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## Letter from the Director: Reflections

In the wrong hands, Mass readings leading up to Advent can be dangerous things.

The literal-minded faithful can read John 18:26 as demonizing the earth and materiality (“My kingdom does not belong to this world,” Gospel for the final Sunday, Ordinary Time, 2015) and Daniel 12:2 as demonizing the other (in the future, “some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace,” first reading, penultimate Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2015).

The skeptical can be just as literal minded, for example in reading Mark 13:24-25 as one more piece of damning evidence against faith—the sun will be darkened, stars will fall from the skies??!! (Gospel for penultimate Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2015).

Yet apocalyptic literature can be read as cultivating hope, and I was reminded what hope involves as I was reducing yet again. Those of you who have visited my office know I tend to accumulate—books and paper mostly.



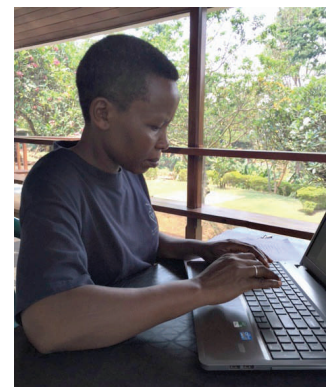
Aurora over Vík í Mýrdal, Iceland  
Image ©: Elizabeth M. Ryan

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## Conrad N. Hilton Grant: Year One

**By Barbara Fleischer, Ph.D.**

As some of you know, the Loyola Institute for Ministry received a major grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation in December 2014 to enhance the communication and leadership capacities of seven religious orders of women. We have just completed the first year of our three-year grant entitled, “Communicating Charism: Educating for Leadership and Social Media Capacity in Communities of Women Religious.” The purpose of the grant is to expand the capacity of these religious orders to attract new members, collaborators, and benefactors by developing high quality video media for each community, expanding social media capabilities, and developing the leadership skills of members through LIM’s graduate-level education. Three of the religious communities are in Africa (Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Uganda/Kenya Province of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Benin City, Nigeria). The other four are centered in the U.S. with international connections:



LIM student Sr. Ribin Musina in Uganda

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# News and Announcements

## Advent Resources

### Arts and Faith Online Reflection for Advent 2015

Celebrate Advent through an online reflection series hosted by Loyola Press and created by LIM faculty Dr. Daniella Zsupan-Jerome who continues her five-part online Advent reflection series for Loyola Press' website this year by creating reflections for Cycle C. Users can watch a video commentary by Dr. Zsupan-Jerome about a work of art that is connected to the Sunday Scriptures for each Sunday of Advent and Christmas Day.



### “An Advent Spirituality” Webinar Recording

Sr. Dot Trosclair, O.P., the director of the Spirituality Center in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, presented a webinar on December 3 about Advent spirituality. You can view a recording of it online [GO»](#)

## LIM Office Closure for Christmas

The university and LIM offices will close for the Christmas holiday from Monday, December 21 through Friday, January 1. The last day for LIM Extension students to submit a paper to the Consulting Service in order to receive it back before the holiday is Friday, December 11.

## LIM at 2016 Conferences

### Gulf Coast Faith Formation Conference • January 7-9

The [Gulf Coast Faith Formation Conference](#) takes place at the Ponchartrain Center in Kenner, LA. This year's theme is “God-given Dignity—Respecting All of Life.” If you are able to attend the conference, please stop by our booth (#107) for a visit. LIM faculty will also be taking part in breakout sessions:

#### **Friday, January 8**

- Tom Ryan, Ph.D., gives a presentation “A Spirituality for the End Times” (#107) from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- Daniella Zsupan-Jerome, Ph.D., gives a presentation “Spirit-Filled Words and Listening Hearts: Faithful Communication in Digital Contexts” (#208) from 1:30-2:30 p.m.

#### **Saturday, January 9**

- Tom Ryan, Ph.D., gives a major presentation “Pope Francis Matters” (#508) from 1:30-2:30 p.m.

