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NOURISHING COMMUNITY

By Moira Reilly

I love CCA and have been going to the Annual Gathering off and on (mostly on, until COVID) since 2010. In the past, I have always come away physically drained but spiritually uplifted, thinking about a new issue to round out my social justice awareness and practice. This year, I was delighted to find that I didn't feel physically exhausted by the end of the weekend; I felt renewed and refreshed, as though I had been on a retreat.

Over the weekend, I had the opportunity to hear the vocational stories of several CCA members in small group and informal settings. This was my first time hearing many of these stories, even though I have seen these members at multiple gatherings over many years. I was honored to get to know Jeannie, Rob Weise, Kathy Simonse, Bob Schimmel, Dave Harl, Grace Williams, Bishop "call me John" Stowe, and Sharon Colton and Bob Hampton a bit better.

As Dave Harl pointed out, so many CCA members have done or are doing faith-based service with Catholic organizations. My own story includes service as a Jesuit Volunteer, a Passionist Volunteer, and three years as a caretaker at Bethlehem Farm. The charisms of these formational ministries include cornerstones of Spirituality, Simplicity, Justice and Service, and Community.

As Bill Reichenbach reflected on the weekend, he shared that **Community** seemed to be the theme this year. I could

not agree more. No wonder: as Molly Linehan Belcher observed in reflecting on CCA, it seems that CCA is important to those for whom being Catholic and the Church's social mission is important. As CCA members, our shared values are grounded in our Catholic faith and call to love and serve God by loving, serving, and advocating for those on the margins. We are strengthened, nourished, and renewed for these ministries as we gather as a community.

It was wonderful to see old friends and new faces, with a wide spread of ages from three-year-old Cecelia Michaelina Iafrate to "old timers" in their 80's. We welcomed many new members to their first Annual Gathering, including Molly and Casey from Bethlehem Farm, and Madeline, Dan, Ben, and Bob from Nazareth Farm, Kasey Bailes from Wheeling, and Jeannie's own parents, Marge and Tom Kirkhope!

The weekend also created safe spaces for sharing our struggles with RC Inc. as it exists in our time and place. But as Sr. Kathleen Weigand reflected, "The Spirit is moving". Many members echoed a sense that CCA is at an inflexion point; we can't quite see the path laid out before us, but all the signs indicate change is upon us. Arnie Simonse reflected that, as we see in all of Creation {and I would add the Pascal Mystery}, the cycle of growth, decline, death, and resurrection and new life is *the way*. Every threshold feels like we're about to fall off a cliff.

I am not the biggest fan of change. But when I look back over my life, in hindsight I can see that every major move, job

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transition, or end of a relationship prepared me or my next chapter. I trust that this will be the case for us as an organization.

In order to discern where we're going and what CCA will look like, we have to know where we've been and how CCA has evolved. Jeannie walked us through the trajectory of CCA's history (complete with a fabulous PowerPoint) on Friday evening. I have been a CCA member since 2010 and was on the board for a few years awhile back, but this was the most clear and comprehensive explanation of CCA's story I've ever heard. Thanks Jeannie!

While we didn't have a social or ecological justice theme this weekend, we did take a field trip on Saturday afternoon to visit Kasha McDonald at WV Black Pride Foundation (wvbpfoundation.com) on Charleston's West Side. Kasha and her team have created WVBPF as a response to the needs she saw for community, fellowship, and safe space for transgender people of color. Kasha is an inspiration and potent reminder that all are welcome and all are loved! Bishop John echoed this in his homily, reminding us that while anger can ignite us to work for justice, ultimately it is love and community and bridge-building (which requires forgiveness) that build God's Kindom. Kasha is building! Kasha and Jeannie shared with us a new partnership in which WV Black Pride Foundation will be developing an outdoor retreat center at SAKO's, the land of CCA's APPAL project, for transgender folx and Black folx and people of color to enjoy the rest, renewal, and refreshment that comes from spending time in God's beautiful Creation.

This was my first Annual Gathering since Mikey (Michael Iafate) died in 2021. Mikey and I carpoled to my first CCA gathering in 2010, and served on the board together before he became a co-coordinator. As Sr. Monica

Schieber observed, our collective grief in the midst of Mikey's physical absence (for certainly he was with us in spirit!) was palpable. But as Arnie reminded us, new life comes quickly on the heels of loss, and it was a delight to have Mikey's wife Jocelyn, and daughters Hazel, Izzy (Isadora), and Cecelia "I go by my second name, Michaelina" in our midst as a reminder that Mikey lives on not only

genetically through his daughters, but in Spirit through CCA and all who knew Michael and continue his fervor in speaking Truth to Power, including doing so creatively through music and art. To be completely honest, as I look back, I realize that I took Mikey for granted. After his death, I was awed at what he had accomplished and the authenticity with which he lived. I can think of no one more deserving of CCA's Peace and Justice Award, and Jocelyn, Hazel, Izzy, and Michaelina were there to accept this award on his behalf, along with Mikey's mother Janice, brother Andrew, sister Angie, and nephew Luka. Josh Taylor and Sean Decker of Mikey's band, the Priesthood, and his brother, Andrew, joined us and played some of Mikey's originals as well as

some of the familiar tunes that Mikey would lead us in at every AG, including my favorite, *West Virginia, My Home* (Hazel Dickens). In accepting the FOCIS Award on behalf of Lay Catholic Voices for Change, Mary Ellen Koenn pointed out that Mikey was also instrumental in their mission of calling diocesan leadership to transparency and accountability. I am grateful for the time I had this weekend to remember and grieve Mikey and other CCA members, as well as friends and family, who have died in the last few years. Thank you for facilitating this time, Allyson!

I hope that whatever direction CCA goes in the future, Annual Gatherings of some kind will continue to nourish our cornerstone of Community. ▲



2023 Annual Gathering participants with Kasha McDonald, founder and Director of the West Virginia Black Pride Foundation, Charleston, WV.

MICHAEL IAFRATE RECEIVES CCA'S 2023 BISHOP SULLIVAN PEACE & JUSTICE AWARD POSTHUMOUSLY

Letter of Nomination by Angie Iafrate, Moira Reilly, Molly Linehan Belcher, and Sarah George Ginn

As you all know, Michael met his untimely death in May of 2021, but it is his life that we wish to highlight. Michael's work, life, and very breath were a prophetic song and prayer for justice in his homeland of Appalachia. He was fed by music, sacred and theological writings, and friendships with peace activists gone before him like Dorothy Day and Daniel Berrigan. From a young age, Michael had a prodigious sense of right and wrong, paying close attention to readings and songs at Mass and in Catholic school for inspiration.

When he got involved with CCA, first as a board member, then as the lead author of the *The Telling Takes Us Home*, or the "People's Pastoral," and finally as a Co-Coordinator, he was instrumental in assisting the evolution of CCA, increasing its scope of social issues and pivoting from a hierarchical to a more lateral leadership structure, working alongside his Co-Coordinator, Jeannie Kirkhope, and the Board, to propel CCA's mission as well as support and encourage the work of its members.

His sense of right and wrong, and his close adherence to the tenets of Catholic Social Teaching became an example to others of how to bring about his vision for the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of the gospels, of equity and inclusion for all, and holding those in authority to that vision. Colleen Shantz, a Theology professor at the University of Toronto, where Michael was a doctoral candidate, wrote in a tribute, "When we saw him pursuing justice, we saw a bridge between things as they are now and the world as it should be." Michael's hope for the world as it should be, tempered by the realities of injustices as they are now, is a model of bridge-building that was rooted in his spiritual practices: prayer, meditation, contemplative reading, perhaps inspired by his father, who would daily retreat with his bible to a corner of the basement, the only quiet place available in his house full of children and noise and love. While Michael's public persona was one of strength and justice, he was also a gentle, kind, and compassionate friend, who was open to dialog, never quick to write someone off without giving them continued chances to learn, try again, and do better.



We would be remiss if we didn't place Michael's work for justice into the context of the world in which he lived. His work and activism addressed issues within and without the Church including sexual abuse, clericalism, economic reform, racism, decolonization, indigenous spirituality, mountain-top removal, divesting from environmental destruction, LGBTQ+ issues, and non-violence. Michael was a well-educated, white male with a great deal of authority, but he recognized that privilege and wielded it to give voice to those who too infrequently have access to the proverbial microphone, rather than the abuse of privilege that we too often see.

Michael and his wife, Jocelyn, identified with the Catholic Worker Movement, living a simple life, aligning themselves with the marginalized, and considering the valuable resources of Earth in decisions from the land they occupied to the vegetarian food they ate. Michael was beyond intelligent and capable enough to have completed his PhD and pursued a career in academia. But his choice to focus his energy on the work that he did was a conscious one, realizing that academic work is often only available within academic circles. It was no accident that he spent years writing and promulgating the People's Pastoral, and that his academic journals only account for a small portion of his collection of writings. ▲

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A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SHARES THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A 'NEIGHBOR' TO THE MVP IN SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA

By Michael Barrick

Reprinted from *Appalachian Chronicle*, April 13, 2023

Editor's note: This is the final article of a four-part series on the decision by the 4th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals to Vacate a Clean Water Certification from the West Virginia DEP for the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP).

ALDERSON, W.Va. – On April 3, The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit vacated a Clean Water Certification from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP). The decision stopped construction of the MVP, though only temporarily.

As I noted yesterday, we solicited comments about the Court's decision from several people I've come to know in my reporting upon fracking and related pipeline development. I provided three prompts for responses (below). Several responses were published yesterday. One group I contacted was the Catholic Committee of Appalachia (CCA). They offered a response, which is from CCA member and Director Eric Fitts of Bethlehem Farm, a Catholic community within one mile of the MVP in southern West Virginia. His responses follow the Prompts.

Prompts

1. Offer a comment on this decision.
2. In a brief comment, add anything you'd like to say about your experiences with the MVP.
3. What are your thoughts about its future, in particular efforts by Sen. Joe Manchin to have it fast tracked through Congress, hence bypassing the regulatory/judicial process.

