Dear fellow mountaineers,

It always takes my breath away when I see that title, “Mountaineer.” Who me? Climb a mountain? Way too much energy and trouble, but… there is always the lure of the magnificent view from the summit of the mountain. And that is what drives people to make the effort, to start training, and to entrust oneself to an experienced guide.

In the past few weeks we have all done just that. Pope Francis has become that mountain guide who not only urges us, but pushes us to climb higher. The mountain he is climbing is not one of the glamorous ones, nor dangerous, but certainly one that takes attention, perseverance, constant alertness, and effort. It is the Mountain of Love for the Poorest.

As members of secular institutes we are “out there” coming into contact with the people on the periphery, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Often they find us; or at least in my experience Jesus sends me “characters” periodically that stretch me beyond my comfort zone. Are we willing to take them with us up that Mountain of Love as part of our team? Even if they initially appear as dead weight, sooner or later we see Jesus masked in them, and then we realize, they are leading us.

In Philadelphia Pope Francis encouraged us: “Love consists in this, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us first.” (1 John 4:10) That love gives us the profound certainty that we are sought by God; he waits for us. It is this confidence which makes disciples encourage, support, and nurture the good things happening all around them. God wants all his children to take part in the feast of the Gospel.

In this month of October when we meditate often on the mysteries of the rosary, let us imitate Jesus and Mary in the daily pilgrimage among the poor who are in reality, the most beloved of God. Holy Mary, pray for us, that we see all people with your maternal eyes and love them with the heart of Jesus.

God bless you all. Know that I pray for you daily.

Marcia Vinje, president USCSI
By Kathy Tierney
Professed Member, Secular Institute of St. Francis de Sales
representing the USCSI

For the past 28 years the J.S. Paluch Company has invited leaders of Catholic vocations organizations from all over the United States to gather and discuss vocations awareness. I was honored to represent the USCSI and excited to foster awareness of secular institutes with such a dynamic group. While most of the participants were representing religious and priestly formation organizations, others included pro-family organizations, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the marketing and communications industry, youth and young adult ministry, the Knights of Columbus, lay ecclesial communities, and Catholic education.

Of course every seminar comes with presentations, and this year’s theme was “Keys to Collaboration.” Very Rev. Frank Donio, Director of the Catholic Apostolate Center, was the keynote speaker and spoke on the Seven Keys to Christ-Centered Collaboration. These keys are worth repeating here: Collaboration starts with Christ; it MUST include the dependence on the Holy Spirit; God works within each one of us; don’t try to “sell” your own product or only run with people that are just like you; communication is not a dialogue but a triad (you, me and the Holy Spirit); be compassionate when things don’t go well; accept that others are sent by the Holy Spirit just as you are, and we all have gifts to offer. A comment that was echoed throughout the seminar was that we are not in competition with each other for vocations. If we help each person discover their true calling, we all win. This is holy collaboration.

There were two studies reported on that analyzed the factors that encouraged vocations. While the studies focused on vocations to the priesthood and religious life, I believe they could be applied to any vocation. In short, encouragement from a priest, religious, family or friend was the biggest factor in pursuing a vocation. In short, encouragement from a priest, religious, family or friend was the biggest factor in pursuing a vocation. There is nothing wrong with marketing, but personal invitation is the most powerful motivator. That being said, we eventually learned a little more about communications and events as a way to spread general awareness. There was a panel discussion on major upcoming events that should be included in awareness campaigns. The events discussed were the World Meeting of Families, World Youth Day, and the Jubilee of Mercy. We also learned about a Canadian based company, Salt and Light that educates through its own print magazine, webpage and television network.

Between presentations we had plenty of time to network. This was my time to spring into action! I passed out our “You are called to holiness” business sized magnets to everyone I met, drawing their attention to the USCSI website for more information. I was very pleased to meet people who were genuinely interested in learning about the secular institute vocation. Many admitted that they weren’t really sure what consecrated life was and what vocations are recognized by the Church as such. Given that this is a gathering of vocations leaders, I truly feel we have an urgent need for a “Vocations 101” course throughout the Church, from top to bottom!

Finally, I would like to thank Sandra Clark and Jessica Swedzinski for asking me to attend this wonderful seminar and represent the USCSI. Let us also move forward in holy collaboration in spreading awareness of our vocation with as much joy as we share the Gospel! —Kathy Tierney

Thank You, LORD!
USCSI Mission Statement reads:

The United States Conference of Secular Institutes shares in the mission of Jesus Christ in serving its member institutes by providing education, resources, and support. It is an organization of secular institutes committed to making known, understood, and appreciated the call to consecrated secularity in the Catholic Church. It collaborates with other groups to present consecrated secularity as a viable option in today’s Church.

