

Responses to Don Goergen OP's video

Participants: Sisters: 282 Associates: 30

Cluster Communities participating: Akron, Columbus, Great Bend, Kentucky, Eucharistic Missionaries New Orleans, Oxford, St. Mary's New Orleans

Some responses did not have the number participating and did not answer the questions on the reflection guides.

Reflecting on the Cluster Statement of Dominican Life and Mission, we found it reaffirming of our call to preach, to teach and to heal. We also noted how important companionship and mutual love is in order for us to effectively carry forward the mission; when one is depressed it can bring us down but we need to ask God to help us bring light into the situation. We stated that together with the help of the Spirit, we are more able to risk and serve than we could ever do as mere individuals.

1. As you listened to Don Goergen's presentation, what did you notice going on within you?

There was excitement to be part of shaping our future and renewed hope and joy that God can use us to meet critical needs of the world.

The importance of wedding of action and contemplation.

Wanting to explore how "Our deepest gladness can intersect with world's deepest hunger."

The importance of being rooted in prayer.

Image of Martha and Mary very helpful

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It is not what we do but who we are that is so important

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People in every century tried to imagine the church in the next century.

Passion comes forth from Don. That passion carries over into possibility to move to something new.

Sisters wondered about what we can leave as a legacy for future generations of Dominicans.

We will need to let go of what is so that God can transform us into something new to meet the needs of tomorrow's world.

Don brought peace and calmness to some, who felt reassured that the vision has its time and we must trust God and wait for it.

Relieved some guilt over lack of vocations and helped them feel ready to move on to whatever may be God's plan for us.

The presentation gave me a vision and spirituality for facing this death and dying with a group of peers.

Excitement similar to that of when we first entered. Wanting to give our life to God now in a more contemplative way is inspiring.

I now have a clearer understanding of what it means to "give to others the fruit of my contemplation".

Seeing contemplation as a social ministry was helpful. His sharing on death, individual and as a congregation, with the transition element offered us hope.

I began to relax and be much more convinced that reconfiguration is the way to go. Who are the visionaries? The past was good but means need to change for today.

Some annoyance at his excessive gesticulations and poor transitions between topics. Feeling confirmed in conviction that the Holy Spirit is impelling and guiding reconfiguration. A broader, more joyful perspective on death and change.

The group found Don's presentation exciting, hope filled, liked his perspective on sageing and death and were concerned about what he names as hyperactivity. While deeply appreciating the past, we noted we must let go of the way we were, even wanting more religious vocations because religious life doesn't require numbers but sages. We felt this is a new time and we want to midwife tier two consciousness along with those laity who are very much into similar awareness.

We came feeling hopeful, at peace, apprehensive, fearing division, questioning, concerned, excited, open, with anticipation, needing more clarity.

This presentation gave many of the sisters a fresh perspective on the need for change, dying to the way we are now and embracing something new. A renewed sense of contemplative prayer, trust in the spirit's guidance throughout the history of religious life and the need to support others along the way were some learnings from Don's very positive presentation.

One Sister is really looking forward to jumping in God's lap.

We see the need better for reconfiguration.

2. What information from Don Goergen's presentation do you want to share in the quilting circle that relates to reconfiguration?

We are sages pregnant with new dreams for the future and need to give birth for future generations of Dominicans. Others saw themselves as midwives, bringing forth new life. Letting go or dying is necessary for transformation or rebirth. We need to accept that God may be calling us to change and be transformed. We must move forward even though we cannot see clearly the shape of the future reconfiguration.

Don encourages us to focus on who we are rather than on what we do and to believe that Dominican life is our mission.

Don re-emphasized the role of change and the need for change. He reiterated that that root of Dominican Life would remain the same.

The scripture would not change, nor liturgical life and our vows. As Dominicans we are itinerate preachers. The emphasis and reflections should be on who we are, not on what we do. The mission we undertook as Dominicans was teaching. The laity have been trained to continue on this ministry in the church. We need to meet the needs of the church today where they are found.

We are like midwives bringing forth new life. We don't know what it will be. That which will be is greater than that which is. The Spirit is working.

Quilting is the blending of colors, materials, etc. into a thing of beauty. The blending of our lives in reconfiguration is the blending of ideas, prayer life and ministries. All are significant. But we cannot get together just to continue what we have already done. We need to meet the needs of the world, of the Church. We need to hope for the world. We need to be "pots boiling over", action flowing from contemplation.

John Paul II said, "Be not afraid".

Reconfiguration is the new birth needed for our times. It needs to be a form that is a way of being as the first Christians were, "See how they love one another." The process and fruits of reconfiguration need to be deeply contemplative. We need to grow into a new consciousness of how things fit together in the world and in our union in God's guiding hands.

We need to ask the questions and engage in more real dialogue. The Church and the world need our witness to Truth. We need to look at the broader picture and not be absorbed by specific, personal desire and preferences. We need to learn how to say good-bye. We need a positive approach, open to the Spirit, avoid the negative. We need prayer and to trust the answer to this prayer. We need to hear from the younger sisters who will be living what we decide.