1. The main problem with the MVP is that we do not need any more carbon released into Earth's atmosphere, due to the worsening effects of climate change, the ecological, spiritual and emotional costs of which are detailed at length in the papal encyclical *Laudato Si': On the Care of Our Common Home* and by many others. The fracking industry that the MVP would support is a serious polluter, which was de-

tailed at length in CCA's pastoral letter *The Telling Takes Us Home: Taking Our Place in the Stories that Shape Us*. Specifically, the pastoral letter states: "Whatever the perceived benefits, the human and ecological costs are severe. Construction of well pads, pipelines, compressor stations, and more, disturb the natural world and disrupt the lives of families and whole communities all over the country, many of them here in Appalachia. Some of the drilling activity has been welcomed by landowners because of short-term economic benefit. Other landowners struggle with invasive drilling tactics and conflicts over the legal meaning of land and resource rights, a story with which coalfield residents are familiar" (43). The MVP project, its use of eminent domain for private gain, its potential to pollute our living waters, and the further fragmentation of the Eastern Hardwood Forest, disrupting local ecologies, is another example of how the people and place of Appalachia are one of many "crucified peoples" and "crucified places", as detailed in the pastoral letter: "Today we look around our world and we cannot help but be moved, and perhaps overwhelmed by, the masses of crucified people, the Body of Christ which continues to suffer in history" (122). "And it is true that Earth suffers under the unbearable weight of destructive human activity, such as the overuse of resources. We have really only begun to hear and take to heart the cry of the crucified Earth, a planet that is undergoing a Golgotha experience that can only be described as ecocide. But there are also specific crucified places, wounds of Christ in our world that affect both people and the land in ways particular to their locations and that cry out to be heard and felt. We believe that new life for the planet is inseparable from new life in crucified places" (123).

For many landowners on the MVP route, the decision of The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit to vacate a Clean Water Certification (401 permit) from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection for the Mountain Valley Pipeline is very welcome news.

The ruling confirms what many of us along the route have known since construction began. Construction activities have released sediment into West Virginia streams in amounts that threaten the health of any stream impacted by the route. Prior to granting the 401 permit, DEP documented an ongoing pattern of significant violations, yet the 401 "permit" did not build in adequate safeguards and requirements to ensure that construction going forward would

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VATICAN FORMALLY REPUDIATES 'DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY' USED TO JUSTIFY COLONIZATION

Reprinted from National Catholic Reporter, March 30, 2023

The Vatican on March 30 formally repudiated the "Doctrine of Discovery," officially declaring that an historic policy used to justify colonial exploitation is "not part of the teaching of the Catholic Church."

The rejection of the concept, which has been used to describe a collection of papal teachings dating back to the 15th century, comes after years of pressure from Indigenous groups and some government leaders, including Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

"In no uncertain terms, the Church's magisterium upholds the respect due to every human being," states a two-page text released jointly by the Vatican's Dicasteries for Culture and Education and Promoting Integral Human Development. "The Catholic Church therefore repudiates those concepts that fail to recognize the inherent human rights of indigenous peoples, including what has become known as the legal and political 'doctrine of discovery.'"

The declaration acknowledges that some scholars believe the basis of the doctrine is rooted in papal documents, but states that the bulls were "written in a specific historical period and linked to political questions, [and] have never been considered expressions of the Catholic faith."

At the same time, it states that the papal bulls "did not adequately reflect the equal dignity and rights of indigenous peoples" and that they were "manipulated for political purposes by competing colonial powers in order to justify immoral acts against indigenous peoples that were carried out, at times, without opposition from ecclesiastical authorities."

Canadian Cardinal Michael Czerny, who heads the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, told reporters on March 30 that "the 'Doctrine of Discovery' is an invention or creation of the U.S. Supreme Court in the 19th century" and that it was "unfortunate" that "a very strongly church related word is used by the U.S. Supreme Court to name an idea or a historical process."

An 1823 U.S. Supreme Court decision, which has been cited as recently as 2005, pointed to the 15th century papal bulls, arguing that the "principle of discovery gave European nations an absolute right to New World lands."

Czerny, however, said the new Vatican statement makes clear that the principle is not a Catholic doctrine and that the 15th century papal bulls were no longer official Catholic teaching. When Pope Francis visited Canada last July to issue an apology for the Catholic Church's involvement in the country's 19th and 20th century residential schools, which stripped Indigenous peoples of their Native heritage and cultures, he repeatedly faced calls for formal re-scission of the so-called doctrine.

Eight months later, Czerny said that the church's priority was to listen and to take seriously concerns raised by the Indigenous peoples.

"To take seriously, often means to take time," he told reporters.

In an article published in Vatican News, the church's official media platform, Portuguese Cardinal José Tolentino Calaca de Mendonca, prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, said the March 30 Vatican note is "part of what we might call the architecture of reconciliation ... the process whereby people commit to listening to each other, to speaking to each other and to growth in mutual understanding."

While the new note does not formally abrogate any formal papal bulls, it quotes a 1537 bull by Pope Paul III, which declares Native peoples should not be enslaved nor deprived of their personal liberty or property.

"Should the contrary happen, it shall be null and have no effect," it states.

Upon the declaration's release, bishops in both the United States and Canada praised the Vatican's note as a welcome step forward in the church's efforts to improve relations with Native and Indigenous peoples "who have experienced tremendous suffering because of the legacy of a colonizing mentality."

"As the Joint Statement points out, there were times when Christians, including ecclesiastical authorities, failed to fully oppose destructive and immoral actions of the competing colonial powers. In this regard, we too express deep sorrow and regret," said the U.S. bishops' statement.

The Canadian bishops also noted that plans are underway for a potential academic symposium, jointly organized by the U.S. bishops' conference and the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences for Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars "to further deepen historical understanding about the 'Doctrine of Discovery.'" ▲

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minimize short- and long-term negative impacts to the streams of the state.

MVP's citations for water quality violations in West Virginia specifically address the release of sediment into streams along the route. By granting the 401 permit, WVDEP refused to take these violations seriously. Given MVP's record of violations of water quality standards during construction, WVDEP cannot ensure that MVP will suddenly do the right thing.

The Court saw this contradiction and ruled that granting the permit in these circumstances was a capricious act by WVDEP.

Coupled with the landslides caused by construction activity on steep mountain slopes, the MVP remains a source of potentially devastating damage to the waters of our state. In Summers County, the MVP is positioned to cross the Greenbrier River at Pence Springs. The MVP has not demonstrated it has either the expertise or the commitment to undertake a river crossing of this magnitude successfully. Those of us who love the Greenbrier River fear for the damage the MVP could do that couldn't be undone. And those of us who live along the small streams that feed into the Greenbrier – fed by headwater streams which rise in the steep slopes of our mountains – fear that the water our household wells depend on will be diverted or contaminated by further MVP construction and post-construction activity.

2. Bethlehem Farm lies within one mile of the MVP route, which is well within the 1.4-mile evacuation zone of the MVP, a 42-inch pipe with a maximum operating pressure of 1,400 pounds per square inch. The MVP has been disruptive to many creatures in its path, including human communities and habitats of other plants and animals. First, there was the arrogance and attitude of superiority from the surveyors and salesmen trying to purchase rights of way from our neighbors, often caught trespassing and using scare tactics and pressure campaigns, even on our elderly neighbors. Then came the edict from FERC that this project was in the public interest and right of way across our neighbors' properties would be forcibly sold to MVP by order of our own government – those who resisted received paltry compensation for this taking. Next there was the influx of workers from out of town (so much for all of the "local jobs" it was going to create) who began stripping

the Eastern Hardwood Forest off of the 303-mile long, 150-ft wide MVP route. The sound of the dismembering of the trees was sickening to hear during that entire first summer and now piles of tree trunks still litter the MVP route, wasted. The carving out of the right of way across mountain ridges diverted or ruined age-old springs and changed watersheds, so that for one neighbor a reliable pond used to water livestock turned into a useless mud hole as it was no longer fed by springs and runoff. Then came the rains and the massive topsoil loss down the steep slopes of Dempsey and Keaney Mountains, as with so many other slopes along the MVP route. That fall, a plague of "blue tongue" swept through the local deer population, killing maybe half of the deer in our local herds, with rotting corpses found near many water sources, as they struggled to survive in their last moments. None of us knew for sure where the "blue tongue" came from, but some said that the insect that transmits the disease may very well have come in with the straw that was used for erosion control and seeding on the MVP route – and the timing was uncanny. Now, the threat of destructive water crossings still looms in the shadows, with some neighbors fearing that wells and groundwater will be ruined as bedrock is blasted to get the pipe under the bed of Hungart's Creek and many of fearing the worst consequences in the crossing of the Greenbrier River, at 162 miles the longest untamed (unblocked) river in the eastern US

3. Senator Manchin is attempting to get Congress to approve the completion of the MVP by yoking it to permitting "reform" for future energy projects. While we should not be surprised by this tactic, it does not bode well for any community in the country that Manchin is misrepresenting principled judicial review as something that should be circumvented. In Manchin's world, judicial review of environmentally costly projects just gets in the way. For people and communities in the cross hairs of a major energy project, judicial review makes it possible for the real cost of a project to be examined by independent review. Neither the corporate sponsors of the MVP nor FERC provides independent assessments of the environmental costs to people, communities, and homeplaces. In our democracy, it is the courts who provide that review on behalf of the people. ▲
Eric Fitts lives in Clayton, WV, with his wife Colleen, and three children. Eric thanks Susan Bouldin, whose family's homeplace is within the blast zone of the MVP route, for contributing to this response.

POPE FRANCIS'S VISION FOR THE CHURCH: SEEKING A CHURCH IN SERVICE TO THE WORLD

By Bishop John Stowe, OFM, Conv.

Reprinted from *Commonweal*, July 5, 2003

On the evening of October 11, 1962, the night preceding the opening of the Second Vatican Council, a crowd of mostly young people gathered in Saint Peter's Square, filled with energy, enthusiasm, and expectation for what was about to unfold. John XXIII came to the window from which popes customarily address the crowds at the Sunday Angelus and gave an impromptu *fervorino*, referred to simply as the "moonlight speech." It is probably his best remembered speech and provides an apt characterization of the man known to the world as Good Pope John. Rejoicing at the sight of the crowd and the glow of their candles, Pope John mused that even the moon came out for the event. After a few more words of encouragement, he said:

When you go home, give your children a hug and tell them it is from the pope. And when you find them with tears to dry, give them a good word. Give anyone who suffers a word of comfort. Tell them, "The pope is with us especially in our times of sadness."

