

CONSECRATA

A newsletter for member communities, friends, and supporters of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious



Every year the CMSWR sponsors a National Assembly for those in religious life, especially the major superiors of religious communities. This event affords women religious camaraderie with religious of different communities and participation in liturgy and presentations on spirituality, religious life, and topics of importance in the Church. These events can be an occasion for sisters to be reinvigorated in their common calling as religious. Few organizations can offer collaboration for religious regarding their apostolic works and the challenges they face, and CMSWR meets this need. In anticipation of the new translation of the Roman Missal, the National Assembly focused on **Liturgy: A Mystery to be Believed, Celebrated, and Lived**. Here is a lengthy excerpt from the keynote address given by Fr. Michael Keating, **Mystery to be Celebrated**.

While the Church's life has many important aspects, in our time I think that liturgy is of special importance. If we don't learn the liturgy properly, if we don't learn how to live it, how to let it take root in our lives and in the lives of our congregations, then much of what we are experiencing by way of renewal will, I think, be ephemeral. So from a strategic point of view, understanding and praying the liturgy well is one of the important tasks of our time, more so even than in previous times when its place was more instinctively understood. ...

A few years ago the Holy Father, Pope Benedict, paid a visit to France. While he was there he met with a group of "ministers of culture." It was a mixed group; people who were important in education, in the arts, and in politics, in all that goes into cultural life. They met together at the College des Bernardins, a beautiful Cistercian monastery in Paris. He was addressing them concerning the current state of European civilization. The Holy Father is a sophisticated scholar who might speak at the level of anthropology, or sociology, or philosophy. He might have touched on any number of current challenges, political, economic, cultural. But instead of these, he spoke to them about *monks*. He began and ended with comments about monks, and in particular he spoke

about St. Benedict. His point was that it was the monks who built western civilization.

The remarkable thing to see about the monks is that they were not attempting to build western civilization. St. Benedict didn't gather together his monks and say, "Gentlemen, this place is in trouble. We need to build a mighty civilization." What he said was, "Let us leave normal life, let us find empty places and seek God. Let us flee this world in order to win the next." It was, seemingly, the opposite of trying to build a civilization.

St. Benedict ordered the life of the monks according to the liturgy. "Seven times a day I will praise You, O Lord," says the Psalmist. And so we get the liturgical hours. The week, based on the seven day creation, had its own regular rhythm. Every Friday was Good Friday, every Sunday was Easter Sunday, and the seasons, the feast days and the fast days, constructed an order that pervaded the whole of their lives. The liturgy ordered their eating patterns. It ordered their relationships. It ordered their fields. It ordered their animal husbandry. They did this out of a desire to order the whole of life according to the divine rhythms. ...

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**OUR NEXT EVENT :**

Formators' Workshop
for Sisters to discuss issues in religious life and pray communally

March 6-9, 2012

*National Shrine of
Our Lady of the Snows
Belleville, Illinois*

COUNCIL OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS

Dear Friends in Christ,

Deep into the fall season, with its characteristically rich colors and abundant harvests, we also – as a nation – traditionally pause, remember, and give thanks. At a deeper and even wider level, fall signifies the annual entering into and celebrating of the completion of the liturgical year. As we begin November, we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints, commemorate All Souls Day and end November proclaiming with our lives that Christ is our King.



This annual turning of the seasons heightens our awareness of the right order of the universe. Even with the daily commotion that can so easily define our lives, we are aware of the supernatural order that sustains us on a deeper level. We become aware of an unseen Hand which guides us inexorably toward the eternal right order. Isn't it true, that when we know the One who unfailingly guides us, and when we know the goal to which He guides us, we find our peace in His order?

All order, whether it is the harmony of a symphony, the place of each star of a constellation, the peace of right relationships, comes from the One Who holds all creation in Himself – Jesus Christ. Together, you and I – indeed all of creation – are ordered *within* His own Mystical Body, oriented toward the Trinity and toward one another.

Our October National Assembly brought us to the heart of the longing within us for proper order. Our theme was ***Liturgy: a Mystery to be Believed, Celebrated and Lived.*** During the stirring conferences, we were brought to a renewed awareness that it is the Liturgy which orders the whole of our lives – time, place, relationship with others, and relationship with God. Liturgy is not simply one activity among many. No. Liturgy stands in a category all its own. Liturgy is the very source of our life as well as the only summit of our life. It is the liturgy which is the great formative principle of the whole of Christian culture. As consecrated women religious, we



are deeply aware of our call to live this liturgical life most intensely and fully, for the sake of the whole Church.

In late October, Mother Ann Marie, O.P., and I had a profound experience of the order within the Mystical Body. We had the tremendous gift and privilege of being able to personally greet Pope Benedict XVI (*pictured, p. 3*). His words and demeanor conveyed, "I know you. I understand you. I appreciate you. I receive your love. I am happy that you are here with me." When we received the Apostolic Blessing, it was clearly communicated to us that he happily extended this blessing to every member of our Institutes and to our benefactors. Each one of us, united with the Vicar of Christ, cannot be blessed without the other being blessed. We belong to one another in Christ.

