

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

August 3, 2009 at 4:24pm

Many women religious heads pleased with Vatican study

by Thomas C. Fox

NCR Today

While a good number of U.S. women religious clearly are chagrined that they are the objects of a Vatican study of their religious congregations, a number of U.S. women religious superiors are expressing gratitude for the Vatican investigation initiated by Cardinal Franc Rodé, Prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and being carried out by Mother Clare Millea.

On the Apostolic Visitation web site , one can find a growing list of testimonials by Women Religious Superiors, expressing their gratitude for the study and process:

The following comments are taken from the site:

Sister Marian Moriarty IBVM
General Superior, Institute Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto Sisters)
Rome, Italy

My meeting with Mother Clare was a relaxed and informative conversation of the hopes and challenges of our sisters in the United States and around the world.

I appreciate the time and attention Mother Clare has given to the many personal stories as this Visitation begins. We have much to celebrate and share and can only be blest by these open and honest conversations of how the Spirit is leading women religious today.

Mother Regina Marie, O.C.D.

Superior General, Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles
Alhambra, California

The time I spent with Mother Clare was pure grace. Mother's approach throughout the conversation communicated a humble spirit of loving service, a profound love for Christ, His Church and religious life, a deep regard for the our own unique Carmelite charism, an empathy for our challenges, and a joy with us for our blessings.

Thank you, Mother, for accepting this arduous task and for the approach you have chosen. You can count on our continued prayerful support.

Advertisement

Sister Louise Hembrecht, OSF
Community Director, Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity
Manitowoc, Wisconsin

I met with Mother Clare the end of May and had a delightful, hope-filled visit. There is so much good that has been done by Religious women in the past and so much that is being done now. And then, beyond what we do, we spoke of the love for the Lord and the Church that compels us to act. I went away encouraged, excited, and grateful for the call to Religious Life and the opportunity to serve my Sisters.

I have visitation with my Sisters. That visitation is simply an opportunity for me to get to know them and to learn of their hopes for deepening in the call to Religious Life. Such is how I see this Apostolic Visitation. We live in a time of blessing.

Sister Nancy Conboy, SA
Minister General, Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement ~ Graymoor
Garrison, New York

I was grateful for the opportunity to meet with Mother Mary Clare and to share with her our unique history - our religious congregation was founded in the Anglican Church on December 15, 1898. On October 30, 2009 we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of our entrance into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. I appreciated being able to share with Mother Mary Clare our passion for Christian unity, inter-religious dialogue and reconciliation. She is a very good listener and was very open when I spoke about my hope that through this Apostolic Visitation Process all of us will develop a great respect for the variety of charisms that are present in religious life in the United States.

Sister Susan Schorsten, HM
Sisters of the Humility of Mary
Villa Maria, Pennsylvania

I appreciated the opportunity to visit with Mother Clare in Connecticut on May 21, 2009. I was delighted to share with her a brief history of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary, and our focus throughout the 150+ years to address where the possible the needs of the day. I spoke with Mother Clare about our trying to live with integrity the directions and spirit of Vatican II in concert with our lived experiences in the US.

I found Mother Clare to be very personable and welcoming and easy to be with. It was definitely not a question and answer session but rather a conversation about the HMs and religious life today. I stressed our hope that we will continue our enthusiasm and commitments even though we are aging and have fewer resources. I told Mother Clare that I believe we will find new ways to utilize our resources and respond to the needs as women of faith with wisdom and experience. I shared with her the multiple ways we are currently collaborating with other religious communities in various ministries.

Sister Emmapia Bottamedi
Superior General, Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart
Rome, Italy

It is a pleasure to be able to express my feelings about the visit I had with Mother Clare Millea.

First of all I congratulate her for having met 125 superiors general. I had the grace to meet her on May 5. The meeting was very positive even though I had come a bit fearful about having to present our United States Province which has greatly diminished in size and at the moment has few apostolic activities due to the advanced age of the great majority of sisters. The meeting was cordial and encouraging. It gave me confidence and hope for revitalization of religious life as well as of our province in the United States. I appreciated very much the direction I received about vocation ministry and all that it requires of religious.

