



CCA HISTORY

Sr. Marian Steffens, OCD

We come to share our story 1970 to 2015

As I greet you today, the most important message I want to pass on is the truth that You, each one of you is CCA. We are CCA. The key to this reality is our relationships. Just as each family has a story, a history, so does our Association. I am happy to begin the story and Sr. Claire will take you to our present situation, but it falls to you, our newer members to carry the torch and keep the story alive and growing.

All stories start 'In the beginning' and so it is with ours.....

The purely contemplative life has always been treasured as an important part of the Church. Many letters, instructions, addresses, are the proof of the esteem for this charism for the Church.

Pope Pius XII issued an Apostolic Constitution in 1950, entitled *Sponsa Christi*. Besides laying out the theology of the purely contemplative life, Pius acknowledged the need to adapt the long standing regulations of what is called *Papal Cloister* because of 'variations and changes of time and circumstances' in a sentence, which to me is a good rule of thumb for interpretation of law and the documents states: "And not only the apostolic orders, but also the purely contemplative ones have been times induced or compelled by circumstances and the grave need in which they find themselves to modify these same norms or to interpret them more broadly." (p.17 introduction to the constitution) In this same important document, there is a strong recommendation by the Holy See for monasteries of nuns to form federations (Article VII).

Because all monasteries are *sui juris*, i.e. autonomous communities where the prioress is a major superior, this call of the Church was not readily accepted. The situation at the times called for something to be done as monasteries were struggling with isolation and lack of vitality. The poverty of some groups was a concern, but the viability and the spiritual health were even of greater concern. There was need for the building up of the purely contemplative life and this document strongly encourages the nuns to find suitable monastic work in the goal of proper support of their monasteries.

Federations were seen as a way 'to give one another fraternal aid, not only in promoting the religious spirit and regular monastic discipline, but also in managing economic matters'. (#8 page 34)