



# Convocation 2014: Day One!

Wednesday, July 9, 2014

## Sisters Begin Convocation Embracing "Future with Hope"

With colorful streamers, heartfelt prayer and joyous song, Sisters of Mercy from the Mid-Atlantic Community opened their five-day Convocation on July 9 to plan a future full of hope and promise.

Nearly 475 sisters and a handful of Mercy Associates are gathered on the campus of Misericordia University, Dallas, PA, to advance the development of the Mid-Atlantic Community, provide members with enrichment and education, deepen unity and relationships, and determine the Community's method of electing delegates to the Institute Chapter.



Mid-Atlantic Community President  
Pat Vetrano

In the Opening Ritual, Sister Regina Burrichter, voicing words of Catherine McAuley, encouraged sisters to center themselves in God to embrace a future of hope.

"Be centered in God from whom all actions spring as from their source," she said.

The event includes contemplative prayer, a two-day presentation and discussion by Luisa Saffiotti, Ph.D., titled "Transformation: Embracing a Future of Hope"; a talk on hydro-fracking; an Extraordinary Assembly to address proposals regarding the community; and a conversation between leadership and members. On Friday, three novices will be received into the community. Eucharist will also be celebrated during the week.

Among those attending the Convocation are Sister Pat McDermott, president of the Institute Leadership Team (ILT), and Sisters Eileen Campbell and Mary Pat Garvin of the ILT, who are also members of the Mid-Atlantic Community.

Sister Pat Vetrano, Mid-Atlantic president, welcomed participants and explained that the symbol for the gathering is the Chambered Nautilus, a seashell with chambers in which a sea organism lives for a season until it outgrows the space. To accommodate new stages of life, the nautilus grows, moves into a new chamber, each one larger than the last,

leaving the smaller chambers behind. She said this continual growth represents our own personal and communal journeys as Sisters of Mercy and members of the Mid-Atlantic Community.

Following the evening, Sister Catherine Manderfield considered the gathering an invitation to "listen deeply to the Spirit already living within and among us." Sister Eileen Trainor said she welcomed input from others and was pleased with the contemplative nature of the Convocation.

The Opening Ritual began with images and music to set the tone. Then, sisters waving colored cloths and streamers wove their way between tables before placing the streamers on the stage to symbolize joy and thanksgiving for the many gifts God has given us. Readings from Ephesians, Psalms and the Sisters of Mercy Constitutions reminded sisters of their call to hear the cry of the poor.

At one point, participants seated at round, white-clothed tables were asked to take a pinch of salt from a shell and place it in a bowl of water as a sign of their identity with those who suffer. They were asked to "know their oneness with the pain and hope of the earth and all her children." Sisters, some holding hands, sang the hymn "Circle of Mercy" to close the ritual.



Participating in salt ritual

In her welcome, Pat Vetrano said like the nautilus, the Sisters of Mercy have been moved beyond their comfortable chambers to rely on one another for encouragement and support. The nature of the nautilus is the nature of the followers of Catherine McAuley, she said. "We follow in the footsteps of Catherine, responding as best as we can to the needs of our time, changing, being transformed, always evolving, always becoming something new," she said.



Sisters meeting at registration

Long lines of sisters waited patiently in the afternoon to register for the Convocation, get their room keys and renew old acquaintances. Sister Theresa Condon was among them. "I like the opportunity to meet and get to know more people in the community," she said. "I enjoy talking to people at a deeper level about our future in the church and our role in it."

Added Sister Maureen B. McCann, "This is a great opportunity to come together to spread Mercy around the world."

Sister Bernadette Wynne tied in the Convocation with a pivotal moment decades ago in the Catholic Church. "We as Sisters of Mercy adopted Vatican II principles 50 years ago, and I would like to revisit some of those principles, ideals and practices," she said.

And Sister Ginny Medwid looked at the next few days this way: "I'm looking forward to the camaraderie, being together again and seeing what the future has for us. We'll do a lot of listening and work and have some fun."

### **Enjoy More Photos!**

For more photos of Day One, click [here](#) to access Shutterfly (username: midsister; password: mercy1831). We also have a video of the Opening Ritual. As soon as we have that uploaded, we'll share the link!

### **The Mid-Atlantic Community Convocation Committee**

Catherine Darcy, RSM, Marie Ann Ellmer, RSM, Anne Kappler, RSM  
Kathleen Keenan, RSM, Maureen King, RSM, Patricia Lapczynski, RSM  
Marie Parker, RSM, Anna Saltzman, RSM  
Debbi Della Porta - Communications Staff



Sisters of Mercy Mid-Atlantic Community, 515 Montgomery Avenue, Merion, PA 19066

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Sent by [ddellaporta@mercymidatlantic.org](mailto:ddellaporta@mercymidatlantic.org)