John XXIII called for *aggiornamento* so that the worldwide Church could be refreshed and renewed for its mission in the world. His fifth successor, Pope Francis, is convinced that it was the Holy Spirit's actions that made the council bear fruit, and he is making it clear that the Second Vatican Council has charted the course for the Church that he intends to follow. Like his smiling predecessor, Francis is attuned to the realities of the suffering of the innocent and is painfully aware of how inequality of access to the world's goods and the phenomenal disproportionality in the consumption of those goods contributes to violence, instability, and the threatened future of humanity. It doesn't have to be so, he reminds us again and again, and the remedy is to simply live as sisters and brothers as God's plan has designed. The *aggiornamento* needed for the present moment is to get back on course with the "pilgrim people of God" ecclesiology of the council and to forge even stronger bonds of fraternity—not only with other Christians, but with all of the world's religions, and even those of no faith who would be characterized as people of good will.

In the past few months, there have been many assessments of the Bergoglio papacy—some lauding its fruitfulness, others bemoaning the lack thereof. If one's primary concern about the Church today is access to the pre-conciliar liturgy, or pre-conciliar attitudes about ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, or a rigid interpretation of the Church's moral tradition when it comes to sexual ethics but not to social ethics; if one fears a Church in dialogue with the world or fears a hierarchy that listens to its own flock; if one wants to be certain that the sacraments be exclusively offered to the saintly or fears any greater inclusion of laity, especially women, in co-responsible roles in the Church—then the Francis pontificate has been an outright disaster. That is supposedly how a cardinal, once a close collaborator of Francis, described this decade in a posthumously released commentary.

If, however, one has been inspired by the fact that the cardinals selected a Bishop of Rome from the "ends of the world," a pope who chose the name of Francis in remembrance of the saint of the poor, of creation, and of peace; if one is grateful for relief from the imposition of Tridentine rubrics and pre-conciliar liturgical fashion by young clerics; if one is enthusiastic about the reintroduction and reimagination of synodality in the West; if one prefers a pope who washes the feet of women, Muslims, prisoners, and who brings refugees on board papal flights and invites them to live in the Vatican; if one nods in agreement with the idea that the Church is supposed to form consciences and not replace them; and if one rejoices to see accompaniment and discernment as the proper approach to those who lives are not fully reflective of the Church's teachings—then it is hard to consider these ten years as anything but a successful *beginning*.

No pope should be remembered for only one thing, but it seems that recent popes have each introduced a memorable word or phrase into the Catholic lexicon. For John XXIII it was "*aggiornamento*," for Paul VI it was "evangelization." For John Paul II, the word "solidarity" probably takes first place; for Benedict XVI, the "rejection of relativism." For a good while I was convinced that the Francis word would be "periphery." Was anybody talking about the peripheries before 2013? It shouldn't been surprising, coming from the first Latin American pope, who brought with him the legacy of CELAM, the Latin American Bishops' Conference and its aim to create missionary disciples, the same conference

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that declared a preferential option for the poor and aligned itself with the impoverished masses of the continent after centuries of being part of the privileged elite. The peripheries to which Father Jorge once sent his Jesuit novices have now become a worldwide directive from the center of the Church.

The word “joy” was also a real contender. When had we ever heard so much about the joy of the Gospel? The joy of love, especially married and family love? The joy of the call to holiness? Certainly more far-reaching than any of his encyclicals is the joy that Francis expresses in every encounter with refugees, migrants, the imprisoned, those who dwell in ghettos, the hospitalized, and those in nursing homes. Recently, after seeing so many pictures of the pope in discomfort and awkwardly moving around, I wondered if we would see that smile again. But sure enough, on Holy Thursday at the Marmo Juvenile Detention Center where he washed the feet of inmates, I saw the beaming smile, returned to him by those who experienced that close connection. The “Joy of the Gospel” was the title of his first apostolic exhortation, and it really did serve as a programmatic essay about the way his papacy would unfold and the direction in which he would lead the Church.

But now my hope and prayer is that “synodality” becomes the lasting Franciscan contribution to our Catholic vocabulary. This pope—a man of deep prayer who is schooled in the Ignatian spiritual tradition of discernment and who bears witness to the freedom of the Holy Spirit—is content to convene the bishops and the whole People of God to learn again to “walk together,” which he reminds us is the foundational meaning of “synod.” It is also a phrase used by John XXIII in that moonlight speech: “*tutti insieme in fraternità*,” everyone together in fraternity towards peace. Pope Francis is also reformulating the use of synods so that they are not only periodic events for convening bishops in affective collegiality, but also the new way of being the Church at every level. If this attempt is successful, its impact will be comparable to that of the Second Vatican Council, opened by another pope who was seen to be nearing the end of his days.

Francis builds on the legacy of the Second Vatican Council’s restoration of the Synod of Bishops as a permanent reality in the Church. *Lumen gentium* provided a renewed look at the traditional ministry of the bishop; the council restored the office of diocesan bishop as being much more

than a “branch officer” for the corporate offices in Rome. The council also discussed the collegiality necessary among all bishops who share responsibility for the universal Church with and under Peter. Still, there was no intermediary structure between the local bishop and pope, except for the national and regional conferences of bishops, which are more about fraternal collegiality than effective governance. The Synod of Bishops would be convened by the pope, discuss pertinent issues at the pope’s request, and provide a global perspective to the pope.

Pope Francis himself, as a bishop, did not appreciate synods that seemed to merely rubber-stamp decisions and directives made elsewhere, mainly by the Roman Curia. He lamented his own experience of bishops who shared opinions and critiques outside the synod hall, but who had been much more reserved about doing so in the Holy Father’s presence. At his first synod as Bishop of Rome, the extraordinary Synod on the Family, Francis instructed the participating bishops to speak boldly and listen charitably. It seems that some were better at implementing the first half of the directive. Another of the frequently repeated words in the Francis lexicon is *parrhesia*, or boldness, which he insists is necessary in the synodal process if real discernment, listening, and dialogue are to take place. The Acts of the Apostles describes such *parrhesia*. But in the synodal setting, time for silence, prayer, processing, and discernment is just as important.

The recent diocesan phase of the universal Synod on Synodality was meant to be an exercise in teaching this method to the whole Church. Indeed it was a start, but there is a long way to go. Francis has clarified that synods are not to function in parliamentary fashion: there are no parties and it is not simply a matter of winning the majority to one’s side of an argument. Real synodality should not have winners and losers; if people are not open to a change of heart through dialogue, they have yet to learn the synodal method. Francis is not at all afraid of learning from failures and trying repeatedly to get it right. Many across the ideological spectrum would consider the Amazon Synod to have been a failure—some because it did not result in the ordination of married deacons to the priesthood or women to the diaconate, others because of their horror that such issues even came to the floor. In his discernment, Pope Francis said that it was not the moment to act on such proposals, because all the participants came with their preconceived views on the topics and no one was open to change. *(continued on page 20)*

THE FLAG OF APPALACHIA

By Micah DeRouen

The Appalachian Flag Initiative has recently created a flag to represent the Appalachian region. The process of designing the flag involved discussions with communities and experts on the topics of Appalachia and vexillology. Vexillology is the study of flags; more specifically, the history, symbolism, and usage of flags. The North American Vexillological Association has five guidelines to which a good flag will adhere.

- 1) Keep it simple: a flag should be so simple that someone could draw it from memory.
- 2) Use meaningful symbolism: the flag's images, colors, or patterns should relate to what it symbolizes.
- 3) Use two to three basic colors: limit the number of colors on the flag to three that contrast and come from the standard color set.
- 4) No lettering or seals: never use writing of any kind or an organization's seal.
- 5) Be distinctive or be related: avoid duplicating other flags but use similarities to show connections.

Of course, there can always be exceptions to these guidelines, but they can be a good lens through which to see flag design.

So how does the Appalachian flag stack up to these guidelines? First, one should see how The Appalachian Flag Initiative describes its meaning and design.

Color Scheme

- The green represents the lush forests that wrap around the ancient mountains and the rural setting of the region.
- The navy blue is representative of the blue hue that colors the distant ridgelines that rest on the horizon.
- The gold is representative of the morning sun pouring out over the distant hills, indicative of a bright future for those who reside in these hills.
- The off-white of the quilt star motif is taken from the color of cloth, indicative of a blank canvas from which each Appalachian may draw their own colorful story.

Altogether, the design forms a depiction of the beautiful mountain landscape that is distinctly unique to the Appalachian region.

Design Elements

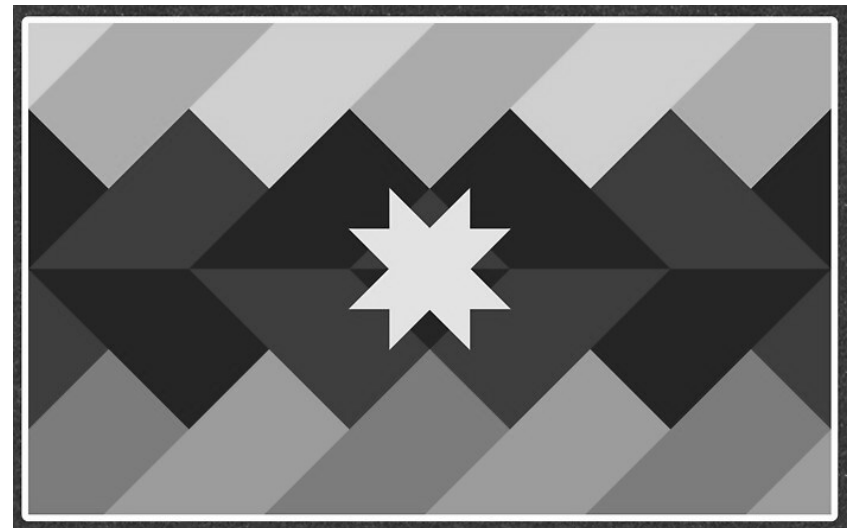
- The quilt star is a symbol found throughout Appalachian arts and crafts, commonly seen on the facades of barns and

in the construction of quilts in many Appalachian homes. The inclusion of this symbol is meant to symbolize the unique Appalachian people that reside within the mountains, with every rendition of the star being done in the artist's style and coloration, further including the diverse array of cultures, faces, and backgrounds in the Appalachian people.