We provide a space for the Spirit in our lives, by openness to truth, by prayer and by a strong desire to follow the direction of the Spirit. The warmth and color in our life add

beauty and strength to the whole. Worn out parts do not bring beauty or warmth to a quilt. Living and dying are part of the whole of life. Whether we cluster or not we will die. It is a question of whether we want to extend the dying time.

Can we show the outside world a positive way of dying? What is the invitation for us today? Can we pray, as a community, to wait for the vision and to hear the invitation of it? Transformation is what needs to happen.

Reconfiguration is happening as we are living through the process. Differing cultural gifts add to the beauty of the quilt. Each piece needs to change to fit into the pattern.

Why are we clustering? To bring together new life and for revitalization of self and community.

Many of our institutions have completed their process. The challenges are many for the congregation. We need to be open to all possibilities.

At this time, all six of us favor remaining as our single congregation rather than join either the Federation or Union plan. We have no assurance that we will hear the Spirit more clearly listening with each other or with other groups. The congregation started with a few members and we might now move into a new place with only a few members. We need to think of the community staying as we are (membership wise) with new growth coming to us in a way we have not known before.

Talk underestimates the order of magnitude of the moment. No inspiration to face into the unprecedented crisis of our times, the wonder and terror of it all. Seems to dismiss the transformative and value shaping power of liberation and feminist movements. Offered images of the Divine that are no longer adequate.

3. What information did you glean from Gon Goergen's presentation on Spiral Dynamics that shapes your perspective on reconfiguration.

All of us may not be blues, reds, greens etc, but we have to accept one another. Each community (congregation) has a different gift. Each one brings something to the blend. As we spiral a depth is created, something for which we all long. Third world people may grasp this concept better. They think more spirally, not so linearly.

Green color for harmony, sensitive, wholistic.

The world has been evolving and religious life will strive to bring about the 2nd tier. In the evolutionary process we see more of the needs of the poor and more ways to help the needy.

People seem to be looking for a third choice-something entirely new. One thing about Spiral Dynamics is that it **is** dynamic. It is constantly moving. It is an open system, constantly going on. It meets needs but gives leeway for different changes. It will take you from one place to another with a different view every step of the way.

Movement from one stage generates energy for the next stage.

There is value in every stage of our life. We need to be more open to move into other stages which generally add richness to our life. Knowledge and openness seem to be the key. We as a group seem not to be in one color or another but scattered over the range of colors.

We liked the image of seven colors that maintain distinct realities but work together. The providence of God is at work making us take that leap. Going out of our comfort zones requires the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Dominican vocation of active contemplatives began as a work force. Is this the moment for a re-founding?

We can be vehicles of the Holy Spirit to carry religious life to tier two. All we do influences everyone else. We need more emphasis on being rather than doing. Consciousness evolves positively by our contemplative movement to God.

How could I stand still and not do something after listening to the challenges of going to the next tier?

What's the vision? Change is happening all around us anyway (second tier consciousness). How do we enter into it and not fight about the details. Implicit assumption of hierarchy, no sense of the communion of planetary energy, especially offensive in relation to present agricultural societies and modern hunter gatherers in the garbage dumps of urban wastelands. Misses order of magnitude. The progression of globalization challenges the adequacy of this model dramatically.

4. How might Don Goergen's presentation inform our Mission in addressing the hungers of the world?

Don called us to deepen our commitment to Dominican contemplation, to balance the Mary/Martha elements of our lives. He challenged us to give ourselves quality time for contemplation that will boil over into action, to be active in the midst of contemplation. He called us to get in touch with the deepest desire of our hearts and our deepest gladness, because where that sacred place intersects with the world's deepest hunger is where we need to be. Who we are is more important than what we do.

We have an obligation, a responsibility, to be educated on the issues. We must seek the truth. Henri Nouwen said: "Be faithful to your call every single day." We need to remember this when we feel we are ineffective. Support from community allows us to minister where we are most needed. The needs of the world and my gifts must mesh.

Prayer and bridge building are needed.

If our Dominican mission is a way of being in the world, perhaps we need more concrete examples of how we Cluster congregations share in mission.

It will be possible to be a much more unified force in addressing hunger. That we focus on bringing spiritual values and hope to others.

I think we are already doing what we can with the resources we had.

With what vision will we continue our collaboration?

We could be an island of peace where others can be stimulated, inspired to greater hunger for God.

We discussed how we are called to be both Virgin/Wife; Rooted in God/Bearing Fruit and Mary/Martha. We affirmed the movement described: acts of charity, systemic and structural change, solidarity, bridge building and consciousness raising. Though we are ready to respond in all of these ways we feel especially called to bridge building and consciousness raising. Finally we resonated to being where what we most need to do (our gladness) connects to what the world most needs to have done (the world's deep hungers).

