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Religious Life: Considering the Future

Celebrating 150 Years in the U.S.A.: Frances Warde, R.S.M.

Marilyn Gouailhardou, R.S.M.

Becoming Partners in the New Institute

Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M.

Enkindling the Embers: The Challenge of Current Research on Religious Life

Janet Ruffing, R.S.M.

Spirituality for Leadership in a Changing Church

Virginia Farnan, R.S.M.

Living in the Information Age

Rosemary Jeffries, R.S.M.

The Lineamenta on Consecrated Life

Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.

Book Review: Edwina Gately's *I Hear a Seed Growing*

Julie Upton, R.S.M.

Enkindling the Embers: The Challenge of Current Research on Religious Life

Janet Ruffing, RSM

*Presentation to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious on August 17, 1993.
We thank the LCWR for giving us permission to reprint it here.*

As I thought about this presentation, an image of transformation, the living flame of love¹ came to mind. Out of the embers, a dying fire bursts again into flames. This image captures our experience of the divine energy when it suffuses our spiritual center from within, enkindling and igniting our passion, energy, mission, and zeal. It is the compassion that rises in our hearts; our indignation in the face of injustice. It is the fiery spirit for which we pray in the *Veni Creator*,—God's gift, a living fountain, love, and spiritual ointment. It is the same spirit whom the mystic, Hildegard, invokes when she prays: "Fiery Spirit, fount of courage, life within life of all that has being."² This is, of course, Pentecostal imagery, tongues of fire making prophets and evangelizers of paralyzed disciples, who much to their surprise made bold proclamations as the Spirit prompted. It is the same fire Jesus brought to earth, longing for its enkindling.

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subjectively as energy,
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The current research on religious life employs images of confusion and chaos, of diminishment and decline, of lack of focus, of invisibility. Others have written of walking where there is no path or of seeing in the dark. Yet I remain convinced that whatever religious life will be in the coming millennium, it will rise up again from the dying embers of the present moment. Despite the enormous challenges religious life as an institution faces in the next ten years, there are new experiences of God and fresh passion for ministry which continue to burst into flame within and among us. That is what energizes you in leadership and your sisters in their ministry.

We experience this living flame subjectively as energy, enthusiasm, and wholeness in the midst of difficult and demanding ministries. We experience it as connection to our founding charisms, reclaimed with fresh purpose, in the lives of a significant number of our members. Yes, the dying and dysfunction is all around us, but so too is an enkindling in many individ-

ual apostolic religious women.

The research I drew on for these reflections includes: The LCWR Ministry Survey,³ the Executive Summary and Survey Instrument of the Nygren/Ukeritis Study,⁴ "The Brookland Commission Papers," a smaller study of 1,000 women religious presented at a conference in October of 1992,⁵ and a review by Grindel and Peters of ten research projects on religious life funded by the Lilly Endowment.⁶

The Context

The Executive Summary of the Nygren/Ukeritis Study which shall be referred to as the FORUS Study insists that every institute must maximize or release the energy of the named driving forces in order to resist their opposites, which they termed "restraining forces," if institutes hope to emerge transformed. Further, they emphasize that the quality of leadership will strongly determine the outcome. Overcoming restraining forces is easier said than done. These forces are at work in each of us, absorbed with the cultural air we breathe. But even more than that, they and we are contextualized in a much larger ecological and global reality. The introduction to the LCWR Planning and Ministry Survey concisely painted this picture. Our deepest challenges emerge from the larger context. Religious life is presently limited by its cosmological and philosophical world views. Not only is religious life itself on a strange and perilous journey, but so too are the planet and its cultures.