### Mid-Atlantic Congress • February 4-6

The [Mid-Atlantic Congress](#) takes place at the Baltimore Hilton Hotel in Baltimore, MD. This year's theme is “Forming Catholic Leaders for Faith-Filled Service.” Visit us in the exhibitors' hall.

### Los Angeles Religious Education Congress • February 26-28

The [Los Angeles Religious Education Congress](#) takes place at the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, CA. This year's theme is “Boundless Mercy.” Visit us in the exhibitors' hall.

## Commencement 2016

The 2016 spring commencement activities will be held the weekend of 21 May 2015. The LIM liturgy and reception is on Saturday afternoon, May 21, at 4:30 p.m. All certificate and degree candidates are invited to participate with their guests. University Commencement for degree candidates for May, August, and December 2015 is on Saturday, May 21 at 9:45 a.m. in the Mercedes Benz Louisiana Superdome. Students who apply for graduation in 2015 are sent by email information from Diane Blair [dblair@loyno.edu](mailto:dblair@loyno.edu) on the liturgy and reception and the other university commencement activities. Information is also posted on the university commencement page. All 2016 degree and certificate graduates (students who have successfully completed 27 hours or 9 courses) need to apply online for graduation. The university's reply to your online application will be sent to your loyno.edu email address. You may find your Loyola email address on LORA if you do not remember it.

# Summer Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership (SICEL) 2016

## Plan Now to Attend!

Join other Catholic educators on June 6-8, 2016 on the campus of Loyola University New Orleans to participate in the Summer Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership. This year's theme is "Spiritual Leadership 'How to...': Forming One Body in Christ."

The institute is a 3-day event filled with influential speakers, informative panel discussions, and breakout groups who will share practical applications for educational leaders in churches and schools. Speakers this year include Fr. Fred Kammer, S.J., former President of Catholic Charities, USA, who will address Catholic Social Teaching and LIM Director Tom Ryan who will address the implications of Pope Francis.

### For More Information

- Visit the SICEL web page [GO»](#)
- Contact Diane Dougherty, event coordinator  
[dmdoughe@loyno.edu](mailto:dmdoughe@loyno.edu) / 504-865-3727

*For job announcements, LIM updates, and other good stuff, like us on [Facebook!](#)*



## Online Open Houses

18 February 2016 • 15 March 2016 • All take place at 8 p.m. Central Time

If you know someone who may be interested in LIM on-campus or online programs, please encourage them to attend one of our fall online open houses. To attend an Online Open House, users should

1. Go to <http://loyno.adobeconnect.com/openhouse/>
2. Select "Enter as a Guest"
3. Type in your name and click "Enter Room." If you log-in before the starting time, you will need to wait until the start time before being invited in.

## Spring Classes Set: On-Campus and Online

### On-Campus Spring 2016 Classes

[Christian Origins \(New Testament\)](#) (LIM C712-051) • Gilberto A. Ruiz, Ph.D., Tuesdays

[Spirituality, Morality, and Ethics](#) (LIM C704-051) • Rev. Edward Vacek, S.J., Ph.D., Wednesdays

### Online Spring 2016 Classes

[Introduction to Practical Theology](#) (LIM G703-W01) • Rev. Ben Berinti, C.Pp.S., Ph.D.

[Jewish Roots of Christian Faith](#) (LIM G711-W01) • Michael A. Cowan, Ph.D.

[Christian Origins \(New Testament\)](#) (LIM G712-W01) • Evelyn Thibeaux, Ph.D.

[Church, Sacraments and Liturgy](#) (LIM G722-W01) • Daniella Zsupan-Jerome, Ph.D.

[Spirituality, Morality, and Ethics](#) (LIM 704-W01) • Sister Elizabeth Willems, SSND, Ph.D.

[Digital Media and Ministry](#) (LIM 826-W01) • Daniella Zsupan-Jerome, Ph.D.

