



# nova notes

**NOVA Catholic Community**

**September 2009**

## ***Chair Notes...***

### **Buckle Your Seatbelts**

As NOVA moves farther along in its discussion of alternative presiders we're beginning to get a stronger sense of what's at stake, and perhaps some of us are feeling a little nervous. As we all know, the process for deciding on these issues is still in the discussion stage. Later we will move into the decision stage. All of the possible consequences of our actions on these issues are anyone's guess, but with patience and kindness to each other we'll come out fine.

Our discussions have been valuable. Everyone is sharing ideas and we're all learning from each other. John Mooney's research has been outstanding and particularly informative. We are improving our understanding of the nature of sacraments and the Eucharist, the centrality of the Eucharist in our religious life, the history of the church, the roles of president and presbyter, and the bond of "Communio" out of which springs the Church and the Eucharist. Ken Chaison, Clyde and Judy Christofferson deserve special thanks for facilitating our communication with great website support, recordings and minutes.



The issues break down into four parts:

1. Suggested formats for community led liturgies in the absence of our Padre Cadre (discussed in July);
2. NOVA's preferred policy on alternative presiders at the Eucharist (discussed in August);
3. The Eucharist as the source of "Communio" and also the effect of "Communio" (future discussion);
4. The ways in which NOVA will implement its preferred policy and the impact of NOVA's decisions on its relationship with the institutional church (future discussion).

Eventually we may ask the following question: If communion with the Church is necessary for a community to celebrate the Eucharist, then how far off the reservation can we go and still celebrate the Eucharist? My answer is that as long as a community prays the Eucharistic prayer as Jesus wants us to, then we are on the reservation. Who defines what Jesus wants? He does, but none of us has Jesus' cell phone number.

The way we work our way through it is that we ask each other, including our Padres, and we ask thinkers and teachers inside and outside the institutional church, from our own times and from our past, "what do you think He wants us to do?" We consider, we decide and we act. Then we buckle our seat belts and drive on.

*~ Tom Clarkson*

**NOVA Returns to Kenmore on September 27.  
Liturgy starts at 10:15.**

# NOVA Catholic Community

[www.novacomunity.info](http://www.novacomunity.info)

NOVA Photos: <http://web.mac.com/dicarroll/Nova>

<b>NOVA Message Line.....</b>		<b>703-852-7907</b>
<b>Chairpersons</b>	<b>Tom Clarkson</b>	<b>703-560-2096</b>
	<b>Gloria Mog</b>	<b>703-522-1812</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Joe Formoso</b>	<b>703-503-9731</b>
<b>Coordinator, Community Life</b>	<b>Cece Michelotti</b>	<b>703-241-0789</b>
<b>Liturgy Coordinator</b>	<b>Jeanne Clarkson</b>	<b>703-560-2096</b>
<b>Padre Cadre Coordinator</b>	<b>John Mooney</b>	<b>703-425-1639</b>
<b>Music Coordinator</b>	<b>Victoria Robinson</b>	<b>703-237-0008</b>
<b>Peace &amp; Justice Coordinators</b>	<b>Dianne Carroll</b>	<b>703-536-2616</b>
	<b>Marie Keefe</b>	<b>301-229-2016</b>
<b>Christ House Coordinator</b>	<b>Kopp Michelotti</b>	<b>703-241-0789</b>
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<b>NOTE EMAIL!!</b>	<b><a href="mailto:mdpinho@verizon.net">mdpinho@verizon.net</a></b>	

The NOVA Catholic Community Invites You To Celebrate The Eucharistic Liturgy With Us Every Sunday in Arlington, Virginia.

Note: Our Liturgy is usually celebrated at Kenmore Middle School, Arlington Blvd. and Carlin Springs Rd, Arlington, VA. Beginning Memorial Day Weekend up to our Fall Retreat weekend, we celebrate at Lacey Woods Park, George Mason Drive near Washington Blvd, unless otherwise noted.

[Lacey Woods]  
Liturgies begin at 9:30 am—Gather at 9:15 am

[Kenmore]  
Liturgy begins at 10:15 am—Gather at 10:00 am

**Next Newsletter Deadline is  
September 27, 2009**

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U.S. War Casualty Toll.... (8/25/2009)

Iraq	4,337
Afghanistan	794

Source...

[www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf)

**NOVA is praying for ...**



**Ana Cackley ...** who underwent emergency appendectomy on Saturday, August 15<sup>th</sup> and is recouping speedily.

**Rose Barrett ...** who underwent breast surgery on Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup>, and has been declared cancer FREE!

**NOVA Continues to pray for:**

**Jim Furlong ...** is still the rehab center, but has been having some severe pain of late. He would welcome your visits. You can find him in Room 104, Sunrise at George Mason, 4300 George Mason Blvd, Fairfax, VA 22030. Call ahead (703) 980-1132, because he does travel to medical appointments.

**Bill Callahan ...** who continues with his very difficult recuperation.

**Warren Reich ...** who is still recuperating from a very serious spinal surgery, but is showing continued progress.

**Sonja Donahue ...** who is at Goodwin House/ Alexandria -4800 Filmore Street -#210 – Alexandria, VA 22311. Phone (703) 824-1246. She is in our daily prayers, and would love a card, a call or a visit.

