



United States Conference of Secular Institutes

# *The Mountaineer*

## President's Message

Dear Friends,

The year is half over and if you are like me, it feels like I have not accomplished much. I haven't put many miles on my car, I haven't attended meetings, I haven't seen my friends... Oh, how wrong is that interpretation. There have been four months to grow in holiness, to practice patience, to put my trust in God into action.

Our priorities have changed over the months and many of us have done a lot of soul searching as to just what is essential in our lives. We have found we can live without many things and experiences. Our focus has shifted even more toward the spiritual. Being deprived of sacraments has increased our longing for the Lord and given us a deeper appreciation of our faith, yes, even we who should be experts in this field.

The disruption in our daily life due to the COVID-19 has been mirrored in the dissatisfaction with the status quo. Demonstrations and riots, Supreme Court decisions and political finger-pointing, have brought many troubling realities into the limelight. Even creation is groaning with earthquakes, floods, volcanoes, tornadoes, and hurricanes.

In God's providence, he allows ideals and principles to be attacked in order to wake us up and tell us, just those he points out to be emphasized and strengthened. We think of the attack on family life, on authority, on the essence of the human being as created by God, or on the dignity of the human person.

As members of secular institutes we are responsible to keep God in the picture and to form society according to Christian principles. It seems as if the old world is in flames, but out of the ashes will rise a new culture. This is not just a battle on the human level, but one between the divine and the demonic. We know who will be the victor in the end and that gives us hope and courage.

In this month when we celebrate our freedom, let us turn to the Immaculate Conception, our patroness, and consecrate our nation and its people to her Immaculate Heart. She knows true freedom, she knows the peace that comes from divine order, she knows a mother's love for her suffering children. She loves us and leads us to her Son.

God bless you all,

*Marcia Vinje*

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*Following the charism of each one's institute, these members have offered reflections on being the salt and the light in our world struck with the coronavirus*



**RORY MURPHY  
VOLUNTAS DEI**

*I am the only Catholic priest staff chaplain at the largest trauma centre and the largest heart centre in London (nine million). The first hospital has about 800 beds and the second (also a major cancer centre) has about 400 beds. In my ministry I depend hugely on two volunteers; and the local Deanery priests for on-call support when I am away.*

*As I am sure you are aware: Chaplaincy is a 'balancing act' demanding good self-care, self-awareness, and healthy boundaries. It can be traumatic.*

## **REFLECTION ON HOW I AS A HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN HAVE BEEN COPING AT THE TIME OF THE CORONAVIRUS**

In my humble opinion and experience as a consecrated secular, when one faithfully “works at” being (i) open to God’s life-giving Spirit (Romans 8:11) and (ii) available to God’s people – one will experience many a blessing from a “God of Surprises.” In my ministry as a priest chaplain, along with the experiences of sacrifice and suffering, I have also enjoyed profound blessings (Luke 6:38). The incalculable rewards of witnessing fellow human beings: **entering** my life and space: broken, lost, despairing, and distressed ... **and leaving:** exultant, grateful, redeemed, healed, forgiven, faith-filled, and whole (John 10:10b). This is thanks to many fine people of various disciplines: from the cleaner to the radiologist, the psychologist to the nurse/doctor ... and many more – including the chaplain walking the hallways, greeting one’s neighbour – **and the workings of God!**

*All changed with the virus:* unseen, virulent, and often lethal. ‘Carefree living’ changed through an enforced lock-down: “Stay at home and save lives.” NO visitors to the hospital. Hair net, goggles, mask, face-shield, gel, gloves, gel, splash-resistant gown, more gloves, shoe-protectors, empty pockets, sans oil stock, communion and ritual book. In short, dressed up like a lunar visitor. Name written on the gown front to clearly ID oneself midst other healthcare workers.

