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Speakers explore what Loretto order has to offer today

Arthur Jones | May. 19, 2012

From left: Loretto Sr. Delores Kincaide, co-member Kim Klein, and Sr. Maureen Fiedler (Margie Jones)

NERINX, KY. -- ?Today?s youth and young adults want what Lorettos already have,? Loretto Sr. Delores Kincaide told the Loretto jubilee gathering of hundreds of members and co-members here April 25. ?A deeper spirituality, a supportive community, and a purpose that will change the world in which they live. Loretto is in a position now to consciously promote expansion by reaching out to these youth and others who desire what we already possess.?

Politicians pontificate, the Vatican and hierarchy play politics, but women religious simply keep their eye on the road ahead. They walk the walk, but when they pause, they can certainly talk the talk. And they did at the community?s Symposium on the Future. Kincaide, longtime coordinator of the Loretto Network for Non-Violence, was the first of three speakers whose style ranged from droll to intense, from witty to exhorting, from profound to spiritual.

?Loretto has existed to meet the needs of the time with the wisdom of the time. That?s why we were given the gifts of higher education, Third-World experiences and the freedom to live where most needed,? Kincaide said. She urged her fellow Lorettines to create ?a new Earth. To make the motherhouse an institute whose reasons for existence would be to intentionally work on learning together, teaching others about evolutionary consciousness and spirituality. Make the motherhouse a laboratory for sustainability on all levels of living.? Draw to the task, she said, the tools and resources of the metaphysical sciences -- philosophy, psychology, theology and spirituality -- and the physical sciences.

Loretto co-member Kim Klein, zeroing in on ?the end of Western economic progress as we know it, and the future of Loretto,? worked in parallel to Kincaide?s artful arguments: ?Make a radical shift in how we conceptualized our economy.? She said the capitalist engine of economic growth has, in the rich countries, largely finished its work -- ?though, like radiation, it has a long half-life.? To improve today?s quality of life, ?now depends on community and how we relate to each other.?

Klein, an Oakland, Calif.-based fundraising consultant for social justice nonprofits, and a co-member for 20 years, said, ?what we at Loretto know how to do is the most important information in the U.S. today -- we know how to be friends, how to offer friendship across generations, across opinions, across nations. The vow of

poverty meant that everything is shared, but there are ways of sharing that might involve different promises. We know how to measure community by its happiness, rather than by its product; by its quality, not its accomplishments.?

Interlinking with Kincaide?s proposal, Klein said, ?This is our moment. It is not just our challenge -- it is our time.?

Mother Earth and the effect of climate change is *the* issue of the 21st century, said the final speaker, Loretto Sr. Maureen Fiedler. Like Klein, Fiedler wove her concerns about climate change -- and the lobby to downplay it -- into Kincaide?s vision for a motherhouse center ?to promote a spirituality to undergird this work. But it has to be an active spirituality, a seedbed for advocacy and action, and it needs to embrace the interfaith dimension.

?A lot of us lament that very few people are entering? religious life, said Fiedler, who hosts the radio program ?Interfaith Voices.? ?But young people are attracted by our values -- at least the conscious ones -- and deeply concerned about climate change. They know a ruined planet could be their future, and they know they must act. So, let us think about attracting young people to join a Loretto effort that has a firm spiritual foundation, but is also active in multiple ways.?

Fiedler took the story back to Loretto?s origins, the three founding women, and today?s Loretto volunteers in Washington, D.C., ?young women who live simply and ecologically, who talk excitedly about Loretto values, who care about what they do. This volunteer program is vibrant and alive. Can we expand this work? New forms of membership? Environmental volunteers, perhaps. New forms of membership -- the involvement of vowed and non-vowed in special ways??

The answer from those attending was a resounding yes. And a roar of laughter when Fiedler added it was the youth who could ?expand our energy and our mission at a time when some of us can no longer work an eight-hour day.?

The vision: a new, young Loretto, at age 200.

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