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# Plugging back in to find a swarm of nuns

Mary Ann McGivern | Jun. 28, 2012 NCR Today

I have been in the Alaska wilderness for the last three weeks. I didn't take my computer, and most of the time there was no cellphone coverage. It was light all the time. We slept outside.

Part of my re-entry experience is a renewed astonishment at the bishops' criticism of American nuns because so much information came to me at once.

First, the LCWR statement that the Vatican assessment is unsubstantiated, the sanctions are disproportionate to the Vatican's concerns and the Vatican action has caused scandal.

Then Simone Campbell announced NETWORK's Nuns on the Bus action to organize opposition to the House Republican budget developed by Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan. Some talk show host proposed pistol-whipping the nuns on the bus, and Iowa Rep. Tom Latham laughed and said how he loved being a guest on the show.

Meanwhile, Loretto is having an election assembly, and I was getting caught up on agenda, voting modes, discussion topics, what out-of-towners are staying at our house -- all the bits and pieces of a nun's life. What in the world is there for a bishop to object to?

And finally, I received in my email a lovely invitation from the women of Immaculate Heart of Mary parish. To celebrate the July feast of St. Mary Magdalen, sisters are invited to a prayer service to share stories of our work and receive a blessing from the parish women.

This was a lot of data to come at me in a day's time.

I had brought Van Jones' book, *Rebuild the Dream*, with me to Alaska. He describes the tea party and Occupy Wall Street as "swarms" where no one individual is in charge and individuals are free to take action on their own, following certain simple guidelines. Wikipedia and Alcoholics Anonymous are examples of swarms. Sorting through all my emails on nuns, I thought, "Nuns are a swarm!"

We are decentralized and self-organized. We subsume institutions like individual religious communities and schools and hospitals. Each node has decision-making power. We reproduce, spin off and mutate. We are difficult to destroy. (Nobody seems to think pistol-whipping the nuns on the bus is funny.)

I'm amused at my own analysis, but, oh, I miss Alaska's light.

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