

RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE



2015
*Annual
Report*



MISSION STATEMENT

The Religious Formation Conference fosters and serves initial and lifelong formation for members of religious congregations of women and men.

OUR CONTEXT & VISION

Impelled by God's prophetic Spirit, rooted in the Gospel, and responsive to the mission of Jesus, we will proclaim the Reign of God by our life and mission.

Informed by our Catholic tradition and attentive to the signs of our times, we move forward grounded in a contemplative stance, the exercise of communal discernment, a growing appreciation of the interdependence of all life, and solidarity with those living in poverty and on the margins.

FROM THE *Executive Director*

As we prepare this Annual Report, Washington, DC is near the end of its magnificent season of spring. It had an early start this year, spurred on by late winter warmth. Once the buds began to open, there was no stopping them! Magnolias led the way, with forsythia, cherries, dogwood, and azaleas following along in overlapping succession. Each morning's commute revealed new colors and beauty.

Spring is a universal sign of hope and new life. It brings us out of our winter hibernating chill and prods us to see with new eyes the magnificence of creation in the most ordinary of places. It has its own time each year and is often marked by starts and stops as winter, spring, and even summer take turns changing places.

A side effect of the blossoms and blooms of spring is a perpetual coating of pollen that clings to our cars, our furniture, and our mucous membranes as well! The substance that is vital to the life cycle of plants is often a disruptive foreign substance for humans.

2015 has been a season of spring and new life for the Religious Formation Conference. It has brought new people and places into our life as an organization. In April Ellen Dauwer, SC was hired as the new Executive Director. Shortly thereafter the Board made the decision to move the National Office to CTU in Chicago. New life in abundance!

Like its earthly counterpart, spring for RFC has also been marked by starts and stops and sprinklings of pollen. In December we bade a fond farewell to Yvonne DeBruin, who served the Conference for seven years as Program Director with much competence and dedication. We continue the search process for a new Program Director at the present time.

We are most grateful to Carol Regan, SUSC who served as Interim Executive Director from September 2014 through December 2015 with much generosity of spirit. This time was marked not by mere maintenance but by promotion of the RFC mission and goals in countless ways. She ably prepared the organization and office for the new direction.

Special thanks, too, to the RFC Board who have ushered in these changes large and small through their dedication and faithfulness to the mission and vision of the Conference. Katherine Kandefer, BVM, is most deserving of our gratitude as well. She brings life and energy to the National Office each day and competently handles the finances of RFC as well as the many other administrative responsibilities, including the details of our move to Chicago.

The year has had its own rhythms of cycles and seasons: webinars, *ForMission*, Orientation to Formation, Life Commitment Program, and the 2015 Congress, entitled "Rejoice! God's Tomorrow Beckons!" How prescient a theme in this time of new life for the Conference, for the Church, and for religious life!

Chicago awaits us. New offices as well as meeting and work space have been constructed according to the needs of our mission. There are opportunities galore for collaboration and cooperation. We look forward to the cross-fertilization that awaits, even its accompanying pollen! Rejoice! God's tomorrow beckons!

Ellen Dauwer, SC

Ellen Dauwer, SC
Executive Director

2015: A Year Abounding in Highlights...

FOR VOWED RELIGIOUS...

as the universal Church celebrated the Year of Consecrated Life;

FOR OUR CHURCH AND NATION...

as both rejoiced in Pope Francis' presence among us;

FOR THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE...

as it celebrated the Year of Consecrated Life with religious around the globe;
welcomed the Pope to this country and even to its very neighborhood in Washington, DC;
saw its mission continue to unfold;
and made significant decisions that will impact the Conference's future.