- The horizontal construction of the flag is meant to convey the message of the overlapping scenes of the mountains on the horizon.
- The jagged peaks, while not common in much of Appalachia, are meant to convey a stronger symbol of mountains and match the quilt star's geometry.
- The rolling lines of the flag as it waves are meant to be closer to the reality of the Appalachian Mountains for many people, conveying the actual topography of these weathered ancient mountains that many of us call home.
- The broken color fragments of the mountain quilt is meant to convey the analogy of a quilt, a common craft that can be found throughout Appalachia.

With these descriptions, it is clear that the Appalachian flag is an excellent design. Symbolism is its strength, even though it does not fully follow the vexillological guidelines. It has more than three colors and a design which is a bit complicated. The designers of the Appalachian flag knew what they were doing. Where they deviated from the guidelines, they did so intentionally and for good reason. As an amateur and passionate vexillologist myself, I am a big fan of the Appalachian flag and am proud that it represents the incredible region that I call home.

**Micah DeRouen is a sophomore in high school from Alderson, WV. His dad, Brian DeRouen, is Secretary of CCA's Board.*



State News

WEST VIRGINIA

Since CCA members in West Virginia are spread out across the state's thousands of winding miles of highways and mountainous backcountry roads, the Chapter has never fully organized or had regular meetings. But, members come together for justice-related events and social gatherings on occasion, most recently at Molly and Jesse Linehan-Belcher's to celebrate Candlemas. The majority of our youngest members are concentrated in West Virginia and are spreading the word about CCA and the pastorals through their work with visitors at places like Big Laurel Learning Center, Bethlehem Farm, Nazareth Farm, Alderson Hospitality House, and the Appalachian Catholic Worker.

Over the years, West Virginia has hosted Annual Gatherings at St. John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston and St. Patrick Catholic Church in Hinton, and online in 2020.

SW VIRGINIA

Southwest Virginia was once a hot spot for CCA activities when Bishop Sullivan, Fr. Les Schmidt, and many women religious, like Sr. Beth Davies and Sr. Jackie Hanrahan were still active in the coalfields (Sr. Bernie Kenny still is). There are a handful of CCA members there who are also involved with the Federation of Communities in Service (FOCIS) and are part of the Elder Spirit Community, including Catherine Rumschlag, Kathy Hutson, Monica Appleby and Dene Peterson.

These days, Cathy Bush, house playwright at Barter Theater in Abingdon, remains engaged and wrote the play, "Though the Mountains May Fall," in response to the People's Pastoral. Joan Wages, in Floyd, is active with her local ecumenical anti-racist group, *Justice Advocates of the Roanoke and New River Valleys*, and she shared with us the recent petition they all signed against Christian Nationalism. (pg 18)

Recent Annual Gatherings in Virginia have been held at Hungry Mother State Park outside Marion, and Southwest Virginia 4-H Educational Center outside Abingdon.

EASTERN KENTUCKY

The KY Chapter was originally started by Fr. John Rausch who held regular meetings, led wildflower and waterfall walks, planted trees, and organized with local groups. After taking a bit of hiatus since his passing, the

KY Chapter has begun reconstituting itself and leadership has been picked up by Sr. Kathleen Weigand and Dave Harl who have put together a website and are becoming active on social media this year. The KY Chapter plans to host the 2025 Anniversary Annual Gathering, with date and venue to be determined.

Annual Gatherings in Kentucky have been at Cliff View Retreat Center in Danville, Pine Ridge Settlement School, Hindman Settlement School, Aldersgate Methodist Retreat Camp, and was hosted online in 2021.

WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

The NC Chapter was started by long-time member, Mary Herr, and grew to be our largest and most organized Chapter for several years. With help from St. Eugene's Care of Creation Committee in Asheville, the NC Chapter took on CCA's Lenten Cross in the Mountains and made it their own. St. Eugene's will be holding the event again this year. Now, Lianna Costantino is chairing the Chapter and Mary says most members are in their 80's and 90's and still try to have quarterly meetings, but since COVID, they have preferred to gather via Zoom.

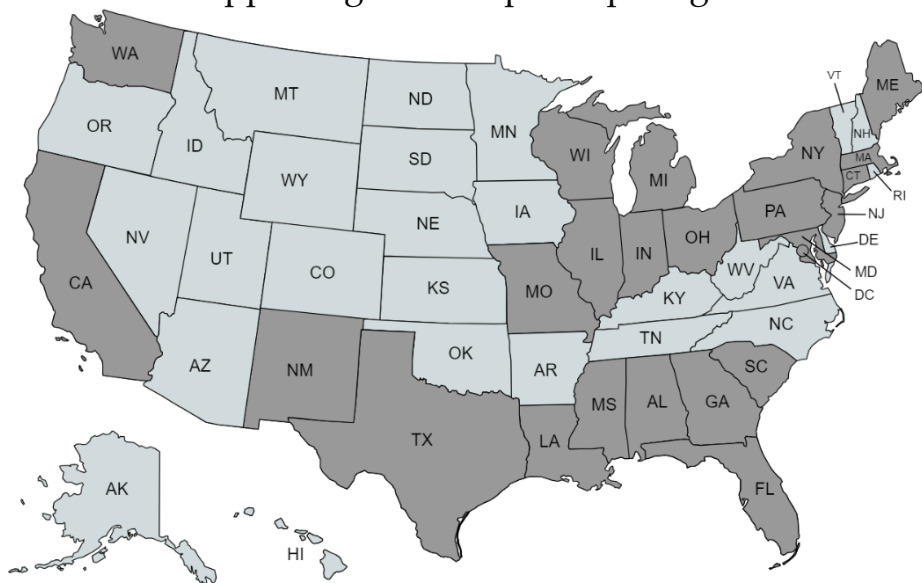
Annual Gatherings in North Carolina have been held at Living Waters Retreat Center in Maggie Valley, and YMCA Blue Ridge Academy in Black Mountain.

EAST TENNESSEE

Although a Tennessee Chapter has never coalesced for regularly scheduled Chapter meetings, members there became our 'go-to' people on issue of nuclear disarmament. Oak Ridge was home to several massive Manhattan Project facilities employing thousands of workers during and after World War II to enrich uranium for use in the world's first atomic bombs. The Y-12 National Security Complex maintains the nuclear weapons stockpile today, and our TN members often meet up there for vigils and demonstrations with Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA). Marcus and Glenda Keyes and Sister Mary Dennis Lentsch introduced CCA to Narrow Ridge Earth Literacy Center, and along with Jim Ullrich and Brother Joe Steen have hosted some very popular and poignant Annual Gatherings which have been held at All Saints Catholic Church in Knoxville, Norris Dam State Park outside of Knoxville, and Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Gatlinburg.

CCA'S DIASPORA

CCA has many members and friends on our PatchQuilt mailing list who have left central Appalachia or who have never lived here but are interested in what's going on with CCA...including two in Canada (Edmonton and Toronto)! Their geographical distance from the region has not kept them from supporting CCA or participating.



Carol Warren in California, Ed Sloane and Joe Holland in Maryland, Jessica Wrobleski in Ohio, and Lee Cormie in Toronto, are all taking part in the reprinting of the Pastoral letters through email correspondence. Bob Shine in Washington, DC, Bob Choiniere in Pennsylvania, and Michael Sigwalt in Illinois, have travelled to join us for various events, and even Muriel Grim in Maine recently jumped on Zoom for Mass with us!

If, no matter where your feet are, your heart is in the mountains, you will always be an integral part of CCA.

*We invite you to consider
Catholic Committee of Appalachia
as a beneficiary
when making your will.*

For more information contact us at:
cca@ccappal.org or
81 Puddle Run Rd. Spencer, WV 25276

CCA's Podcast Schedule

Each month through 2024 we will host a small panel of CCA members or friends to answer the question posed during the listening sessions for the People's Pastoral:

"WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE YOU IN THIS PLACE?"

- **January** – Mental Health & Wellness: *Neurodivergent in a Neurotypical World* with Kasey Bailes & Jamie O'Hara
- **February** – Celebrating Black History Month: *Black in Appalachia* with Kasha McDonald and Crystal Good
- **March** – Celebrating the Feast of St. Joseph: *Holy Joes for Justice* with Bishop Stowe, Fr. Andy Switzer, Fr. Walt Jagela
- **April**– Celebrating Earth Day: *Mountain Mamas* with Janet Keating, Carol Warren, Vivian Stockman
- **May** – Celebrating the Month of Mary: *Moms in Ministry* with Allyson Petry, Colleen Fitts
- **June** – Celebrating Pride Month: *Lay Men "Out" and Working in the Church* with Bob Choiniere, Bob Shine, JR Zerkowski
- **July** – Hearing the Prophet's Call: *Lay Catholic Voices for Change* with Chuck DiSalvo, Mary Ellen Koenn, Kathy Switzer
- **August** – Exit Stage Left: *On leaving RC, Inc. for the Episcopal Church* with Ed Sloane, Rev. Sr. Judy Yunker, Rev. Alyssa Pasternak-Post
- **September** – Anniversary of Luther's Thesis: *CCA's Protestant Friends* with Rev. Jenny Williams (Methodist), Rev. Robin Blakeman (Presbyterian), Rev. Scott Williams (Episcopalian)
- **October** – Anniversary of Luther's Thesis Continued: *CCA's Protestant Members* with Rev. Darick Biondi (Methodist), Rev. Theresa Brion, Jennifer Deegan (Episcopalian)
- **November** – Trans Awareness Week: *Trans Friends of CCA* with Drew Crawford, Janna Coe, Rosemary Ketchum
- **December** – No Room in the Inn: *Women on the Margins of the Church* with Sarah George Ginn, Molly Linehan, Moira Reilly

Find the links to these episodes on CCA's website page:
www.ccappal.org/media

Reflections

MARCUS KEYES REMEMBERED

Reprinted from CCA's Facebook page, November 30, 2023

I am heartbroken to announce that our dear Marcus Keyes passed away peacefully on Monday night with his beloved Glenda by his side.

Marcus described himself as a rather egg-headed middle-aged Irish priest in the order of St. Columban Missionaries serving in the Philippines when he met Glenda Struss, a younger, more affecting, Missionary Sister of St. Columban from the States. As he told me the story from the corner of the couch after a long day of meetings, it was she who unleashed his heart to a profound love for Earth, and an understanding of the gospel's message of justice "in the context of ALL creation."