*All changed:* An influx of very ill patients, wards hastily upgraded to provide increased ventilator capacity, the creation of a massive temporary hospital for 1,400 patients. Virtual visits were arranged for Covid+patients with *video chats* from the bedside. Ministerially there are sacramental words, Apostolic blessings, spiritual communions, prayers from a distance.

*All changed:* The air is steeped with a sense of fear and anxiety with the enforcement of self-isolating, wearing of masks, shielding of the vulnerable, social distancing from others, aloneness, fear. Then, some final goodbyes: heart-wrenching, isolated, alone, inconsolable grief, copious tears, fear, ... *and ...*

**for the one called to “minister”?:** Here I find myself drawing upon my faithful ‘tool’ of the consecrated secular – the spirituality of “**The Present Moment.**” God IS present with me – may I be “present to God’s presence”.... within me and without me. In a moment of quiet I draw on God’s strength and God’s compassion and love. *Do not fear* (past). For I am with you always (present). Yes, till the end of time (future) (Matthew 28:20).

**And** this is reiterated for me in the Gospel of today – *my present moment:* 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday – Matthew 10:26-31 ... “*Do not be afraid.*” **And** in the words of Pope Francis: “Fear is a not a good counsellor” ... rather: “Be messengers of life in time of death.” The spirituality of Voluntas Dei – **The Present Moment** “speaks” to me, and through me to many others, as the anchor and core of spiritual well-being during this unprecedented time of our lives.



**PAUL TOLVE  
VOLUNTAS  
DEI**

this time of the pandemic has certainly placed us all on a level playing field. Minister and detainee alike realize the fragility of life and it has helped us all take a deeper look in-ward!

The most difficult reality during these pandemic months is the further isolation our detainee population has been experiencing. Their loved ones cannot come to visit them! Not only that but if a loved one died while they are in prison we cannot send them out with the Correction Officers to the wake or funeral as we commonly did. So the grieving is tremendous and this impacts their already stressful life while incarcerated. Much of my ministry in the past few months has been a voice of comfort and presence; and facilitating the grieving process for our detainees who have lost mothers, fathers, children, siblings, nieces, nephews, aunts, and uncles.



**Ministering in a prison setting** brings with it various challenges due to the nature of imprisonment itself. When people come to prison their identity and dignity is immediately affected. As a chaplain one enters that same environment to serve the enormous concerns that each detainee has. The Chaplain is not exempt from experiencing those same concerns and challenges and seeks to find the inner strength from a common humanity to walk with our incarcerated brothers and sisters.

Compounding these situations we cannot gather to celebrate their faith traditions to mourn the death of their loved ones, so the ministry has become very specific and individual to help each one. Prayer and grief counseling is much of what I do now in the prison. **The needs are endless and through the Spirituality of Voluntas Dei I can remain focused on the task at hand.**



That journey with our detainees here at the Westchester County Department of Correction in Valhalla, NY, during



**Mask designed and sewn by Claudette Cyr, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, for her great-niece.**

## ICU—CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC 2020



**DOREEN  
ROWTIE**

**MISSIONARIES OF THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST**

**I am a Critical Care ICU nurse, at a trauma level one hospital in New York City.** Like many other health care workers lately, I could not make my patients well. Sure, that happens often in the ICU. What made these patients vulnerable? They were all infected with COVID-19, and will lose the battle as their ages range from 23-68 years old. I was destroyed by the clinical course in a way that has only happened a few times in my nursing career. It was the presentation! I have not seen that before. It was the complications! I have not seen that too!