An Overview of 2015 at RFC

A review of the Conference's life and mission in 2015 appropriately begins by noting two significant decisions made in the past year. At its April meeting, the RFC Board chose Ellen Dauwer, SC, as the Conference's next Executive Director, its 13th since its beginnings as the Sister Formation Conference more than sixty years ago, effective January 1, 2016. At that same meeting, the Board voted to relocate the Conference's national office to Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, IL. The Conference has had a long and rewarding association with CTU, holding its June session of *ForMission* there the past several years. The move to CTU will locate the Conference at a graduate school of theology and ministry with strong roots in religious life; indeed, a certainly synergy has brought many groups committed to the flourishing of religious life to CTU and many houses of formation are located there. Relocating to CTU will offer the Conference many significant possibilities for collaboration.

RFC CONGRESS 2015

The Conference celebrated its nineteenth biennial Congress in Pittsburgh, PA, November 5-7, 2015. Themed to the promise of God's tomorrow, the Congress brought together some two hundred fifty participants, presenters, guests, and exhibitors and was indeed a cause for rejoicing. Keynoters, Daniel Groody, CSC, and Janet Mock, CSJ, reflected on the Congress theme from unique perspectives. Father Groody spoke on the movement of peoples as a sign not only of today's reality but as a hint of God's tomorrow and linked his reflections to the Eucharist, reminder of Jesus' inclusive table-sharing. Sister Janet's presentation centered on the God who "beckons" us forward even through holy darkness, using the symbol of a once hidden river that flowed below the city of Pittsburgh and now bursts forth in a fountain where all the city's rivers meet. Congress seminar presenters, Loughlan Scofield, ST, Julia Prinze, VDMF, David Couturier, OFMCap, and Linda Gibler, OP addressed such topics as the formator as leader, international religious life, what



the earth teaches us about tomorrow, and the religious imagination of the millennial generation. Pre-Congress workshops included an Orientation to Formation, *The Paradox of Formation: Who is Being Formed?* led by Helen Cahill, OP and an *Introduction to Contemplative Dialogue* presented by Steven Wirth and Connie Schoen, OP. At the Conference's closing banquet, the Mary Emil Penet, IHM award was presented to Lynn Levo, CSJ in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the initial and lifelong formation of vowed religious in this country and abroad. In her remarks, Lynn introduced some lively music and the Congress concluded with participants dancing into God's tomorrow!

Congress Photos:

(top row l to r) Before the final banquet; Steve Dillard, SJ at Eucharist; Connie Schoen, OP, and Steve Wirth

(middle row l to r) Congress logo; Congress participants; Attentive listening

(bottom row l to r) Watching the dance; Sue Dunning, CSJ chairing National Meeting



“I have attended many Congresses. This one (was) outstanding. I felt a dramatic interior shift due to presentations, processes and conversations.”

(CONGRESS PARTICIPANT)

RFC'S REGULAR PROGRAM OFFERINGS AND SERVICES



Class of June 2015 with Team

ForMission met twice during 2015, engaging participants in reflection on *Community/Communal Life and Spirituality for Apostolic Religious Life*. One of the Conference's signature programs, *ForMission* is a formation program for religious new to or discerning a call to formation ministry and for leadership personnel who serve as liaisons to their community's formators. It meets twice each year for intense residential sessions; between sessions participants continue their formation through reading, writing reflection papers, engaging in peer supervision, and forming a study group with members of their own congregations, thus widening the program's impact. Increasingly, participants have an international background or experience and/or are working with newer members from international and/or culturally diverse backgrounds.



LCP participants, 2015

Another of the Conference's signature programs, the **Life Commitment Program** welcomed a group of religious preparing for final profession to a weeklong session in July 2015. Focused on

Religious Life as a Prophetic Enterprise in the 21st Century, the week features input on prophetic living, the vows, and community life. Ample time is given for personal and communal reflection and prayer; a free day and a retreat day complete the session. The **Life Commitment Program** is especially valuable for members of smaller congregations who have a small number of religious approaching final vows and for congregations which do not belong to a federation which may offer a similar program.

