



Passionist Community Vocation Office

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November 9, 2018



National Religious Vocation Conference Convocation 2018 Walk with me: Encounter, Accompaniment and Invitation

“To set the world ablaze with the fire of God’s love through the prophetic, joyful witness of religious sisters, brothers, and priests as radical disciples of Jesus.”

~NRVC Vision Statement

Dear Passionist Family,

I hope that you are staying warm, enjoying the fall season and that all is going well for you and your families.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the 15th biennial National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) Convocation in Buffalo, New York from the 1-5 of November. The theme this year was, ‘Walk with me: Encounter, Accompaniment and Invitation. As a new member of the Passionist Vocations Team and a new entity to vocation ministry as a whole, attending this event hosted by the NRVC was invigorating. There were incredible pre-convocation workshops, spirited liturgies, insightful keynote speakers, and engaging conversation with some of our Catholic youth at Canisius College.

During this week, we were allowed the opportunity to listen to various speakers from communities around the nation and world. Among them were, Fr Kevin Diprinzio, OSA, Sr Mary Pellegrino, CSJ, Sr Xiomara Méndez Hernández, OP, Dr Hoffsmann Ospino, and Fr Thomas Gaunt, SJ. Each of these people had remarkable insights to share regarding all aspects of vocation ministry and I hope to share some of those with you today.

Fr Kevin DePrinzio, OSA, gave an eye opening presentation titled, *The Vocation Encounter: Ministry at the Beautiful Gate*. Using a passage from Acts, Fr Kevin employed the use of Lectio Divina in which the passage was read four times with different focus points; they were lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio. After reflecting on each of these methods,

Our second speaker, Fr Thomas Gaunt, SJ, gave a presentation on *Pathways to Religious Life*. Fr Thomas followed along on the theme and tone set by Fr Kevin, in a wonderfully eloquent way. One line that resonated with me was that, it is one thing to attract, another to engage. The current reality of the church is that the youth is not being drawn/encouraged to vocations. The present church looks nothing like the church of the past, meaning that our demographics are shifting and we should feel motivated to provide the necessary resources. We must increase visibility and awareness. Enhance collaborative efforts for engaging the culturally diverse young church in discerning and impacting the future of religious life. In terms of generational changes,

we must be willing to change and adapt to a multigenerational community. As far as cultural changes go, we should be willing to accept and be open to different cultures.

Later in the day on Saturday, Dr Hoffsman Ospino, PhD, an associate professor of theology and religious studies at Boston College presented on being *Called to Accompanying God's People in a Time of Paradigm Changes*. Dr. Ospino began by declaring that a combination of multicultural and technological complications are challenging us at present. To address this Dr.Ospino presented statistics to help us locate the issues at hand. He referenced the fact that third world nations have drastically improved their theological and ministerial formation. A large part of that is due to their efforts to build community through social media. Dr.Ospino also referred to the habit of treating people as commodities. We ,as members of vocation ministry, are challenged to see the face of God in every brother and sister. We must accompany one another as one church.

As a wonderful follow-up to Dr. Ospino's talk, Sr Xiomara Méndez Hernández, OP, and Sr Mary Pellegrino, CSJ, came to the stage on Sunday. Sr Xiomara gave a heart touching talk on *The Invitation-Mutual Encounter- Mutual Accompaniment*. She opened up with her own story of joining her religious community and the painful moment when she was asked to assimilate to her majority American community. As a result of that initial experience, she emphasized the importance of being more accepting of other cultures, especially in a time when the majority of the public is foreign born. Sr Xiomara left us with a proposition to change our 'attire' in order to see more success in our vocation efforts.

A. Active Engagement T.Trust T.Transparency I. Inclusivity R.Respect E.Expectation

Sr Mary spoke on *Living No Longer for Ourselves: Communion as Vocation*. During her time, she reflected on the idea of, The Tragic Gap. The Tragic Gap refers to the gap between the hard realities around us and what we *know* is possible — not simply because we wish it were so, but because we've seen it with our own eyes and been exposed to these experiences the past. Sr Mary related this to vocations by raising the question of how to maintain dialogue amidst familial discord and bridge differences? Four things to keep in mind while pondering these ideas are the words: truth,grieve, and hope. We must strive to tell the truth in a society that lives in illusion, to begin acting upon the challenges we face. We should grieve in a society that practices denial.We must express hope in a society that lives in despair. Both women spoke on heavy topics and I hope they offer reflection opportunities for all who read their words,

As a person not overwhelmingly familiar with vocation communities overall, I have to say that having the opportunity to attend the Convocation was an eye opening experience. I left with some questions in mind and I gladly share them with you. How open are we being to new ways of thinking when we are looking for people to commit to our communities? Is there an open dialogue being held regarding modern day political climate and how are we addressing that when reaching out to prospects. Are we using social media when we engage people? If so, what can we do better? The Convocation provided a deeper insight into vocation ministry and I feel a renewed excitement for the expansion of our ministry within the Passionist community. I hope you all feel the same after hearing some of what I was able to take from this event. For those of you that are interested in viewing the youth panel discussion that took place at Canisius College, just follow this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lCvWFNDqToo&feature=youtu.be+> . If anyone has questions at any time, please contact the Vocation Office at 502-451-2330, extension 19, or via email at cruc.vocation.office@gmail.com



Sr Celeste Mokrzycki,SSJ, an attendee of the Convocation, painted this beautiful watercolor during our meditative prayer sessions. In the right hand corner you can see an excerpt from the NRVC vision statement, “To set the world ablaze with the fire of God’s love”. May we all feel compelled to bring this statement to fruition through our dedicated efforts, ideas and willingness to collaborate with communities nationwide and may our prayers be fulfilled.

Sincerely in Christ Crucified,

Monica Santillan
Vocational Coordinator