With his face reflecting the only lamplight in the room and ice melting in his glass, he went on. As the two would walk with another sister on the dirt roads between the poverty-stricken villages they served, Glenda fervently pointed out their interconnectedness with the land around them which was also being devastated by extractive industries. And, that's when he fell in love with her, too. Marcus began preaching Care of Creation from the pulpit after that, then, took the message, and Glenda, and ran with it. They left their orders, married, and came to Appalachia in 1990, joining CCA a year later.

Marcus lived out the rest of his days with Glenda in a simple solar cottage with bad internet, poor phone service, and a compost toilet he hated and fought with constantly on the Narrow Ridge Community Land Trust in eastern Tennessee. He worked as the director of Glenmary Home Missioners' "Commission on Justice, Peace & the Integrity of Creation" until he retired. Meanwhile and thereafter, he spent his time volunteering with Narrow Ridge Earth Literacy Center, the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA), and as a CCA board member twice over the next two decades.



Marcus was on the editing team for CCA's second Bishops' pastoral letter, "At Home in the Web of Life" (1995). His penchant for loud, late-night laughter and discussion, combined with hot philosophical and theological debate, initiated the articulation of CCA's most eloquent and verbose versions of our mission and vision statements. He and Glenda celebrated and mourned with us, participating in virtually every one of our Annual Gatherings across the region, and making the trek off their mountain for members' funerals. I know they were just as committed to friends in their other circles, as well. As a sagacious Chair of the Board, Marcus masterfully navigated us through a very difficult time, logistically and spiritually, when bishops began withdrawing their financial and moral support as they swung right politically, closed diocesan Peace & Justice offices, and turned inward to defend themselves from the sex abuse scandal.

In later years, when he and Glenda weren't taking trips back to Ireland to visit relatives and bury siblings, Marcus stayed closer to home, still active with CCA's planning committee's for Annual Gatherings in Tennessee, and with OREPA's campaigns and weekly vigils for anti-nuclear proliferation.

Marcus was a mentor to me, a trusted friend I often confided in, and my spiritual director for a time. He was the oldest male feminist I ever knew, the funniest man I ever met, with the best accent I ever heard. He could

mesmerize a crowd with the sincerity, depth, and tone of the prayers he led, and have us in stitches with his humor. His descriptions of our connections to Earth and the Cosmic Christ were as intellectually stimulating as they were spiritually inspiring, leaving us both confident and humbled with our place in the universe. Marcus' warmth and compassion had no bounds, except for maybe with a bishop or two. Then, his Irish indignation would enliven and galvanize us to work for a better Church. The light in any room will be dimmer without him, but darkness will never be without hope for his having been among us. Marcus was 84. ▲ *Posted by Jeannie Reichenbach*

O'BRIEN REMEMBERED FOR KINDNESS AND SPIRIT OF SERVICE

Reprinted from the Wheeling Intelligencer, December 27, 2023

WHEELING – The Rev. James O'Brien – the longest-serving Jesuit priest at Wheeling University and a recent inductee into the Wheeling Hall of Fame – died Saturday at age 96, at Columbiere Jesuit Community in Baltimore, Maryland.

Those who knew him remembered him for his faith, love of others and devotion to his community. "It is with a heavy heart that I share the heartbreaking news of the passing of our beloved, Reverend James O'Brien, S.J., a devoted servant of God and cherished member of our community," WU President Ginny Favede said in a released statement. "Father O'Brien lived a truly beautiful life. His unshakeable faith, his deep love, and his tireless service made him a guiding light for us all.

"We are all better people today because of him," she continued. "His gentle words, unwavering belief, and infectious kindness touched countless lives, leaving a lasting imprint on our hearts. In the coming days, we will share details regarding arrangements to celebrate his remarkable life. For now, let us hold Father O'Brien and his family in our thoughts and prayers."

Information from the Wheeling Hall of Fame states that O'Brien first came to what is now Wheeling University in 1962 as a young Jesuit to teach philosophy. A few years later, he would take an academic leave of absence to complete work on his doctorate at Duquesne University.

He organized the first Appalachian Experience Club in 1978 to help those in need in southern West Virginia. O'Brien, along with students, would chop wood to heat the homes of the less fortunate and enjoy the rural setting each fall and spring break. While the club no longer exists, its mission, to serve others, has blossomed into the university's Appalachian Institute. Now in its 21st year, the institute continues to promote research, service and advocacy.



O'Brien served as an active member at Wheeling Jesuit University for more than 50 years. While retired and a resident of the Colombiere Jesuit Community in Baltimore, he continued to serve the university community as an active member of the alumni association.

Each year during Alumni Weekend, the Alumni Council presents the James O'Brien, S.J. Award, to recent graduates who manifest a growing competence in their chosen field, and whose personal life reflects the university's mission of educating "men and women for life, leadership and service to others."

"The life and ministry of Father James O'Brien, SJ, left an indelible mark on Wheeling University that will be felt for years to come," said Tim Bishop, director of communications and marketing for the Diocese.

Suff. Bishop Darrell Cummings of Bethlehem Apostolic Temple in Wheeling introduced O'Brien at the Hall of Fame ceremony.

"He was a wonderful man," Cummings said. "When we first came here in the 1990s (to Wheeling) we started doing the Martin Luther King Day celebration, and I was the chairman of the committee. We were on the committee together.

"He welcomed us, and worked with us. He was also a humble man with a sweet spirit. He was open to ideals, and gave great ideals."

"I am devastated to hear of his passing. He was a true asset to the community,"

Cummings continued.

At that Hall of Fame ceremony, O'Brien challenged the audience at the end of each day to ask themselves not what they did, but why they did it.

"How close was I to the purpose of my life? The purpose of all our lives is to grow."

Local historian Margaret Brennan said O'Brien personified what the Jesuit priests brought to the region during their time here.

"We were blessed to have the great Jesuit priests we had," she said. "They were like a leaven in our lives. They enriched the whole community. I will miss him terribly." ▲

Reflections



THE COORDINATOR'S CORNER

By Jeannie Reichenbach

This past September, my parents attended their first CCA Annual Gathering. As others mingled during one of the breaks, I saw them sitting on a bench outside whispering to each other. Not the most left-leaning people, nor the most progressive Catholics, I went over to ask them if everything was okay. I was relieved when they both bubbled with enthusiasm saying they were just quizzing each other on everyone's names and discussing how impressed they

were with the whole program. My dad said they were talking about how proud they were of me, "And, we were just wondering where you came from."

I giggled, "Pardon me?"

He said, "You didn't get any of this from us. How did you ever get involved with this kind of work?"

I reminded him *they* were the ones who raised me Catholic, and besides both of them having been health professionals, they were always examples for us, serving a myriad of needs from foster parenting to running a soup kitchen. They even joined others at Toledo's Islamic elementary school after 9/11 to act as human shields during recess. I told them the Ursulines from high school and Jesuits in college taught me to ask why we had to do these direct acts of service in the first place, and learning about the Catholic Worker movement took care of the rest.

Going beyond charitable works to address the root causes of injustice is what sets CCA people apart. My dad said Bishop Stowe's homily explained it best for him. Our faith calls us to be on the side of the most marginalized, so, if we don't stand up for them—with them—who will?

Since then, my parents have befriended a retired Episcopalian priest who moved into their building a year after they did. My mom said Rev. Jim Lewis used to be "a bit much" for her, but now she understands him better. Jim has collaborated closely with CCA for years on social, economic and environmental justice issues in Appalachia. At 88, he is still on the front lines of his life-long ministry. He makes himself available to listen to fellow residents by sitting in quiet corners of the facility's public spaces. He's

often on his phone organizing with others downtown, and he was the one who inspired me to write about the Hamas-Israeli conflict (*page 16*) and encouraged me to publish it.

On that same issue, the last time I was visiting my parents, we saw Jim tucked in a side room, again on his phone, and visibly upset. When I tapped on the door and he saw it was us, he got up immediately, reached out to hug me and said, "They don't want to do it." I knew he meant Charleston's Muslim community is not willing to push City Council to pass a resolution for a ceasefire in the Middle East after the Council already tabled the idea.

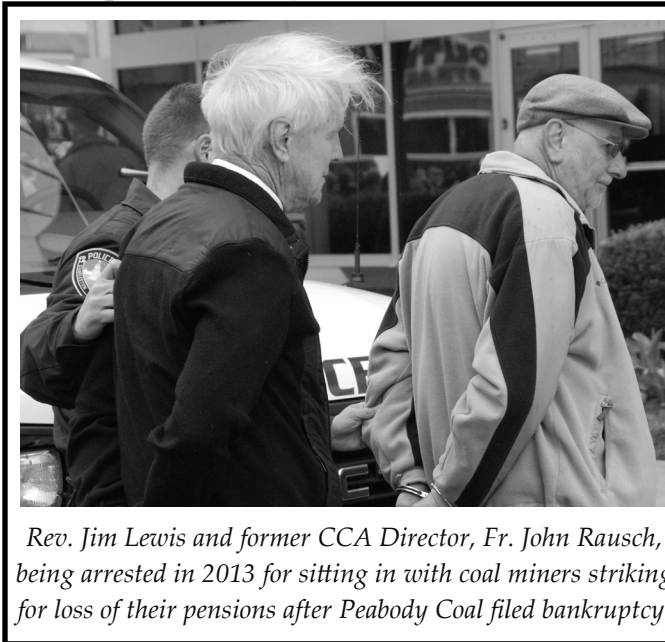
"They must be scared," I said, "I can certainly understand that."

Jim said, "Yes, but we can't do anything if they don't lead the way."

Moved by quizzical compassion, my parents invited him to join us in their apartment. I thought, this is a man sensitive to his privilege as a white male cleric. Jim has the ability to pull strings with the mayor and members of the Council and, if that didn't work, he could galvanize armies of protestors to force the issue. But, he won't unless he is given the word by those who would be most affected by his actions, and rightly so. Although frustrated by it in this instance, Jim respects the magisterium

of the people. They are the authority and he listens to them.

I've been frustrated lately that CCA's numbers are dwindling, and that friends like Jim Lewis are too few and far between. But, he and I both need to remember Dorothy Day's advice, "Don't worry about being effective. Just concentrate on being faithful to the truth," because, whether we achieve peace and justice or not, even in small numbers, we are making an impact—on people like my parents. ▲



Rev. Jim Lewis and former CCA Director, Fr. John Rausch, being arrested in 2013 for sitting in with coal miners striking for loss of their pensions after Peabody Coal filed bankruptcy.