**We established six ICUs with over 250 ventilators running at any one time. Our ratio was 4 patients or 3 patients to one nurse, until the travel nurses arrived.** A nurse from Texas came to me after she found out that I was in charge of one of the ICUs and said, "I came here for you. For all the nurses, because I couldn't imagine working the way you guys were working for, how long you were working like that." **We worked six days per week for 14 hours.**

**It was the grief. It was the families.** The grief and death I witnessed, was the grief that I have allowed myself to

recognize since this runaway train got rolling here, in early March. I could sense it. It was lingering in the periphery of my mind. There were a lot of emotions and realities for us nurses and the families of our deceased patients. All our choices to intervene risk our own health and safety. **But this grief! This pandemic grief! It's inconceivable! I spent many hours praying with families as I Facetime, to allow them to say their good-byes.** I heard the cries of parents, siblings, and children for their loved ones as I stood holding the hand of their loved ones, as I commend them into the hands of God and place the sign of the cross on their forehead.

Of the 220 patients who died, none of those under my care died alone. The Rosary accompanied all body bags. These families will suffer and grieve every day for the rest of their lives; most were unable to bury their loved one as they all went to mass burial on Hart Island. What grave will they have to visit on birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays? We cared for our own staff in the ICUs who eventually died. This is the tiniest, devastating snap shot of the ministry of a nurse in the ICU.

Ministering to the sick, the dying and sharing in the emotional grief of families were maintained with prayers, text messages, and emails through the support of my sister missionaries. All health care workers, patients, and families were mentioned in prayers during the weekly rosary that was initiated by our President, Sue Larkin. Rosaries for the deceased patients were made and sent by Angela Stefano. A heartfelt thank you to all our Missionaries in this pandemic crisis.

Simone Weil remarked that "The extraordinary greatness of Christianity is not that it provides us with medicine against suffering, but that it gives perspective to suffering." Christ on the cross alone can give meaning to our suffering at this time.



## God desires our hearts anew during pandemic 2020



**DEBORAH PARISE**  
**MISSIONARIES OF THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST**

### *A time of grace*

The coronavirus did not have as much impact on my person-to-person apostolate, i.e. work, since we worked from home (Graduation Services). My apostolate grew to include intensive prayer for all those suffering, especially those in hospitals with no one to visit in their last hours.

With my sister Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ, electronic connection enabled us to have a short retreat and renewal of vows and definitive incorporation via Zoom. In a way peculiar to God who assists us when we try our best, I found the retreat and renewal of vows to have as much an impact as if I had been there in person. We were sent materials to reflect on, and our Ecclesiastical Assistant Father Dominic Monti, OFM, gave us his retreat reflections, and we had some very good sharing in virtual space.

**As far as spiritually, I felt that I had gone to a health spa where nothing was left out.** Not having a three-hour commute each day did wonders for the shine on my spirit. Most of that time I was able to devote to meditation, spiritual reading, and holy hours. This, it is obvious, came from the Holy Spirit supporting me through these difficulties by drawing me closer to him. I especially was revitalized by grace to pursue again devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which in my busyness fell into disuse. My favorite book, *20 Holy Hours* by Fr. Mateo Crawley Boevey, CSSC, was especially comforting and strengthening.

I can't get over the debt of gratitude I owe to Our Lord for all his graces at this time.



**MARY LOU CARR** *-on right at Scottsdale, Sept 2016*  
**MISSIONARIES OF THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST**

### *This coronavirus has definitely made life a challenge.*

The most difficult part for me was having to watch Mass live streamed from the parish. I missed the Eucharist so much. I couldn't pray the prayer for Spiritual Communion without tears beginning to flow. I am pleased that Mass in person has returned with restrictions. **I have offered my services to disinfect the pews after Sunday Mass.** I have tried to fill in my day with prayer and spiritual reading. I increased my ministry to others by running errands or dropping off lunch to those who were unable to get to the store.

As an institute, SIM began praying the rosary together via Zoom on Wednesday afternoon to put an end to Covid-19 and protect those on the front line. What was suppose to be for a month, was so well-received that the Missionaries asked to continue. Last week, we had our annual retreat via Zoom. It was so wonderful to have almost all our members in attendance including those who because of age or infirmity cannot travel to retreat.



