



**Coordinating Council Meeting
November 2021**

Opening Remarks

Jane Herb, IHM, President

Good morning! We come together this morning to begin our work as a Coordinating Council. The tradition of beginning our gathering with a Stretching Experience continued yesterday as we pondered our white culture and the contribution it makes to systemic racism. Today we begin our work, enabling “communication, faith sharing, consultation, and deliberation between and among members of the Leadership Council and Community Circles” (IHM Constitutions, Article 108).

Since the beginning of this leadership term, the Coordinating Council has convened during the pre-pandemic period, the pandemic period; and now the post-pandemic time. Most of us are deciding to get a booster shot while we continue to hear of break-through cases of COVID. We encounter some who turn their heads and act like the pandemic never happened. Others continue to be cautious and careful where they travel and to avoid large groups. We are aware of the disproportionate effect the global pandemic has had on people of color and we hear of thousands around the world who have not had the opportunity of the first vaccine. People talk about returning to normal and we know that cannot be the reality.

Within our country we experience partisan politics, and we pray that our legislators will come together to *build back better*, and to tend toward some type of economic stability for all people. Various parts of our country have experienced flooding, uncontrollable fires, and other effects of global warming. Within our Church, there is the invitation to synodality, inviting all of us to come together, contributing to Synod 2023. Amid these realities, we gather to foster “a sense of the whole regarding the life, mission, and common good of the Congregation” (IHM Constitutions, Article 108).

As I prepared these comments, I found myself returning to a reference I made earlier at a Coordinating Council meeting in 2013, that of imaginal cells. Imaginal cells are the ones that create the incredible process of metamorphosis that occurs when a caterpillar changes into a butterfly. Although Theresa of Avila did not talk about imaginal cells, she referenced the transformation of the Spirit that happens as similar to that of the development of the butterfly. Barbara Marx Hubbard speaks of imaginal cells and the potential these cells have to develop, even though there are forces at work that also try to destroy these cells. The tiny caterpillar forms a chrysalis and hangs from a branch

on the journey to becoming a butterfly. Within that chrysalis there are imaginal cells, seeds of future potential, which at first lie dormant and are attacked by the caterpillar's immune system. But they persist, multiply and connect with one another; resulting in the emergence of a butterfly. The mantra of Imaginal Labs, located in New York, believes that "courageous leaders are the imaginal cells within their organizations to help them transform to meet the challenges of our times."

You may be wondering what this short biology lesson has to do with the Coordinating Council. I believe that we are about nurturing the imaginal cells and connecting them in order to create our story for the future. We, as representatives and as leadership, come together having gathered the imaginal cells from our respective groups. Some of those cells will die and we will work to connect others to create something new.

Look around you. Those of you who have been on the Coordinating Council for the past three years will notice that there are two fewer members, and we gather around one less table. This reflects our reality as we engage in our emerging future. Let me say a few words about our coming together from the Governance Circles, Leadership, and the Associates. You come together as representatives, bringing input from your respective groups. Once we sit at these tables, we are a new entity. We become a deliberative body, a separate part of our governance structure. Together we discern the perspective each of us brings to create something new. You may go back to your respective Governance Circle or the Leadership Council and face questions; such as, "How did this emerge from the CC? It wasn't our idea?" No, but what will emerge from our deliberations is something new. The butterfly doesn't look anything like the caterpillar, yet each stage is important in getting us to a new place.

Steven Covey's mantra is, "Begin with the end in mind." If we look at the agenda, there are two fundamental questions that we will answer: What are the focus questions for the Coordinating Council for the next three years? What is the focus of the 2022 Assembly? We certainly cannot answer those questions today. But, over the course of the next two days, we will reflect on our experience of the Assembly last summer as well as the gathering for the 175th anniversary. Those together with our reflection on the Finance Report and the update from the Process and Oversight Committee will provide those imaginal cells that we will nurture to provide answers to those questions.

When the Leadership Council met to reflect on the past three years and to look to the next three, we concluded that we desired a "new look" for the Coordinating Council. The Agenda Committee developed the agenda with that in mind. We chose not to put

specific times on the agenda, but rather to allow for the creative space we need to contemplatively listen to one another, and to have the time we need to reflect and converse with one another. I often hear the question about shortening the length of our meeting. We are committed to letting the agenda drive our time together – not filling up time slots. Together we will decide whether to continue the Stretching Experience and what time we need to tend to our emerging future. Not only is this gathering at the mid-point of our six-year term, but it is also the Coordinating Council that will help shape Chapter 2024.

The fundamental question that was before us during our gatherings this past summer and that will continue to guide us is “What is God calling us to as we look to 2024? to 2030?”