

## **Second Community Assembly: "Seeding the Future"**

**By Linda Taylor, CSJ**

On May 9, 2015, 99 Sisters, 44 Consociates and 1 Candidate gathered for the second Community Assembly (CA) of the St. Paul Province. The theme for the day was "Seeding the Future". The morning ritual included inspirational readings from the "World Café" and Clarissa Pinkola Estes, and guided us to reflect on the "Calls to Action" created at the 2013 Congregational Chapter. As each "call" was read, everyone responded with a resounding: "POSSUMUS! WE ARE ABLE! YES WE CAN!"

During the morning session, Table groups looked at five Vision and Purpose statements based on themes that emerged at the first CA in January. Some of the themes were: "developing existing and expanding relationships with a diversity of others who share our charism..." "focus on the mission and values of Jesus", "inspire action around justice issues", "engage with others, partners, experts as well as those directly impacted by issues in significant dialogue and in identifying current/emerging needs and resources". Each group selected the one statement they thought was closest to what they wanted the Vision and Purpose to be and talked about words/ideas they wanted to add to it. Discussion in the room grew spirited and intense as table groups talked, visited other tables to "cross-pollinate" ideas, and added or crossed out words until they were satisfied with the results. Completed statements were hung on the wall, then everyone read them and placed a dot on the one they liked the best. The posted outcomes showed leanings toward two of the original five statements and a large number of statements that combined ideas into a new statement. The CA Planning Committee will take the statements and use input from them to prepare new statements for participants to work with at the next Community Assembly.

In the afternoon, CA participants worked on defining the composition of the CA. This led to a conversation about how the Community Assembly would be different from the Province Assembly. The question was raised about what it would be like for the participants to be "equal". Florence Steichen suggested: "I think of "equal" in the sense of having equal voice and status. Everyone's voice is of equal importance and carries the same weight". More discussion followed, and it became clear that we weren't ready to define who the participants will be or to make rules that could inhibit the flexibility of the new entity. Peg Schwendeman said, "I always draw the map for my garden in pencil. I start with where I am going to plant things. If I get a new idea, or something doesn't work, I erase it and change it. We need to write our plan for the Community Assembly in pencil, too, so we can erase, adjust and change things as we need to...as reality changes." People seemed to be in agreement that the new Community Assembly is a "work in progress" and we need to be patient and let it emerge.

At the end of the day, Individuals said they sat with some people they didn't know and became better acquainted with others. The closing ritual included watching "The Everything Seed", the reading of more "Acts of Chapter", and again the resounding: "POSSUMUS! WE ARE ABLE! YES WE CAN!"

At the close of the ritual, Kathy McLaughlin led everyone in singing, "Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah" while staff of Carondelet Center and Carondelet Village passed out ice cream treats. We ended the day hopeful for the future and energized by our interactions with each other.