Now an integral component of RFC programming, **webinars** continue to draw large audiences, usually numbering between 300-400 participants; it is not unusual for an RFC webinar to be streamed live to every continent. In 2015, a Congress year, the Conference offered three webinars: *Prayer in Times of Suffering* (Robin Ryan, CP), *The Hidden Cost of Connectivity: Companionship, Creativity, and Contemplation* (Susan Pontz, SS.C.M.), and *Retirement: An Invitation to Transformation* (Paula Cooney, IHM), the last named in collaboration with the National Religious Retirement Office

SERVICES AND PUBLICATIONS

RFC staff offers consultations, by phone, email, or personally, to member congregations on matters pertaining to initial and lifelong formation. The Conference's website is updated regularly and contains a wealth of information and resources for members. During 2015, a unique user name and password was issued to each member congregation with the request that they be circulated to all that congregation's vowed members; thus all vowed members of RFC member congregations have full access to all materials on the Conference's website.

InFormation, the Conference's quarterly bulletin, regularly features a substantive lead article, occasional briefer essays, a book or film review, notices of events sponsored by the Conference itself and by the different regions.

The Year of Consecrated Life

The Religious Formation Conference marked the Year of Consecrated Life in three distinct ways:

- By offering a series of workshops in celebration of the Year;
- By dedicating a page to the Year on its website;
- By facilitating the participation of an RFC member in the International Meeting of Formators in Rome, Easter Week, 2015.

WORKSHOP SERIES



Michael Downey, Ph.D



Eduardo Fernandez, SJ

Hope: Invitation and Impetus to Transformative Life and Mission

Pope Francis' stated aims for the Year of Consecrated Life included his desire that vowed religious embrace the future with hope; the RFC embraced this desire as the focus of its gatherings in celebration of the Year. Supported by a generous grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, four workshops were held in four different venues, with each presenter reflecting on hope through a different lens. More than 150 religious participated in these gatherings; all the sessions were videotaped and are posted on the RFC website, thus making the entire series available to an extended audience.

Hope: A Choice That Matters featured Lynn Levo, CSJ, in Dubuque, IA;

Hope: The We(e) Virtue found Michael Downey presenting in Weston, MA;

Hope: Revivifying Mission was offered by Eduardo Fernandez, SJ, in Houston, TX;

The Scriptures: Living Source of Hope was presented by Mary Schneiders, OP in Louisville, KY.

THE RFC WORD CLOUD FOR THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

The RFC webpage for the Year highlighted a Word Cloud (featured as the cover of last year's Annual Report) drawn from Pope Francis' evocative words to or about vowed religious. RFC members were invited to offer a reflection on one or more of the words and many did. *Dreamers* prompted Margaret Palliser, OP, to write:

We are called to be dreamers. Where might the quiet voice of the Spirit be whispering to me God's dream for our world? The Spirit is often in the preoccupation, in the question that doesn't go away. Do I have the courage to allow my imagination to pursue the question the Holy Spirit is giving me today?

RFC PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR FOR FORMATORS

As part of its celebration of the Year of Consecrated Life, the Vatican office responsible for consecrated life offered a weeklong seminar for formators from around the world. A generous grant from a major foundation make it possible for one religious from every continent to participate in the seminar and the RFC was asked to nominate one of its members for this grant. Mary Saponara, MSC, a United States citizen long missioned to Mexico and active in formation ministry there, was awarded the grant and participated in the seminar on behalf of the Conference. Mary reported on her experience in Rome to the RFC membership through an article in *InFormation*.