The context of religious life includes not only U.S. culture with all of its promise and limitation, but also the profound changes initiated by Vatican II. These are now meeting fierce resistance within the post-conciliar church. There is unfolding a total change in our story of the earth and its peoples and our relationship to them. None of these contexts is insignificant, and each of them requires a reshaping of this life we call religious—a prophetic attempt to live wholeheartedly as icons with direct openings to the sacred through which others may enter. We are called in unprecedented ways to be fully American in our living of religious life, fully Christian, fully emancipatory of ourselves and other women, fully multi-cultural, fully ecclesial, and fully ecological. Religious life has not consolidated in its new form because all of the larger contexts affecting it remain as yet incoherent. This is the time to trust the "Fiery Spirit, fount of courage, life within life of all that has being." We, along with everyone else, are to be remade.

Preliminary Observations on The Forus Study

Before I address the specific challenges pointed to in these contrapuntal forces, I want to make five preliminary observations about the FORUS Study and its conclusions, although the complete data is not yet available. First, I found some curious omissions in the organizing framework of the survey instrument. There were virtually no questions in the instrument which allowed an integrated description of the dynamic inter-relationship of shared charisma, experience of God, personal history and gifts, and the way belonging to an apostolic congregation empowers a life of apostolic service. I am describing an internalized consciousness in each of us as well as a set of concretely structured relationships with a congregation and its members. Because the external manifestations of this structure have changed so markedly, we find it difficult to make its internal coherence “visible.” Because the study covered all forms of religious life for both men and women, the old juridical categories assumed by the questions seemed inadequate to express the new experience of apostolic religious life for women.

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Secondly, conclusions of this study suggested some tensions between the prophetic and contemplative poles of religious life.⁷ The last thirty years has reclaimed and released the prophetic charisma of religious life, a dormant, dangerous memory. Contemplation and prophecy are not necessarily polar opposites. Rather I assume a unity between the mystical and the prophetic. One can be prophetic by parabolic action, by simply living differently. One can be prophetic by social criticism, social analysis, and political activism. But one is only prophetic when protest, denunciation, lament, and vision are rooted in the mystical impulses of the fiery spirit. Further, according to Walter Brueggemann, every ministry can have a prophetic dimension regardless of its social or institutional location.⁸

Third, apostolic religious women were not questioned about feeling a call to ordained ministry. Historically, apostolic religious life has remained significantly different for men and women. The constraints imposed by church and society upon women regarding ministries, leadership, and relationship to the world are essentially sexist. Apostolic life for

women has never meant the same autonomy, freedom, flexibility, or acceptance as it has for monastic, mendicant, or apostolic men; nor does it yet.

As long as the church refuses to resolve the question of women's full participation in leadership in the church, I do not think we will be able to separate the distinctiveness of apostolic religious life for women from ordained ministry. I think a significant but probably small percentage of our members have always been called to ordained ministry. Could this contribute to the strong tendency to parochial assimilation which both the LCWR Ministry Study and the Forus Study question? There are complex reasons why religious women experience confusion about our role in church and society. We are still trying to do a new thing as fully apostolic women.

Fourth, some of the questions on spirituality seemed poorly conceived. Activities ranging from visiting the sick or helping the poor to exercising aerobically or resting in contemplative prayer were presented in terms of how they contributed to spiritual or personal fulfillment. This question was asked in an individualistic way. Where were the questions about what sacrifices or disciplines religious embrace in order to be contemplative and to respond to their mission? Or what activities sustain commitment, nourish them spiritually, or give meaning to their lives?

Fifth, I found the questions on Jesus unconnected to the content of that Christology—how an experience of Jesus leads to specific forms of mission. One question probed whether one's belief in Jesus was stronger or weaker now than on entrance. The other concerned the frequency of feeling at one with God or Christ. Major developments in christology, new understandings of the humanity of Jesus and of his ministry have had a major effect on our spirituality. The experience of Jesus in a fully apostolic spirituality looks to Jesus' own ministry as a guide for how to be in ministry. There we discover God's compassion for the poor and marginalized. In addition, liberation christologies, including feminist ones, emphasize that Jesus suffered a political death precisely because he refused to accept the injustice embedded in the religious and social institutions of his day. Jesus is not so much one's Lord and master to whom one gives obedience by accepting the superior's decisions as he is the animating source of compassion, energy, and love. Obedience is listening and responding to this call wherever it takes us.

