



RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE

## 2017 ANNUAL REPORT





## mission statement

The Religious Formation Conference educates and strengthens formators in their ministry of formation. The RFC engages religious communities with timely resources, services, and experiences that support initial and ongoing formation, that are responsive to an emerging future, in prophetic witness to Gospel values through personal and communal transformation.

## our context and vision

The Religious Formation Conference will engage women and men religious in a variety of vibrant resources, services, and experiences that bring our rich religious heritage into interaction with the contemporary and cultural realities of our world by:

- Promoting open, contemplative and collaborative dialogue;
- Modeling and encouraging inclusivity and respect for diversity;
- Welcoming inter-generational and inter-cultural viewpoints; and
- Responding to God's ongoing invitation to the "new" of religious life.



# from the executive director

## THE GRACE OF ENCOUNTER

If we were to plot out all the nouns that Pope Francis has used over the five years of his papacy, we could hypothesize with a reasonable degree of certitude that “encounter” would be in the top ten. Not only does he talk the talk; he also walks the walk.

Francis invites us “...to work for the culture of encounter, in a simple way, as Jesus did: not just seeing, but looking; not just hearing, but listening; not just passing people by, but stopping with them; not just saying ‘what a shame, poor people!’, but allowing yourself to be moved with compassion; and then to draw near, to touch and to say: ‘Do not weep’ and to give at least a drop of life.” (“For a Culture of Encounter: Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*,” September 13, 2016.)

Encounter, too, has been both a frequently-used word and experience for the Religious Formation Conference over the past year. Not only was it the theme of our biennial Congress, it also describes the welcome that we have experienced in our new home at Catholic Theological Union.

For four grace-filled days in mid-November members and friends of the Conference gathered for Congress in Milwaukee for challenging input, celebratory prayer, and blessed encounters. Formators and leaders from across the country and around the world were able to share hopes and dreams for religious life and also exchange good ideas and best practices. For the RFC national office, Congress was not only the culmination of months of focused work, it also helped to point the way for the many days that have followed.

2017 also marked the first full year for the National Office in Chicago. While the early days were those of welcomes and introductions, the later ones evolved into full integration and deeper collaboration. We now have a seat at the table with the many formators based at CTU and we have found much resonance with our neighboring organizations that also serve religious life. Not only has this led to more committee work, but to creative joint endeavors as well.

In our technologically connected world, encounters extend beyond the geographically proximate to form neighbors around the globe. We often see this reflected in the registrations for RFC webinars and we witnessed it as well in the attendees at Congress. We are called to look as well as see, to listen as well as hear. Our encounters this past year have been grace-filled: mutually giving and receiving the gifts of the other. They have revealed to us the face of divine love in new ways. We are forever grateful.

*Ellen Dauwer, SC*

Ellen Dauwer, SC  
Executive Director





# graced encounters

## AN OVERVIEW OF 2017 AT THE RFC

**The RFC had many graced encounters in 2017.** We are grateful for all the ways God blessed us with gifts of talent, treasure, and time. A few highlights of this past year include:



In January 2017, **Connie Schoen, OP** assumed the position of Program Director. A Dominican Sister of Peace, Sister Connie brought recent work in contemplative dialogue, restorative justice, and conflict resolution with her to the RFC. She has worked diligently to update, plan, and enhance RFC programs that create sacred spaces for all religious to explore transformation for the sake of communal life and mission in the 21st century context of religious life, the church and world.

"Working with so many diverse member communities and program participants this past year as been a true blessing. Religious life is alive with possibility!"



2017 was a year of continuing to get settled in our new office space at **Catholic Theological Union (CTU)**. One of the many benefits of us being in Chicago is sharing a building with several other Catholic non-profit organizations. This has led to increased collaboration and partnerships. We are pleased to work with the following organizations housed at CTU: Center for the Study of Consecrated Life (CSCL), Institute of Religious Formation (IRF), Giving Voice (GV), Communicators for Women Religious (CWR), and National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC). In 2017 we worked together to plan National Catholic Sisters Week and Brothers Day celebrations. We look forward to continued collaborations in the future.