Through contemplation we learn the values worth dying for, if it should come to that. We need to search for truth and a deeper understanding of the hungers of the world. We may not be able to alleviate them, but we can support the systems that try to alleviate some of the needs. In searching for the truth, we are searching for God's view.

We want to be a part of something that is giving birth to a new way of being Dominican religious. It is rooted in who we've been but stretches us into the more. We want both our personal gladness and the community's gladness to be a response to some hunger in the world. We desire to be attentive to the Spirit's prompting-able to wait for a vision that will come.

The deepest hunger in society is for spirituality which is why we all became associates. The re-foundation of active communities is a call to re-gather with contemplative dimensions. If we all agree that spirituality is the deepest hunger, can we address it as 250 or 800? Can we renew in small groups or as a big group? Is bigger better?

The greatest hunger is for Jesus. As we are immersed in his Presence, the world will come to know him through us.

Religious have always been on the cutting edge. Their contributions to the Church have been unparalleled. Maybe now we are being called to be instruments of the Holy Spirit as we reflect on what this new vision will be as we continue the process of collaboration. Our group is ready. After viewing this presentation, it is brilliantly clear, thanks to Don Goergen, that dying is necessary if transformation is to come forth.

Reading our history, hasn't the Holy Spirit always been present to move us into the future, trusting in the wisdom of each of us as we continue to evolve.

We hope with each others help we are able to see clearly the work we are called to do in this life. We ask for the grace we need to answer that call with courage, with love, and with lasting dedication.

Concern about the public face of this clustering process which doesn't give a full picture of what is happening. Where are the reports of what is happening in other congregations and the decisions of some Alliance congregations for not entering the process?

Concerned was expressed about the way in which the options were eliminated resulting in Federation and Union. The CCC has said there was no interest in them. The process did not allow for a formal decision by the group to eliminate options. Often the time constraints did not allow tables to even discuss options and this was interpreted as a lack of interest.

What is it about a group of 700 that will enable us to be more contemplative? What is creative and cutting edge about the Union. It appears to be the same model with more people. How can we get underneath the structures to face the deeper issues?

There is a basic misunderstanding about the process and that was manifest at the St. Louis inter-congregational meeting. Some congregations in the cluster have embrace the mission statement which states: As members of the Cluster, we are committed to a process for reconfiguration of Sister Congregations for Dominican Life and Mission. Other members believe that they are in a conversation which is exploring the possibility of committing to reconfiguration. This led to comments like: "you don't belong here" and "you haven't accepted the mission statement". Some congregations have already committed to the Union model while others are still exploring options within the Cluster and the option not to continue in the process. Concern was expressed that there needs to be some process of reconciling these differences as we move forward.

We need more time. The collaborative novitiate is helping.

All seven congregations are in different stages. What does it mean to "die with dignity"? Are we going to lose our identity? These are anxious times. TIME is a concern in the responses to all three questions. Because we need and want more time does not mean that we don't want to be in the conversation.

The vision is not evident. It was explained that our present task in the cluster process is to establish a structure which will allow a new vision. A fear exists whether we will be able to give birth to something new.

It was expressed that we have completed the goal for which we were established and we are ready to die. Barbara Fiand does not believe in clustering. There is a strength in acknowledging that we have done a great work..

What are the great needs of the world? We fear because we don't know what is coming. It is not possible to get to know everyone. Introverts and extroverts will have different

expectations. There are not many Hispanics in the larger community. Fearful of retiring someplace where Spanish will not be heard. Fearful of losing rural ministry.

Cluster will bring opportunities for multicultural experiences. Look forward to transformation which is life-giving. We have many gifted people and coming together will be life-giving but still scary.

Responses related to Associates:

Challenge: if associates are here to support the mission of the sisters and the mission of the sisters is changing, then we have to “morph” into something that will support the new mission.

Associates need to develop our own contemplative lives in order to carry on where the Sisters leave off.

Associates will be stretched by the results of the Cluster process and will have identity concerns similar to the sisters.

Once the vowed members make their decision about union or federation, how do associates make their choice? If a congregation chooses to leave the cluster process, does that mean that all associates of that congregation stay with them or will they have a choice to stay, transfer, leave? Most Associates do not understand what the cluster process is about.

Associates bring Dominican life to people “in the trenches” showing that living the Dominican life CAN be done in this culture/society in a different way from vowed members. Associates are part of the moving forward of the spiral movement. The spiral image leaves nothing and no one behind. Everything and everyone gets taken up to a new level.

The hope and anxiety of not knowing what the future holds is the same for associates and sisters.

We associates need to move into second tier consciousness and it feels as if we’re just on the precipice.

Our vocation as associates is being *who* we are *where* we are with deep gladness and is rooted in our own contemplative life.

We are Dominicans and whatever happens, we’re still about continuing the mission. We trust that the right thing will unfold according to the Holy Spirit.