

NACAR



North American Conference
of Associates and Religious

The Associate

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Message from NACAR

MISSION

The North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR) is a membership organization that acts as a catalyst to serve, empower and promote the associate-religious relationship.

VISION STATEMENT

A vibrant, viable organization that collaborates with regional partners to promote association in all its forms.



As I reflect to write this editor's note, I am taken aback by the myriad of emotions that I have felt over the past two months – fear, gratitude, anger, happiness, disappointment, frustration and love, just to name a few. I have been overwhelmed at times by an onslaught of emotions during this pandemic, feeling many emotions at the same time. When those emotions and thoughts began to feel like a wave crashing over me, I turned to the Holy Spirit over and over.

I began to read *True Devotion to the Holy Spirit* by Luis M. Martinez when the quarantine began and found it bringing me great comfort and peace. Martinez states, "... the Holy Spirit takes our faculties and moves and guides them, so firmly that they do not stray, and at the same time so gently that our activities continue to be vital, spontaneous and free" (p.19). I think of the Holy Spirit as a gentle wind that brings me peace and comfort throughout the day and calms my emotions. I love the thought that the Holy Spirit is so gentle that my actions are still mine but a soft hand is there to guide me.

Another quote by Martinez that continues to bring me peace is: "for the Holy Spirit pours charity into our heart, makes a habitation of our soul, and directs our spiritual life by means of his gifts" (p.9). I enjoy the image of charity being poured into my heart like a river of water and thinking of the Holy Spirit inhabiting my soul.

In this issue we discuss ways associates and communities stay connected during the pandemic. We will continue to explore this theme throughout the year. During this time of uneasiness and change, I hope the Holy Spirit brings you restfulness and peace.

Associate Carla Rush,
Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati,
editor of The Associate



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Finding Understanding Crossing a Threshold

by Associate Carol Braun, Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes

Crossing a threshold calls us to leave familiar things and our comfort zones to be totally present to the people and events that we encounter. It is a sacred time that requires trust in what is emerging. Six associates of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes opened their hearts to recognize the holy in the places and people that they would encounter on a pilgrimage to the border of Arizona and Mexico.

In late October they traveled to Bisbee to visit four Sisters of St. Agnes who are working with immigrants and asylum seekers on the Arizona border. The sisters staff the non-profit organization We Are One Family/Somos La Misma Familia. These sisters each specialize in various services for the border community, such as immigration law assistance, holistic health and spiritual direction. They work for justice and reconciliation, especially with those whose faith life and human dignity are threatened.

The associates crossed the border in Mexico, walked by the tents where asylum seekers await their turn to enter the U.S., listened to the personal story of a refugee, and participated in a prayer walk that honored those who have died on their journey to escape violence and poverty. The group witnessed four orphaned children awaiting entry into the United States at the Migrant Center in Aqua Prieta, Mexico. "The sight of those children frightened and alone, clinging to each other, left a stabbing pain in my heart and is forever seared into my memory," said Associate Pat Belongie.

The associates journeyed to the Tucson Federal Courthouse to observe a "streamlining" deportation procedure where over 100 detainees are shackled with chains on their ankles and



A Sister of St. Agnes reaches out to immigrants and asylum seekers at We Are One Family/Somos La Misma Familia.

wrists to be processed in a court hearing giving each person a twenty-second trial. "The process left us perplexed and uncomfortable... what a dehumanizing process," said Associate Mary Beth Nienhaus.

Their hearts were again filled with hope as they toured St. Elizabeth Health Center, a medical clinic serving low-income communities where a Sister of St. Agnes works as a nurse practitioner. A highlight for the associates was working with 42 just-arrived asylum seekers at Casa Alitas, a Tucson-based respite center.

The pilgrims faced hard questions with no easy answers. Associate Kelly Robe reflected, "Part of social justice work is listening to people. Standing in solidarity with others and being a witness to suffering and injustice allows it to transform us from the inside out."

Each associate on the pilgrimage crossed a threshold into a new understanding of self and the world. Associate Carol Braun stated, "The borders of our hearts have been stretched by this pilgrimage empowering us to take action and to be people of reconciliation and hope."

