

From the LCWR Presidency
Celebrating Itinerancy

by Pat Farrell, OSF — LCWR Past President

In the midwest spring has been slow in coming this year, so most of us are more than ready for it. Nature's dramatic flowering and greening always seem to be suddenly upon us, abrupt and surprising, even as we suffer through the drabness of March anticipating it. Spring so aptly coincides with the Easter season in the northern hemisphere, surrounding us with symbols of new life! We have much to celebrate. Hopeful signs in Rome seemed to appear as abruptly and surprisingly as the spring, lifting spirits in as global a way as the change of season.



your hands and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go." (Jn. 21: 18b) Some things simply come to an end: our time in leadership, our work, living situations, life itself. There is no choice but to let go and to move forward into the unknown. But itinerancy of the heart is chosen, cultivated. It is not an automatic posture, given the human tendency to settle into the familiar. But it is a virtue long-honored in religious life. Inner itinerancy keeps us appropriately dislodged for outer movement towards

the God who is coming to us from the future. I celebrate it with this poem:

For women in congregational leadership spring is frequently a time of busy transition. Many congregations are preparing for a general chapter, or elections, or transition of leadership. LCWR spring regional meetings are often a time of welcoming new leaders and of appreciative leave-taking of those going out of office. Lives are either in transition, or preparing to be. That reminds me of stories in my congregation of the annual custom of sisters finishing the school year and packing their trunks in preparation to move to another mission, in case they would be reassigned. I can hardly imagine doing so, yet there is something in that practice I find attractive. It gives stark expression to the itinerant quality of radical discipleship.

In our case, the vowed life positions us in freedom to respond to new situations of need. Itinerancy is a fundamental disposition of the heart, a posture of readiness for God's compelling claim on our lives for mission. The spring, end-of-the-school-year custom of packing a trunk in readiness to move, gave outward expression to that inner disposition. The practice is now obsolete, but the posture has never been more urgently needed. In this springtime of massive paradigm shift, letting-go is the most essential of skills.

Clearly, life leads us into an itinerancy not necessarily of our choosing. "When you grow old you will stretch out

To all that is brief and fragile
 Superficial, unstable,
 To all that lacks foundation
 Argument or principles,
 To all that is light,
 Fleeting, changing, finite
 To smoke spirals,
 Wand roses,
 To sea foam
 And mists of oblivion...
 To all that is light in weight.
 For itinerants
 On this transient earth
 Somber, raving,
 With transitory words
 And vapory bubbly wines
 I toast
 In breakable glasses....

Maria Eugenia Baz Ferreira

*Inner itinerancy keeps us appropriately dislodged
 for outer movement towards the God
 who is coming to us from the future.*