Sister Adalberta Mette, SCC
General Superior of the Sisters of Christian Charity Generalate

Rome, Italy

I find the website a help with regard to getting information about the Apostolic Visitation. But most helpful for me had been the visit with you, dear Mother Clare. For me the personal contact is always more important. Therefore, I thank you that you gave us this opportunity.

Sister Mary Waskowiak, RSM
President, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Silver Spring, Maryland

My experience of sharing with Mother Clare had the qualities of the Gospel account of Mary and Elizabeth's visitation. We were mutually respectful of and receptive to one another and I believe the Spirit hovered over our exchange. I continue to seek clarity on the underlying motivation for the

Apostolic Visitation. I thank Mother Clare for her warm hospitality and gracious receptivity.

Sr. Patricia Mulcahey, OP
Prioress, Congregation of the Most Holy Rosary
Sinsinawa, Wisconsin

The visit was renewing. Mother Mary Clare's listening and responsive demeanor has added another footing to the "yellow brick road" leading to the dialogue women religious and women throughout the world seek. Those of us who have visited, appreciate the fact that Mother Mary Clare is leading the Visitation. Our prayers continue for her and for an openness to the Spirit, on the part of all involved in the Visitation.

Sister Janice Fulmer
Superior General, Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth
Rome, Italy

My visit with Mother Clare was very relaxed and cordial. As leaders of international congregations, we spoke about the places where our congregations are currently serving the Church and how we engage in international planning in order to serve God's people better. For me, this meeting was a good opportunity to highlight the wonderful things my sisters are doing to serve God's people in the United States and have been doing for 125 years.

Sister Mary Whited, CPPS
Superior General, Sisters of the Most Precious Blood
O'Fallon, Missouri

I shared with Mother Clare how the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood are praying for a positive outcome to the Apostolic Visitation and how they were praying for me and other major superiors who met with her in St. Louis in June.

Prior to our meetings with Mother Clare, leaders in St. Louis met to support one another and pray together. Mother Clare listened very carefully as I spoke about our founding story, about how we seek to live our charism and mission of reconciliation, about our spirituality, and about the hopes and challenges we face as a congregation. When I affirmed the various expressions of religious life enrich the church, she agreed. When I spoke about the need for reconciliation within our church and the importance of building on common ground, she understood. I trust that my contribution to the many conversations taking place across the US and in Rome will make a difference toward a fruitful outcome for congregations of apostolic women religious throughout the US.

Sister Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM
President of the Congregation, Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Dubuque, Iowa

My visit with Mother Clare was one event within a much larger context. We, the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVMs), chose to respond to the Apostolic Visitation as an opportunity

for us to reflect on, converse about, and gather our responses to three questions: What would we like said about our foundress Mary Frances Clarke; how are we living her spirit today; and what are our hopes for the future. The congregational participation in this process over a three-month period shaped what I brought to the content of my visit with Mother Clare. Moreover, at the time I was visiting with Mother Clare our whole congregation had come together in various places around the world to pray the same prayer prepared especially for the occasion.

Mother Clare was an active, engaged listener. She created a spacious environment for me to share how we BVMs live our commitment as women of the church who love the church. Her way of being present encouraged me to state our BVM hopes that the official church affirm the beauty and power of the diverse charisms of religious life; open up pathways to dialogue about actions and decisions that flow from our theology and ecclesiology; and celebrate the integrity, fidelity, and authenticity of our lives.

Having acknowledged the fruitfulness of the preparation processes and the positive nature of my time with Mother Clare, I continue to seek greater transparency about the purpose of the visitation, the connection between this initial affirming experience and the two phases to follow, and the final report.

Sister Patricia Kelly,
Congregational President, Sisters of
Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

My fifty-minute conversation with Mother Clare was relaxed and flowed well. Her hopes for the visitation would resemble mine: that we would respect and accept one another and that we would be revitalized by the witness received of the fidelity in life and mission of the women religious in the United States.

