



NRVC
National Religious
Vocation Conference

2022 CONVOCAION CALL BEYOND BORDERS

HANDOUT TO ACCOMPANY THE CONVOCAION **ROUNDTABLE CONVERSATION** VIDEO

Call beyond Borders

Roundtable Conversation: Rewind the Future

IN PREPARATION FOR A ROUNDTABLE CONVERSATION at the NRVC's 2022 Convocation, participants reviewed the 1992 first-ever in-depth study of women's and men's religious institutes, *The Future of Religious Orders in the United States*, by Sister Miriam Ukeritis, C.S.J. and Father David Nygren, C.M. This seminal research examined what changes must occur if religious life is to remain a vital gift to the Church in the next millennium. The study called for a radical response to the Gospel and a life more aligned with serving those who are poor and living on the margins.

In addition, they reviewed the 2012 NRVC video of newer entrants from 1993-2008, available on the NRVC YouTube channel (tinyurl.com/2th4yabs), that highlighted the key themes from the 2009 NRVC/CARA *Study of Recent Vocations to Religious Life*. And finally they drew on the NRVC 2020 *Study of Recent Vocations to Religious Life* that captured key characteristics of those who entered religious life from 2003-2018.

The 2022 roundtable conversation brought together six religious to share their insights and lived experiences. Before watching the Convocation video on the NRVC YouTube Channel, it may be helpful to also watch the Moving Forward in Hope videos (tinyurl.com/457fmn49). After watching the Convocation video, reflect on the quotes from the roundtable conversation outlined below to ponder the significance of your own story of call and endless response to go beyond your own borders to move forward in hope.



Scan for
video

What has changed in your outlook on consecrated life?

■ It's exciting to see what people have done since the study was published (in 1992). We summarized our findings saying that to remain vital and effective into the future, religious communities need to be "faithful to (their) founding purpose, responsive to (today's) unmet needs." This broadened the conversation across congregations and, for many, served as a mantra that moved things along. —Sister Miriam Ukeritis, C.S.J.

■ A lot has changed in religious life in the past ten years. In my own community, experiencing a lot of loss, we've decreased in membership, we've downsized, and how we live, is much more suitable and appropriate to our needs. While there's been loss, there's also been a great sense of discernment in a deep sense of who we are and what are we called to. There is ongoing discernment in our lives. My congregation has been freeing up structures that are not possible with the number of members we have. There is an openness to ways of living our charism and spirituality tied into the world around us. —Sister Ana Dura, C.R.

May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith and may you be rooted and grounded in love. Thus, you will be able to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love, and experience this love which surpasses all knowledge, so that you may attain to the fullness of God. Now to him whose power now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine—to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus through all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

—EPHESIANS 3:17-21

(Continued on reverse side)



■ Looking at these past ten years, I see that my formation has continued with a desire in growing deeper in what I had vowed, and I want it to continue to grow deeper. God has given me the courage to say yes to things I didn't necessarily look for. —Sister Angela Gertsema, A.S.C.J.

■ When I reflect on what is different, in the past ten years, especially in the past few years, the words abundance and fragility, really come to mind for me in relation to my experience of religious life. I have found it has also been a time of possibility. I have choices about where I will focus my energy that allows me to be creative, and I'm very grateful for that. A sister who had been retired at the motherhouse for seven years volunteered to come and move with me. She entered into another upheaval to be supportive of me and that has been a graced space of abundance and fragility interwoven together... We have to recognize that we need each other and each other's perspectives. —Sister Sarah Kohles, O.S.F.

What are some key messages that are timeless in consecrated life?

■ What has sustained me? What has continued to stir into flame in this fire of religious life? What has been a key for me? For me, it comes down to relationship. First and foremost, with God, of course in both prayer and spirituality. But also, relationship with others. Perhaps this is my own living into the twofold commandment of love: to love God and neighbor without distinction. Encountering other religious and their respective charisms have been key for me. This key is one of shared passion, one of openness, and one of creativity. —Father Kevin DePrinzio, O.S.A.

■ As vocation directors, we know what it takes to attract new members, which is the easy part, but the challenge for us is to keep and sustain new members in our congregations. All of our congregations have to adapt when new people join. It is important for all of us to listen and to learn from each other. I would say today to any postulant, novice, or temporary professed sister or brother to be bold in your vocation. Persevere in community and know that God is walking with you on this journey. —Deacon Patrick Winbush, O.S.B.

What do you perceive to be the key to move forward in hope?

■ What we need are people who are resilient, who can live with ambiguity, who have imagination. We need as many different perspectives as possible. —Sister Sarah Kohles, O.S.F.

■ It's timeless message. It's not like you can see the future, you have to take one step, and then you'll see the next step. If we live today, it will show us tomorrow. —Sister Ana Dura, C.R.

■ Faith. To move forward, the key to hope is to be men and women of deep, deep faith and knowing that God is walking with us. The image that keeps coming to me is Peter walking on the water. To stay in the present moment, to be open to the next step, and to even imagine that it's not just Peter, it's us together walking on the water. —Sister Angela Gertsema, A.S.C.J.

■ The charism of religious life is bigger than the individual community charism. We know it well, God is the center, and how we live that out through vows, community, Eucharistic spirituality, all are important, because we are committed to this way of life. One of the keys that helps me go forward is really trusting that God is with us. I know it. I feel it, I've experienced it. We don't have to have all the answers. —Sister Miriam Ukeritis, C.S.J.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

What do you see on the horizon for your own vocation and for consecrated life?

What is possible in the next year, and in 10 years, for you and in consecrated life?

What are some of the key messages you heard in the videos?

What are some ways you have been attentive to your own vocation in the past year?

How do you keep the momentum going in living your vows until your last breath?

What's the key to moving forward in hope intergenerationally, interculturally, and intercongregationally?