CCA'S 2024 ZOOM MASSES WITH BISHOP JOHN STOWE

- ◆ Sunday, April 21, 4pm
- ◆ Sunday, June 4, 4pm
- ◆ Sunday, Dec 3, 4pm

Mark your calendars and watch for the link in our email updates.

NOT GUNS, BUT PEOPLE WITH GUNS

By Fr. John S. Rausch, reprinted from the 2007 Spring issue of PatchQuilt

Virginia Tech University recently conferred 27 diplomas posthumously on the students killed in the April 16 shootings. The granting of degrees to those slain represented another step in healing the brokenness that gun violence brought to that campus.

Although the 32 deaths at Virginia Tech represented the deadliest shooting in U.S. history, commentators quickly recalled the 13 deaths at Columbine High School in 1999 and the 5 Amish girls killed in Pennsylvania last fall. Analysts ask: why.

Some shooters appear mentally disturbed, some loners, some rebellious and angry. The common thread: everyone of the shooters had easy access to high-powered firearms.

The number of guns in the U.S. has quadrupled from 54 million in 1950 to over 222 million today including 76 million handguns. The U.S. far exceeds the industrialized nations in gun deaths because of its level of lethal firepower. More than 30,000 people die each year from gunshot wounds through murder, suicide and accidents.

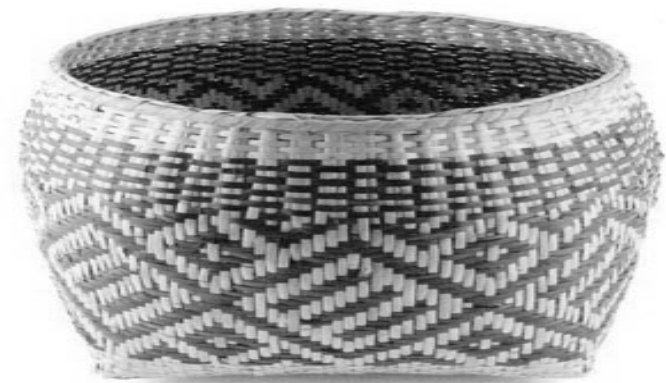
However, the National Opinion Research Center reports that currently gun ownership continues to decline as support for firearms control rises, even after 9/11. Whereas in the mid 1970s modern household gun ownership peaked at 55 percent, by 2006 that number dropped to 35 percent. Researchers suspect that fewer people hunt for recreation and, with a declining crime rate, fewer home owners buy guns for protection.

(continued on page 18)

CCA's CHEROKEE RETREAT

**An Introduction to the
Culture & History of the Cherokee People:
A Journey to Uncolonization & Allyship**

**March 12-17, 2024
Cherokee, NC**



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* Gave more than once

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Benedictine Convent, MO
Sisters of Precious Blood
Cong. of Sisters of St. Francis

(continued on page 17)

See, Judge, Act

CATHOLICS NEED BISHOP TO HELP BUILD PEACE

By Jeannie Reichenbach

As we hover between Christmas and Easter seasons, Christians reflect on Jesus' life and death in light of the violence in the Holy Land, recognizing we share the same God as Muslims and Jews.

Following the Prince of Peace is a direct line from the Nativity to the Cross. Opposing the fighting in Gaza as part of that path, we are told it's not our business, focus on issues at home. Disagreeing with the majority is divisive; speaking truth to power is trouble-making. Persisting, we may face losing jobs, friends, family, arrest, jail, or worse.

Rather than encouraging or joining Catholics and others on this path, Bishop Brennan is dodging the cross of critics. His advice is to pick his team, rationalize the violence, and pray it all ends quickly.

On January 2nd, the bishop published his second analysis of the Israeli-Hamas conflict through the lens of Catholicism's traditional Just War Theory, the Church's doctrine on the ethics of war. Between his two statements and January 4th interview on *Talkline*, his tone is disturbingly one of an armchair quarterback's giving play-by-play commentary and winning strategies for Israel.

If Bishop Brennan's purpose is to teach use of the Theory in real time, it could be challenged as neither correct nor applicable therefore unnecessary, along with his tone. Without Israel recognizing a Palestinian state, there are no sides. Israel is conducting policing actions with distinct ethics. How a government handles internal issues requires a different evaluating tool.

Regardless, any Just War lesson today needs to include that, every pope since the start of the Nuclear Age has said there is likely no scenario in which war can be justified. Basic human decency says the goal of both parties in Gaza being total elimination of the other, by no stretch, can be a morally legitimate war aim.

The bishop acknowledges, by death toll scores, Israel's outrageously disproportionate retaliation, but has yet to say, "This war is not just."

The October 7th attack by Hamas can be explained, but not justified, by an occupied territory enraged with ongoing oppression by its colonizers. Many West Virginia Catholics hoped our bishop, while contemplating Hamas' motivations, would be conscious of being a settler on stolen

land or, at least, recognize a correlation to the Coal Wars and continuing anger over outside interests in Appalachia.

Pope Francis says the only side we should take is the side of peace. We can be against Israel's government without being anti-Semitic. We can be for a free Palestine without being extremist. We can debate who is right or wrong but, while the child complains, "They started it!" the adult asks, "Who's going to end it?"

The bishop suggests United Nations peace-keeping troops call the game, but that only perpetuates the spiral of violence. Charleston's City Council at least entertained a ceasefire resolution. Embarrassingly, no Catholic clerics arrived to support it.

Along with using our voices to influence decisions on how to make and keep peace in the Middle East, we must build peace in our own place. No less a path to the Cross, Bishop Brennan would be more pastorally helpful if he reminded us of our connections to the carnage, and how we can witness to peace as instruments of it in our daily lives:

- Appalachians, including West Virginia Catholics, know what "occupied territory" means, with corrupt and abusive overlords. We must work toward Restorative Justice, seeking cooperation from offenders.
- When the United States does not directly involve troops, our government is still complicit in many wars to secure our comfortable lifestyle compared to the rest of the world's. Americans must resist consumerist temptations so the planet's finite resources can be shared equitably.
- Catholic Social Teaching's principle of the "Common Good" is not synonymous with the American Dream. We must ensure every individual, and Earth itself, has basic universal rights, freedoms, and peace.
- Military recruiters are in our school halls, cafeterias, and football games stalking potential soldiers. We must be as persistent in promoting peace-building careers so our kids know they have choices.

Beyond praying, may our peace-building at the grassroots bring about the Prince's Peace on Earth. ▲

PEACE

LAY CATHOLIC VOICES FOR CHANGE RECEIVES CCA'S 2023 FOCIS AWARD

At the Annual Gathering this past September, the Chair of CCA's Board, Allyson Petry, presented the FOCIS Award to Mary Ellen Koenn who received on behalf of her group, Lay Catholic Voices for Change (LCVC).

The group began in Morgantown, WV, in the summer of 2019 as a response to the harm inflicted on the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston (DWC), by its former bishop, Michael Bransfield. As its website states, "LCVC represents concerned West Virginia Catholics who, through independent lay involvement, are working to accomplish healing from the clergy sexual and financial abuse crisis in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston by promoting increased accountability and transparency in our church."

At the time, the group collected over a 1,000 signatures for a letter they sent to the Diocese saying, "We are troubled that the scandal of clergy sex abuse in our Church has been prolonged and perpetuated by coverups in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. We are also troubled by the

coverup in our diocese of the former bishop Michael Bransfield's outrageous spending.

As lay people, we decry the crimes that have been committed. But we are forced to acknowledge that the coverups have been facilitated by our acquiescence to a culture of clericalism that has pervaded our Church.

It is now incumbent upon us to respond to the Catechism's teaching that *"the laity have the right and even at times a duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church"* and *"a right to make their opinion known to the other Christian faithful."* (CCC. 907) We must hold ourselves accountable for changing our institution so that these crimes and their coverups cannot happen again. We cannot leave it up to the hierarchy to tell us how it will solve this crisis. Until we resolve to be part of the solution, there is no effective change. Therefore, we challenge ourselves and all Catholics in our Diocese to commit to being prayerful, informed, and involved."

One of LCVC's first campaigns to affect change was called, "Not a Dime for DWC." In an open letter to all the parishes, LCVC urged parishioners to withhold donations to the diocese until accountability measures were put in place to assure transparency. They called for an independent auditor, and wanted financial statements released to the public. LCVC also pressured the Diocese to restructure and reinstate a lay diocesan pastoral council for more lay oversight.

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston agreed to three of LCVC's demands. 1) Facing the "Not a Dime for DWC" boycott, the diocese hired a new auditor, Clifton Larson Allen, LLP, 2) the Diocese began publishing annual financial findings, and continue to do so today, and, 3) DWC increased the role of laity through a new Diocesan Pastoral Council.

It was CCA's great honor to learn that LCVC had included a page of its website in memory of Michael Iafrate who, in his role as CCA's Co-Coordinator, was instrumental in LCVC's formation and beginning steps; his meeting attendance and correspondence helped them get started, and his support continued after he moved out-of-state. We are also extremely proud to have a number of CCA members and friends as founders of LCVC, on its steering committee, and involved in its actions: Chuck DiSalvo, Mary Ellen Koenn, Mark and Kathy Switzer, Allison DeGeorge, Vincent DeGeorge. CCA looks forward to collaborating with LCVC in the future. ▲

DONOR THANK YOU'S *(continued from page 15)*

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Statements

(Not Guns, continued from page 15)

People of faith view violence in a holistic way. The U.S. Catholic bishops in their 1994 statement, “Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action,” said, “Violence in our culture is fed by multiple forces...We have to address simultaneously declining family life and the increasing availability of deadly weapons, the lure of gangs and the slavery of addiction, the absence of real opportunity, budget cuts adversely affecting the poor, and the loss of moral values.”

The root causes of violence challenge the very economic fabric of society. Poverty breeds violence. Lack of decent jobs seeds frustration. The widening income gap leaves those left behind feeling like losers. The forces of globalization with its outsourcing of middle income jobs and its undercutting of union strength diminish family life when the market demands more than one wage earner for the family to survive. Weakened family life invites the pseudo-security of gang membership, and addictive substances offer a quick escape from harsh life choices and economic failure.

Society in general contributes to this moral breakdown by solving problems with violence. The U.S. military budget now ranks larger than the combined defense budgets of every other nation in the world, and our foreign policy makers rely more on the stick than negotiations, thus modeling problem-solving with violence.

