Our Sisters, Our Future: Health and Spiritual Care for Aging

UISG / CSI Webinar

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Context is Important!
Change is ever present...

- Over the centuries of Religious Life in the Church there is an ebb and flow in the number of Religious Institutes and in the number of members
  - economic situation
  - political environment
  - population changes
  - opportunities and needs

- Religious Communities include many ages and generations from 18 to 105
  - a local community may have three or four generations.
### Sisters in Four Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Kenya</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Vietnam</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Institutes</td>
<td>±150</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>204</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Houses</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>2,777</td>
<td>7,568</td>
<td>563</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Sisters</td>
<td>7,625</td>
<td>25,561</td>
<td>41,446</td>
<td>24,250</td>
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<tr>
<td>100+ members</td>
<td>±75%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;100 members</td>
<td>±25%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
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<td>% over 70</td>
<td>±20%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>&lt;10%</td>
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Major Superiors Focus Groups: Kenya, Mexico and United States

#1. Providing for the General Well Being of their Aging and Ailing Members

- Providing quality health care to sisters; especially challenging are meeting the needs of those sisters suffering from dementia
- Finding facilities where ailing sisters can reside and are not isolated from community and family
- Providing quality mental health care for sisters
- Meeting their sisters’ emotional and spiritual needs
- Hiring and retaining good healthcare personnel
Leaders suggested the following solutions for addressing the general well-being of elderly Sisters:

- Hiring the right personnel to assist leaders and care for members
- Having all of their ailing sisters in one facility, from assisted care to hospice care
- Collaborating with other congregations for a shared residential care facility
- Partnering with an outside residential care facility
- Partnerships with organizations such as local colleges
#2. Financing the General Needs of the Congregation

Going hand-in-hand with those wellbeing challenges are those related to financing the needs of the congregation. Financial challenges reported by the leaders:

- Importance of planning before the congregation is overwhelmed
- Meeting short-term and long-term health care costs
- Financing congregational short-term and long-term operations (Ministries, Formation)
- Financial planning in the midst of unexpected costs
- Properties management
Suggested financial solutions put forth by the leaders include:

- Collaborating with other congregations on financial matters
- Hiring a business manager for the congregation
- Learning how to better estimate and plan for the costs associated with using outside care facilities
- Forming a finance committee to give advice to congregational leaders
Newer Members’ Hopes and Expectations...

- Their hope for the next ten years is for an increase in clarity of mission and identity as renewed institutes reemerge from consolidation and restructuring.

- They eagerly anticipate the evolution of religious life in the next ten years and look forward to increased collaboration across generations.

- They are eager to move beyond diminishment and to expand the mission of their institute into new avenues for ministry. At the same time, they feel drawn to return to the roots of their institute and to restore a sense of its original charism.

- They desire members of all ages to be committed to living the charism more vibrantly, with a greater effort to live in solidarity with the poor and marginalized. They recognize stewardship involves divesting of empty buildings, underutilized property, and sponsored institutions to live more simply, utilizing human and material resources to benefit the neediest.

*Recent Vocations to Religious Life: A Report for the NRVC, March 2020*
Questions to consider…

- Thinking practically, what are my Religious Institute’s and elderly members:
  - Physical needs?
  - Spiritual needs?
  - Community engagement needs?
  - Financial needs?
Questions, Discussion

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PATHWAYS TO RELIGIOUS LIFE
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