National Board & Committees

THE NATIONAL BOARD OF THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE

Robert Clark, FMS
Elaine Davia, CBS
Steven Dillard, SJ*
Susan Dunning, CSJ*
Mary Glackin, IHM*
Kathleen Goike, IWBS
Joye Gros, OP
Karen Hawkins, SP
Patricia Moriarty, RSM*
James Paradis, OSA
Marilyn Pray, SSJ
Raul Sala, OMI
Noreen Walter, SCL*
Carol Regan, SUSC, *ex officio**

**Executive Committee of the National Board*

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Steven Dillard, SJ
Kathleen Goike, IWBS
Michaela Huelbig*
Christopher Strub Kelly*
James Paradis, OSA
Carol Regan, SUSC
John Williams*
Katherine Kandefer, BVM, *staff to Committee*

**Investment Sub-Committee*



Back row, left to right: J. Paradis, P. Moriarty, K. Hawkins, C. Regan, S. Dillard, M. Pray, R. Salas

Front row, left to right: J.Gros, N. Walter, M. Glackin, K. Goike, S. Dunning, E. Davia

Absent: R. Clark

CONGRESS 2015 PLANNING COMMITTEE

Elaine Davia, CBS
Yvonne DeBruin
Joye Gros, OP
Karen Hawkins, SP
Katherine Kandefer, BVM
Carol Regan, SUSC

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Lisa Buscher, RSCJ
Vincent Cushing, ofm
Yvonne DeBruin
Katherine Feely, SND
Rosemary Mangan, RJM
Carol Regan, SUSC
Luisa Saffiotti, Ph.D.
Fintan Sheeran, SS.CC.
Loughlin Sofield, ST

The Membership of the RFC

Collaborating Groups & Organizations

From its beginning in 1954, when a group of intrepid and visionary women religious came together to form the Sister Formation Conference, collaboration has been a hallmark of the Religious Formation Conference. The Conference is proud to carry on and extend this rich heritage.

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE

In 2015, membership in the Conference passed the 200 mark, that is, more than 200 religious congregations either renewed or chose to join the Conference. Some two-thirds of these are congregations of women religious, another third are men's congregations. The diversity of the Conference's member congregations is striking: some number fewer than twenty members, others more than eight hundred; they include monasteries, mixed clerical and lay communities; there are communities that profess vows, take oaths, make promises; congregations are diocesan, pontifical and located in the United States, are international in membership and scope. All RFC congregations, with their range of charisms, are engaged with and through the Conference in the mission of initial and lifelong formation of vowed religious for the transformation of religious life for the sake of mission in and to the world today.

COLLABORATING GROUPS & ORGANIZATIONS

As membership in the Conference grew during 2015, so did the circle of collaborating groups and organizations with which the RFC is privileged to work. We are proud to list them here and thank them for the support and witness they offer us.

The Brothers Think Tank

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)

Communicators for Women Religious (c4wr)

The Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)

The Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR)

Giving Voice (GV)

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)

The Leadership Development Collaborative

National Catholic Sisters Week

The National Conference of Vicars for Religious (NCVR)

The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO)

The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC)

The North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR)

The Religious Brothers Conference (RBC)

The Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI)

The (Sulpician) Institute for Seminary Formators

The Washington Area Formators Network (WAFN)

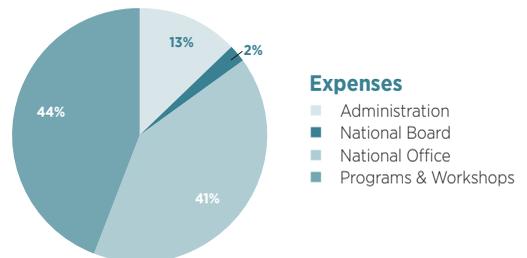
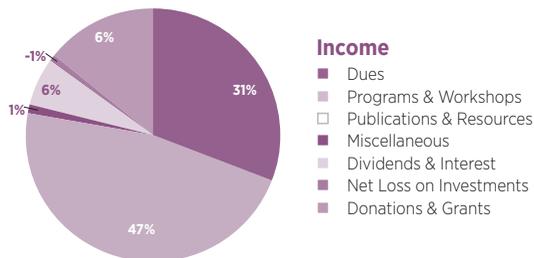
2015 Finances