Preparing for the Future by Preserving the Past

by Associate Ann Gotfryd, Congregation de Notre Dame,
Montreal

It was not my plan to sit for hours shredding paper. However, having time to go through my files has been positive, and, truth be told, shredding has offered a satisfying sense of purpose in this time of COVID-19 isolation.

While I sorted, I found myself revisiting that part of my story related to my associate relationship. The old documents gave witness to my personal journey and to the development of associate life within my congregation. Ruthlessly, I began tossing pages into the “for shredding” box. A select few I saved. Others I put aside to be deposited with my congregation’s archive services. There they will be assessed and, if found to have historical value, preserved.

Archives have a unique value. They are not the same as libraries and have a distinct purpose and organization. While libraries collect and circulate published materials of which there are multiple identical copies, archival records are usually unique and mostly unpublished. Archives provide useful historical evidence usually in the form of primary source documents that demonstrate the function of a person or organization. Such collections help increase a sense of identity and provide important insights and understandings into the culture of the organization.

Associates, and especially associate leaders, may want to think about how they can contribute to the archival records of their institution.

Something that no longer has importance for us could still serve as a valuable witness to a particular event and/or the history of associate life. Since authorship (name of creator), date, location, context, etc. will be vital for future readers, it is important that such detailed identifying information be included whenever material is first created.



Exact directions for inclusion in an organization’s archive collection will vary, as will any specific storage instructions. However, there are general guidelines available about the preparation and housing of material. Associate leaders will want to become aware of these standards. If

possible, leaders may need additional clarification and guidance from their community archivists before sharing with their communities. I found it helpful to create a standardized cover page that contributors could complete.

As we make our way through this moment, isolated but not alone, we know that history will look back to find the story of how we lived it out. Maybe we can include how we used some time to preserve the story of the life we have lived as associates. A story worth telling is a story worth preserving.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT HISTORICAL ARCHIVES

For an example of an archives submission cover page visit the NACAR website

[Archives Information](#)



Staying Connected During the Pandemic

Compiled by associate leaders from various congregations

Building and maintaining relationships remains strong for the Joliet Franciscans as we find unique ways to stay connected. With our retired sisters quarantined in their rooms 24/7, the associates extended a major effort to write letters and make phone calls to help stay connected. One associate mentioned she sent notes to 42 sisters, all in one envelope which then were distributed. Most of the associate regional prayer groups meet over Zoom, and, after awkward technology moments, have found that continuing monthly meetings is cherished.

Associate Nancy Davis,
Joliet Franciscans

Stimulated by NACAR's creative conversations, Chanin Wilson, the director of associates for the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, designed virtual meetings titled "Associate Share." Once a month associates have the opportunity to participate in a Zoom meeting, one in the morning and another in the evening. The topics have been diverse. One month Associate Mary Hirsh, who works in the congregation's assisted living facility, shared the impact receiving Christmas cards has on the sisters, and the associates spoke of the graces they received by sending the cards. In April, participants heard Associate Carla Rush discuss Brene Brown's guideposts to *wholehearted living* and how it relates to their charism. The associates split into Zoom breakout rooms, concluding with large group reports. A third month, associates discussed a video by Sister of St. Joseph Carol Zinn titled "Associates' Vocation." Associates from Alaska, Florida, Ohio, Colorado and England are connecting monthly over shared charism.

Associate Carla Rush,
Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati

Inspired by the Visitation and Pentecost spirituality of Marguerite Bourgeoys, Congregation de Notre Dame (Montreal) Sisters and Associates annually celebrate together on May 31, the Feast of the Visitation. This is also when associates renew their commitment. This year, our feast day was also Pentecost Sunday. Most gathered in local groups for contemplative prayer and online visitation, and, in addition, over 75 sisters and associates from the Canadian and U.S. Provinces embraced the spirit of Pentecost, gathering in the spirit of Marguerite and connecting virtually from across North America. The Zoom service included readings, time for conversation, and sharing.