Heavy doses of violence spew forth from the media, TV, movies and video games. Child advocates claim the average U.S. child views 12,000 to 15,000 murders on television by adolescence, and talk-radio regularly traffics in anti-black, anti-Arab, anti-gay and anti-female rhetoric that further coarsens society.

Fear of terrorism funds the arms manufacturers that ever increases the budget of the military. Fear for personal safety enriches the gun industry, while its lobbyists campaign to neutralize state and federal gun laws.

Then, when someone tragically murders multiple numbers of people at a school or mall, public analysis turns to mental health issues and psychopathic behavior—topics that need attention in our society without waiting for a violent act. Yet few acknowledge that the anti-social or psychotic behavior of the perpetrator caused the carnage and death because he had such easy access to guns. ▲



Submitted by Joan Wages

“Any time you wrap the cross in the flag, you obscure the cross and deify the flag, thereby distorting the meaning of both.”

—Reverend Dr. David A. Jones,
Pastor, Williams Memorial Baptist
Church, Roanoke, Virginia

We, the Undersigned, Denounce the Distorted Views of Christian Nationalism.

Christian Nationalism advocates a particular brand of Christianity, which it believes is superior to other religions. It seeks to guide and dominate American civic life with its twisted version of Christianity.

Christian Nationalism is Based on Misplaced Beliefs that Have No Biblical Basis.

We reject the belief that America was established as a White Christian nation. We reject the belief that America is God's chosen nation. From these beliefs flow a steady stream of hate and intolerance: racism, anti-semitism, misogyny, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-indigenous, basically, anti-anything that is other.

The Founders of Our Nation Believed in Freedom of Religion

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution declared that our government cannot establish a religion, and that every religion can be freely practiced. Regardless of where people worship—in a cathedral, mosque, synagogue, church, or temple—all religions enjoy the same status and protection.

The Biblical Jesus Rejected Nationalism

We reject the militant, hard-nosed, and authoritarian image of Jesus offered by Christian Nationalism. Their Jesus carries a sword and attacks his foes. That Jesus has no biblical foundation. Instead, Jesus refused to retaliate when beaten and nailed to a cross. He preached love for enemies. He blessed peacemakers and urged his followers to love their neighbors as themselves. He rejected domination and replaced it with service to others.

Jesus Invited ALL to the Table

Jesus invited Jews and non-Jews, prostitutes and tax collectors, outcasts and religious leaders to follow him. All were welcomed. Jesus announced a kingdom that transcends nation and ethnicity, created and defended not by the sword, but by the power of divine love.

Protecting America's Commitment to Religious Freedom

We, the undersigned, denounce Christian Nationalism. The cost of silence compels us to speak. We affirm the strength of an inclusive and interfaith United States of America. We applaud the promise to protect religious freedom—allowing every faith, and those of no faith, to worship as they are called with dignity and equality. We commit to creating a more just and loving society for all.

CCA OPPOSES WV HOUSE BILL #2007 BANNING GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE FOR TRANS MINORS

By Thomas H. Linde, Approved by the Board of Directors, 3/15/23

There is a story we don't hear taught in Sunday School or preached from the pulpit. In Acts 8, Philip the Evangelist is told by an angel to go to a desert road. There, he encounters a man who is both a sexual minority and a different race.

Our record of the first person converted and baptized after Christ's death and resurrection is this man, the Ethiopian eunuch. After he hears the gospel, he declares, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" and then "went on his way rejoicing".

The truth is, at its inception, our early church welcomed the queer community. This is our church history, and these were its earliest members, foreordained by God. This is who we are.

Beyond judgements of gender and sex, human life is sacred, holy, and deserving of dignity. If affirming the gender identity of our youth will help them to say yes to living in a world in which nearly one third of all transgender children attempt suicide, then we must do what we can to grant them sovereignty over their bodies and bless their human flourishing. To do anything less could be a death sentence.

To that end, the West Virginia chapter of Catholic Committee of Appalachia strongly opposes the State's House Bill #2007, the ban on gender-affirming care for minors.

WV HB #2007 is an oppressive solution for a "problem" that does not exist. Although the highest number of trans youth per capita in the U.S. live here in West Virginia, there is little to no evidence that gender reassignment surgery is performed in-state. As such, HB #2007 is nothing more than a power grab of God's sovereign choice to

grant us dominion over our own bodies.

And as the statutory language has expanded to ban hormone treatments and puberty blockers, it has become clear that the bill is intended to bully the LGBTQIA+ community and drag our most vulnerable and powerless citizens into the public square for the purposes of humiliation and degradation.

Catholic Committee of Appalachia honestly acknowledges that mainstream churches have served as havens of such violence, prejudice, and discrimination. Pope Francis has cautioned our faith community that our thoughtless or unkind words can lead to different forms and degrees of violence: "If our hearts are made of stone, the stones

find their way into our hands and we are ready to throw them."

And so we wish to extend three clear messages in faith, hope, and love:

To the transgender youth of West Virginia, who we meet on this desert road, we respect and honor your bodies—which we believe are the bodies of Christ in this world. We repent of the sins of both our Church and our State. We affirm you and we stand unwaveringly with you.

To the licensed counselors and medical professionals who offer extensive care to children navigating transition, we

offer our deep gratitude. Such life-altering healthcare decisions and life-or-death legislative matters cannot, and should not, be made without your professional wisdom and expertise.

And to the politicians who campaign and legislate under Christian identity, we ask: does the gospel that you live, and the gospel that you share, send others away rejoicing? Or do you merely wish to stand there, holding ready your stones? ▲



Back Matter

(Pope Francis's Vision, continued from page 8)

In considering the implementation of the Synod on Synodality in the United States up until now, we can see both an initial grasp of the concept of synodality along with an enthusiasm for the process of listening and consultation—but also a well-founded wariness about whether anything will come of it. (I am referring here to the laity primarily.) There are also critiques of the process, suspicions of its agenda, and attempts to discredit it. Reception by the bishops in the United States can be characterized as lukewarm at best. There are places in the country where the synod has been embraced and eagerly implemented, and places where there has been little to no engagement with the process.

My perspective is shaped by having been the bishop from my region (the ecclesiastical provinces of Louisville, Mobile, and New Orleans) who coordinated our regional synthesis and was part of the USCCB team that coordinated the national synthesis. I also participated in the drafting of the continental synthesis. While every diocese in my region did something, some were content to merely offer an online survey. An online survey can be a helpful tool, especially when there was a desire to include the disaffected and alienated who would probably not be inclined to come to a church gathering for the purpose. But an online tool alone can hardly be an expression of the “walking together” that the synod is supposed to be about.

The dominant cultural pragmatism in North America was evident in the desire to know “where this is going.” Bishops frequently stated that they do not know how to lead a process when the desired outcome of that process is unclear. I think the pope’s response to that complaint would be that the bishops are not meant to lead the process, but to facilitate the Holy Spirit’s guidance. It is easy to see why the national “Eucharistic Revival” has received far more energy, attention, and resources in the U.S. Church: there is a plan, there is marketing, there is a beginning and

end point, there is substantial funding, and there is a problem to be addressed, namely the concern that Catholics do not believe sufficiently in the Real Presence. Instead of ensuring a eucharistic centrality to the synodal process, allowing for an organic discernment about our eucharistic understanding, plans for a mega-event featuring plenty of pre-conciliar piety and theology have replaced the focus on the Synod for a Synodal Church in the USCCB. It does not strike me as coincidental that much of the Eucharistic Revival focuses on eucharistic adoration, passive in nature, and so offers an easy alternative to the active engagement of walking together synodally.

Several places in the United States could not resist creating a local action plan for their synod, even though this is clearly not the stage of the synod for that. Sometimes that push for a plan was about making sure that the insights gleaned from the People of God in dialogue would not be lost; I think that concern is valid, but also comes from thinking that the synod is an event rather than the way of being Church.

The first phase of the Synod, from October 2021 until April 2022, was to be the phase for listening and discernment in local churches,

dioceses, and bishops’ conferences. The *National Synthesis of the People of God in the United States of America* for the diocesan phase of the synod emphasizes the joy with which participants were engaged and the positive feelings that came from the listening sessions. The structure and facilitation of such sessions varied greatly. This was not seen as problematic by the Office of the Synod in Rome because the Church is diverse, and this phase was not meant to be a one-time opportunity to get it right, but rather a part of an evolving process. The number of people who expressed gratitude for being listened to and being able to express themselves was impressive, even if some of those who wish to discount the process prefer to emphasize the miniscule percentage of all Catholics who actually participated in a formal session. My



own experience of sensing a palpable love for the Church, even when members have been frustrated, hurt, and are worried about its future, was echoed throughout the country and around the globe. The enduring wounds of the sexual-abuse and mismanagement crises were prominent in discussions; related issues, like the concentration of power among clerics, the loss of respect and trust in the hierarchy, and the fear about the faith not being received by the next generation, also came up frequently—as did concerns about the roles of women and LGBTQ people in the Church. There was a great desire expressed to become a more welcoming Church and to offer accompaniment to people at every stage of faith development.

It seems that those who were engaged in synodal processes throughout the country have come to appreciate the language and spirit of Pope Francis and really are learning the art of discernment. It should be noted that many groups conducted synodal listening sessions outside of diocesan or parish structures and sent their syntheses directly to the Synod Office in Rome or to the USCCB, sometimes expressing dissatisfaction with the local process. Even so, the concerns that came up frequently throughout the United States also surfaced in many other parts of the world. If Pope Francis was hopeful that the Spirit would provide the issues to be discerned, the Spirit is speaking.

When all these national syntheses were received in Rome, a working document was created. The title given by the Office of the Synod in Rome to the working document for the Continental Stage includes these words from Isaiah 54:2: “Enlarge the space of your tent.” This reflects a desire for a less self-enclosed and more welcoming Church. The continental document describes a kind of wrestling with the concept of synodality and a real desire for a more missionary Church, even if we are unsure about how to get there.

