

Pre-Chapter Meeting Communique **March 25, 2023**

Sister Mary Ellen Tennity began the pre-chapter meeting with reflections on Mary's *fiat* at the moment of the Annunciation. She suggested that a communal and personal reflection on Mary's feast would also provide us with our own opportunity to be an incarnational presence. As she focused on Gabriel's presence at the Annunciation, so vividly portrayed in Henry Ossawa Tanner's painting of the event, she suggested that we asked ourselves, "Does God have a message for us both personally and communally?" Perhaps, she suggested further, these pre-chapter sessions were providing us with a space to hear God's invitation to birth Christ into the world.

After an opening prayer, Sister Catherine Bertrand and Sister Joanne Hanrahan, our Chapter facilitators, provided an *Overview of Process for Leadership Conversation*. Participants were asked to consider an updated list of those sisters who had earlier expressed their willingness for a possible leadership position in the Congregation. The question was raised: "How do we talk to each other about each other?" Sister Catherine and Sister Joanne noted several issues that might prove unsettling to some attendees at the meeting as we began to process names possible for leadership roles. We were reminded to consider these questions:

- What is being asked of us at this time as IHMs?
- What skills and competencies are needed from leadership and membership in response to our current needs and challenges?
- Who among us reflects the ability to undertake these current needs and challenges?

Before those present began to suggest names for leadership at their tables, however, Sister Catherine and Sister Joanne suggested that we consider the following:

- Avoid surprises . . . be certain you have said something to the person beforehand.
- Make sure what you are saying comes from "firsthand" experiences, not hearsay.
- Ask yourself: Is your information current, kind, and accurate?
- Ask yourself: Is the recommendation good for the whole? Are you the one to say it?
- A one-on-one conversation with the recommended person may be helpful and necessary.

These qualities were suggested as necessary for anyone assuming a Congregational leadership role: self-knowledge, openness to the Spirit, good listening skills, a sense of inclusivity, commitment

to servant leadership, a receptiveness to diversity, as well as the health, skills, and competency to be a member of a team.

The following would not be appropriate reasons for recommending an individual: looking out for self-interest, placating someone, rewarding someone for service, protecting someone from disappointment, or providing someone with employment.

Members then began the process for raising up names at their tables. Sisters were asked to suggest names first with no accompanying comments; the process was repeated at each circle several times.

A short break followed this process.

After the short break, members at each table were asked to consider those Sisters whose names they had raised. Each name was considered, and members at the table were free to comment on their chosen names. Those named Sisters who received a majority affirmation at the table were listed on a long sheet of paper. These papers were taken to the front of the hall and eventually taped to the wall. When that process was completed, those present were asked to review all those listed in silence. The Sisters silently walked around the gym, taking in the suggested names.

After the lunch period, members were asked to discuss the questions, which had already been discussed in their local houses.

- • How is my relationship with God evolving: How does this relationship shape my prayer?
- • How does “contemplation as a way of life” foster loving relationships and help us to value more deeply God’s purpose in placing us together in community?
- • What is needed to deepen/develop the skills necessary for forming healthy adult relationships and vital communities?

Following these table conversations, members were asked to formulate how new insights might provide future direction for the Congregation. Each table was asked to formulate no more than three responses to the following: “As a community, we are invited to” Members at random tables were asked to share their insights with the assembly.

Following these conversations, Sister Joseph Marie Carter reminded the members that the next meeting would be held on April 15 and would center on the issues of responsible membership and collaborative ministry. At the meeting in April, a five-year report will be given by the Council. Those present were reminded to look for additional Chapter material that will be disseminated through Constant Contact.

A short meeting was held with the chapter delegates. Sister Sharon Hedrick explained the next step in affirming names for possible election. She reminded delegates that we would be invited to affirm up to ten names after receiving the list of possible candidates. Delegates were encouraged to dialogue with other Congregational members about skills, qualities and gifts. A communication regarding the details of the process was sent to the delegates on March 26, 2023 via Constant Contact.

Sister Mary Ellen Tenuity explained two official reports required for Chapter. She quoted *Faithful Witness #97* which requires two distinct and complete reports to be presented to the General Chapter: one dealing with persons, discipline and works and the other dealing with the complete financial condition of the Congregation. The first will be delivered during the April 15th meeting and the second delivered at a Chapter meeting in the summer. Three delegates, voted upon by the delegation, will review the two reports and give their observations during Chapter.

There were no questions raised by the delegation, so the meeting concluded.

Liturgy followed shortly thereafter in the VMHS chapel.