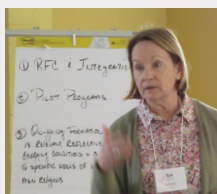






Thanks to a generous grant from the GHR Foundation, the Conference engaged in a **strategic/emergent planning process** throughout 2017.

Led by a creative Steering Committee and a skilled facilitator, the process kicked off with a planning retreat in Tucson, AZ in February that included the Steering Committee, RFC Board and Staff. The group sought input from members, discerned future directions of the Conference and identified goals for the next four years. Thanks to the work of many, the RFC Board affirmed a revised strategic plan for 2017-2020.



A significant moment for the RFC was launching an **official Facebook page** in 2017. We have grown our page to



almost 500 likes! This social media presence allows us to share the good news of the RFC with friends on a more regular and timely basis. From inspirational reflections to Catholic news to updates from the RFC, our Facebook page is a dynamic witness to our Catholic faith and organizational mission. If you haven't already, be sure to check it out: [www.facebook.com/relforcon](http://www.facebook.com/relforcon)



Religious**Formation**  
CONFERENCE

In September, RFC unveiled a **new logo** that embodies the organic, emerging movement of the Holy Spirit at work in the Conference, our church, and the world. The fresh, modern look and feel swirls toward the horizon with courageous faith in God's abundant love and vivifying force of hope for the present and future of religious life.



# graced encounters

## 2017 PROGRAM OFFERINGS & SERVICES



### **ForMission**

A theory/content and skills development program for women and men vowed religious who are new to or preparing for formation ministry, in 2017 **ForMission** engaged 28 participants from three distinct cohorts, representing 27 congregations and 7 countries of origin other than the United States. *ForMission* met for two residential sessions, one in January at Mercy Center, Burlingame, CA and the other in May-June at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, IL. The theme in the January session was *Formation for Religious Life* and in May-June was *Mission and Religious Life in the 21st Century*.

Each residential session brought participants into dialogue with presenter-experts in the fields of theology, scripture, culture/interculturality, and spirituality, in addition to a day on skill development and application.



### **Orientation to Formation**

A day long workshop for new formation personnel, for seasoned formators wanting to refresh and update their skills, for leadership persons who serve as liaisons to formators, and for members of formation communities, **Orientation to Formation** was offered at the 2017 Congress. Mary Pat Garvin, RSM, facilitated the gathering of 125 participants in reflection and dialogue on *Mentoring: A Near Occasion of Grace*.



### **Life Commitment Program**

An 8-day experience for religious discerning and/or anticipating the profession of final vows, the **Life Commitment Program** gathered 12 women and men in July 2017 at Marillac Spirituality Center, Leavenworth, KS. Participants engaged with skilled and experienced presenters on topics of the vows – poverty, celibacy, obedience – community and communal life and religious life as a prophetic enterprise in the 21st century. Participants shared their stories, hopes and challenges with peers immersed in an atmosphere of prayer, conversation, silence, and fun.



## Webinars

The Conference offered **five webinars** in 2017, embracing elements of both initial and ongoing formation: *Transformation of Religious Life: Reflections from Younger Members* (February 17), based on the research of Ted Dunn, PhD; *Praying with the Arts* (May 22), an introduction to Visio Divina by Glynis Mary McManamon, RGS and Mark Dean, OMI; *Encounter or Isolation: The Challenge of Pope Francis* (September 25 in Spanish and September 27 in English) by Arturo Chávez, PhD, in collaboration with Mexican American Catholic College (San Antonio, TX); and an Advent feature, *Posados, Parrandas, Pastorelas: Performing Resistant Hope in Troubled Times* (December 13), a reflection on the celebration of life in the midst of struggle by Dr. Carmen Nanko-Fernández.

RFC webinars regularly attract an international audience and are viewed by individuals and groups with registration ordinarily ranging from 100-500. Webinars are archived for future (or repeat) viewing at no charge to RFC members and are available to others for a modest fee.