Further there is an experience of Jesus which happens in and through ministry itself, a face of Jesus revealed in the poor—the compassion of Christ which is received as women respond in compassion to the needs of others. This kind of religious experience, the felt simultaneity of love of God and love of neighbor, is at the heart of apostolic religious life. When ministry is a selfless expression of love, love is constantly circulating among caring people and God. The

"Caring People" part of the Nygren/Ukeritis study discovered this kind of operative christology. Caring people do not burn out because their altruistic care for others returns to them in reciprocal caring, and God is experienced in and through all of it. I believe we are challenged to ask one another such christological questions. How has our religious experience changed or developed in the light of these major shifts in christology during these years of renewal? How many christologies are operative in our members and how do we support the on-going conversion implied when the Christ mystery takes on new dimensions mystically and ministerially?⁹

The Challenges

With these observations, what then are the salient challenges posed by the research? Together the studies add up to formidable challenges as well as offering cause for hope. Although I use the contrapuntal forces identified in the Forus Study as an organizing framework, I am including data from the other studies.

Individualism versus Vocational Commitment

Nygren and Ukeritis challenge us to examine ourselves on the extent to which individualism in U.S. culture may be undermining vocational commitment. In this challenge, they link individualism, cultural assimilation, and the democratization of authority. They insist that religious close the gap between espoused and operative values evident in the life and work of religious. They focus this discrepancy on the number of religious who feel no personal commitment to realize the preferential option for the poor, little commitment to congregational vocation and mission, and a reliance on "inner authority" rather than obedience or discernment in relationship to the congregation. They tend to place the "high cost" of gospel living with direct ministry to the poor, a more communal, less individualistic life-style, and stronger links through authority to congregational mission.

Option for the Poor

Striking differences exist between the Forus Study, the LCWR Ministry Study, and the Brookland Commission Papers on the extent to which religious actually espouse a preferential option for the poor. The Forus study interprets the response rate of 37% who feel no commitment to work with the poor as a serious problem of credibility for religious life. By contrast, the LCWR Ministry Study found that 88% of the communities have practices or policies that allow for uncompensated ministry with the materially poor. This is clearly a response of the communities to place corporate resources at the service of the poor. Secondly, 30% reported the creation of new not-for-profit corporations as a way of sponsoring a new ministry. In the ministry trends over the last ten years, LCWR Ministry Study reports a shift from ministry

with the middle-class to ministry with the poor. The opportunity to work with the poor was also among the top ten criteria influencing ministry choices, along with compatibility with charism. The Brookland Commission in a much smaller sample also found a stronger commitment to the poor than did the Forus Study. 88.5% considered a fundamental option for the poor either crucial or quite important to religious life. In the same study on 27% indicated their choice of ministry was not influenced by a commitment to work directly with the poor.

The discrepancy among these studies requires further study. Is leadership misinterpreting the extent to which the option for the poor is espoused by membership? No question in any of the studies asked for the degree of support members felt for corporate decisions in the use of investments, subsidizing ministry with the poor. No question addressed ways in which sisters not working directly with the materially poor were committed to this value through less direct means, such as education, advocacy, or research. Finally, the LCWR Ministry study confronts us with the fact that although we espouse the value of systemic change as an important way of helping the poor, only 335 sisters are currently involved full-time in advocacy and social change out of 49,105 active religious women. Conversion is perhaps still underway in this important area.

Cultural Assimilation Feminism

Let us look at the challenge of cultural assimilation which encompasses not only individualism and the democratization of authority, but materialism, consumerism, feminism, and professionalism as well. As a result of the women's movement, the spheres of activity available to us outside the structures of the church and our congregations have expanded. There are signs of hope in our recognition of and response to internalized sexism in ourselves, our community structures and attitudes, as well as in external environments.