Income

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Dues | \$202,839 |
| Programs & Workshops | \$303,698 |
| Publications & Resources | \$ 2,465 |
| Miscellaneous | \$ 7,516 |
| Dividends & Interest | \$ 39,730 |
| Net Gains on Investments | -\$ 7,271 |
| Donations & Grants | \$ 89,503 |
| Total Revenue and Gains | \$638,480 |

Expenses

| | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Administration | \$ 74,902 |
| National Board | \$ 10,298 |
| National Office | \$225,906 |
| Programs and Workshops | \$245,404 |
| Total Expenses | \$556,510 |
| Net Revenue | \$ 81,970 |



2015 Contributors

Members of the Conference's Board of Directors, Finance Committee and Investment Sub-Committee, Advisory Council, and other friends and supporters contribute their time, talent, and expertise to furthering the Conference's mission. Many others support the Conference as generous benefactors.

We are proud to acknowledge the financial gifts and grants as well as in-kind contributions offered by our benefactors during the period January 1, 2015-December 31, 2105. If we have omitted a contribution, we apologize for this error and ask that we be notified of it, so that we can rectify our mistake in our next Annual Report.

We are grateful to...

Anonymous Foundation:

Capacity Building Grant

Boston College, Boston, MA*

The Catholic Extension Society,
Chicago, IL*

Christian Brothers Services,
Romeo, IL*

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation,
Agoura Hills, CA

Congregation of Bon Secours,
Mariottsville, MD*

Congregation of Sisters of
the Presentation, St. Johns,
Canada

Congregation of the Sisters of St.
Joseph, Orange, CA*

Congregation of the Incarnate
Word and Blessed Sacrament,
Victoria, TX*

Dominican Sisters of Peace,
Columbus, OH

Doris Klein, CSA

Duquesne University, Pittsburgh,
PA*

Felician Sisters of North America,
Beaver Falls, PA

Franciscan Sisters of Mary,
Bridgeton, MO

Patrick Greaney, Esq.

