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Creative Imaginings

Reflective Process
and Facilitator's Guide



FACILITATOR GUIDE FOR

Creative Imaginings

What If

Step 1: Introduction by Facilitator:

In preparation for Chapter or a leadership team meeting, this invitation is to allow ourselves to *see the field*, that is, to see beyond what is familiar; to see what others might be seeing that we are missing. This Creative Imaginings exercise is based on the work of Mark L. Clarke in his article, **Envisioning the Future of Religious Life As a Pioneer Community** and that of Diarmuid O'Murchu in his book **Religious Life in the 21st Century: the Prospect of Refounding.**

Step 2: Facilitator outlines the four sections to this exercise. (You can focus on one or more of the sections.)

Section One: Here Mark Clarke provides 6 characteristics of the emerging religious life.

Section Two: O'Murchu invites us to consider wisdom and inspiration from our foundresses and founders.

Section Three: O'Murchu outlines skills he believes will be needed by religious during the middle of the 21st century.

Section Four: Both Clarke and O'Murchu call women religious to embrace the paschal mystery as a means of transformation.

For each section, we are invited to embrace the possibilities of what is being seen and to ponder the implications for ourselves as members and for our congregation.

Step 3: Facilitator asks the group to take 30 minutes to read and ponder the handout.

Step 4: After 30 minutes, facilitator checks with the group to see if they need more time. If no, facilitator asks the sisters to form small groups of 4-5 or as table groups to share their ponderings. Allow approximately 30 minutes for the small group sharing.

Step 5: After 30 minutes, facilitator opens the large group for sharing around the four areas. What insights did you gain from your table sharings? What from this reflection, do we want to retain as we continue preparing for the Chapter or for our leadership?



Creative Imaginings **What If**

Introduction:

In looking at what is emerging for women religious, it begs us to explore new insights so our behaviors begin to move us forward into the unfolding future. The following are 'what ifs' to consider during this incredible time of paradigm shifts and emergence.

What If:

What if as suggested by author, Mark L. Clarke, in his article *Envisioning the Future of Religious Life as a Pioneer Community*, page 3, the following characterizes the emerging religious congregations of the 21st century...

- *Smaller congregations committed to living and sharing the spirit of the charism*
- *Intergenerational and intercultural in composition*
- *Committed to people on the margins, especially women and children*
- *Simpler and more intentional community life enriched by faith sharing and contemplation*
- *Interconnected by a network of relationships that are passionate and committed to the congregational charism and the gospel message*
- *Technologically savvy*

Pondering: What are the implications for us if this 'what if' is true?

What if:

What if we were like the founders and foundresses as noted by Diarmuid O’Murchu in his book, **Religious Life in the 21st Century: the Prospect of Refounding**, page 223. According to O’Murchu, these great people are the historical models providing our primary wisdom and inspiration.

They...

- *Read the signs of the times*
- *Identified those marginalized and oppressed*
- *Responded courageously and unflinchingly*
- *Challenged popes, bishops, presidents*
- *Contested norms of society and corrected them*
- *Raised to consciousness the rights and dignity of women (of all people)*

Pondering: *Standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before us, ‘what if’ this was our manner of being?*

What if

What if the following skills, as outlined by O’Murchu in his book, **Religious Life in the 21st Century: the Prospect of Refounding**, pages 226-228, are needed for religious to truly be effective during this century?

- ***Cosmic Consciousness*** – *Religious have to move beyond mechanistic and dualistic perceptions and relationships to Church and embrace a more expansive, evolutionary understanding of God’s creation*
- ***Contemplation reclaimed*** - *A new depth of immersion in the sacredness of God and presence with God must be a part of the fabric of each religious’ life.*
- ***Earth literacy*** – *The degradation, exploitation of, and horrific impact on Earth needs prophetic witnesses and advocates. Religious need to be schooled in these issues and partner with others to bring about change.*

- **Community empowerment** - *The art of discernment of networking to empower new possibilities for justice and liberation will require of future religious skilled training in:*
 - *Systems Theory*
 - *Group Dynamics*
 - *Organizational Wisdom in order to engage and challenge the destructive impact mega-corporations on the modern world.*
 - *Community Organizing*
- **Economics** – *Need to be thoroughly versed in the science of economics and aware of creative alternatives to the pervasive capitalistic system.*
- **Mass Media**- *If religious are to provide an effective counterculture to prevailing consumer values, they need to be versatile in media skills, and need to have members responsibly trained so they can engage more actively in our information-saturated world.*
- **Law** – *Millions are deprived of any sense of responsible legal representation. Members need to be trained to be lawyers or solicitors, people who will be competent and capable of handling the complexities of today’s legal world.*
- **Political Networking** – *To impact our social/political reality, members need training in and awareness of contemporary political science and the art of networking for change in lieu of direct involvement in mainline politics.*
- **Multi-faith Facilitation** – *Awareness of diverse religious traditions and facilitating skills to engage the culture of multiple religions belonging (Goosen 2011) will be pastorally and ministerially essential for religious of the future.*
- **Creative Theology** – *Focus is on bringing meaning to multi-disciplinary realities and trusting orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy.*
- **Bi-lingual and Intercultural** – *In this global world, religious need to be proficient in more than one language and truly committed to authentically live community with someone from a different culture. (Added by CommunityWorks, Inc.)*

Note: “Traditional ministries such as teaching, nursing, social work and pastoral ministry will exist especially in second and third world countries along with being dependent on funding from the church. This is not sustainable and needs to involve the few while others grow in new skills.” **Religious Life in the 21st Century: the Prospect of Refounding**, page 228

Pondering: *What might this say about our community formation; on-going formation and the future leadership of the congregation? What might this say about our need for lay collaborators and strong networks?*

Closing Thoughts:

“Refounding is firmly rooted in the paschal experience of death and resurrection, vividly envisioned by Walter Brueggemann: ‘We may and do quibble about many matters in the church. But however we may parse those quibbles, we hear this confession of newness, given in ways we know not how, at the bottomless pit of death. And we begin again!’” **Religious Life in the 21st Century: the Prospect of Refounding**, pages 221.

“Today’s change must be radical and transformative. It is a profound and sacred journey that involves four important elements: contemplative silence, prayer, empathy for the individual and communal discernment. The development of the pioneer congregation will mean entering an emotional journey of grieving and letting go so new models can emerge both with their successes and failures. Communal discernment needs to be an absolute part of this sacred journey, which calls for the integration and respect for the individual aspirations with the creation and response to a communitarian call, nothing less than the paschal mystery.”
- **Mark Clarke: Envisioning the Future of Religious Life as a Pioneer Community**, page 8

Pondering: *As women standing committed to the Gospel, how are you called to embrace anew the paschal mystery?*

Do leaders and members have the capacity and willingness to take on this mindset and to adapt these new behaviors?

How can leaders empower and birth this emerging reality within the congregation?

Creative Imaginings, What If



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*Donna is available for consultation
and welcomes a conversation to
discuss your thoughts and questions
about this reflective process.*

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