The Brookland Commission Survey¹⁰ instrument presented a complex and multi-faceted analysis of the influence of feminism on the intellectual life of women religious. Two-thirds of the respondents are impatient with the progress on women's issues in U.S. society and three fourths with progress in the church. Three fourths believe their congregations supported feminist attitudes and values, and also find them in accord with their way of thinking. 37% say it is difficult to be a feminist and a practicing member of the Catholic Church, and two-thirds support the ordination of women. For many of us, the extent to which feminism is being espoused by us may sound like good news, and it is! However, there is also potential for women's communities to become unnecessarily polarized over these issues. Some sisters remain severely

threatened by the word, "feminism." Others continue to claim they have never been oppressed as women. For these, denial serves to reduce internal conflict, protect a less conflictual way of being ecclesial, and assists accommodation to patriarchal culture in work environments.

As communities of women, we have multiple understandings about the meaning of feminism, and the specific changes in language, practice, and worship desirable in ecclesial contexts. We espouse varying analyses of women's situations within feminist schools of thought. There are a significant number of women in our communities who do not grasp the significance of gender analysis for the full empowerment of ourselves as women, for our commitment to all women, as well as to poor women. Since the majority of women's congregations founded between the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries generally espoused some special concern for women, it seems impossible to reappropriate these charisms today without taking feminist analysis into account. Further, according to Maria Riley in her Brookland Commission Paper, religious women should be contributing the rich social teaching of the church as well as a Christian feminist reading of the gospel to secular feminism.¹¹ Thus the challenge is for us to become both more conscious and more critical in explicitly working with our communities on feminist issues and in appropriating feminism through the liberating strands of Christian tradition.

A distinct yet related challenge appears in the research related to the acceptability of lesbian candidates in women's communities. The Forus Study found women expressed considerable uncertainty about policy, attitudes, or experiences, as compared to men. It would seem women religious as a whole are simply not openly dealing with lesbian issues in a significant way.

Professionalization and Work-Absorption

A second source of concern in relationship to cultural assimilation is the professionalization of our ministries and a tendency to work-absorption versus the communal and contemplative dimension of religious life. U.S. religious life has always been work-absorbed. Religious women work hard and get the job done—whatever job they do. With the relinquishment of congregationally-owned or operated institutions, it is increasingly difficult for leaders to direct their personnel to specific ministries and to create new institutions to meet new needs. We need to continue to ask ourselves the question, "In the service of what goals do we spend our lives and congregational resources?" "What are the hidden institutional, perhaps even self-centered goals, sisters may unwittingly be serving in our ministerial lives?" The LCWR Ministry Survey challenges us to develop a new form of corporateness which would allow us to focus ministry in significant ways and sustain initiatives in the future.

In addition, we are also challenged anew to maintain an alternative life-style in the face of the corporate cultures of our work sites which discourage a contemplative rhythm of work and prayer, simplicity of life and relationships with both friends and community members. Many of us work excessively, neglecting participation in community events, time for retreat or renewal, and shared communal life. The rewards of a sense of achievement, self-importance, and financial gain for uncritically assimilating the 60-80 hour work week of professional life in this culture and an escalation of consumerism related to "keeping up" with professional life are difficult to resist. Yet there is also the less obvious communal reality of our pooling of economic resources and shared responsibility for the community. To what extent, as leaders and as members, do we support one another in the difficult choices required to resist the trends toward work absorption and materialism? At the same time do we also support our women in making their best contributions to their professional fields? And do we positively foster contemplative and community values?

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The Forus Study showed that for many religious their professional identity offers greater role clarity than does their identity as religious. It remains a challenge for members and leaders to resist the tendency to derive our sense of self more from our professional identity than from our identity as religious, who are also in many cases professionals.