[Pastoral and Educational Praxis](#) (LIM 886-W01) • Michael A. Cowan, Ph.D.



## Hilton Grant: Year One Continued

Daughters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Chi Hoa (U.S. and Vietnam), Sisters of the Holy Family (African American Community founded in New Orleans), Congregation of Mt. Carmel Sisters (located in Louisiana, the Philippines, and Timor-Leste), Congregation of St. Joseph Sisters (recently founded from the combination of seven independent U.S. St. Joseph Sister communities).

For media production, we are blessed indeed to partner with Salt and Light Catholic Television Network of Canada. Their capable staff will create short videos and seven documentaries, which will be aired on Salt and Light's network and affiliate stations. The videos will eventually be linked to each community's website and social media. Fr. Thomas Rosica, C.S.B., is executive director of Salt and Light and also the English-language assistant to the Holy See Press. He often appears on CNN and other stations when they air events featuring Pope Francis, so you may have seen Fr. Tom on television during the pope's recent U.S. visit. The producer of the seven-documentary series is Ms. Cheridan Sanders. You may link to Cheridan's blog, as well as to other information on the grant, through our project web site: [lim.loyno.edu/charism](http://lim.loyno.edu/charism).

One of the first challenges we faced in this first year of the project was getting the infrastructure in place for the African sisters' online course work. The locations varied in internet capability. In northern Uganda and in Rombo, Tanzania the only possibilities for internet were satellite dishes and, amazingly, we were able to contract with service providers and have all needed equipment installed in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya by the start date of the first course in May. The grant provided computers to all African LIM students, but the sisters also varied in experience with computer literacy. Several had steep learning curves just to be able to type and save Word documents. By May, we had 42 students ready and all began the first course of the program, *Introduction to Practical Theology*.



Daughters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, Queen of Peace Province, New Orleans, LA.

LIM Director Dr. Tom Ryan travelled to Nigeria to bring course resources and meet the students there. I was blessed to travel to Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya in the spring semester. I was amazed at the schools, hospitals, and ministries that the sisters there have developed with great faith and few resources. When I asked how they managed to do so much, the usual answer was "slowly, slowly...we begin and then we save what we can and expand." I truly am in awe of their resourcefulness, joy, courage, grace, and persistence.

In the spring, the students involved in this project will begin their third course. Salt and Light will be filming in the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Vietnam, and the U.S.... Stay tuned for more!



RSCJ Sisters in Kenya learning how to do LIM online courses.

## Webinar

**Creating a Culture of Encounter in the Year of Mercy: How To** • January 21, 2016 • 8 p.m. Central



Susan Mary Weishar, Ph.D., is a fellow and migration specialist at the Jesuit Social Research Institute (JSRI), Loyola University New Orleans. Dr. Weishar will illuminate a spirituality of encounter in this Year of Mercy by describing teach-ins on migration she has helped to develop for JSRI. To attend the webinar,

1. Go to <http://loyno.adobeconnect.com/webinar/>
2. Select "Enter as a Guest"
3. Type in your name and click "Enter Room." If you log-in before the starting time, you will need to wait until the start time before being invited in.



## Letter from the Director Continued

As I was designating some papers for recycling, I stumbled across a copy of the “Testament of Dom Christian de Chergé.” He was Prior of the Cistercian Monastery in Tibhirine, Algeria, the country where he lived early on and that is 98% Muslim. “As a child . . . he expressed curiosity about the Muslims he saw at prayer. His mother told him, ‘They are praying to God.’ He concluded, ‘I have always known that the God of Islam and the God of Jesus Christ do not make two’” (42).

He joined the Cistercians in 1971. In 1976 the monks at Tibhirine identified themselves as “those who pray [and work with and] among others who pray” (181).