Sister Joan Sue Miller, SCL
Community Director, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
Leavenworth, Kansas

As Mother Clare and I visited in Chicago recently, I felt the sisterhood of consecrated religious women today. We spoke of God's calling us in a way that defies today's crisis of human measures such as age and fewer young members. Our hopes and concerns were similar. We face loss and change in this disjointed world and Church today. Yet our experience and our shared values are at the heart of saving today's world.

I left our conversation with an even stronger sense that women religious, from our many traditions, are a creative presence in the Church and the world. We believe in striving with our whole lives for the fullness of God's design for humanity and we share faith in God's inspiring, enabling and blessing our efforts.

We are two women with a mission and a shared gift of God's call, and our conversation was about faithfulness and hope. As I left the meeting and visited with other women leaders who shared the experience, my heart was filled with joy and peace. Religious life has changed, but it is not ended. My prayer is that this continuing conversation might point to a future full of hope.

Sister Jane Ann Slater, CDP
Congregation of Divine Providence
San Antonio, Texas

I met with Mother Clare on June 3 and I enjoyed our visit very much. I was able to share our Texas Congregation of Divine Providence story and discovered that our two congregations have more than a little in common. It is my hope and that of our Sisters that with this Apostolic Visitation all of our Church will come to a better understanding of US women's congregations and that our founding spirits will surge more strongly within us.

We hold each of our wonderful Congregations, Mother Clare and the Visitation in our prayers.

Sister Joy O'Grady, CSC
President, Sisters of the Holy Cross
Notre Dame, Indiana

I am happy to write that my visit with Mother Mary Clare Millea was positive and affirming. We had a genuine dialogue about one of our concerns about a lack of transparency and openness to dialogue within the leadership of the Church, and I think that we both felt listened to and heard. It is my hope that this visitation will lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of the role and contributions of women religious in the Church.

Mother M. Anthony, SCMC
Superior General, Sisters of Charity of Our Lady Mother of the Church Motherhouse

Baltic, Connecticut

I was fortunate to visit with Mother Clare in Hamden. It was very obvious that Mother Clare's concerns were for the good and holiness of religious life in the United States and for the Church. Mother Clare asked questions but allowed me the opportunity to pursue responses of my interest. It was a pleasant and hope-filled experience.

Sister Marcia Allen, CSJ
President, Sisters of St. Joseph

Concordia, Kansas

I met with Mother Clare Millea on June 9 in Chicago, Illinois. My experience of Mother Millea was that she was open and receptive of my report and although reserved, reverent of our community and its experience. She seemed to welcome our conversation and at times I felt mutuality in our exchange. She was curious and appeared interested in the areas of diversity our community structure and operation offered. In retrospect I believe that she is genuinely interested in communicating the seriousness with which we regard our life as women religious.

Sister Nancy Conway, CSJ
President, Congregation of St. Joseph Central Offices
Cleveland, Ohio

The experience of our congregation's preparation for this first phase in the Apostolic Visitation process, in which we were invited to share our joys, concerns and observations with Mother Clare, was a positive one. Because we are a larger and new congregation (22 months old, 777 sisters), we are still getting to know one another. The depth of the conversations among our sisters in preparation for the June 6 visit with Mother Clare not only prepared us for the visit with her, it also contributed to a larger formative process already taking place within our congregation.

The visit itself with Mother Clare was also quite positive. Sister Jeanne Cmolik CSJ, another member of our Congregation Leadership Team, and I both had the opportunity to meet with Mother Clare. We found her to be respectful, interested in our congregation and her questions conveyed a genuine curiosity about our experience as women religious in the United States.

Sister Laura Anne Bufano, CSJ
Congregational Director, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
St. Louis, Missouri

A spirit of openness and honest sharing marked my ?face-to-face? meeting with Mother Clare. She was gracious and welcoming, listened attentively and with great interest to the observations, hopes and concerns I shared with her in behalf of our congregation. As a congregation we see the visitation process as an opportunity for us to deepen our communion with and within the Church and were delighted that, at the conclusion of the ?formal? part of the meeting, Mother Clare had the opportunity to meet the other four members of our congregational leadership team.