For sharing our annual report with you, the Executive Committee would like to take a different perspective and highlight the various ways a secular institute member has been working for this Year of Consecrated Life. Her name is Kathleen Tierney, a member of the DeSales Secular Institute, living in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Booth at Indianapolis archdiocesan youth convention.

Speaker (What is Consecrated Life) and participant in vocations day for youth in southern Indiana.

Participant in archdiocesan vocations workshop for parish vocations directors.

Sent a letter to Archbishop Tobin making myself available as a resource for information on Secular Institutes. (which he gratefully acknowledged!)

Interviewed by writer Marge Fenelon for National Catholic Register article on Secular Institutes, to be published soon.

Coordinated promotional design with professional graphic artist for use in archdiocesan weekly newspaper, flyers, posters and our website.

Created a new Facebook page promoting the DeSales Secular Institute.

The DeSales Secular Institute continues to receive inquiries that come through our website.

We are using the new color brochures printed by the USCSI as well as magnets promoting the USCSI website.

We will have a booth at the National Catholic Youth Convention to be held in Indianapolis, November 19-21.

I’m happy to represent the USCSI for the National Vocation Awareness Division J.S. Paluch Seminar in Chicago.

Kathy
Live+Jesus
Friday, September 18, 2015

The 2015 session of the USCSI was opened with a welcome from President Bea Caron with 26 delegates from 11 institutes present. She referred to the “Year of Consecrated Life” with its challenge to wake up the world and embrace the future with hope, and to be witnesses for the world around us. She pointed out the new logo, letterhead, tri-fold and poster for which Fr. George Hazler was responsible. Bea also mentioned that our Treasurer, Evelyn Loyola was not able to be present due to health reasons.

This was followed by Holy Mass with an optional gathering afterwards.

Saturday Morning, September 19, 2015

Our speaker for Saturday morning was Father Mark Wendling S.O.L.T., who spoke on the topic: “The Role of Friendship in Discipleship.” The following are some highpoints from the notes which I took from his talk. He began by emphasizing the role of members of Secular Institutes as they live in the world, not being of the world but for the world, and as such can infiltrate the secular world, and permeate the secular world. There are many needs and challenges in the states, such as a lack of religious values, materialism, and isolation.

He continued by emphasizing the role of friendship which is essential in our work. The icons of the Trinity and the Incarnation have been broken down. The Trinity should be experienced through the family, which is often not there for many. The Incarnation is the image for marriage, which presents a crisis in our time. Friendship is being lost through such things as Facebook since it is so easy to friend and defriend.

Friendship can be seen as an encounter with beauty, the icon of God’s love, and training to give ourselves to others. Friendship makes the Gospel love tangible, relates to truth, and is a safe place to open ourselves. Father Mark then explained that beauty is experienced as friendship and friendship brings beauty, the highest of natural loves. Filial love is the common element in all loves. Filial love is wholly gratuitous, freely given and received. It and friendship come from the same root. Friendship gave value to survival. Agape, or love of God, finds fulfillment in friendship. Jesus called 12 as his friends, and wanted to share his life with them. Friendship is a pre-requisite for discipleship.

Friendship with Christ has a contemplative nature and brings true joy in a relationship with God.

The second part of his talk stressed that friendship is essential in evangelization. Our goal is communion with Christ. This is harder without friendship. It provides a love that is most like the love of God. It finds beauty in the other person which can be a tangible experience of the Divine. A visible icon of this is the smile. Friendship authenticates me as a disciple and makes the person real and approachable. People expect it to be there and it gives strength to the message. Christ said: “They will know you are my disciples by the way you love each other.” It causes us to relate in truth, and discover the goodness and beauty in others. It also creates a safe place for others since I am received as I am. It gives receptivity for Divine life. There is no fear of rejection or injury, so they are open to the message. Love gives life.

Saturday Afternoon

The morning concluded with Holy Mass followed by dinner. The following is based on points from the afternoon talk. Our afternoon guest speaker was Franca Niameh, who is in her third year of temporary incorporation with the Secular Institute of the Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ (SIM) in America. She works in the field of Human Psychology. She shared with us her life history as well as her life in SIM. Theirs is a life of community, though they live alone. They are formed by poverty in Christ. With all their being and desire the members of the Kingship of Christ want to bring Christ to all humanity, to unite with Christ and have others do the same. I must ask how I teach
them the union with Christ. This can include the psychological, spiritual and cultural life.

We must ask the question, “Why does Christ empty himself?” In this he shows us the poverty of spirit. Joy and confidence in God is what will make us stand out. Can we find joy in loss and death? How do we find God in failure? What separates us from the love of Christ? We have a wise man inside of us which is the spirit of life in us. Ours is a life of service to love with Christ.