## Services and Publications

The RFC staff offer **consultations** by phone, email, or in-person to member congregations on matters pertaining to initial and lifelong formation. Additionally, the Conference's **website** is updated regularly with new articles, reflections, webinar recordings and other resources for members.

**InFormation**, RFC's quarterly bulletin, offers members in-depth coverage on important formation topics and practices. The RFC's **Google group** (listserv) gives members opportunities to connect virtually around best practices, resources, and events. Finally, RFC's **NewsBlog** and presence on **Facebook** and **Twitter** offer followers regular and timely updates on Catholic happenings and RFC news.



## Spring Workshops

As a follow-up to its 2016 Fall workshop series, *Conversations at the Well: Crossing Over to Meet the Other and Oneself*, the Conference offered a 2017 Spring series in San Antonio, TX, St. Louis, MO, and Philadelphia, PA on skills for successful border-crossing. Presenters shared practical tools and skills needed to engage and embrace diversity as a growing reality in religious life and the world. The series included: *Crossing the Border from Individual to One: Skills for Communal Discernment* (March 18) by Patricia Kozak, CSJ; *Religious Communal Living as an Intercultural Journey* (May 6) by Pio Estepa, SVD; and *Crossing the Borders of Diversity: Interpersonal Skills and Challenges* (May 13) by Luisa M. Saffiotti, PhD. Attendance ranged from 30-50 participants per session.





## RFC 2017 CONGRESS

The Conference celebrated its twentieth **biennial Congress** in Milwaukee, WI November 16-19, 2017. Congress gathered over three hundred participants, presenters, guests, sponsors and exhibitors who explored the theme *Grace in the Now: The Gospel of Encounter*. In addition to keynote presentations and workshops, attendees enjoyed opportunities for community-building and networking, prayer and liturgy, fun and food.

Keynoters Stephen Bevans, SVD and Teresa Maya, CCVI reflected on the Congress theme by exploring the call to be prophets of encounter and addressing the need for *encuentro* in our time, respectively. Congress seminar presenters Lynn Levo, CSJ; Raymond Dlugos, OSA; Juan Molina, OSST; and Margaret Mayce, OP focused on topics such as human sexuality, community life, social justice, and cultural diversity. Pre-Congress sessions included facilitated workshops by Mary Pat Garvin, RSM (Mentoring) and Daniel P. Horan, OFM (*Laudato Sí* and Lifelong Formation). A new feature in 2017 was a Post-Congress workshop presented by Mary Johnson, SNDdeN and Sandra Schneiders, IHM that reimaged formation for religious life for the future.

At the general meeting at Congress participants had the opportunity to provide input into the emerging strategic plan for the RFC, listened to updates on the Conference including the new dues structure, and offered suggestions for effective communication with members. Additionally, gratitude was expressed to Carol Regan, SUSC for her service to the Conference as Associate Director.

Congress concluded with a banquet in which the Sister Mary Emil Penet award was given to Mary Pat Garvin, RSM in recognition of her outstanding contributions to both initial and lifelong formation.

The 2017 Congress was truly a life-giving experience for all those who participated. Attendees spoke powerfully about how the opening prayer service set a wonderful tone and created a sacred space for members and partners to encounter one another and dialogue about their joys and challenges in formation ministry.







A scenic view of a rocky beach. The foreground is filled with numerous smooth, rounded stones in various colors, including reds, oranges, browns, and greys, scattered across the sand. The stones lead towards a calm, light blue sea that meets a clear, bright blue sky at a distant horizon. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

Member congregations  
are RFC's primary  
collaborators and  
work together toward  
the transformation of  
religious life for the  
sake of mission to the  
world today.



# rfc membership

## Collaborating Groups & Organizations

1954 saw one of the first instances of significant collaboration among religious congregations in the United States when a group of intrepid and visionary women religious came together to form the Sister Formation Conference (SFC). In 1976, the SFC crossed a new threshold to welcome congregations of male religious to Conference membership, thus creating the Religious Formation Conference (RFC). Today the Conference proudly carries forward this rich heritage!

