

VOCATION ALIVE - The Other – A Vocation Perspective

Pat Carter, CSJ, on behalf of the Federation Vocation Animation Committee

Who is “the other” for you? The one who is immediately suspect? The one who causes you to be apprehensive? For whom do you instinctively build walls, real or virtual, for self-protection? Are you more likely to see an “other” in a person who does not look like you? Are the differences in experience or culture unknown and therefore questionable? Is there a challenge in communication, in language? I have read a lot this summer and it seemed in every story, there was a pattern. When two characters initially meet, they “other” each other and as the relationship grows, attitudes evolve and acceptance grows. In one story the person begins to defend the one she previously “othered.” Does spending time with a stranger,

coming to understand who they are, change the “othering effect?” Is this tendency to “other” a protective mechanism in our brains which has become reflexive? What do we need to do to change the neural pathways? Why not just start with acceptance? Looking beyond differences and anticipating the discovery of dignity, integrity and humanity. As women religious with a charism of unity and reconciliation, we are committed to witness to the grace of unifying love. Let us meet people with openness and acceptance. Let heal those around us of the disease of “othering” and by our example teach trust and inclusion of all individuals. And when we fail, which we will, let us ask forgiveness and begin again to grow in freedom.

Into the Future Collaborative – a gathering of Oneness



L to R: Srs. Suzanne Franck (Brentwood), Mary Jo Radey, Lisa Balcerek (Baden), Pat Murray (West Virginia), Pat Carter, Charlene Kostuk (Philadelphia).

Thursday, July 27 to Saturday, July 29, 2023, 27 CSSJ Sisters from the Canadian and US Federations were led through a process of reflection by Kristen Mattes, a School Sister of Notre Dame de Namur. Sr. Kristine Fernandes, of the Toronto Congregation, was a member of the planning team. Sisters Mary Jo Radey and Pat Carter, of the SSM Congregation, have participated in a monthly Sharing of the Heart online group and were invited to participate in this event. It took place at the Carmelite Spiritual Centre in Darien Illinois, just outside of Chicago. Initiated originally as a means to support the

Sisters of the Atlantic region, the gathering became inclusive to all who desired to meet. The theme of the event was *Weaving the threads of Our Collective Beauty* and that was indeed what took place. We prayed, we shared reflections, questions, meals and we enjoyed each other’s presence. The space was so filled with grace, comfort and joy. And we were very grateful for air conditioning!