The working document for the continental phase was then sent back to the dioceses for further discussion, careful reading, reflection, and discernment in dialogue. All were asked to describe what in the document resonated with their experience and what would be most impactful in their local church. These discussions were to be in preparation for a continental synodal assembly, which happened on every continent—*except* North America. For the purposes of this phase of the synod, Mexico was included with Latin America (South and Central) because of linguistic, cultural, and historical ties. North America—that is, the United States and Canada—conducted several sessions by Zoom

with the bishops and two delegates selected by each diocesan bishop. There were sessions available in English, Spanish, and French. Asia, Europe, and Africa, with their vast geographies and cultural diversity, were able to conduct continental assemblies. Even the Middle East created such an assembly. North America did not, citing economic and practical difficulties in coming together.

With a narrower selection of delegates in this phase, there were some notable differences from the broad content of the diocesan listening sessions. Concerns about the direction of the synod were more pronounced. Many raised questions about whether the synod was trying to change doctrine and voiced opposition to that possibility. Calls for greater precision in what inclusivity might mean and who it might involve were more common, and discussions of liturgical tensions, the loss of the Latin Mass, and confusion over the process were more vocal at this stage. The USCCB synod staff noted the low participation of priests in the synod process and asked each bishop to nominate one older and one more recently ordained priest to a special clerical session, also conducted by Zoom. The concerns I just mentioned dominated that session even more, but it was deemed unofficial and similar to a special session created for ecumenical leaders (which I personally found very illuminating). It did not factor into the continental synthesis that was submitted to Rome and awaits publication.

Another aspect of synodality that I do not believe gets sufficient attention is the ecumenical incentive, especially concerning relations with the East. In 2008, well before the election of Pope Francis, his good friend, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the first Patriarch of Constantinople to attend a papal installation, spoke to the Synod of Bishops precisely on the issue of synodality. His speech was, in his own words, in response to St. John Paul II’s 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, in which he basically asks the larger Christian community for ways to reimagine the Petrine ministry in a Church healed of schism. Bartholomew suggested that for the Eastern and Western Churches to heal their millennium of division, it would be essential that the Petrine ministry be balanced by a rediscovery of synodality in the West:

It is well known that the Orthodox Church attaches to the synodical system fundamental ecclesiological importance. Together with primacy, synodality constitutes the backbone of the Church’s government and organization.... This interdependence between synodality and *(continued on page 22)*

Back Matter

(Pope Francis's Vision, continued from page 21)

primacy runs through all levels of the Church's life: local, regional and universal. (Synodus Episcoporum Bolletino, 30)

Apparently, Pope Francis is interested in the Patriarch's suggestion. In a 2015 address marking the fiftieth anniversary of the re-establishment of the Synod, Pope Francis reminded us that the only authority in the Church is the authority of service. The pope, he said, is not above the Church, he is a member of the Church, a baptized person among the baptized and a bishop among the bishops; as successor of Peter he presides in love over the whole Church. He also made clear that the "Synod is with Peter and under Peter, not to dictate but to guarantee unity." This sounds like balancing synodality and primacy.

Striving to make the Church walk together on a path of renewal is a big enough challenge for anyone. Francis has certainly worked to fulfill the mandate of the cardinals who elected him to reform the Roman Curia. In keeping with principles he enunciated from the beginning of his papacy, he has created the structure for a Curia in service of the local churches and focused on mission over maintenance. The document reforming the Curia is called *Praedicate evangelium* (Preach the Gospel) and the Dicastery for Evangelization has the highest ranking in the new organization. Laypeople, including women, can hold positions of leadership. But like his predecessor John XXIII, who sixty years ago addressed an encyclical, *Pacem in terris*, to the whole world, inviting everyone to work together for peace, Francis sees the Church's mission as much more external than internal. He wants the Church to lead the whole world in recognizing that we are all part of God's family and have to live as sisters and brothers with all people and with all creation.

This first Jesuit pope has shown the world that his selection of the name Francis was more than symbolic. While he most certainly brings his Ignatian spirituality and charism for discernment to his exercise of the Petrine Office, he also embodies the spirit of the poor man of Assisi for the twenty-first century. Mission, for St. Francis and for Pope Francis, begins with an encounter with the all-merciful God, which sparks an overflowing joy that one is compelled to share. That is mission. When Pope Francis challenged the Church early in his pontificate to stop looking like Lent without Easter and to stop finger wagging and condemning as a way to spread the Gospel, he was drawing from his name-

sake. Like his patron saint, the pope has preached and worked for peace throughout his pontificate and has acknowledged the ongoing violence that many fail to see. He speaks about the Third World War being fought piecemeal and he has not shied away from war zones in order to personally bring a message of peace.

Francis is in line with all of his recent predecessors as a force for peace among nations and eager to serve in mediation. Yet even here, there is a particular style, an imitation of Jesus and a *vicinanza*, a nearness, like the words of Pope John in that moonlight speech. Francis traveled to war-torn Iraq, the first pope to do so. He met with Indigenous leaders in Canada who had been harmed by the Church's ministers and traveled to Congo and to South Sudan as a messenger of peace and to demonstrate his solidarity with those who have suffered the ravages of war. We have witnessed his tireless preoccupation with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Trying to walk the diplomatic tightrope so that he might be able to serve as a negotiator for peace did not win him much support. But he did not deny that Russia is the aggressor and even jeopardized advances in ecumenism with the Russian Orthodox with his harsh words about Patriarch Kirill's support of Putin's war. Every Sunday he reminds the pilgrims in Saint Peter's Square to pray for "martyred Ukraine." He also prays for Russians, many of whom have a distorted view of the war through no fault of their own and many who favor peaceful coexistence with Ukraine. Both sides are necessary to bring about peace.

It was on the Vigil of the Feast of Saint Francis in 2021 that Pope Francis signed his encyclical *Fratelli tutti* (*Brothers and Sisters All*) at the tomb of the famous peacemaker whose writings gave rise to the name of the document. With this encyclical and the earlier *Laudato si'* (2015), the pope has given the global Church a healthy dose of Franciscan spirituality: he highlights the interrelatedness of all creation and the need to live as brothers and sisters, in fraternity with all humanity and indeed all of creation. In *Fratelli tutti*, written in the midst of the global pandemic, he laments how humanity failed to come together to address this common threat, and he urges humanity to start building the friendships and relationships that will be necessary to avoid resorting to war and violence and to work together to address the accelerating climate catastrophe. Just as the human family and all creation are interrelated, so are all the issues that threaten human existence, human dignity, and human life today. Climate change disproportionately affects the poorer

countries of the world that consume less of the fossil fuels that have caused the warming. The loss of islands, the destruction of land and biodiversity, and the unusual and brutal weather patterns all lead to greater migration, even as the wealthier nations close their doors to the suffering migrants trying to preserve their lives. All of this is a form of violence.

Why should the pope be the only one who sees the unsustainability of the present situation? Are we so unaccustomed to having prophets arise from within the Church's hierarchy? Are human beings today so suspicious of any kind of organization that the common good becomes unthinkable? What will it take for all the leaders of the Church and of other world religions to speak as forcefully about the need for structural change and allow human values to supersede economic values for the common good and common survival of all?

To consider the common good, without rooting the common good in one's own personal needs or advantage, requires the chief theological virtue of charity. We rarely consider charity as a political solution; rather, what the government is unable or unwilling to do for the disadvantaged is often left to private or institutional "charity." In *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis invokes the classical meaning of disinterested love and suggests that charity unites the abstract and the institutional; it moves from the theoretical good to the desire to help that results from a direct encounter with a person in need. But as even the case of the Good Samaritan reveals, there is always a need for a structure or institution, like the inn, to provide the help an individual is unable to offer. The pope reminds us of the ancient yet ever-present reality of concupiscence, a proclivity to selfishness and narrow interests, that always has to be confronted and overcome through fraternity. Any perfect world order in theory will need to recognize the reality of human weakness; systems cannot just be put in place, nor can we think our way through every problem with a technological or market-based solution.

Following a creative exegesis of the Good Samaritan parable, Pope Francis offers a reflection on a more open world in contrast to the closed world described in the encyclical's beginning. The more open world is based on human relationships that, like the Good Samaritan, transcend national and ethnic boundaries. He decries the results of the breakdown of such transcendent relationships: racism, which never goes away but periodically retreats; anti-immigrant

sentiment; and lack of attention to the "hidden exiles" in our midst, like the disabled or abandoned elderly. The common good requires a recognition of the great worth of each person. Solidarity is born of conversion and is more than sporadic generosity. Francis re-introduces the concept of gratuitousness (not being useful to the market), a concept that removes relationships and even politics from the realm of the utilitarian to one more responsive to the God who allows the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the good and the bad alike. Not everything has to be limited to political favors and even exchanges; in fact, the common good requires a certain gratuitousness, which is quite different from the "pay to play" system at work in our country that excludes so many.

"Dialogue and friendship" are introduced as a part of the path to a more fraternal world. Pope Francis describes dialogue as "approaching, speaking, looking at, listening, coming to know, understanding, and finding common ground" (FT 198). Dialogue is not the exchange of opinions, but rather a desire to come together. Selfish indifference or violent protest can undermine or end dialogue. Dialogue requires clear thinking, rational argument, a variety of perspectives, and the contribution of different fields of knowledge and points of view. It does not result in relativism but is rather a search for truth. Respect for the dignity of the other and the recognition that persons are more valuable than material things or ideas are necessary for a dialogue that contributes to the common good.

Pope Francis, in the spirit of St. John XXIII, has been opening the windows of the Church to allow a fresh breeze in. And as with John XXIII, there has been considerable resistance to what he is imagining, with the opposition to it far more blatant than it was for his predecessor. Francis, like the council that forms his ecclesiology, is interested in a Church in service to the world, filling that world with the Gospel in deed as much as in word. The recent announcement that lay delegates, including women, will be voting members of the synod, demonstrates the pope's willingness to make the synod more representative and responsive to the whole Church. The embrace of synodality has the potential to revive and enliven the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This Church will strive to lead humanity to greater fraternity and unity—for our survival, and hopefully for our flourishing. ▲

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Lord, Make Me a Channel of Disturbance: The "Reverse St. Francis Prayer"

Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.
Where there is apathy, let me provoke;
Where there is compliance, let me bring questioning;
Where there is silence, may I be a voice.
Where there is too much comfort and too little action, grant disruption;
Where there are doors closed and hearts locked, grant the willingness to listen.
When laws dictate and pain is overlooked...
When tradition speaks louder than need...
Grant that I may see rather to do justice than to talk about it;
Disturb us, O Lord.
To be with, as well as for, the alienated;
To love the unlovable as well as the lovely;
Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.

~Author Unknown

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