## The Membership of the Religious Formation Conference

The RFC is grateful to the over 200 religious congregations who chose to join or renew the Conference this year. When a congregation, monastery, or a unit of a congregation such as a province or region joins the RFC, all its vowed members belong and enjoy the privileges of RFC membership. Congregations holding membership in the RFC – their leadership, formation personnel, and all their vowed members – are the Conference's primary collaborators and work together toward the transformation of religious life for the sake of mission to the world today.

The RFC is grateful to the religious congregations who either renewed or chose to join the Conference this year.

We are grateful that the many graces of encounter in 2017 widened the RFC's circle of collaborating groups and organizations:

The Brothers Think Tank  
Catholic Theological Union and its Formation Council  
The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)  
The Center for the Study of Consecrated Life (CSCL)  
Communicators for Women Religious (CWR)  
The Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) and its Formation Committee  
The Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR)  
The GHR Foundation  
Giving Voice (GV)  
The Institute of Religious Formation (IRF)  
The J. S. Paluch Company  
The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)  
The Leadership Development Collaborative  
The Mexican American Catholic College (MACC)  
The National Association of Vocation/Formation Directors (NAVFD; Canada)  
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 Religious Brothers Conference (RBC)  
The Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI)  
The USCCB: Office of Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations

# national board & committees

## RFC Board

Elaine Davia, CBS  
Steve Dillard, SJ (Treasurer)  
Mary Glackin, IHM  
Kathleen Goike, IWBS  
Joye Gros, OP (Co-Chairperson)  
Richard Hall, OMI  
Anna Hang-Nga Nguyen, SCC  
James Paradis, OSA  
Marilyn Pray, SSJ  
Elyse Marie Ramirez, OP  
Kathleen Turley, RSM (Co-Chairperson)  
Noreen Walter, SCL (Secretary)  
Mary Walsh, CSJ  
Ellen Dauwer, SC (Ex-officio)

## Finance Committee (Spring and Fall)

Michael Connors  
Steve Dillard, SJ  
Anna Hang-Nga Nguyen, SCC  
James Paradis, OSA  
James Gaffney, FSC  
Leora Linnenkugel, OLVM  
Carol Regan, SUSC  
Mary Walsh, CSJ  
Reneta Webb  
Katherine Kandefer, BVM (Staff to Committee)  
Ellen Dauwer, SC (Ex-officio)



Finance Committee members

## Investment Sub-Committee

Michaela Heulbig  
Christopher Strub Kelly  
John Williams

## Steering Committee for Planning Process

Ellen Dauwer, SC  
Jennifer Gordon, SCL  
Marie McCarthy, SP  
James Paradis, OSA  
Carol Regan, SUSC  
Corrina Thomas, FSPA  
Susan Weber, facilitator

## Governance Committee

Elaine Davia, CBS  
Kathleen Goike, IWBS  
Richard Hall, OMI  
Kathleen Turley, RSM  
Ellen Dauwer, SC (Ex-officio)

## Congress 2017 Planning Committee

Ellen Dauwer, SC  
Karen Hawkins, SP  
Katherine Kandefer, BVM  
James Paradis, OSA  
Marilyn Pray, SSJ  
Connie Schoen, OP  
Elyse Marie Ramirez, OP  
Carol Regan, SUSC

## Mary Emil Penet Award Committee

Mary Glackin, IHM  
Karen Hawkins, SP

# rfc contributors

Significant financial support for the RFC comes from the membership dues paid by our primary collaborators in mission, those religious congregations, provinces, and other units belonging to the Conference. Many of them choose to assist the Conference in other ways as well: through financial donations, membership on the Board, on standing or ad hoc committees, and the provision of in-kind, voluntary service to the Conference. In this they are joined by foundations, vendors, and others who support the mission of the Conference.