Role Clarity and Vocations

The current confusion over the role of religious in both church and society is a natural consequence of institutions in the process of transformation. Women considering a religious vocation receive little encouragement from their families, peers, clergy or laity. If it isn't necessary to live simply, celibately, or in relationship to community to engage in ministry or to be of service to the church and society, why embrace religious life? While the Forus Study challenges us to become clearer about our identity, life-style, and mission, we are not responsible for the massive changes in church and society which contribute to our invisibility and the lack of social support for our life-style. Few, even in the church, grasp the core values of religious life apart from the useful role we played as a work

force in church institutions. The Forus Study indicates that young people continue to exhibit generosity and dedication. However, we may be underestimating the need for education about religious life and our need to foster support actively from the larger community for religious life to be an attractive option. The Forus Study indicated that religious feel that they alone are responsible for shaping religious life. In every other historical period, communities recognized the need to accommodate themselves to the attitudes of hierarchy and society in order to sustain membership. What is the gap between our self-understanding and the way we are perceived that we need to address more directly?

Adult Development and Individualism

Although I do not argue that we are uninfluenced by strong currents of individualism, I believe we need to confront this challenge as a developmental issue as well as a cultural one. Developmental psychologists tell us that the majority of the adult population in the United States can be placed at the conformist stage or lower. The change process in religious life has compelled psychological development in many of our members. Conformist personalities once were a good fit in religious life. Today our communities are populated by some women who are still dependent, others who are becoming independent and who are not yet ready for interdependence, and still others who desire to place their autonomy at the service of communal life and congregational mission in mature interdependence. These differences in psychological and spiritual development pose significant challenges to us for recruitment, life-style, the exercise of authority, and congregational mission.¹²

Individualism and Community

In terms of life-style, the issue of community remains the great conundrum. Many women are fully and passionately engaged in ministries which feel significant, are deeply connected to the community's charism, and offer an appropriate arena in which sisters exercise their considerable gifts. However, some long for a less isolated life either living a more explicitly shared life of prayer, theological reflection, and bonded relationship or some what new, less routine ways of sharing the charism and spiritual orientation which originally drew them to community. I believe if we are to address the pressing need in U.S. culture for communities with members who have developed beyond dependency and dysfunction, we may well need to reduce the levels of our professional involvements. This is a tremendous challenge since most of our current members carry deep wounds from having foolishly invested energy in dysfunctional living groups and are reluctant to experience a diminishment of ministerial effectiveness again. Such decisions require careful discernment, interior freedom, and the

capacity to make the necessary sacrifices for the sake of a greater good.

Differing Interpretation of Authority

The Forus Study states: "authority in religious life, as in the church itself, is perhaps the most pressing question for religious to resolve."¹³ There are differing interpretations of authority and leadership which inhibit the ability of leaders to focus the energies of their congregations. Further, Nygren and Ukeritis found that women religious experienced greater difficulty with obedience than with any other of the vows. Women have been deeply wounded by abuses of authority. We are challenged to heal the wounds of authority in our personal and communal past even as we learn to exercise authority within a community of adult disciples. This is pioneering ground and its resolution is perhaps the greatest gift we could offer the ecclesial community. It remains problematic, however, that our interpretations of authority differ within the same congregation. These variations impede the ability of leaders to lead and make it difficult to hold members accountable to a more nuanced understanding of obedience.

Affiliative Decline versus Role Clarity

The Forus Study emphasized the factor of affiliation. The researchers found that members of religious orders exhibited a stronger need for affiliation than for mission. This they interpreted negatively since new members are attracted primarily by the purpose or mission. Due to the current lack of clarity about the distinctiveness of religious life, the benefits and satisfaction of belonging to a congregation seem to assume greater importance than shared commitment. This interpretation puzzled me. In the absence of clarity about our place in church and society, women, at any rate, seem to be intent on re-shaping their communities on the basis of new interpretations of the charism arising in their members. This communal discernment requires an entirely new level of bonding, entrusting one's sense of self and unique expression of charism to one another. There remains the reality that together an institute is more than the individual ministries of its members. But in the absence of corporate institutions expressing that charism, a congregation's purpose and mission can be less visible. Are these stages in a process, with deeper bonding followed by a new corporateness in the expression of charism, or a form of defense and denial?