Sister Marian Moriarty IBVM
General Superior, Institute Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto Sisters)
Rome, Italy

My meeting with Mother Clare was a relaxed and informative conversation of the hopes and challenges of our sisters in the United States and around the world.

I appreciate the time and attention Mother Clare has given to the many personal stories as this Visitation begins. We have much to celebrate and share and can only be blest by these open and honest conversations of how the Spirit is leading women religious today.

Mother Regina Marie, O.C.D.
Superior General, Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles
Alhambra, California

The time I spent with Mother Clare was pure grace. Mother?s approach throughout the conversation communicated a humble spirit of loving service, a profound love for Christ, His Church and religious life, a deep regard for the our own unique Carmelite charism, an empathy for our challenges, and a joy with us for our blessings.

Thank you, Mother, for accepting this arduous task and for the approach you have chosen. You can count on our continued prayerful support.

Sister Louise Hembrecht, OSF
Community Director, Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity
Manitowoc, Wisconsin

I met with Mother Clare the end of May and had a delightful, hope-filled visit. There is so much good that has been done by Religious women in the past and so much that is being done now. And then, beyond what we do, we spoke of the love for the Lord and the Church that compels us to act. I went away encouraged, excited, and grateful for the call to Religious Life and the opportunity to serve my Sisters.

I have visitation with my Sisters. That visitation is simply an opportunity for me to get to know them and to learn of their hopes for deepening in the call to Religious Life. Such is how I see this Apostolic Visitation. We live in a time of blessing.

Sister Nancy Conboy, SA
Minister General, Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement ~ Graymoor
Garrison, New York

I was grateful for the opportunity to meet with Mother Mary Clare and to share with her our unique history - our religious congregation was founded in the Anglican Church on December 15, 1898. On October 30, 2009 we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of our entrance into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. I appreciated being able to share with Mother Mary Clare our passion for Christian unity, inter-religious dialogue and reconciliation. She is a very good listener and was very open when I spoke about my hope that through this Apostolic Visitation Process all of us will develop a great respect for the variety of charisms that are present in religious life in the United States.

Sister Susan Schorsten, HM
Sisters of the Humility of Mary
Villa Maria, Pennsylvania

I appreciated the opportunity to visit with Mother Clare in Connecticut on May 21, 2009. I was delighted to share with her a brief history of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary, and our focus throughout the 150+ years to address where the possible the needs of the day. I spoke with Mother Clare about our trying to live with integrity the directions and spirit of Vatican II in concert with our lived experiences in the US.

I found Mother Clare to be very personable and welcoming and easy to be with. It was definitely not a question and answer session but rather a conversation about the HMs and religious life today. I stressed our hope that we will continue our enthusiasm and commitments even though we are aging and have fewer resources. I told Mother Clare that I believe we will find new ways to utilize

our resources and respond to the needs as women of faith with wisdom and experience. I shared with her the multiple ways we are currently collaborating with other religious communities in various ministries.

Sister Emmapia Bottamedi
Superior General, Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart
Rome, Italy

It is a pleasure to be able to express my feelings about the visit I had with Mother Clare Millea.

First of all I congratulate her for having met 125 superiors general. I had the grace to meet her on May 5. The meeting was very positive even though I had come a bit fearful about having to present our United States Province which has greatly diminished in size and at the moment has few apostolic activities due to the advanced age of the great majority of sisters. The meeting was cordial and encouraging. It gave me confidence and hope for revitalization of religious life as well as of our province in the United States. I appreciated very much the direction I received about vocation ministry and all that it requires of religious.

Sister Adalberta Mette, SCC
General Superior of the Sisters of Christian Charity Generalate

Rome, Italy

I find the website a help with regard to getting information about the Apostolic Visitation. But most helpful for me had been the visit with you, dear Mother Clare. For me the personal contact is always more important. Therefore, I thank you that you gave us this opportunity.