Late Afternoon

Those who were interested had the opportunity to take a tour of San Antonio. The first stop was the Alamo, where we were able to view the site and visit the gift shop. The second stop was at the Cathedral, which dates back to the early years of the city. Like the Alamo, it is built of local limestone. As one enters, one can see the coffin that contains the ashes of those killed during the siege of the Alamo whose bodies were burned by order of Mexican General Santa Anna. Because Mass was being celebrated, we could only pass quietly through the back of the Cathedral.

After some time at the River Walk, even though it was dark, we went to see the Mission Concepcion, which has not undergone major renovation. We were not able to go inside because of the time, but could see the original outside stonework. It still has 2 Masses on Sundays. Just recently the San Antonio missions were declared World Heritage sites.

Sunday, September 20, 2015

Sunday morning began with Morning Prayer, followed by the business meeting conducted by President Bea Caron. The annual reports were given and accepted where necessary. A major order of business was the election of the new President. Marcia Vinje, Schoenstatt Sister of Mary, was elected as the next President. Various members were thanked for their contributions, especially Bea for her work as President, and Vice President Fr. George Hazler for the liturgy booklet, and the brochures and table-top poster which were made available.

It was announced that next year’s meeting will be September 16 -18 at the Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center in Marriottsville, MD.

USCSI at the World Meeting of Families

Following on the heels of our annual conference in San Antonio, members of USCSI traveled to Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families. We had arranged for USCSI to have an exhibit there in order to share with tens of thousands of people the vocation of secular institutes. The exhibit hall was huge and filled with a fascinating variety of presenters including publishers, movements, schools, religious goods vendors, promotions of saints or people on their way to sainthood. Competition for the attention of people was stiff and our display was modest compared to many.

Yet we were determined to make up for what was lacking by vibrant smiles and warm conviction that we had something unique to offer. We concentrated on informing people about what secular institutes were. The responses were varied – many smiled gratefully and even seemed enthused to hear of an option of consecration in the world. “Jesus’ secret agents in the world” caught the attention of some.

We were also gratified at the many people who stopped to have conversation with us – bishops, priests, vocation directors who are all key people in educating others and helping them discern a possible vocation to a secular institute. A few were truly interested for themselves; some had already viewed the USCSI website and wanted more detailed information. Some were fascinated by the idea and you could fairly see the wheels turning in their heads and the fire igniting in their hearts.

Please, do take any opportunities that present themselves to you to educate others about our vocation. You never know how one small stone cast into still water will widen circles to touch a heart waiting to hear the call of Jesus to become a consecrated secular. - Marcia Vinje
When Bishop James Massa was ordained in July, I had the idea of approaching him to acquaint him personally, so that he could talk to the seminarians about the vocation of Secular Institutes.

On Saturday, October 17, 2015, we had a meeting with Bishop DiMarzio, the bishop of Brooklyn and Queens. We were 15 from six or seven institutes for a special day of Consecrated Life. At this time, I gave half the box received from Jessica to Bishop James Massa, our newly ordained auxiliary bishop. He is the one who organized the inter-religious prayer meeting at ground zero when Pope Francis was in New York. He used to teach in the seminary. Many young priests know him and were helped by him along the path of priesthood. I knew him when he was assigned to campus ministry, where I was a college student.

I asked him to deliver the brochures, the book on Canon Law, and the DVD to the rector of the seminarians. If they need more, they will write to our secretary. I read in the Tablet, the Catholic paper in our diocese, that Bishop Massa was invited to speak to the 92 seminarians. If they all understand consecrated life, including consecrated seculars, then when they become priests, they will be able to spread this vocation.

The other half of the box was given to the director of vocations in the bishop's office. She came and wrote down all our suggestions and difficulties in getting vocations. The last word the bishop said to us is: "Pray."
This is the work of the Holy Spirit. 

Antonia Wong, Don Bosco Volunteers

Now we invite you and your institute to share what you did with the box of USCSI brochures.
We can publish it in the next newsletter. Email: jessica@schsrsmary.org Thank you.

---

Report of the U.S. Conference of Secular Institutes (USCSI)
For the 2015 CCLV November 14th Meeting

During this Year for Consecrated Life, the United States Conference of Secular Institutes (USCSI) printed 40,000 brochures with another 20,000 in a large brochure format. We undertook a bulk mailing. In trying to help everyone find their preferred communication style, we offered a book, a DVD, a website update, and the two versions of printed brochures.

These were sent to 90 Rectors; 170 Vicars for Consecrated Life; 40 principal officers and friends of USCSI. Fifteen priority boxes were sent to interested Diocesan Vocation Directors around the country. We also offered a speakers bureau in order to build awareness of the great gift God presents in the vocation lifestyle of a secular institute member.