Multiculturalism

This intensity of affiliation suggests that it may be increasingly difficult to bring new members into a group that is already too formed in its relationships with one another to admit newer members. The challenge to multiculturalism is imperative here as well. The Forus Study suggests that communities are insuf-

ficiently critical of their internalized racism and inhospitality to women from non-white cultures. We are challenged not only to accommodate women in varying stages of psychological development, but to welcome the different gifts that women from non-white cultures could bring to us. We must be willing to allow our community cultures to be changed by them.

Challenges from Ministry Trends

The LCWR Ministry Study describes a virtual explosion in ministries among women religious. It portrays tremendous energy and involvement in ministry. The survey itself discovered that whole new categories of ministry were emerging through the response of women religious to unmet social needs. Of the one thousand women who could not find their category of ministry in the survey, 10% were engaged in prison ministry, and the remainder in giving retreats direction and spiritual direction. Leadership expected increases to occur in the ministries of spiritual direction and retreat work. This study also found that women religious were looking to one another for partnership in collaboration in the future. Yet, what are the obstacles we still need to overcome that impede our ability to collaborate?

Congregational Ministry versus Individual Ministry

The Forus Study reported a new willingness of members to participate or live in community-sponsored institutions. The study suggests that greater potential may now exist for members to contribute their work to congregationally-sponsored projects than in the recent past. However, at the same time, the LCWR Ministry Study discovered that individual sisters rather than congregational planning are responsible for identifying new ministries. Leaders and members together are challenged to develop new ways for gathering and directing this energy toward common goals that are prophetic, compelling and compassionate.¹⁴

Skillful leadership and changes in structures and processes will be required to strengthen a sense of shared purpose and mission and better focus the personnel resources of each community. Is housing such a clear focus of corporate attention because it is a more pressing need than others, or because skillful leadership has effectively influenced this response?

Declining Emphasis on the Quality of Intellectual Life

There is concern expressed from several sources about some of the shifts taking place in ministries and their effects on religious. The Brookland Commission is concerned that with the shift away from educational ministries, there is little planning or support for the ongoing educational development of members. Secondly, there seems potentially to be a loss of appre-

ciation for the role of critical thought and the intellectual life in promoting social change or developing coherent, operative theory.

Other Trends

Other Major trends identified by the LCWR Ministry Study were the shift away from work with children to work with adults, from ministry in sponsored works to non-sponsored ones, from institutionally-based ones to non-institutionally-based ones, and from church-related services to non-church-related ones. This diffusion appears to have the potential of weakening the societal influence exerted by the institutions which we owned or sponsored. Which institutions ought we seek to preserve and which relinquish? Are there new ones we should be creating?

Parochial Assimilation

Finally, the overall trend toward parochial assimilation remains strong. The LCWR Ministry Survey projected increases in parish ministry by 1996. More women expect to be parish administrators and more involved in the ordinary pastoral ministry of the church despite the lack of funding for these positions and the discriminatory difficulties experienced in full-time parochial ministry. In what ways does the intensive involvement of religious in diocesan or parochial ministry compromise the freedom and flexibility of their responding from the unique charism and the more prophetic dimensions of religious life? What tensions between the needs of the local church and fidelity to congregational charisms will need to be negotiated?

Conclusion

The challenge remains for us to determine the uniqueness of our contribution to ecclesial life, give greater direction to our ministerial choices, and to assess more critically the long-term effects of our choices. The clock is running out. We are aging very rapidly. Some communities will decline and die, others may revive if we manage to face the challenges before us. This is simply what it means to be living through a transitional time of major paradigm change. Yet these are not times without hope. Despite the depth of the challenges which the research and our larger context present to us, there are also sparks of light, signs of the fiery spirit in these same studies and in our experience. There is tremendous interest in the future of religious life evidenced by the amount of recent research. Current members of religious institutes are strongly committed to this way of life and to their communities. Many communities are energized by a renewed understanding of their charisms, and charism functions as a criterion influencing a wide range of decisions.