Sister Mary Waskowiak, RSM
President, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Silver Spring, Maryland

My experience of sharing with Mother Clare had the qualities of the Gospel account of Mary and Elizabeth's visitation. We were mutually respectful of and receptive to one another and I believe the Spirit hovered over our exchange. I continue to seek clarity on the underlying motivation for the Apostolic Visitation. I thank Mother Clare for her warm hospitality and gracious receptivity.

Sr. Patricia Mulcahey, OP
Prioress, Congregation of the Most Holy Rosary
Sinsinawa, Wisconsin

The visit was renewing. Mother Mary Clare's listening and responsive demeanor has added another footing to the "yellow brick road" leading to the dialogue women religious and women throughout the world seek. Those of us who have visited, appreciate the fact that Mother Mary Clare is leading the Visitation. Our prayers continue for her and for an openness to the Spirit, on the part of all

involved in the Visitation.

Sister Janice Fulmer
Superior General, Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth
Rome, Italy

My visit with Mother Clare was very relaxed and cordial. As leaders of international congregations, we spoke about the places where our congregations are currently serving the Church and how we engage in international planning in order to serve God's people better. For me, this meeting was a good opportunity to highlight the wonderful things my sisters are doing to serve God's people in the United States and have been doing for 125 years.

Sister Mary Whited, CPPS
Superior General, Sisters of the Most Precious Blood
O'Fallon, Missouri

I shared with Mother Clare how the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood are praying for a positive outcome to the Apostolic Visitation and how they were praying for me and other major superiors who met with her in St. Louis in June.

Prior to our meetings with Mother Clare, leaders in St. Louis met to support one another and pray together. Mother Clare listened very carefully as I spoke about our founding story, about how we seek to live our charism and mission of reconciliation, about our spirituality, and about the hopes and challenges we face as a congregation. When I affirmed the various expressions of religious life enrich the church, she agreed. When I spoke about the need for reconciliation within our church and the importance of building on common ground, she understood. I trust that my contribution to the many conversations taking place across the US and in Rome will make a difference toward a fruitful outcome for congregations of apostolic women religious throughout the US.

Sister Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM
President of the Congregation, Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Dubuque, Iowa

My visit with Mother Clare was one event within a much larger context. We, the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVMs), chose to respond to the Apostolic Visitation as an opportunity for us to reflect on, converse about, and gather our responses to three questions: What would we like said about our foundress Mary Frances Clarke; how are we living her spirit today; and what are our hopes for the future. The congregational participation in this process over a three-month period shaped what I brought to the content of my visit with Mother Clare. Moreover, at the time I was visiting with Mother Clare our whole congregation had come together in various places around the world to pray the same prayer prepared especially for the occasion.

Mother Clare was an active, engaged listener. She created a spacious environment for me to share how we BVMs live our commitment as women of the church who love the church. Her way of being present encouraged me to state our BVM hopes that the official church affirm the beauty and power of the diverse charisms of religious life; open up pathways to dialogue about actions and decisions that flow from our theology and ecclesiology; and celebrate the integrity, fidelity, and

authenticity of our lives.

Having acknowledged the fruitfulness of the preparation processes and the positive nature of my time with Mother Clare, I continue to seek greater transparency about the purpose of the visitation, the connection between this initial affirming experience and the two phases to follow, and the final report.

Sister Patricia Kelly,
Congregational President, Sisters of
Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

My fifty-minute conversation with Mother Clare was relaxed and flowed well. Her hopes for the visitation would resemble mine: that we would respect and accept one another and that we would be revitalized by the witness received of the fidelity in life and mission of the women religious in the United States.

Sister Joan Sue Miller, SCL
Community Director, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
Leavenworth, Kansas

As Mother Clare and I visited in Chicago recently, I felt the sisterhood of consecrated religious women today. We spoke of God's calling us in a way that defies today's crisis of human measures such as age and fewer young members. Our hopes and concerns were similar. We face loss and change in this disjointed world and Church today. Yet our experience and our shared values are at the heart of saving today's world.

