a panel who shared their experiences. The sessions closed with time for small group discussions to share people's insights.

The afternoon plenary session on July 3rd was under the theme: *Practical Strategies Beyond the Convocation*. Bishop Gomez of Los Angeles and Carl Anderson, the supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus spoke about the people we don't see in Church and how we can reach out to them. Another panel of experts shared their insights. Later on we celebrated the Fortnight for Freedom Mass. After supper there was an Evening of Witness and Praise.

On the 4th of July the theme was *Spirit-Filled Evangelizers Equipped for Excellence*. The keynote speaker was a very lively layman named Patrick Lencione who works in both the corporate world and in the Church as an author and speaker. He made the point that we have a circle of influence where we can make a difference, and a circle of concern for matters that lie beyond our power to change. We should concentrate on the former first by striving for personal holiness and second by focusing on the team of people you work with. We have more influence if the love of Christ radiates from the team. Bishop Robert Barron spoke to us via media hook up since he was unable to personally be present due to an airline glitch.

From 11 am until 1:30 pm the various delegations, that is, dioceses or organizations met to make practical plans for the next step back home. And they did take advantage of that. One could feel the energy and intensity in this session. The Mass of Sending was celebrated at 2:00 pm as the closing of the convocation.

This gathering was meant to be an opportunity for the bishops to listen to and share with many of the leaders in the Church in order to have a common thrust for the new evangelization in the United States. The final results of this convocation will only be realized in the practical work of the various delegations.

Meanwhile those who attended were certainly touched by the Holy Spirit moving among so many people who are building the Father Kingdom in numerous ways. - *Marcia Vinje*



Six secular institutes were present at the Convocation

I am so very grateful for the invitation to attend this historic and overwhelming event. As it was attended by over 3,000 participants, including 160 bishops, it was a marvelous networking, educational, and inspirational opportunity. Bishop-led and infused with current lay leadership, this 4-day event unpacked Evangelii Gaudium in realistic terms, relating what the current successes and challenges are to evangelize the world with joy. There were many, many breakout sessions that I wanted to attend, but due to an inability to bi-locate, choices had to be made. I selected: 1) Addressing and Understanding the Throwaway Culture, 2) Silent Voices: Reaching Out to the Victims of Violence, Abuse, and Trafficking, and 3) Communicating the Church's Vision of the Human Person and Human Sexuality.

Surrounded by deacons, priests, bishops, and cardinals an atmosphere of joy and holiness abounded. Nationally recognized experts in their respective fields, provided many opportunities to talk one-on-one. For example, I was honored when Lisa Lundren, the resident USCCB expert on human trafficking, met with me for hours until late discussing the plight of the girls with whom I work who have been rescued from sex trafficking. She asked me to send her details of my work done with them thus far so that she could begin a process of providing Catholic initiatives in this specific area. The ripple effects of this convocation will continue to reverberate in our church communities for a long time to come. Yvette Fouchi 7/13/17

A FEW THOUGHTS TO THE CONTENT OF THE CONVOCATION TALKS:

- **There is a major shift affecting Catholicism:** Presently, Hispanics account for 71% of the growth in the Catholic Church. 60 % of US Catholics under 18 are Hispanic. The largest group of Catholic immigrants are Asian. ¼ of Catholics in the US are immigrants. We need resources to teach them and sponsor their youth so they remain in the church.
- **Focus on Family Life** (where the next generation is formed). Need to fight the corrosion of communal life. The presence of the so called cultural wars makes it virtually impossible to take a stand in anything so not to offend (threat to family and community). Rediscover the power of the table: eat and worship together!
- **Secularism** (25% of US citizens are “nones,” i.e. not affiliated with a church); 14% US born Hispanic youth don’t identify with Catholicism. How can we reach out? Of 75 million Catholics in the US 1/3 do not go to church but they did not disappear. What makes Catholic identity enduring?
- **Be aware of methods:** People need to be reminded rather than instructed. Start with personal holiness.