*Evelyn Loyola and Sue Larkin at National Meeting 2016 held at Scottsdale, AZ.*

## HOW HAS ONE BEEN COPING WITH THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC?



### JEAN FRISK SCHOENSTATT SISTERS OF MARY

Some of you may know Jean Frisk from her work in earlier years with the Vocation Committee. She had collected materials for other projects and so there was a stash of good cotton on hand. About 50 members decided to have a couple of days fully devoted to the mask-sewing project. Each step was treated like an assembly line and seven sewing machines were kept busy. **Close to 500 masks fulfilling stringent requirements** went to a hospital, homes for the elderly, homeless shelters, and Catholic Charities.

### ELLEN MARIE BARANEK SCHOENSTATT SISTERS OF MARY

I want to mention some positive experiences for me and my institute sisters. There was a more peaceful atmosphere when each person didn't have to anticipate leaving quickly for the next activity elsewhere. **It has been good to slow-down mentally so that the average working day included more joyful serving and thinking of the other.**

A positive benefit in regard to the apostolate is seeing how new ways could be implemented. It was possible to make better use of the computer and internet; instead of traveling to reach out to people, one used social media to join a group setting and converse this way. It worked well and many could share information and have some social exchange without having to travel to the next town and city. Then there was more time for prayer and to place ourselves more at the Lord's disposal in his presence. Adoration hours increased! We all confidently trust that, when the hour has come, our Lord and his Mother will bring relief to our world through the cure of the coronavirus.

**Tawanna Ortega**, a Schoenstatt associate member, also has a message on masks. She graduated last fall in the New York Police Department and is working in the NYPD School Safety Division in the Bronx.

*A prayer note:* My NYPD School Safety Division lost another agent 5/5/2020 to COVID-19, Kevin Bostic—and his wife died a month before from it. They leave four boys behind!



"I try to approach the many variables of my job with a smile, remembering the Heavenly Mother. Even so now, when we're being asked to do all these jobs that are not-in-line with our daily duties. It has become a struggle, but I just take a deep breath, ask the Blessed Mother for guidance and I get out and encourage as well as educate many people on the importance of wearing masks and keeping safe distances from one another.

It's rewarding to me while handing out masks because **I'll get lots of smiles and waves from young children, and all races are extremely happy and grateful when I greet them with a smile and kindness as I extend a few masks to them. It doesn't matter the skin tone...**

EVERYONE is happy we're there keeping them safe! I strive to keep everyone safe as well as those in their cars, bicycles, mopeds, or skate boards. I reach out to all! At the end of the day, I know the Blessed Mother is pleased with me and my work, helping as many of her children as I can!"

## An Ordination Story

Among all the major events occurring around the world, one happened rather quietly: the crowning moment of a vocation. **Jeff Roedel**, the first Schoenstatt Father to be ordained in the USA in 16 years, became a Roman Catholic Priest on June 6, 2020. When Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI of Milwaukee laid his hands on the Wisconsinite and conferred the Holy Spirit upon him, Jeff's work of many years reached its peak.

Some of Jeff's friends journeyed from afar to accompany him. I and several other members of the Schoenstatt Movement of Austin flew in from Texas, despite the restraints of COVID-19. A few people asked me why I should risk it. Well, when I first started at the University of Texas, Jeff introduced me to the mission of Schoenstatt. Others invited me to the group, but there Jeff was the one who spoke of a crusade of organic thinking, living, and loving. He inspired us to transform our culture. Jeff accompanied me through a formative time as a good shepherd, helping me enter into a true mission for the Lord. So, I wished to support him as he became a father and shepherd of a flock.

When the rite of ordination commenced, Jeff stood up, left our section of the church, approached the altar, and was presented to the community. He made his solemn promises and laid face down on the ground. Here was a true father: he symbolically walked away from the community, lay there in death to himself, ready to pour out his life for God the Father and his bride, the Church. His willingness to offer his life for the Church in this symbolic gesture



moved me greatly. While he lay there, I sang “pray for us” to the saints, and I felt inspired, too, to sacrifice in my own way for Christ. ...