Through his experience and study, he noticed the joint commitment of Christianity and Islam to God’s mercy and the prevalence of this word in the Qur’an. For him, one of the roles of Islam in God’s plan is “living in and witnessing to the one merciful God” (46). Christians “need the faith of the believers in Islam in the mercy of God in order to discover, in a deeper way, the richness of their own faith tradition” (42-43).

“As a mystic, Christian de Chergé lived each day a theology of religious encounter that had its focal point . . . in eschatological thinking. As he . . . recognized, ‘If the monk believes he has something to say here, it is . . . as someone committed to practicing a way of being in the world that makes no sense outside hope of the last things,’” of the end times (122).

De Chergé composed his Testament in 1993; it was made public on Pentecost 1996 after he and six other monks had been kidnapped and eventually beheaded by insurgents in the Algerian Civil War. The events that led up to this are poignantly dramatized in the film *Of Gods and Men*. His Testament begins, “If it should happen one day—and it could be today—that I become a victim of . . . terrorism . . .” It then offers moving reflections on life in Algeria, his possible murderer, and what his faith calls for.

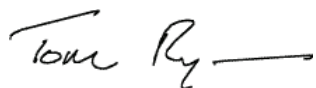
De Chergé then imagines his heavenly vocation. “This is what I shall be able to do, God willing: immerse my gaze in that of the Father to contemplate with him His children of Islam just as He sees them, all shining with the glory of Christ, the fruit of His Passion, filled with the Gift of the Spirit whose secret joy will always be to establish communion and restore the likeness, playing with the differences.”

In de Chergé’s Trinitarian account, Muslims as Muslims—not as potential converts—play key roles in God’s plans. He anticipates that his vision in the eschaton will be transformed into God’s vision, yet he already attempts it in this life. And that vision, which entails “becoming unconditionally men and women of dialogue” in the service of solidarity, has other mysterious and hopeful consequences. It has transformed him and his monks, their Muslim neighbors, and those who have learned of their lives and commitments since.

For de Chergé, the Incarnation represents an invitation to live in the eschatological hope that Jesus already inaugurates—to see, as God does, through the eyes of divine love; to live, as the Trinity does, in self-giving community; to act, as Jesus did and his Spirit do, respectful of culture and committed to justice.

What a difference it would make to read Advent and Christmas texts through these lenses!

Grace and peace in this season of hopeful anticipation!



**Loyola Institute for Ministry**



### Works Cited

De Chergé, Christian. “Testament of Dom Christian de Chergé,” 1993. <http://goo.gl/wZ3UiE>

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Ministry education to make a  
difference in the world.

## The Loyola Institute for Ministry

**The mission of the Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM) is to prepare women and men for religious education and ministerial leadership in Catholic and other Christian communities through professional graduate education and through professional continuing education. The Master of Religious Education and the Master of Pastoral Studies degrees are offered in the Institute. A number of continuing education options are also part of Institute programming.**

**This newsletter is designed for students in all the LIM programs, alums, current liaisons, facilitators, faculty, and friends.**

**The content of the newsletter is collected, edited, and prepared for the web by Jennifer Shimek.**



## Upcoming Events

### JANUARY

7-9th • Gulf Coast Faith Formation Conference • Ponchartrain Center • [GO»](#)

19th • Classes begin • [GO»](#)

21st • Sue Weishar, Ph.D., presents "Creating a Culture of Encounter in the Year of Mercy: How To" • Webinar • 8 p.m. Central • [GO»](#)

### FEBRUARY

4-6th • Mid-Atlantic Congress • Baltimore, MD • [GO»](#)

26-28 • Los Angeles Religious Education Congress • [GO»](#)

18th • Online Open House • 8:00 p.m. Central • [GO»](#)

### MARCH

15th • Online Open House • 8:00 p.m. Central • [GO»](#)

### MAY

21st • University Commencement • Mercedes-Benz Superdome • 9:45 a.m. Central • [GO»](#)

21st • LIM Liturgy and Reception • Loyola's Main Campus • 4:30 p.m. Central • [GO»](#)