Work as team! It is statistically proven that much energy and a good deal on resources can be saved when people work together. Jesus is our role model! Some ingredients of constructive team work: trust one another; engage in conflict (is productive only when built on trust); commitment; accountability (don’t be afraid to correct; excellence means leading souls heavenwards not avoiding honest confrontation and correction); results. Consecrate all to Mary!

More than 100 volunteers (noticeably from FOCUS) wearing a red T-shirt with white letters ‘Ask me’ were spread out at every entrance, hallway, escalator to direct and accommodate traffic to and from the sessions and meals. All in all, the organization was superb. It will be interesting to see if the U.S. bishops decide the event was valuable enough that it shouldn’t be just “once-in-a-life-time” but perhaps something that happens on a more regular basis.

Danielle Peters

DISCUSSION OF SECULAR INSTITUTE MEMBERS ON THE FINAL DAY OF CONVOCATION

It was a tremendous honor to be able to attend the Convocation of Catholic Leaders in Orlando, Florida. To be in the midst of so many joyful and energetic Catholics was refreshing and invigorating. Members of the USCSI who attended met at the conclusion of the event to share how we can carry this focus of missionary discipleship within the USCSI and each institute.

We shared the opportunities for our secular institutes. We are a vocation uniquely designed for missionary discipleship. We are the vocation for today! We can adapt to the constant and rapid changes in our culture. We are already at the periphery, which was a focus of the convocation. We have stability within our structure.

There are also some challenges. The most notable challenge is the lack of awareness of our vocation as well as an opposition to it by some. The number of members is decreasing across almost all institutes. Distance between members is challenging institutes that initially had members who met face to face on a regular basis. Institute

leaders, whether within their own institutes or the USCSI, are stretched.

While we intend on reviewing notes and taking this all to prayer, we did agree to move forward with two specific tasks. We will develop a common outline for all members to use when educating people about our vocation. This is so we deliver a consistent message regardless of what institute we represent. Institutes are also encouraged to review USCCB literature on missionary discipleship. All plenary sessions and parts of breakout sessions of the convocation were recorded so the information can be shared with everyone.

The Church is mission. We are struggling, but the Church has always struggled. Let us go forth on mission, knowing that the Providence of God, the sacraments instituted by Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit will see us through. Mary, Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us.

Kathy Tierney, DeSales Institute

“Drawing Near”: Being the Fringe in the Fringe – The Call of the Consecrated Secular

When I think of the vocation of a Consecrated Secular, I think it is an invitation to be “*the fringe in the fringe*,” an image inspired by the gospel story of the hemorrhagic woman who longed to touch the clothes of Christ, “*If I but touch his tassel, I shall be cured*,” (Mk 5:28), and the encouragement of the Holy Father to “*go out into the existential peripheries*,” (Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis to All Consecrated People, November 21, 2014). For me, the call to be Consecrated in the World is to live in the world as the “tassel (or fringe) of Christ.”

Though small and hidden, the tassel was in touch with Christ, and in touch with the world, and *through the tassel*, Christ was able to touch and heal the hemorrhagic woman in the existential peripheries (i.e. “the fringe”) of society. Through the “tassel,” the love of God is poured out on the other, in a concrete example of love of neighbor.

Jesus shows us in a very simple, practical way, what it means to “love neighbor” in the parable of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. In the gospel story it says that “Jesus *drew near*, and walked with them.” Jesus approached the disciples with total simplicity, and in total anonymity. Jesus remained hidden, “their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.” (Luke 24:16). He simply drew near, entered into their experience, and walked with them. The gospel goes on to say, that the disciples were “downcast.” (Luke 24:17). It was not enough that Christ drew near to them, he drew near to them in the place of their suffering, in the place of their desolation, in the place of their vulnerability. On the road to Emmaus, Christ shows us how to manifest a Consecrated heart in the world, and how to be a vessel of God’s love and mercy.

The vocation of a Consecrated secular is an invitation to “*draw near*,” and in quiet, hidden simplicity, to choose to join with another in their suffering. To draw near to others requires us to experience in the solitude of our hearts, how God has first drawn near to us. While we are called to minister to others in the existential peripheries, we are first invited to recall how God met us in our existential peripheries: in the places of our darkness, our poverty and emptiness, and to recall how he drew near to us, in order to fill him with himself.