Guest House, Lake Orion, MI*

Michaela Heulbig

Holy Union Sisters, Milton, MA

Immaculata Retreat House,
Willimantic, CT

LaRoche College, Pittsburgh, PA*

Loras College, Dubuque, IA

Loyola University, Chicago, IL

Marianist Province of the United
States, St. Louis, MO*

Marist Brothers of the Schools,
Bayonne, NJ

Martina Spiritual Center,
Pittsburgh, PA*

National Catholic Sisters Week,
St. Paul, MN*

Oblates of Mary Immaculate,
Washington, DC

Order of St. Augustine, Villanova,
PA

Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ

Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ,
Donaldson, IN

Regis College, Weston, MA

Religious Sisters of Mercy, Mid-
Atlantic Community

Region 3, Religious Formation
Conference*

The Serra Club, Pittsburgh, PA*

Shalom Center, Splendora, TX*

Sisters of Charity, BVM, Dubuque,
IA

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate
Word, Houston, TX

Sisters of Charity, Leavenworth,
KS

Sisters of Providence, Renton,
WA

Sisters of the Presentation, New
Windsor, NY

Sisters of the Sacred Heart of
Mary, Tarrytown, NY

Sisters of St. Joseph of
Carondelet, Albany, NY

Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace,
Englewood Cliffs, NJ

Sisters of St. Joseph, Rochester,
NY

Sisters, Servants of the
Immaculate Heart of Mary,
Immaculata, PA*

Society of the Divine Savior,
Milwaukee, WI

Society of Jesus, Berkeley, CA

**Sponsor/Donor to Congress 2015*

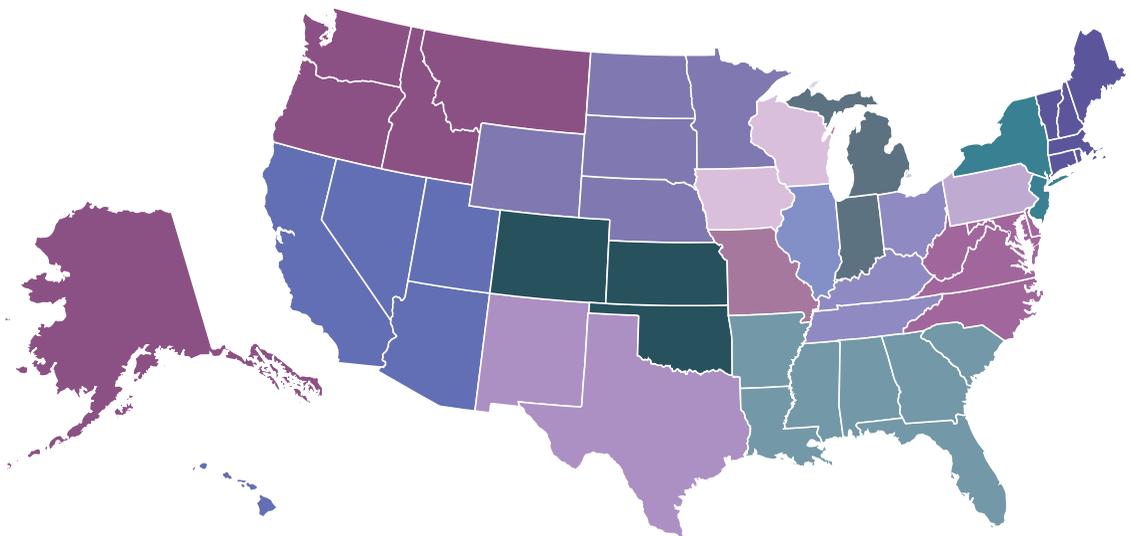
2015 RFC Regions

Mutuality characterizes the relationship between the Religious Formation Conference and its Regions. When Conference events are held in different parts of the country, members of the local region act as hosts and offer valuable on-site material support. The Board and national office staff often approach Regions with requests for nominations, programming suggestions, networking possibilities, and information about local situations and resources. In turn, the national staff of the Conference is pleased to respond to regional requests for presentations and other services whenever possible.

The Regions of the Religious Formation Conference, currently fifteen in number, are determined by the Conference's Board of Directors. Some are geographically vast, even non-contiguous; others quite small and compact. Regions differ from one another demographically as well: some are home

to many RFC member congregations, others are sparsely settled; in some Regions, congregations are receiving new members while in others, congregations have not welcomed newer members for some time.

These realities highlight the fact that the need for services in initial and lifelong formation varies greatly across this country. The regional structure encourages local RFC members to plan activities and events appropriate to local needs; this may include an annual joint RFC-NRVC meeting in a particular area, an inter-community novitiate program, peer supervision groups, events highlighting such lifelong formation issues as embracing retirement from active ministry, deepening communal discernment skills, engaging in theological reflection on local justice and peace issues. The scope of any Region's activities is as broad as its creativity, needs, and resources allow.