Here was a man who had found his mission, worked for years to form himself and be formed, and now was ready to serve all of us *in persona Christi*. Father Jeff looks forward to serving the student life at the University of Wisconsin—Whitewater.

-By Zachary E. Larson for [schoenstatt.org](http://schoenstatt.org)



## A New Deacon to Serve the Kingdom



**Sebastian Springob**, currently teaching German and Theology at St. Ursula High School, was ordained just before the coronavirus pandemic stopped international travel. The Diaconate Ordination took place in his parish church of St. John the Baptist in Attendorn, Germany, on Friday, March 13, 2020, by Auxiliary Bishop Matthias König, Diocese of Paderborn. Two members of the *Voluntas Dei* Institute were present for the ordination; Fr. Rory Murphy from London, England, and Fr. George Hazler from Troy, MI.



In 2012 Sebastian Springob joined *Voluntas Dei*, making perpetual profession in August 2019. After his deacon ordination in Attendorn, he will complete a diaconal internship in a Catholic parish in New York City from August 2020 to the end of April 2021. In May

2021 he will resume his ministry as a teacher and Catholic school chaplain at St. Ursula until ordination in June 2021.

*Diocesan Interview:* Sebastian says he personally likes the "office" of a deacon. "To be of service" is a central element

of the *Voluntas Dei*. By "to be at the service" the consecrated candidate means less the assistance of the deacon in the liturgy, even if this is an important and honorable task, but rather it emphasizes "to have opened and sharpened the eyes and ears for the concerns of the people around one, to stand by them, to look at them, especially at those who need help."

"Taking time out from school life in Germany to get to know community life in a world metropolis on another continent is a huge adventure, which I am naturally very much looking forward to, but for which I also have a great deal of respect," says Springob in anticipation of his nine-month diaconate internship in a Catholic community in New York City. "I have already had the opportunity to get to know the parish in the USA in recent years. I believe that the really warm and open people will make it very easy for me to get started. It fills me with great gratitude that things have worked out this way and that I was also able to receive a lot of support from the Archdiocese of Paderborn as an employer."

The secular institute *Voluntas Dei* had almost "fallen at his feet," Springob remembers. "For a long time I had been searching for a spiritual anchor in my daily life. The approach of *Voluntas Dei* caught me immediately: it is suitable for everyday life and down-to-earth, but at the same time it is profound and challenging. And so I set out on my journey."

—translated by editor from [www.erzbistum-paderborn.de](http://www.erzbistum-paderborn.de)



## Posting in Facebook—Posting in Facebook—Posting in Facebook

**Realizing that personal contact is the key to our vocation work**, and building on the outreach of a decade of participation at high school, college, and religious education national/international conferences where we educated a live, person-to-person communication, let's stretch to add another vocation outreach for USCSI.

What does it involve? Working together as institutes in the USA on social media in order for us to reach through many, many Facebook users **a target audience of young adults**. Since it is a full-time job and more, the emphasis is not to communicate as such, rather **to post info/ideas/photos/quotes/experiences to bring searching hearts to our USCSI website**. **Being highly visible in social media will give more exposure to our all-too-often unknown vocation of joy.**

**Beginning this September look for twice a month posting as this challenging approach is launched.**

All principal officers have been invited to engage members to write a short message. By August 15, 2020, send a few sentences, a paragraph at most, which point young adults to our way of life. You can form groups to prepare these short contributions, perhaps using quotes from your founder or foundress. These can be short messages of the institute's spirituality and founding work, your vocation mantra or motto, or a funny point of witnessing during the pandemic, and/or many more possibilities. *—Editor*



*May this update from the Acutis Family, published via National Catholic Register/Catholic News Agency, June 14, 2020, encourage us all:*

Venerable Carlo Acutis, an Italian teenager and computer programmer who died in 2006, will be beatified October 10 in Assisi, Italy. Acutis, who died of leukemia at the age of 15, offered his suffering for the pope and for the Church. He was born in London on May 3, 1991 to Italian parents who soon returned to Milan. He was a pious child, attending daily Mass, frequently praying the Rosary, and making weekly confessions.