Associate Ann Gotfryd,
Congregation de Notre Dame, Montreal

In June, Dominican Associates, Grand Rapids, gathered by Zoom to check in with each other and share how they are coping through the State of Michigan's stay-at-home order. Some associates noted that they keep in contact with the sisters by telephone to just chat and find out how they are faring. We are exploring an ongoing associate and sister companion or prayer partner arrangement. In addition, since we have been engaged in the Dominican Charism Initiative series, it has been a gift during this time for our associates and sisters, to deepen their commitment to the Dominican charism, using Zoom to connect. We are planning a larger virtual gathering in the near future.

Associate Lisa Mitchell,
Dominican Sisters, Grand Rapids,
director, Dominican Associate Life

Pandemic Forums

Bay Area (BACAR)

Associate Kathy Noether, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur,
BACAR co-director

Concern and caution have been on everyone's mind as we have faced a strange and surreal change in our lives. The Bay Area Conference of Associates and Religious (BACAR) has stepped up to initiate a forum to air these concerns and look toward strategies to cope with today and tomorrow in the darkness of the coronavirus. As Franciscan Sister Iliia Delio has advised, "Out of chaos, a star is born. Breakdown can be break through if we recognize a new pattern of life struggling to emerge."



After a brief prayer, introduction, and overview of the forum, Zoom participants divided into several breakout rooms for discussion of three questions. Here is a sampling of some of the concerns and thoughts that were expressed.

We worry about many things beginning with family and friends.

- Families are scared and struggling.
- Some people are not taking necessary precautions
- The poor, homeless, and asylum seekers are suffering.

We can still seek spiritual nourishment in God, myself, and others.

- This time can be a spiritual period of grace.
- Education has shown immense creativity.
- Online media has increased the possibilities for spiritual growth.

Participants in a recent BACAR forum share their thoughts and concerns via Zoom.

We have ideas to grow during this time of chaos.

- Use of the media has inspired us.
- Listening and watching online retreats has helped us to cope.
- Sharing ideas through online/streamed conferencing has kept us engaged.

To see more of what we discussed, continue to navigate our website, www.bacar2.org, for the facilitator report summaries of these forums.

Join us next time for BACAR Pandemic Forum on August 5, 2020, at 10 a.m. Pacific time. Mailchimp announces the Zoom link if you are on our mailing list. The forums are free and all are welcome!

If you know someone who would like to be on our mailing list, please contact Elizabeth Avalos, Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at eavalos@comcast.net.

A Pandemic Reflection

Resources to Help

Mary Stanco, Sisters of Humility of Mary, director of Donor Care Leadership Collaborative

Are many of us feeling as though we are in an upper room during this pandemic or more like Zaccheus stuck in a tree trying to figure out what is going on? It is a time like this that I wonder if we remember that the apostles and all who were

While so much is uncertain, new healing routines are ways to inspire hope and a sense of being healthier and to have a strengthened resilience so we can continually adapt to whatever lies ahead. Right now we can do what we can to help ourselves alleviate any anxiety we may be feeling and remain open and healthy in our hearts, minds, bodies and souls.



trying to understand Jesus were afraid, curious, annoyed, doubting, tired and maybe even beside themselves. Some of us may be calm, determined and just trying to do the necessary, safe and right thing to keep family and work life going.

Whatever our reaction, Jesus meets all of us right where we are. No matter how we present ourselves in prayer, it is okay to come as we are and breathe the big sigh if that is all we can muster. It is a pandemic moment in our lives in which we are asked to trust ourselves and each other. There will be a point where we will be coming out of these stay-at-home orders and quarantine.

Here are some resources that have helped people wrap their head and hearts around what they may be experiencing. These resources might help us understand how okay it is to be vulnerable at this time. Through our vulnerability we might find the strength to carry on each day.

The Harvard Business Review, “That Discomfort You’re Feeling Is Grief” by Scott Brinato Brene

Brown’s podcast “Unlocking Us: David Kessler and Brené on Grief and Finding Meaning”

You are welcome to share resources you have found helpful by emailing me at stancohm819@gmail.com.