From our own place of emptiness, having been filled with the mercy of God, we are able to be a vessel of

mercy for others by drawing near to them in their own poverty. To be the “fringe in the fringe,” is to be a hidden instrument of God’s mercy and tenderness to all we encounter. When Jesus “drew near,” the apostles later said, “were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way.” (Luke 24:32) They did not know to whom they were speaking. They just knew that the encounter touched their hearts. To be the “*fringe in the fringe*” as a Consecrated secular, is to allow God to use us to touch the hearts of others.

The prophet Isaiah says, “truly with you, God is hidden.” (Isaiah 45:15). The early monastics knew that God was to be found in anonymity. The desire to encounter this “hidden God” led them away from the world, and into the desert to find God in hidden contemplation.

To embrace the call of a Consecrated Secular is to do the same, to retreat from the world, into the cloister of our hearts, and dialogue with the hidden God. In the same spirit of hidden simplicity, we are then fortified by our experience with God, and can be a hidden vessel to bring him in to the peripheries of the world, as the “*fringe in the fringe*.”

-Prachi Shah

My name is Diana Navarro and I am a member of Caritas Christi Secular Institute. I am writing this article to testify to the power of prayer. Trying to balance my part-time work, while taking five graduate classes was very overwhelming during the spring semester of 2017. I was very stressed out and felt that there was not enough time during the day to accomplish everything. During my last two exams, I asked other USCSI members to pray for me. I asked some of my secular institute members and two Schoenstatt Sisters to pray for me during my final exam. One of them, Marcia Vinje had her religious education class pray for me also. To the praise and glory of Jesus Christ, I felt such serenity and knew that God’s hand was present when I took my exams and received all A’s. Therefore, I encourage all of you in USCSI to reach out to one another if you have a need because praying for one another is our mission in life according to **Ephesians 6:18: “With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit. To that end, be watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the holy ones.”**

50! We're 50 years old and 50 years young! On May 23, 1967, the Company of St. Ursula of Canada received official Church approval. USA members will attend the golden anniversary festivities in August in Quebec, the Company's center. We are an affiliated Group of this Company.

<http://companyofstursula.org/who-we-are/albums/company-of-canada-quebec-2015>

Then to Now

Our USA Group is one of several offshoots given life by the Company of Canada. Jacqueline Morin planted the Company in Canada, inspired by the Second Vatican Council's call to return to the sources. In Brescia she transferred to the Company from the Ursulines of Rimouski.



Among the early members joining her were three who had entered Companies in Italy and emigrated to North America with their families.

Another offshoot is the Company of Toronto, which became autonomous in 2014.



A third is the Group of the Philippines, now affiliated with Toronto.



Thanks Be To God! Alleluia! Immeasurable are the graces shared by these women consecrated to Christ. For fifty years we have been supporting each other in this vocation. For fifty years we have sought to be instruments of God's love and goodness in the world.

Take time to CHECK THIS OUT:

Global Sisters Report is running an online Q&A about secular institutes, with particular attention to the Company of St. Ursula:

<http://globalsistersreport.org/.../q-mary-cabrini-durkin-carr...>

www.companyofstursula.org

<http://www.Facebook.com/CompanyofStUrsula>

The Company of St. Ursula Establishes an Asia-Pacific Group

A new Asia-Pacific Group was recently constituted by the Council of the Federation of Companies of St. Ursula, Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici, meeting in Brescia, Italy. An Australian and a Singaporean had previously been affiliated with the Company of France. With the consecration of two Thai women in April, the new Group (see below) has its own regional identity and seeks to join the Asian Conference of Secular Institutes. Its hope is to grow into an autonomous Company within the Federation.

St. Angela founded the Company of St. Ursula in 1535. The Group of the United States is a member of USCSI and is represented on the Federation Council by Mary-Cabrini Durkin.



At right, the new Group climbed together to the Castello overlooking Brescia.