Each morning at altars across the United States – and in Rome – there are sisters who join their prayerful intercession for you to the eternal intercession of the Great High Priest. Each evening, as the day's toil is brought to conclusion, again we come to sing our Evening Prayer in Christ. Each time we bring you with us as we stand before the Throne of God.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Mother Regina Marie Gorman, O.C.D.

Mother Regina Marie Gorman, O.C.D.
Chairperson

Which activities of the CMSWR would you like to see featured in Consecrata?



While in Rome for annual meetings with various dicasteries, the new chairperson of the CMSWR, **Mother Regina Marie Gorman, O.C.D.** (right), and former chairperson **Mother Ann Marie Karlovic, O.P.** (middle), greeted **Pope Benedict XVI** at the Vatican.

(cont.) What happened when they weren't looking is that this remarkable ordering principle began to expand beyond their own monastery and convent walls, and became the seed around which what was then a somewhat chaotic society began to gather, such that the whole society began to be ordered to the rhythms of the monastery. This is why St. Benedict is one of Europe's patron saints and is called the "Father of Europe."

Part of the reason for this is the extraordinary ordering power of the liturgy. By the word "order" here, one wants to think not of goose-stepping armies, not a militaristic or a mechanistic order, but rather the order of beauty: the order of a symphony, the order of a feast. It has an inner attractiveness to it, and it orders our inner being as well. So even while they were not attempting it, the religious orders were providing something of great importance for the rest of the society because of the ordering power of the liturgy.

This is an example, written into history, of the phrase of Jesus, "Seek first the kingdom, and all these other things will be added to you." That could be a motto for the monastery. Monks sought first the kingdom. They weren't interested in building civilization, but civilization was "thrown in." ...

If I might conclude with this encouragement to all of the Sisters here: in the midst of your many important tasks, in the midst of your pursuit of a life full of the love of Christ, also do this: make yourselves mistresses of the principles of liturgy; continue the task of fostering it as the seed crystal of your common life; teach the young women who are coming to you, and who will need to understand this for the sake of the mission that God is giving them. They will need more than an unconscious love for their liturgical prayer; they will need to know how to build it and protect it and pass it on to others. They will need to relearn what is getting lost in the wider culture, the instinct for civilization, the importance of this God-given ordering principle for the common life of the Church. I would even say that as our religious congregations go, so will go the Church in our time. No wonder that the battles around religious life have been so fierce; there is much at stake.

In the midst of this, I am very hopeful. If our time has been one of great destruction, it has also been one of remarkable creation. Many new works of God are germinating and coming to flower. And I am sure that God who has begun this good work in us will not fail to bring it to completion. ✠

Thank you to you, our benefactors!

Mass is said for all friends and benefactors of the CMSWR each week in the chapel of the national office. Sisters of the religious communities represented by the CMSWR are grateful for your support, which makes much good possible for women religious in the United States.

Around the national office

About a mile from the CMSWR national office, Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington, DC, dedicated the new Blessed John Paul II Seminary at a Mass on October 22, the first feast day of the recently beatified Pope.

Cardinal Wuerl called the new seminary "a manifestation of the New Evangelization." "We see Blessed John Paul II's legacy continued in the formation of new priests in this archdiocese," he said.

The new seminary was announced in October 2010. It opened for its inaugural semester in August, with room for 30 men. Seminarians for the archdiocese will start their priestly formation through the seminary, while attending classes at The Catholic University of America.

Thank you so much for your support of CMSWR in sending sixty-five sisters to

World Youth Day

in Madrid, Spain

World Youth Days are a source of many graces for young people and for everyone in the areas where they are held. For instance Bishop Anthony Fisher, O.P., the coordinator for the Sydney gathering in 2008, reports that New Zealand has seen the number of vocations double in the year after the event, and that number doubled again in the second year after. Many young people discover their vocations at World Youth Day.

We look forward to sharing the fruits of these events with you!

COUNCIL OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS

IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



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— Quick Takes —

- **Happy 20th anniversary to the CMSWR!** In 2012 we are excited to usher in the Council's 20th year of commitment to promoting religious life. Our focus for the coming year is the religious life and the New Evangelization.
- His Eminence **Justin Cardinal Rigali, CMSWR Episcopal Liaison** has retired from his duties as Archbishop of Philadelphia and is now living in Knoxville. Please remember His Eminence and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in your prayers.
- The **Domus House of Studies in Rome** has eight Sisters presently living and attending classes in Rome. We may pursue another summer program as a time for renewal and refreshment, as well as for Sisters for celebrating jubilee years or sabbaticals. Please let us know if you are interested!
- The **Board of Directors** has accepted their new posts at the National Assembly and went to Rome to meet with the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life, and with the Congregation for Liturgy and Sacraments, the Congregation for Bishops, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. We were encouraged to focus on the formation of sisters, particularly those in basic formation.
- A **Formators' Workshop** will be held March 6-9, 2012, in St. Louis.
- Did you see the updates on our web site during **World Youth Day 2011**? The Sisters on pilgrimage wrote a blog-style journal about the prayerful experience. Take a look, and get ready for the next one two years from now in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil!