



**SPECIAL SECTION**

**COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES**

*Environmental action; lay presidents; and more*

PAGES 1a-12a



**WORLD NEWS**

**BRAZIL**

*Landless still imperiled decade after nun's death*

PAGE 17

**MOVIES**

**GRACE**

*Film depicts blessings of 'A Simple Life'*

PAGE 21



# NATIONAL CATHOLIC

# REPORTER

THE INDEPENDENT NEWS SOURCE

Volume 51, No. 10 | \$2.95

NCRonline.org

February 27-March 12, 2015

## Francis warns cardinals against becoming a 'closed caste'

By JOSHUA J. McELWEE

**VATICAN CITY** · Forcefully repeating his message of engagement and of reaching out to those marginalized by society, Pope Francis in February told the world's Catholic cardinals they cannot become a "closed caste" of prelates who do not turn to the outcast or to those in need.

Speaking during a homily at a Mass Feb. 15 with some 160 cardinals from around the world, Francis again outlined for the high prelates a powerful vision of a church marked first by seeking out others and by welcoming them, no matter their situation in life.

The credibility of the church on the Christian message, the pope said, rests entirely on how Christians serve those marginalized by society.

"Dear brothers," Francis told the cardinals, "I urge you to serve the church in such a way that Christians — edified by our witness — will not be tempted to turn to Jesus without turning to the outcast, to become a closed caste with nothing authentically ecclesial about it."

Urging the prelates "to serve Jesus crucified in every person who is marginalized," the pope said they must "see the Lord present even in those who have lost their faith, or turned away from the practice of their faith, or who have declared themselves to be atheists."

"We will not find the Lord unless we truly accept the marginalized," the pope exhorted. "Truly, the Gospel of the marginalized is where our credibility is at stake, is found and is revealed."

Francis was speaking at a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica to mark the cre-

Continued on Page 18



—James Karales/©Estate of James Karales/David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library/Duke University  
The Selma-to-Montgomery March for voting rights in Alabama in 1965

## Catholics from across the US were prominent in 1965 Selma march

By PAUL MURRAY

The voting rights demonstrations led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 50 years ago in Selma, Ala., are among the most significant events of the modern civil rights movement. They successfully rallied supporters of racial justice behind the need for government action to protect the right to vote long denied to African-

Americans. The Voting Rights Act, described by many as the single most important piece of legislation passed by Congress in American history, was a direct result of the Selma protests.

Catholics played a prominent role in Selma, much more than in previous civil rights demonstrations. Never before had Catholic activists turned out in such large numbers. Now, on the

50th anniversaries of Bloody Sunday and the Selma-to-Montgomery march, it is fitting to honor those who participated in these historic events in March 1965.

Early in 1965, Edmundite Fr. Maurice Ouellet, pastor of St. Elizabeth's African-American mission in Selma, answered a knock at his door. He was surprised to

Continued on Page 6

## Survey finds serious flaws in diocesan financial management

**ANALYSIS**

By JACK RUHL

The Catholic priesthood is aging at an alarming rate, and thousands of U.S. diocesan priests are expected to retire within the next few years. With most diocesan priest pension plans significantly underfunded, questions over where the money comes from to support them may point to a major crisis in the making.

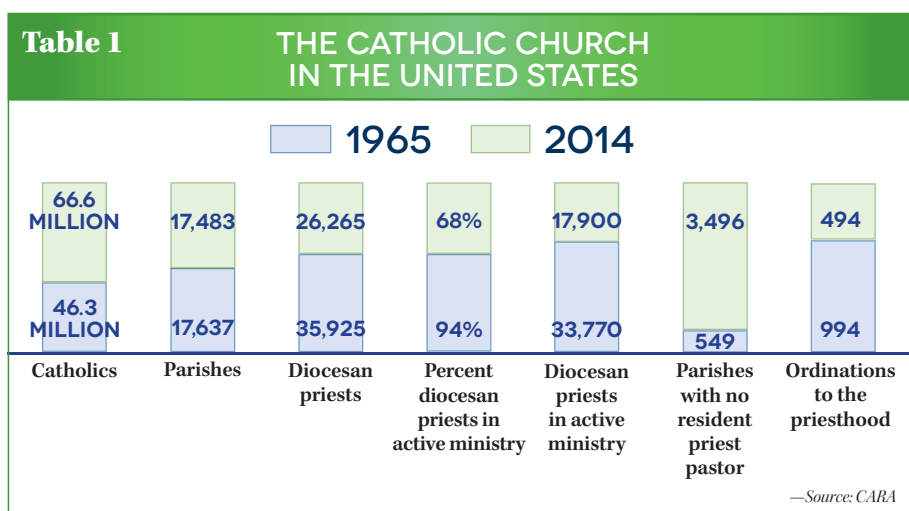
Fewer than 26,265 diocesan priests remain in the U.S. today and of them, only 68 percent — about 17,900 — are still in active ministry (Table 1). Only about one-third as many new priests are being ordained each year to make up for the ones who are retiring, dying or leaving active ministry. Dioceses now have one retired priest for every two active priests, and half of all priests in active ministry are over the age of 60.

Half of all priests currently in ac-

tive ministry also expect to retire by 2019, and most of them expect to receive the pension payments they've been promised. Church leaders have known for decades about the looming priest shortage and its implications

for sustaining Catholic parishes as eucharistic communities. Another, more hidden crisis lurks in diocesan pension reserves that are underfunded, many of them seriously.

Continued on Page 10



This issue was mailed on Feb. 20.



## SELMA: INSPIRING THE COMMITTED, SHAMING THE TIMOROUS

Continued from Page 1

see King standing on the front step.

"The Negro people tell me there is one white man in Selma who is black," King said by way of introduction, "and I want to meet him."

The Nobel Prize-winning civil rights leader was in the midst of his historic voting rights campaign in this cotton-trading town on the banks of the Alabama River. The community was split into hostile black and white camps. White leaders used all means at their disposal to keep African-Americans off the voting rolls. Civil rights forces were equally determined to gain their constitutional rights. Ouellet was the first white Selma resident to openly support justice for African-Americans.

Frs. Francis Casey and John Paro, missionary priests from the Society of St. Edmund, established St. Elizabeth's mission in 1937. First, they built the church. Three years later, the Sisters of St. Joseph from Rochester, N.Y., opened an elementary school. The sisters also founded Holy Infant Inn, a nursing home for the aged and chronically ill. In 1944, the Edmundites acquired Good Samaritan Hospital, which the sisters built as the primary health care source for African-Americans.

As a 13-year-old Vermont schoolboy, Ouellet viewed a home movie of Edmundite missionaries hammering the roof on St. Elizabeth's Church. "I thought those fathers were wonderful men," he recalled. "Like Christ and my own father — they were carpenters." These men inspired him to dedicate his life to serving the poor.

Ouellet described his posting to Selma as "a dream come true." He spent his days doing "the regular things that a pastor would do. ... We visited people in their homes, we took care of the sick, we said Mass, we taught kids over at the school occasionally, visited the hospital, just took care of people generally."

This priestly routine was permanently disrupted by Bernard Lafayette, a 22-year-old organizer for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Lafayette was a veteran of the Nashville, Tenn., lunch counter sit-ins and the Freedom Rides. He put his seminary studies on hold to work full-time in the civil rights movement. His primary objective in Selma was increasing the number of black registered voters.



—Society of St. Edmund Archives/Mr. Farkas

Edmundite Fr. Maurice Ouellet with children in Selma, Ala., in 1963

**Mathew Ahmann called priests sympathetic to civil rights. 'Put on your clericals,' he told them. 'If you don't wear them anymore, look under your bed.'**

Lafayette and Ouellet began meeting, usually late at night.

"We talked for many hours and then for many days," Ouellet said. "He taught me that we should meet the needs of our parish; that we could spend all our time applying Band-Aids, but if we didn't get to fundamental rights, we really weren't helping."

Despite the 15-year difference in their ages, Ouellet credited Lafayette with converting him to activism: "He took me by the hand, as though I were in kindergarten, and led me to understand community relations."

Ouellet allowed Lafayette to use St. Elizabeth's parish hall as a training site for high school students working on the voter drive. Ouellet's first address at a mass meeting cemented his identification with the movement. He told his African-American audience that "they were God's children and American citizens and it was their

Christian duty to vote."

The next day's newspaper displayed a photo of the priest singing "We Shall Overcome" while holding hands with a black woman. The caption said, "White Priest dances with Negro woman at Mass Meeting."

His involvement escalated. He consulted with Justice Department lawyers suing to halt discriminatory voter registration practices, worked with black ministers seeking to open negotiations with white leaders, and tried to begin a dialogue with white clergy.

He was frustrated in all these initiatives. In Selma's racially polarized atmosphere, there was no room for reasonable solutions.

Ouellet's endorsement of African-American rights earned him the enmity of white Selmians, who believed blacks were incapable of organizing a sustained protest. They imagined the priest was behind the movement. He was hauled before a grand jury and accused of being a communist, received menacing phone calls in the middle of the night, and endured repeated threats against his life.

Ouellet shared his concerns with a similarly vulnerable black minister. They resolved that, as men of God, they should trust divine providence.

Racists might threaten, but "we were just going to go on and do what we thought was the right thing," he said.

Archbishop Thomas Toolen of Mobile, Ala., forbade priests and nuns under his jurisdiction from participating in civil rights demonstrations. He justified his edict out of concern for their safety, exclaiming, "I don't want any dead priests."

This forced Ouellet into a delicate balancing act. He kept his religious superiors informed of his civil rights efforts, but did not always ask their permission.

Ouellet was recuperating from kidney surgery on March 7, 1965, when state troopers savagely attacked non-violent demonstrators crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge in an attempt to march to the state capital in Montgomery. He rushed to Good Samaritan Hospital and aided doctors and nurses dispensing emergency care to the victims. One badly injured man "looked like someone had taken a knife and sliced a piece of his head." The bloodied patient was John Lewis, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee chairman and future congressman. The date would be known as Bloody Sunday.

In response to the attack, King wired religious leaders across the United States, urging them to join the Alabama protest. In Chicago, Mathew Ahmann, executive director of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, sprang into action, calling priests sympathetic to civil rights.

"Put on your clericals," he told them. "If you don't wear them anymore, look under your bed." Conference staff worked the phones, mobilizing their network of 112 local Catholic Interracial Councils.

Priests, nuns and laypeople made the pilgrimage to Alabama in unprecedented numbers, adding a distinctive Catholic presence to the Selma protests. Delegations came from all regions:

- The Syracuse, N.Y., Catholic Interracial Council sent 13 members in a chartered plane.

- Mundelein College in Chicago dispatched a bus with 28 students and 10 faculty members.

- From St. Anselm College in New Hampshire came two priests and eight students.

- The Chicago Catholic Interracial Council sent a group of 34.

- The New York City contingent in-

## PAUL BOKULICH: 'IT WAS MAGNIFICENT'

An iconic picture of the Selma-to-Montgomery march hangs in the living room of Paul Bokulich's California home. It shows a long line of demonstrators silhouetted against a darkening sky. Bokulich was among them, he said.

In 1965, Bokulich was studying philosophy at Wayne State University. The former seminarian lived with other Catholic activists near the downtown Detroit campus. After the Rev. James Reeb, a Unitarian Universalist civil rights activist, was murdered in March, Bokulich and several housemates answered Martin Luther King Jr.'s call for volunteers to come to Selma, Ala.

The others left Selma after a few days, but Bokulich remained. When Judge Frank Johnson issued the order allowing the march to Montgomery, Bokulich offered his assistance. Because of his experience as an ambulance attendant, he was assigned to the medical detail. Thousands of people walked segments on the first and last days of the march,

but only 300 people, including Bokulich, covered all 54 miles.

"It was magnificent," he remembers. "You had this singing and you had these young people in the front who would walk in step. They made a drama out of the whole thing."

Selma marked a turning point in Bokulich's life. He never returned to college. For the next two years, he worked for civil rights on the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He and his wife, Patricia, organized newly registered voters in majority-black Greene County, Ala. Living in a sharecropper's shack, they helped prepare the way for the Rev. Thomas Gilmore to become the county's first African-American sheriff.

In the 1970s, the Bokulichs moved to Soquel, Calif., where they built a house and raised eight children. Paul operated a gas station. In retirement, he is a part-time maintenance man for St. Joseph Parish in Capitola.

—Paul Murray



—James Karales/©Estate of James Karales/David M. Rubenste in Rare Book & Manuscript Library/Duke University  
The Selma-to-Montgomery march for voting rights in Alabama in 1965



# Remembering Selma

In March 1965, civil rights marchers set out three times from Selma, Ala., triggering a series of events that became a watershed in civil rights movement history.



**March 7, 1965 'Bloody Sunday'**  
State troopers attack marchers with billy clubs, tear gas at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, six blocks out of town, and drive them back; newspapers and TV carry photos

Source: U.S. Library of Congress

**From Selma to Montgomery**

**March 9**  
Martin Luther King Jr. leads a symbolic march to the bridge

**March 21**  
About 3,200 marchers set out under court protection; they are about 25,000-strong when they arrive in Montgomery, March 25

**Aug. 6, 1965**  
President Lyndon Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act, removing barriers to voting that many blacks had faced

Graphic: Pat Carr, Lee Hulteng

© 2007 MCT



—AP Photo

Catholic nuns, African-American men and women, ministers and others rest along Route 80 in Alabama on March 21, 1965, during the voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery.

Sr. Antona Ebo delivers a statement after police halted a march to the county courthouse in Selma March 10, 1965.



—AP Images/©Bettmann Corbis

cluded 32 priests and seven laypeople, with 10 more priests coming from Brooklyn.

St. Elizabeth's ran a shuttle, transporting new arrivals from the Birmingham and Montgomery airports. More than 900 Catholics participated in the Selma protests.

King was delighted with the Catholic turnout. During a lull between demonstrations, he confided to Ouellet, "Isn't it wonderful that we are getting all kinds of people coming down, and we're even getting priests and sisters?"

The priest was unimpressed. "Well, it's about time they got here."

King disagreed: "Oh, Father, don't say that. The important thing is that they are here."

Ouellet helped Ahmann set up temporary headquarters for the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice in St. Elizabeth's parish hall. For the next two weeks, Ahmann labored behind the scenes, coordinating the Catholic response.

The Sisters of St. Joseph converted a vacant wing of Good Samaritan Hospi-

tal into a temporary dormitory. Other visitors stayed with African-American families. Good Samaritan's dietician, Patricia Robinson, supervised the kitchen staff toiling overtime to prepare meals for the guests. A roster in the hospital lobby was signed by 140 priests, 50 sisters, 29 ministers, four rabbis, 108 laymen and 38 laywomen from 26 states.

Toolen was apoplectic at the sight of protesting nuns: "Certainly the sisters are out of place in these demonstrations. Their place is at home doing God's work. ... What do they know about conditions in the South?"

However, Atlanta newspaperman Ralph McGill was thrilled to see sisters in the vanguard of protest. He reported, "The presence of the Roman Catholic nuns ... inspired the committed and shamed the timorous."

For 10 days, protests continued in Selma. Brown Chapel AME Church was the rallying point for civil rights forces. Mass meetings continued almost nonstop. Daily demonstrations set off for the county courthouse, only

to be halted by a police barrier dubbed "the Berlin Wall."

While civil rights supporters waited for permission to march to Montgomery, President Lyndon B. Johnson announced he was sending to Congress the voting rights bill that King demanded. Crowded around television sets, the Selma demonstrators cheered the president's declaration.

On March 17, 1965, Federal Judge Frank Johnson ruled that the march to Montgomery could proceed. Four days later, some 3,000 marchers departed from Selma, this time crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge without incident. King and Rabbi Abraham Heschel led the throng for the first 7 miles.

Judge Johnson's order permitted only 300 people to continue the next three days, with 250 places reserved for local residents and only 50 for out-of-state visitors who could walk all the way. One of these was Sr. Mary Leoline, a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and a teacher at Christ the King School in Kansas City, Kan. At

Continued on Page 8

## KATHY SCANNELL: ADJUTANT'S DAUGHTER

Kathy Scannell was a 23-year-old office worker for the Delaware Development Department when she flew to Alabama with a delegation from the Wilmington Catholic Interracial Council. They arrived for the last day of the Selma-to-Montgomery march.

Scannell's parents were politically connected liberal Democrats and members of Christ Our King Parish in Wilmington. Her father, Joseph Scannell, was adjutant general of the Delaware National Guard. Before she left, her father handed her a letter addressed to the adjutant general of the Alabama National Guard. She paraphrases its contents: "My daughter is visiting in Alabama and I hope you would extend to her the same courtesies that I would extend to your daughter should she be visiting Delaware."

Kathy laughs, "That was my get-out-of-jail-free card." Fortunately, she never had to use it.

The six-person Wilmington group, four whites and two blacks, drove into Montgomery's African-American community and waited for the march to pass. The marchers called out as they trooped by, "Come on. Come join us." The Wilmington contingent fell in at the back of the procession. Scannell remembers seeing soldiers in full combat gear stationed along the route — men commanded by her father's Alabama counterpart.

When she returned to Wilmington, Scannell was greeted by her older sister, who had stayed home caring for her young children. She said, "You were the lucky one. You represented all of us who couldn't go."

—Paul Murray

## SR. ANTONA EBO: INSTANT CELEBRITY

When Sr. Antona Ebo reported for work at St. Mary's Infirmary in St. Louis the morning after Bloody Sunday, her staff was discussing the brutal attack by Alabama state troopers on civil rights demonstrators. As she learned the shocking details, she casually remarked that she would "be down there helping those people" if she weren't so busy.

Forty-eight hours later, the diminutive African-American Ebo, a Franciscan Sister of Mary, was flying to Selma, part of an interfaith delegation sponsored by St. Louis Cardinal Joseph Ritter.

She confesses ambivalent emotions. "One side of me said, 'I don't want to be a martyr,' but the other side said, 'Put up or shut up.'" She felt that God was calling her bluff.

A mass meeting was underway when the St. Louis contingent filed into Brown Chapel, headquarters of the Selma protest. Spotting Ebo, the Rev. L.L. Anderson exclaimed, "This is the first time in my life I am seeing a Negro nun. To see her tells me you don't have to be white to be holy."

She was summoned to the microphone, and she told the packed church, "I am here to witness to your rights to go to register and vote."

Back in St. Louis, Ebo was an instant celebrity. Her photo appeared in *The New York Times*. Reporters called from all over the country, even from the Vatican.

Twenty years later, Ebo returned to Selma. Mayor Joe Smitherman told her, "We often wondered what became of that little colored lady that they dressed up like a nun."

—Paul Murray



## SR. BARBARA LUM: 'WE WERE REALLY TERRIFIED'

St. Joseph Sr. Barbara Lum came to Selma, Ala., from Rochester, N.Y., in 1959 to work at Good Samaritan Hospital and teach in its practical nursing program. Her African-American students told her of indignities they suffered under the Jim Crow system. Because the white Sisters of St. Joseph lived and worked in the black community, they too were shunned by most of Selma's white residents.

The sisters' convent was next to Tabernacle Baptist Church, scene of the first voting rights meeting. They stood on a radiator in Lum's room to view the crowd of hostile white men gathered outside the church. "They were standing there with billy clubs, some of them in plain clothes and some in uniforms. They lined both sides of the street. We were really terrified that people were going to be beaten when they came out of church."

On Bloody Sunday, Lum rushed to the Good Samaritan emergency room to care for demonstrators injured in the attack on the bridge. She treated people suffering scalp lacerations, broken bones and the



—Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester  
Sr. Barbara Lum at work in the pediatric ward at Good Samaritan Hospital in Selma, Ala.

effects of tear gas. "Most of them had been hit with billy clubs or fallen and run over by deputies on horses," she recalls.

When hundreds of out-of-town civil rights supporters rallied in Selma, the sisters improvised lodging in an unused hospital wing. "We just put down mattresses and people slept there, sort of dormitory style. Sisters in one area and priests in another. Our dietary [department] opened

up and cooked more meals so that they all got fed at the hospital."

Archbishop Thomas Toolen of Mobile, Ala., forbade the sisters from taking part in demonstrations, but they did not complain. "I felt that it was very important that we stay at our posts," Lum said. She never knew when she might be needed to care for victims of another assault.

—Paul Murray

## SUSAN BUTLER: 'IT WAS JUST HEARTBREAKING'

Susan Butler, a graduate of Marymount Manhattan College in her third year teaching at New York City's School for the Deaf, was watching "Judgment at Nuremberg" when the television drama was interrupted with news of the Bloody Sunday attack in Selma, Ala. "It was just heartbreaking to see," she recalls. Later that night, when Al Gordon, a veteran Freedom Rider, called urging her to accompany him to Alabama, she readily agreed.

Butler and Gordon stayed with Mrs. Howard in Selma's black community. Each morning, they reported to Brown Chapel AME Church for the day's assignment. On March 19, 1965, the pair was among more than 300 protesters arrested for picketing outside the home of Mayor Joe Smitherman. They were placed in "protective custody" and held overnight in a community center converted into an impromptu jail.