I left our conversation with an even stronger sense that women religious, from our many traditions, are a creative presence in the Church and the world. We believe in striving with our whole lives for the fullness of God's design for humanity and we share faith in God's inspiring, enabling and blessing our efforts.

We are two women with a mission and a shared gift of God's call, and our conversation was about faithfulness and hope. As I left the meeting and visited with other women leaders who shared the experience, my heart was filled with joy and peace. Religious life has changed, but it is not ended. My prayer is that this continuing conversation might point to a future full of hope.

Sister Jane Ann Slater, CDP
Congregation of Divine Providence
San Antonio, Texas

I met with Mother Clare on June 3 and I enjoyed our visit very much. I was able to share our Texas Congregation of Divine Providence story and discovered that our two congregations have more than a little in common. It is my hope and that of our Sisters that with this Apostolic Visitation all of our Church will come to a better understanding of US women's congregations and that our founding spirits will surge more strongly within us.

We hold each of our wonderful Congregations, Mother Clare and the Visitation in our prayers.

Sister Joy O'Grady, CSC
President, Sisters of the Holy Cross
Notre Dame, Indiana

I am happy to write that my visit with Mother Mary Clare Millea was positive and affirming. We had a genuine dialogue about one of our concerns about a lack of transparency and openness to dialogue within the leadership of the Church, and I think that we both felt listened to and heard. It is my hope that this visitation will lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of the role and contributions of women religious in the Church.

Mother M. Anthony, SMC
Superior General, Sisters of Charity of Our Lady Mother of the Church Motherhouse

Baltic, Connecticut

I was fortunate to visit with Mother Clare in Hamden. It was very obvious that Mother Clare's concerns were for the good and holiness of religious life in the United States and for the Church. Mother Clare asked questions but allowed me the opportunity to pursue responses of my interest. It was a pleasant and hope-filled experience.

Sister Marcia Allen, CSJ
President, Sisters of St. Joseph

Concordia, Kansas

I met with Mother Clare Millea on June 9 in Chicago, Illinois. My experience of Mother Millea was that she was open and receptive of my report and although reserved, reverent of our community and its experience. She seemed to welcome our conversation and at times I felt mutuality in our exchange. She was curious and appeared interested in the areas of diversity our community structure and operation offered. In retrospect I believe that she is genuinely interested in communicating the seriousness with which we regard our life as women religious.

Sister Nancy Conway, CSJ
President, Congregation of St. Joseph Central Offices
Cleveland, Ohio

The experience of our congregation's preparation for this first phase in the Apostolic Visitation process, in which we were invited to share our joys, concerns and observations with Mother Clare, was a positive one. Because we are a larger and new congregation (22 months old, 777 sisters), we are still getting to know one another. The depth of the conversations among our sisters in preparation for the June 6 visit with Mother Clare not only prepared us for the visit with her, it also contributed to a larger formative process already taking place within our congregation.

The visit itself with Mother Clare was also quite positive. Sister Jeanne Cmolik CSJ, another member of our Congregation Leadership Team, and I both had the opportunity to meet with Mother Clare. We found her to be respectful, interested in our congregation and her questions conveyed a genuine curiosity about our experience as women religious in the United States.

Sister Laura Anne Bufano, CSJ
Congregational Director, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
St. Louis, Missouri

A spirit of openness and honest sharing marked my ?face-to-face? meeting with Mother Clare. She was gracious and welcoming, listened attentively and with great interest to the observations, hopes and concerns I shared with her in behalf of our congregation. As a congregation we see the visitation process as an opportunity for us to deepen our communion with and within the Church and were delighted that, at the conclusion of the ?formal? part of the meeting, Mother Clare had the opportunity to meet the other four members of our congregational leadership team.

Source URL (retrieved on 04/19/2018 - 9:06am): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/many-women-religious-heads-pleased-vatican-study>

Links:

[1] <https://www.ncronline.org/forward/join?clickSource=end-article>

[2] <https://www.ncronline.org/node/160616>