There appears to be fresh energy and creativity in leadership, especially among outstanding leaders.

There is fresh vision for the future emerging from multiple sources. There is evidence of profound experience of God and an explosion of ministerial creativity and variety that issue from the unity of love of God and love for others. There is commitment to serve the poor among leadership, through use of congregational resources. And there is evidence of health and vitality in some communities. The sparks are in the embers. Will we help fan them into flame?

These are times to trust the fiery spirit since religious life is, after all, a work of this energizing, loving fullness of God's graciousness. We are called in fidelity to trust and respond to the spirit within and around us. To return to Hildegard—the spirit is the highest and fiery power, “who kindled every living spark and breathed out nothing that can die. She flames above the beauty of the fields, shines in the waters; in the sun, the moon and the stars, she burns. And by means of the airy wind, she stirs everything into quickness with a certain invisible life which sustains all. She, the fiery power, lies hidden in these things and they blaze from her.”¹⁵

Footnotes

1. John of the Cross reserves this poetic metaphor for the completion phase of the transforming union of the soul with God. “The Living Flame” in *Collected Works of John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1979).
2. “O Ignis Spiritus Paracliti,” (Sequence for the Holy Spirit), trans. Barbara Newman in *Saint Hildegard of Bingen: Symphonia*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988) 149.
3. Anne Munley, *Threads for the Loom, LCWR Planning and Ministry Studies*. (Silver Spring, Md: Leadership Conference of Women Religious, 1992).
4. David Nygren and Miriam Ukeritis, “The Religious Life Futures Project: Executive Summary” to be called FORUS in future publications, *Review for Religious* 52 (January-February 1993) 6-55.
5. These studies were funded by the Lilly Endowment and are focused on the intellectual life of women religious including the significance of feminism. Principal researchers are: Maria Riley, Mary Frohlich, Karen Kennelly, and Katarina Schuth. A survey instrument was used that measured some of the effects of feminism on religious life, questions about the intellectual life, and attitudes and practices related to continuing education for women religious.
6. *Final Report to Lilly Endowment, Inc.: Evaluation of Grants for Research and Education of Roman Catholic Religious Communities*. John Grindel and Sean Peters, Project Directors, begun in 1990 and published 1991 or 1992. Among the grants studied were: the Brookland Commission Study, the Nygren/Ukeritis Study, Quinonez and Turner's Study, as well as others.
7. In conclusions on vocation, Forus suggests religious are currently more contemplative than prophetic if prophetic is identified with the preferential option for the poor. Forus, 46. Grindel and Peters assert in their conclusions that “Nygren and Ukeritis believe that we are witnessing today a swing of the pendulum towards an emphasis on the mystical aspect of religious life away from a prophetic emphasis.” 84.
8. Walter Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 109-113.
9. The introduction to *Threads for the Loom* describes the elements of the new paradigm of religious life without making explicit how they might be a specific interpretation of the gospel and one's discipleship.
10. Katerina Schuth, “The Intellectual Life as a Value for Women Religious in the United States,” *Brookland Commission Study* with appendix including the survey on Women Religious and the Intellectual Life. This survey asked questions on feminism in the context of the intellectual life. For purposes of oral delivery, in some cases percentages have been rounded off to rough fractions.
11. “The Significance of Feminism for the Intellectual Life of Women Religious,” *Brookland Commission Study*, July 1992. See also her *Transforming Feminism*.
12. *The Final Report to the Lilly Endowment* cited above emphasizes these developmental issues more than the Forus Study and notes its importance. See also Elizabeth M. Liebert, *Changing Life Patterns: Adult Development in Spiritual Direction*. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992) for an accessible discussion of adult development.
13. Forus, 46.
14. The Forus Study underscores this challenge as well.
15. *Hildegard of Bingen's Book of Divine Works with Letters and Songs*, ed. Matthew Fox (Santa Fe: Bear and Company, 1987) 11-12.

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