

# National Association of Vocation/ Formation Directors (NAVFD)

April Newsletter 2015



## NAVFD Annual General Meeting

The Board of NAVFD looks forward to your presence at the AGM which will be held by teleconference call on Saturday, May 23 at 11 a.m. Eastern Time Zone. It will be an exciting opportunity to discuss matters that concern you. There will also be a sharing of ideas about what initiatives congregations are undertaking for the Year of Consecrated Life.

Call in at 1-800-7475150, Access Code 5374264.☞

### Teleconference:

Wednesday, May 6, 2015 at 11 am Eastern Time Zone.

Topic: "How are university students developing a culture of vocation and what can we do to support them?"

Presenter: Sr. Sue Kidd, CND

All NAVFD members are encouraged to call in. It is like attending a workshop at our conference but from the comfort of your own home or office. "As one of the initiatives for the Year of Consecrated Life, NAVFD is offering a few teleconference seminars on topics of interest to NAVFD members. We are delighted that Sr. Sue Kidd, CND has agreed to share with us her experience of working with college/university students. There is no charge and all members are invited to participate". Call in at 1-800-747-5150, Access Code 5374264☞

## Consecrated Life at the Heart of the Church: An International Conversation

At the entrance to Paul VI auditorium there is a bronze sculpture of the risen Christ. Christ is standing with arms outstretched. The cocoon that has encased him is broken in half with one part forming an upright backdrop and the other lying on the ground, empty. The remarkable element of the sculpture is the out-

stretched arms of Jesus are missing forearms and hands.

This striking piece of art made me think of what St. Teresa of Avila once said: "He has no hands now but yours." Throughout the Easter season we are reminded of the apostles going out from their hiding

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places to be the hands, feet and heart of Jesus in the world. As formators we are called to journey, accompany, and mentor those in formation so that they can be formed by the Father through the power of the Spirit and become hands, heart and feet of Jesus in



View of the Conference Room

our world. This was the aim of the first International Congress for men and women working in formation.

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life under the direction of His Eminence João Braz Cardinal de Aviz sponsored the Congress for formators in Consecrated Life. The Congress took place in Rome from the April 7-11. This was one of the planned events by the dicastery to celebrate the Year of Consecrated Life.

Attending the Congress were 1300 trainers in Consecrated Life from 106 countries representing over 400 different religious communities, secular institutes and societies of Apostolic Life. At the special audience with Pope Francis, when looking at this crowd of religious he said with a smile: "When I see so many formators in front of me it's difficult to believe there is a vocation crisis."

The Pope was very encouraging in his address, warm and delightful in his off-the-script comments. He reminded us of the importance of patience in the work of formation. Success is not always evident and

few will receive affirmation for their work. Sometimes we will feel like Jesus on the cross crying out: "My God, my God why have you abandoned me?" However, like Jesus we need to be people of faith and conviction that God is with us even in the darkest hours. It is his grace at work in the hearts of those we have entrusted to us.

Pope Francis also spoke of how the apostles were told to go to Galilee where he would meet them. Why Galilee and not Jerusalem? Because Galilee was the place of first encounter, the place where they heard their call, the place where they were formed by his word. We in our turn must go to our inner Galilee to rediscover our encounter with the Risen Lord, to be nourished in our vocation and continually formed by His Word.

As formators we also have to be what we speak. The pope and the speakers throughout the week stressed the importance of witness. As Pope Paul VI said: "Preach the Gospel with your lives, use words only when necessary."



Eucharist in St. Peter's

It was great to be with so many other formators from around the world. As with many congresses it is the personal contacts that are the most enriching. There were plenty of opportunities to exchange views during coffee breaks, meals as well as during

the sessions. We were assigned to one of 140 tables with 8 to 10 participants. We stayed with the same group throughout the week so we had the opportunity to appreciate the challenges and insights each had to offer. Surprising were the greater number of similarities than differences.

Each day began with prayer and closed with prayer. There were usually two major input sessions in the morning and one in the afternoon. After each presentation there was a time of quiet reflection before sharing at the tables.

The talks varied from the very theoretical to the practical. What was emphasized was the importance of looking at formation as a life-long process. Formation of candidates to religious life have already been in formation from birth and will continue to be in formation, one would hope, long after they leave us. Our task is to develop sensitivity to the working of God's grace in their lives – docility and openness to learning.



Ray Douziech author of this article.

There were two speakers who challenged the vocabulary we use in formation. First of all, we are not forming anyone. The word formation implies putting people into a form and expecting them to take the shape of the form we impose. A much better concept is mentoring and the accompaniment of another adult through awareness of themselves, their gifts, their talents. We are called to help those who come to us to reflect and lead them to conversion of heart and mind. In the end the aim is to see if there is a fit of personality for the charism we are witnessing.

One afternoon was devoted to workshops. I was in the English workshop offered by the Justice and Peace Commission. The topic was justice, peace and the integrity of the environment in the formation processes. It was a consciousness awakening for me to hear how this ought to be part of every stage of formation. Justice and peace are not appendices to a program but a vital core element to any formation program.

I am very grateful for having had this wonderful experience of being with such an international group of formators. Like Mary Magdalen we are called to rush from the often dreary tombs of our own making and the sometimes isolation of our endeavours to announce that the Lord has truly risen, there is new life. We leave having been touched like the disciples of Emmaus – our hearts moved by this encounter with the Lord in so many brothers and sisters. “Our love deepened more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.” (Phil 1,9).[✎](#)

## Conference 2016: ‘Live the Word Courageously: New Voices in Vocation Culture’

April 25-28, 2016 at the Clarion Hotel in Winnipeg, Manitoba. A mere one year from now we will be gathering to participate again in our biennial conference where we will learn new things from the presentations as well as the informal contacts with others whose ministry of vocation awareness we share.[✎](#)