

NRVC West Coast Meeting Minutes



Date: 10/3/2024

Time: 10:00am

Location: Zoom

Attendees: 14 members

Fr. Radmar Jao, SJ

Irene Benavides (*for DC's*)

Sr. Dulce Aguilar, OP

Elsalaura Gallegos (*for CSJ's*)

Sr. Debbie Gumina, PBVM

Fr. Eric Cruz, SSCC

Sr. Mavis Animah, SJ

Jillian Cooke (*for Father Kolbe Missionaries of the Immaculata*)

Sr. Lisa Laguna, DC

Sr. Jocelyn Quijano, PBVM

Sr. Val Roxburg, SND

Sr. Mary Ellen Johnson, CSC

Sr. Karin Neurnberg, CSJ

Br. Reegan, SDB

Opening Prayer

Fr. Radmar led our opening prayer, invoking the intercession of St. Therese of Lisieux, who famously said "at the heart of every vocation is love".

Sharing of Gratitudes

We went around the zoom introducing ourselves, where we are zooming in from, our congregation, and answering the question: "What are you most grateful for in this work of vocation ministry"

Open Forum

Fr. Radmar opened up the floor for any questions, issues, concerns anyone had regarding vocation ministry. Especially since there were a couple of relatively new vocation ministers present. Three main topics were brought up:

1) How best to promote across genders and congregations?

- Refer individuals to communities that fit their desires. Check diocesan websites and NRVC website (although there are more congregations outside of the NRVC family)
- Get to know the charisms of each group.

- Perhaps we ought to consider creating a quick guide/directory of congregations names, a short description of the charism, and age of acceptance. Focus on West Coast congregations.
- Vetting is crucial! Important to conduct a prescreening before referring individuals to other congregations. If you don't think they are a fit for religious life, don't refer them to anyone else!
- Consider if the individual prefers local or international congregations.
- Personal references are more effective than random referrals.
- For secular institutes, refer individuals to the office for the vicar for religious for the Archdiocese of LA.
- Encourage individuals to speak with their parish pastor or priest and begin at their home parish.
- Provide opportunities to meet other men and women discerning vocations.
- Check if individuals have received the sacraments of initiation.
- Consider age limits in the discernment process.

2) Mental Health Issues

- Keep in mind, religious life as a potential "safe space" for young people, though they may require therapy. Need to balance being a home for them without risking the community.
- Post-COVID has led to increased anxiety and isolation, with a noticeable shift in mental health.
- Importance of reading up on mental health issues and doing personal inner work.
- Clarify your community's stance on mental health conditions (e.g., bipolar, anxiety, depression, social anxiety, etc) and set boundaries on what you can or cannot accept.
- Recommended books:
 - "Emotional Agility"* by Susan David, PhD
 - "The Anxious Generation"* by Jonathan Haidt
- Addictions: What support systems are in place for individuals? Consider therapy and resources like St. Luke Institute for mental health testing.
- Keep in mind CANON 642, which states: *"With vigilant care, superiors are to admit only those who, besides having the required age, health, suitable disposition, and sufficient maturity, are capable of living the life of the institute properly. If it seems necessary, they are to use experts to determine the candidates' suitability, particularly from a psychological point of view."*
 - religious communities need to ensure they are accepting healthy individuals.
- Emphasized the need for education in mental health ministry to avoid jeopardizing the congregation or the church.

3) LGBTQ Issues - what to do if someone self-identifies as homosexual/same-sex attracted?

- Don't immediately discount the person. A good rule of thumb is to offer pastoral support and presume the discernor has a vocation unless proven otherwise.

- Remember, the vows are meant for both homosexual and heterosexual candidates. Both can struggle to live the vow of Chastity, and both need to be assessed on healthy psycho sexual integration.
- A key question to consider is, does the person have a genuine calling from God or not? Remember the “Gamaliel Principle” which suggests that if a movement or action is of human origin, it will fail, but if it is from God, it cannot be stopped, as opposing it would mean fighting against God (Acts 5:33-39)
- be aware of the stages of coming-out - what is their primary identity?
- Is the person living with whatever the issue is in a healthy way? Regardless of sexuality. Will they be able to live in community?

Announcements

- NRVC Convocation - If you haven't already done so, please [REGISTER](#). There are currently about 11 West Coast members registered! Sr. Lisa Laguna will be honored with an Outstanding Recognition Award at the Awards dinner on November 3rd, the start of National Vocation Awareness Week!
- [NCYC in Long Beach](#), (November 14-16, 2024) — if you are interested in attending there may still be [exhibit spaces](#) available. An information exhibit booth is \$800 and includes 4 passes. They expect 2500 teens, parents, and youth ministers.
- nominations for new area coordinator - Fr. Vien Nguyen, SDB is no longer serving with me as Member Area Coordinator because has been reassigned and is no longer serving as the vocation director for his congregation. Please prayerfully consider serving with Fr. Radmar as Member Area Coordinator, especially if you are in the Northern California area. Contact Sr. Debbie (debbiesscm@nrv.net) or Fr. Radmar (UWEVocationDirector@jesuits.org) for more information.

Next Meeting

- We are looking at an in person gathering the week of NCYC (Nov 12 or 13th), or sometime during the first week of Advent.
- Given today's open forum, some potential topics:
 - LGBTQ and vocations - different perspectives
 - Young adults and mental health
- STAY TUNED!

Closing Prayer

Fr. Radmar led the group in a closing prayer. And all logged off by 11:00am