The march to Montgomery finally got underway on March 21. "It was amazing just to see this sea of people of all colors and persuasions all coming together," Butler says. Mrs. Howard had packed a lunch so they wouldn't go hungry. There was a great joy among the marchers.

As they walked, they passed clusters of both whites hurling insults and black residents cheering them on. Although the white and black spectators stood near each other, there was no conflict between them; their attention was focused on the marchers.

"It was very strange, like they all had blinders on and couldn't see anything next to them," Butler remembers.

Three years later, Butler and Gordon traveled to Memphis following Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. They joined striking sanitation workers in a silent demonstration to honor the civil rights leader.

—Paul Murray

## SELMA: ARCHBISHOP ISSUES ULTIMATUM

Continued from Page 7

the end of each day's march, she was driven back to St. Elizabeth's convent, arriving the next morning to resume marching. Another was Jim Letherer, a one-legged activist from the Saginaw, Mich., Catholic Interracial Council; he covered the 54 miles on crutches.

On the last night, the marchers camped at the City of St. Jude, a medical and educational complex on the outskirts of Montgomery operated by the Montgomery diocese. That evening, musical stars, including Harry Belafonte, Odetta, Mahalia Jackson, Joan Baez, Pete Seeger and Leonard Bernstein, entertained the crowd.

On March 25, 1965, King and his wife, Coretta Scott King, led a triumphal procession of 25,000 Americans to the steps of the Alabama state capitol. In his oration, King asked his audience how long they would have to wait for freedom. "Not long" was his refrain.

The Selma experience profoundly affected Catholic participants. William

Riordan from Santa Barbara, Calif., testified, "All of us felt our lives were enriched by the loving manner in which the Selma Negroes cared for us."

Many marchers were inspired to work for racial justice in their home communities. Fr. James Groppi, assistant pastor of St. Boniface Parish in Milwaukee, returned to Wisconsin "all on fire" for civil rights. In 1967, he organized members of the NAACP Youth Council in a crusade against segregated housing. They marched for 200 days and nights, until the city council passed an open housing ordinance.

When their guests departed, the Edmundites had to contend with an irate Toolen. The archbishop complained that Ouellet "abetted and encouraged" the Selma protest. He was incensed that "all the priests and nuns who are in Selma are being housed and fed by the Edmundite Fathers and that racial meetings are being held in the church." (This charge was untrue. St. Elizabeth's church was too small to accommodate the hundreds of protesters streaming into Selma.)

Toolen issued an ultimatum: "I want Ouellet out of Selma. He is a good

priest but crazy on this subject."

St. Elizabeth's heartbroken parishioners petitioned the archbishop to reverse his decision: "We think that your removal of Father Ouellet is wrong and will diminish Catholic influence in this community."

The *National Catholic Reporter* condemned Ouellet's ouster: "It is surely no answer to the problem [of racial intolerance] to repress the one prophet who is most visibly speaking and acting the truth."

All appeals fell on deaf ears. On June 27, 1965, Ouellet stood at St. Elizabeth's pulpit one last time. He admitted he was saddened, but urged his congregation to remain faithful and refrain from anger: "All that we do, we must do with love. As a person and individual, I matter very little. However, the church matters and matters a great deal."

[Paul Murray is professor of sociology at Siena College in Loudonville, N.Y. His research focuses on Catholic activists in the civil rights movement. He encourages movement veterans to contact him at [murray@siena.edu](mailto:murray@siena.edu).]

# Deepening the Mystery of Religious Life

September 8 - October 14, 2015

A sabbatical/renewal experience designed for women religious who desire to enter more deeply into the reality of their vocation.



Information: Manna House of Prayer, P.O. Box 675, Concordia, KS 66901  
Phone: 785-243-4428 Email: [retreatcenter@mannahouse.org](mailto:retreatcenter@mannahouse.org)

Exciting turns are ahead!

your email?

May we have

communication to fail.

We don't want

Thank you!

NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER

Soon you'll have the ability to manage your subscription and read the newspaper online. If you're interested in this service, please contact us to add or confirm an email address for your account.

Tell us your email, along with your name and six-digit account number (which appears on mailing label if this newspaper):

BY EMAIL: [account@ncronline.org](mailto:account@ncronline.org)  
BY PHONE: 800-333-7373