

## **“Key Insights, Emerging Directions”**

### **By Sister Teresita Kambeitz, OSU**

When I was invited to serve as a “listener” at the May 2, 2013 meeting of the CRC Administrative Council and major superiors of Western Canada, I wondered what “headset” I might use as an organizing principle for all I would hear throughout the day. Since this is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, I decided to turn to *Perfectae Caritatis* for guidance.

#### **Principles of the Renewal Process**

With the five principles of renewal and adaptation in section two as my framework for listening, I classified the wealth of ideas that came from talks by panelists, Sisters Joyce Harris, SSA, Patricia Derbyshire, SCSL, and Margaret Patricia Brady, OSB, on their experience of transformation in religious life since Vatican II, as well as from reports given by the discussion groups on questions related to current realities and the future of religious life.

My headset was tuned to listen for examples of the two simultaneous processes mandated in *Perfectae Caritatis*, namely, “a continuous return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original inspiration behind a given community and an adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of the times.”

In the following paragraphs, I will present very briefly the key insights and emerging directions I heard throughout the day and will classify them according to the five principles according to which the renewal processes were to go forward: “to follow Christ; to return to the charism of the founders; to participate in the life of the church; to be aware of contemporary human conditions; and to continue our spiritual renewal.”

#### **1. “To Follow Christ”**

**Key Insights:** The following of Christ is our highest rule, especially in continuing his mission of reaching out to the wounded and the poor. We are more knowledgeable and appreciative of scripture.

**Emerging Directions:** We seek to find Christ present in our midst and in our world.

#### **2. “To Return to the Charism of our Founders”**

**Key Insight:** We are honoring the charism of our founders and continuing our community traditions.

**Emerging Directions:** We wish to strike a balance between community and ministry and to become more adaptable. We recognize the need to be astute and capable of handling our financial situations. We commit ourselves to care for our elderly members.

#### **3. “To Participate in the Life of the Church”**

**Key Insight:** We have been participating more fully in the life of the Church; we are more receptive of ecumenism and collaborative ministry.

**Emerging Directions:** We propose to strengthen our mission focus on ecclesial work, to dialogue with clergy and to collaborate with our bishops.

#### **4. “To Be Aware of Contemporary Human Conditions”**

**Key Insights:** We recognize our need for knowledge of social conditions and for engagement in social justice. With apostolic zeal, we are working toward non-violent relationships and critiquing unjust conditions. We are growing in activism such as writing letters to politicians.

**Emerging Directions:** We acknowledge the need to become more inter-cultural. We seek to be prophetic in our diminishment which is a reality which needs to become living and life-giving. We are increasing our knowledge of advances in communication technology. There appears to be a greater awareness of creation spirituality and an upsurge of the gospel of justice and equality. We are recognizing the development of a laity that is growing in their baptismal commitment to participate in the threefold mission of Christ as priest, prophet and servant-leader.

#### **5. “To Continue our Spiritual Renewal”**

**Key Insight:** We are moving from active ministry to a more contemplative way of life.

**Emerging Directions:** We are called to deeper prayer and trust. Our discussion focused on our hopes in Pope Francis’ leadership and our growing in maturity in religious life. In response to the challenges names in *Vita Consecrata* (1996), Articles 88-92, namely, hedonism, materialism and freedom in obedience, we questioned whether religious today are seeking excessive personal comfort, are accumulating more “stuff” and are developing a kind of independence that resembles “doing my own thing.”

An issue that received brief attention had to do with new candidates. Most congregations have few new candidates and those that they have tend to be religiously conservative. They also come with cultural differences and expectations such as desiring visibility by wearing a religious habit. Some are new converts with prayer lives geared toward devotional practices that are not very theologically sound. They desire community living, but the reality is that fewer women religious live in groups today.

Throughout the day I picked up a climate of agreement that religious today are called to grow in trust in God’s plan for the world and to place our hope in the power of the Holy Spirit “blowing” through the church and directing us, as disciples of the Risen Lord, toward building up the Reign of God with confidence and joy.