In May 2019, Acutis' mother, Antonia Salzano, told CNA Newsroom: **"Jesus was the center of his day."** She said that priests and nuns would tell her that they could tell that the Lord had a special plan for her son. "Carlo really had Jesus in his heart, really the pureness ... When you are really pure of heart, you really touch people's hearts," his mother elaborated.

The miracle that paved the way for Acutis' beatification involved the healing of a Brazilian child suffering from a rare congenital anatomic anomaly of the pancreas in 2013. The Medical Council of the Congregation for Saints' Causes gave a positive opinion of the miracle last November, and Pope Francis approved the miracle in February.

**Acutis was exceptionally gifted with computers.** In *Christus vivit*, the apostolic exhortation published after the 2018 Synod of Bishops on young people, Pope Francis offered Acutis as a model of holiness in a digital age. Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino from Assisi said, "Young Carlo distinguished himself with his love for the Eucharist, which defined his highway to heaven." His Archbishop continued: "In these recent months of solitude and distancing, we have been experiencing the most positive aspect of the internet — a communication technology for which Carlo had a special talent." "The love of God can turn a great crisis into a great grace."



## NEWS BRIEFS

☞ Please note that the **USCSI 2020 National Meeting** scheduled in mid-September in the San Francisco area has been cancelled. We are sorry for this, but find it the most prudent thing concerning all that is happening.

☞ Also cancelled from the usual conference style and moved onto a social media digital platform are the FOCUS Leadership for college students (St Louis over New Year 2021) and RECongress for religious educators (Anaheim in mid-February 2021).

☞ Many thanks to the Schoenstatt and Voluntas Dei members working on the **Spanish brochure** for our secular institute vocation. / Have you all requested copies of *Guide to Religious Ministries* “blue book”?

☞ For **Prachi Shah** the Canonical Vows of Consecration (to live Consecrated Life in the World according to the Cistercian charism) with Bishop Earl Boyea on August 15, 2020, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, are postponed at this time due to complications of her work with COVID-19 and the health condition of her mother. Please keep her in your prayers.

☞ Consecrated secularity is like being Jesus’ Uber driver: first we tell him to make our heart his home, so that IN US, he can live and move and have his being... THEN we become his Uber driver and bring him anywhere he wants to go in the secular periphery! –Prachi Shah, 4/4/2020

☞ Pope Francis decided to insert **three new invocations** to the Virgin Mary in the “Litanies of Loreto” dedicated to her: “Mother of Mercy” (*Mater Misericordiae*), “Mother of Hope” (*Mater Spei*), and “Comfort of Migrants” (*Solacium Migrantium*). The first invocation will be inserted after “*Mater Ecclesiae*,” the second after “*Mater Divinae Gratiae*,” and the third after “*Refugium Peccatorum*.” –provided by ZENIT, June 22, 2020, [Anne Kurian](#)

### USCSI Mission Statement:

- The USCSI shares in the mission of Jesus Christ in serving its member institutes by providing education, resources, and support for member institutes.
- The USCSI is an organization of member institutes committed to making known, understood, and appreciated the call to consecrated secularity in the Catholic Church.
- USCSI collaborates with other groups to present consecrated secularity as a viable option in today’s Church.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE USCSI:

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Please share joys & blessings from your institute for our Fall Newsletter: email [jessica@schsrsmay.org](mailto:jessica@schsrsmay.org) by September 8, 2020.



**Mark your calendars in future planning:**

**USCSI NATIONAL MEETING  
SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 24 - 26, 2021  
AT MARYTOWN, ILLINOIS.**

We will keep you posted—We need you there!