■ REGION 1: ME, NH, VT, RI, MA, CT

■ REGION 2: NY, NJ

■ REGION 3: Eastern PA

■ REGION 4: Western PA, MD, DE, VA, WV, DC, NC

■ REGION 5: MS, AL, LA, AR, GA, FL, SC, Puerto Rico

■ REGION 6: OH, KY, TN

■ REGION 7: MI, IN

■ REGION 8: IL

■ REGION 9: WI, IA

■ REGION 10: Eastern MO

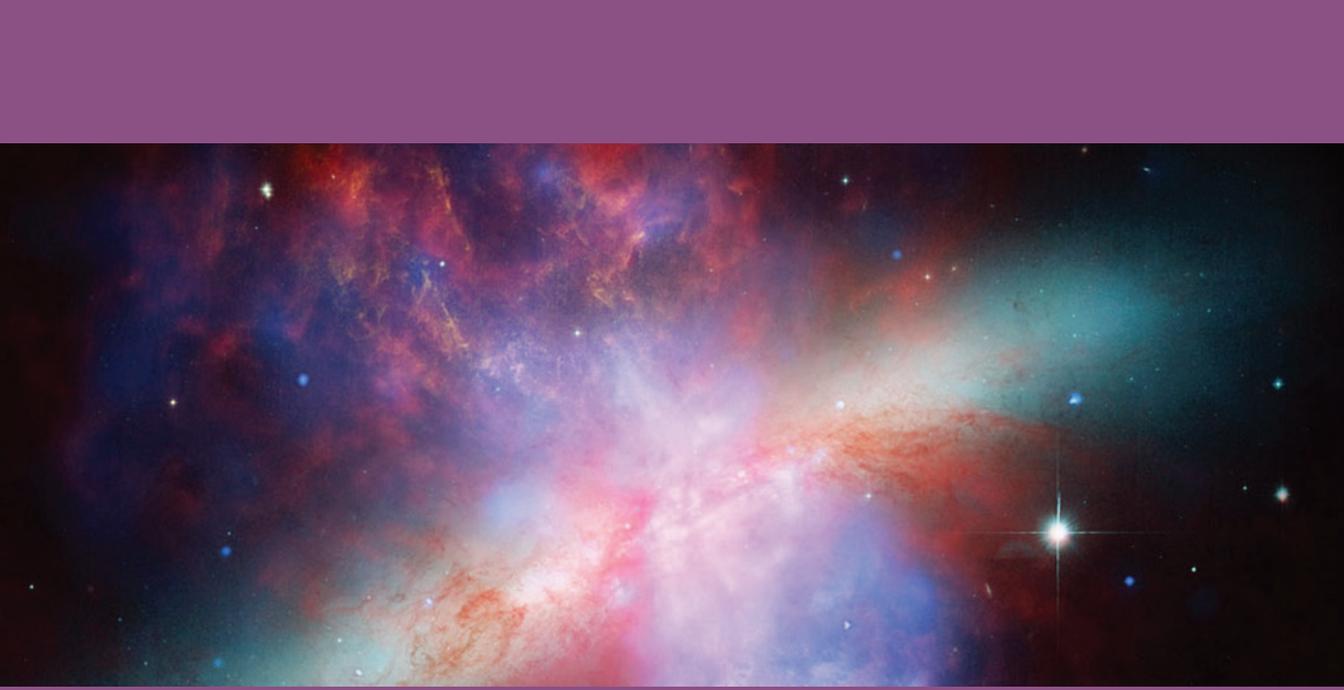
■ REGION 11: NE, ND, SD, MN, WY, Western MO

■ REGION 12: NM, TX

■ REGION 13: CO, KS, OK

■ REGION 14: CA, NV, UT, HI, AZ, Guam

■ REGION 15: WA, OR, ID, MT, AK



Toward Tomorrow...

2016 PROMISES TO BE ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT YEAR FOR THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE.

A series of workshops, **Conversations at the Well**, is planned for the Fall of 2016. Drawing on a daring and profound conversation between Jesus and a woman at an ancient well in Samaria in which both crossed significant boundaries, the series will use the metaphor of “border crossing” to explore the many challenges vowed religious face today in their personal and congregational lives, in mission to our world and beyond.

Sent from the Well: Encounter, Mutual Transformation and Mission

September 9-10, 2016
Chicago, IL
Teresa Maya, CCVI and
Jung Eun Sophia Park, SNJM

Preserving Patrimony on the Journey

September 23-24, 2016
Renton, WA
Helen Marie Burns, RSM

Acting on the Journey of Transformation

November 18-19, 2016
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA
Donald Bisson, FMS

Crossing the Borders of Human Exceptionalism in the Age of *Laudato Si*

December 2-3, 2016
Cincinnati, OH
Daniel Horan, OFM

Through these offerings and its regular programs the Religious Formation Conference will continue to carry forward its mission: to foster and serve the initial and lifelong formation of members of religious congregations.



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