Pope Francis’ invitation to “Wake up the World” and to “Embrace the Future with Hope” generated the many requests we received to grant interviews by telephone, by email, or in person. It was a great opportunity to help educate the greater public about our lesser-known path to holiness. It was gratifying to speak with so many members of religious orders and see their interest to our specific calling.

There are also requests for guidance in founding a secular institute. An Oblate Missionary of Mary Immaculate who served as Secretary to the World Conference of Secular Institutes (CMIS) provided pertinent information. Secular Institutes can be an important funnel for the Holy Spirit’s promptings in society today.

Internally we realized a wonderful sense of identity as this Year for Consecrated Life unfolds. Some of the 25 or so secular institutes in the USA (250 internationally) took new courage to schedule meetings with their bishops,
volunteer to be on vocation panels, and take the instant communication plunge to work on websites, blogs, and face book pages. Campus Ministry, Serra Clubs, and retreat centers willingly distribute information about local secular institutes.

Given our “secular character” it was and will always be, very important for us as institute families to not only worry about promotional designs with professional graphic artists for use in archdiocesan weekly newspaper ads and flyers and posters, but to be able to quiet our senses and pray. By looking within and praying to the Lord of the Harvest to send those vocations to secular institutes who can embrace the specific path to holiness we give a true testament for our world. The help of national and diocesan workshops (such as the National Vocation Awareness Division J.S. Paluch Seminar in Chicago) need the supreme example and model of being a prayer warrior or angel, wherever we are called to serve.

Pope Francis gives strong imperatives: “May you always safeguard this attitude, to go beyond things…and not just beyond… but to the very heart of things, where everything is played out: politics, economy, education, the family … there! …Don’t be tempted to think…but what can I do? Remember the Lord spoke to us about the grain of wheat, eh! Your life is like the grain … wherever you are, do everything you can for the Kingdom to come. A simple life, a simple gesture but be yeast, be the grain, which makes [the Kingdom] grow. Thank you so much for what you do in the Church; thank you so much for your prayers and actions. Thank you for the hope and do not forget, eh!: Be revolutionary!” May 10, 2014

Submitted by Jessica Swedzinski, USCSI Secretary

Meditation on the tiny word UP

1. Wake Up!!
   Decide to have a good day.
   "Today is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" Psalms 118:24

2. Dress Up!!
   The best way to dress up is to put on a smile.
   A smile is an inexpensive way to improve your looks.
   "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at outward appearance; but the Lord looks at the heart." I Samuel 16:7

3. “Shut Up!!”
   Say nice things and learn to listen. God gave us two ears and one mouth, so He must have meant for us to do twice as much listening as talking. "He who guards his lips guards his soul." Proverbs 13:3

4. Stand Up!!...
   For what you believe in. Stand for something or you will fall for anything. "Let us not be weary in doing good; for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good." Galatians 6:9-10

5. Look Up !!... To the Lord.
   "I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13

6. Reach Up !! For something higher. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, And He will direct your path." Proverbs 3:5-6

7. Lift Up !!... Your Prayers.
   "Do not worry about anything; Instead PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING." Philippians 4:6
Fr Jim Musumeci gifted this Annual Meeting with a group photo in sunny San Antonio. Sitting left to right: Marlene Holman & Pearline Archer both from Madonna della Strada, Jamaica; Annemarie Wacker, Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, Kenosha, WI; Estelle Nichols, Mission of Our Lady of Bethany, Nottingham, NH; Judy Salcedo, Madonna della Strada, Hackensack, NJ; Claudette Cyr, Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, Watertown, CT. Middle row: Fr Jim Musumeci, Voluntas Dei, Forest Hills, NY; Franca Niaimeh, San Pablo, CA and Sandra Clark, Las Cruces, NM and Matty Miquel, Albuquerque NM are Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ; Beatrice Caron, Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, Saco, ME; Kathy Tierney, St Francis de Sales, Indianapolis, IN; Sue Larkin, Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ, New York, NY; Prachi Shah, Inquiree of Carmelite SI, Ann Arbor, MI; Jessica Swedzinski, Sleepy Eye, MN and Marcia Vinje, Staten Island, NY are Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. Third row: Fr George Hazler, Voluntas Dei, Troy, MI; Danielle Peters, Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, South Bend, IN; Diane Navarro, Tampa, FL and Mary Blake, San Antonio, TX are both from Caritas Christi; Fr Lenny Delgado, Voluntas Dei, Yonkers, NY; Fr Christian Christensen, Schoenstatt Fathers, Austin, TX; James Beers, Lay Missionaries of the Passion, Staten Island, NY; Pauline Mathieu, Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, Brunswick, ME; Heidi Infante, Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, Rockport, TX.

Barbara Inforzato and Helcy Caraballo, Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ, worked the USCSI Booth at the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia with Marcia Vinje and Jessica Swedzinski, Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. FBI security closed the exhibits on Friday.