## Congregations/Organizations

Adorers of the Blood of Christ  
Catholic Theological Union  
Christian Brothers de la Salle  
Christian Brothers Services  
Claritian Missionaries  
Congregation de Notre Dame -  
Blessed Sacrament Province  
Congregation of Bon Secours  
Congregation of Divine Providence  
Congregation of the Humility  
of Mary  
Congregation of the Incarnate  
Word and Blessed Sacrament  
Congregation of the Sisters of  
St Joseph - Brentwood  
Daughters of Charity - Province  
of St. Louise  
Daylesford Abbey  
Dominican Sisters of Peace  
Dominican Sisters of Springfield  
Edmund Rice Christian Brothers  
Franciscan Sisters of Mary  
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual  
Adoration  
GHR Foundation  
Guest House  
Holy Union Sisters  
J. S. Paluch Company  
LCWR Region 2  
Little Company of Mary Sisters  
Marianist Province of the US  
Marist Society

Marquette University Archives  
Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic  
National Catholic Sisters Week  
National Religious Retirement  
Office  
Oblates of Mary Immaculate  
Order of St. Augustine - Villanova  
Province  
Our Lady of Victory Missionary  
Sisters  
Paulist Fathers  
Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ  
Religious Formation Conference -  
Region 3  
Religious of Jesus and Mary  
Sinsinawa Dominicans Sisters  
Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati  
Sisters of Charity of Halifax  
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth  
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth  
Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth  
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed  
Virgin Mary  
Sisters of Christian Charity  
Sisters of Mercy - West Midwest  
Community  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas -  
Northeast Community  
Sisters of Providence  
Sisters of Providence -  
Renton, WA

Sisters of St. Francis - Dubuque, IA  
Sisters of St. Francis -  
Oldenburg, IN  
Sisters of St. Francis -  
Rochester, MN  
Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi  
Sisters of St. Francis of Sylvania  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester  
Sisters of the Divine Savior  
Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary  
Immaculate  
Sisters of the Humility of Mary  
Sisters of the Precious Blood  
Sisters of the Presentation - NY  
Sisters of the Presentation -  
Dubuque  
Sisters of the Presentation  
of the BVM  
Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary  
Sisters, Servants of the IHM-  
Immaculata  
Society of Jesus (Jesuits)  
The Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart  
Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint  
Joseph

*If we have inadvertently omitted a benefactor, please alert us to this error so that it can be corrected in the next Annual Report.*



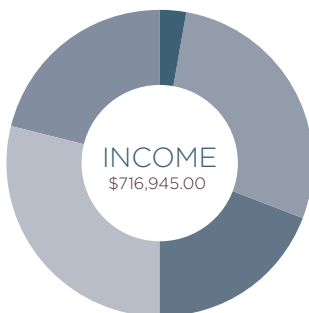
# finances

## 2017 INCOME

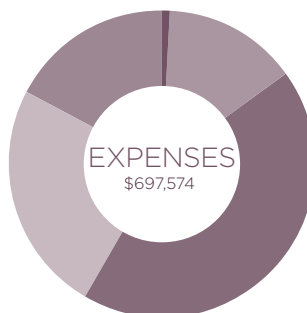
Dues	\$ 199,392
Programs	\$ 133,043
Congress	\$ 208,926
Interest & Investments	\$ 153,308
Development	\$ 22,118
Publications & Resources	\$ 158
<b>Total Revenue and Gains</b>	<b>\$716,945</b>

## 2017 EXPENSES

Administration/National Office	\$ 98,077
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 298,908
Congress	\$ 168,663
Programs	\$ 122,044
Publications & Website	\$ 9,882
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 697,574</b>
<b>Net Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 19,371</b>



- DEVELOPMENT 3%
- DUES 28%
- PROGRAMS 19%
- CONGRESS 29%
- INTEREST & INVESTMENTS 21%



- ADMINISTRATION/NATIONAL OFFICE 1%
- SALARIES & BENEFITS 14%
- CONGRESS 43%
- PROGRAMS 24%
- PUBLICATIONS & WEBSITE 17%







# ReligiousFormation CONFERENCE

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