

Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
Leaven Assembly
July 31, 2018

Sister Amy Willcott

As you all may remember, the importance of community and questions and concerns about how we are living it out were expressed by Leaven groups this year. And related to that were questions about what is it that we are inviting new members to and what might be reasons that women aren't entering and/or staying in community.

Our Constitution says that Community is essential to our life. That our presence to one another, our being a part of each other's lives, hospitality, and our concern for the one human family and our world is what fosters community.

In his book "Religious life in the 21st century" Diarmud O'Murchu says, "Community should never be an end in itself -- or for our own comfort-- rather it is a resource that empowers us for mission."
(O'Murchu)

And, that is what we are about...the mission of Jesus.

Among us, there are many expressions of community and communal living....and those 2 are different.

Community is nourished by shared prayer, meals together, meaningful conversation, deep listening to (and challenging) one another, and quality time spent together.

If those times rarely happen in communal living, we are just living alone together. A number of us do live alone—and some, though living alone are very connected to community – maybe more so than those living under one roof.

The way we live Community ought to empower us for mission.

Is the way we live inviting to women who have a vocation to religious life?

According to a survey in 2016 of National Religious Vocation Conference, the decision of women to enter their religious institute was "very much" influenced by the community life they witnessed, the prayer life they saw/experienced, the lifestyle of the members and the types of ministries.

How open are we to welcoming someone new in our Community? A woman of another race, or culture. Someone who may be 20, 30, or 40 years younger than I am.

How open are we to 'difference' in our community culture? We have our regular ways of praying, celebrating, eating and socializing.

In order to welcome women who are Latino or Vietnamese or Filipino – cultures where family and community are extremely important – we would need to change the way we currently live community, our own community "culture", in order to embrace a candidate and her extended family.

Community life and vocations are very much interconnected. I wonder if we have become too comfortable with how we live community to welcome someone new.

How willing am I to live with someone who is younger and has energy to burn for the sake of the mission of Jesus?

Welcoming a woman of color, a woman from a different culture, an energetic youthful spirit and attitude, will challenge those of us set in our ways. And that experience can bring us new life and a new spirit – if we are willing.

Last year we talked about being at the crossroads. I wonder if we would call this a time of **crisis**. The word crisis entered the English language in 1425 and it was a word related to medicine. Crisis meant “turning point—as in a disease.”

We are at a turning point – a decisive moment. Certainly, there is dis-ease. Uneasiness about many things -- our community life, vocations, the future, and the current state of our world.

“Dis-ease creates a longing for something different, something deeper. It can be the impetus for transformation.”

Question for the whole group:

What is the significance of this turning point as we look deeply at who we are called to be?