**Grace Birch ...** who is at Sleepy Hollow Manor – 6700 Columbia Pike-#202 – Annandale, VA 22003-3450 – (703) 256-7000x3027. She too is in our daily prayers, and would appreciate a card, a call, or a visit.

**Lord, hear our prayer**

# September Birthdays, etc.

- 2 Bob & Helen Michie, Anniversary
- 3 Brian Ferguson
- 6 Rose & Jerry Barrett, Anniversary  
Alida Yath
- 8 Barbara Formoso  
Cathy Showalter
- 9 Gloria Mog
- 10 Karen Coale
- 13 Adam Clarkson  
Hetty Irmer
- 14 Christopher Iskander  
Joseph Kane  
Joni Whalen-Peck
- 16 Dave Gillmarten
- 18 John Michie
- 23 Bob Michie
- 24 Juliet Boyne
- 25 Nicco Mele
- 27 Daniel Cackley
- 28 Mike Chase  
Richard Markey
- 29 Ted Miller

*Please ensure that Marie Pinho, [mdpinho@verizon.net](mailto:mdpinho@verizon.net), has your important dates, i.e., birthday, anniversary, ordination, etc. (month/day only) if you would like them to appear here.*



# Liturgies: Year B — Cycle I

Inclusive Readings and Music Selections are available in the new NOVA Yahoo Group Files  
Please give all music selections to the Music Liaison the Sunday before your liturgy.  
Liturgies at Lacey Woods Park, N. George Mason Dr. at Washington Blvd in Arlington

SEPTEMBER MUSIC LIAISON  
Tom Clarkson

OCTOBER MUSIC LIAISON  
Tim White

## September 6—23rd Sunday/Ordinary Time

John Haughey, SJ - Katie Ahrens &  
Victoria Robinson

Isaiah 35: 4-7a  
Psalm 146: 7-10  
James 2: -5  
Mark 7: 31-37

## September 13—24th Sunday/Ordinary Time

Bill Callahan— Carolyn & Ted Miller

Isaiah 50: 5-9a  
Psalm 116: 1-6, 8-9  
James 2: 14-18  
Mark 8: 27-35

## September 20—25th Sunday/Ordinary Time

NOVA Retreat (Shrine Mont, Orkney Springs, VA)  
Community Led Liturgy  
Loveless Family & Retreat Planners

Wisdom 2:12, 17-20  
Psalm 54: 3-6-8  
James 3: 6- 4:3  
Mark 9: 30-37

## September 27—26th Sunday/Ordinary Time

Jim Hug, SJ – Mike & Gen Timpane

Numbers 11: 25-29  
Psalm 19: 8, 10, 12-14  
James 5: 1-6  
Mark 9: 38-43, 45, 47-48

## October 4—27th Sunday/Ordinary Time

Quinn Connors - Kopp and Cece Michelotti  
Genesis 2:18-24  
Psalm 128:1-2, 3,4-5,6;  
Hebrews 2:9-11  
Mark 10:2-16

## October 11—28th Sunday/Ordinary Time

Bill Callahan - Jeanne and Tom Clarkson

Wisdom 7: 7-11  
Psalm 90: 12-13, 14-15, 16-17  
Hebrews 4: 12-13  
Mark 10: 17-30

## October 18—29th Sunday/Ordinary Time

Joe Kenna - Clyde Christofferson

Isaiah 53:10-11  
Psalm 33: 4-5, 18-19, 20, 22  
Hebrews 4: 14-16  
Mark 10: 35-45

## October 25—30th Sunday/Ordinary Time

John Langdon - Dianne Carroll,  
Peace and Justice Team

Jeremiah 31: 7-9  
Psalm 126: 1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6  
Hebrews 5: 1-6  
Mark 10: 46-52

**Return to Kenmore!**  
**September 27, 10:15 a.m.**



## Activities . . .

### Gunston volunteers needed



*Nova volunteers distribute bags of non-perishable food, cereal provided by Nova, perishable (eggs, milk, meat, etc) items picked up at the Arlington Food Assistance Center ware-*

*house on the night of distribution and produce items every other week picked up by Eric Carroll at the produce markets downtown (funded by the Nova Peace & Justice budget). The distribution takes place at the Gunston Middle School Recreation Center in Arlington. Many volunteers have been active in this project for a dozen years and others are more recent. All love their work and would love to teach new Nova folks how it's done. So if you would like to volunteer: send email to Dianne Carroll [diacarroll@comcast.net](mailto:diacarroll@comcast.net) or call 703-536-2616*

*~Dianne*

**Sept 3:** Eric, Cathy G, Peter G, Ann Arabian

**Sept 10:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sept 17:** Tim, Jerry, Cackleys

**Sept 24:** Marie P, Glen, Syd

...and October (with 5 Thursdays!!)

**October 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**October 8:** \_\_\_\_\_

**October 15:** Tim, Jerry, Cackleys

**October 22:** Marie P, \_\_\_\_\_

**October 29:** Glen, Syd, \_\_\_\_\_

**Routine: (usually)**

Perishable pickup at AFAC warehouse at 6:00pm

Distribution at Gunston 6:30-7:30

Clean up and return list to AFAC

**Note: An activity where the more hands, the merrier.**

### *NOVA General Meeting*

On **October 17** there will be a NOVA General Meeting, beginning with a Potluck Dinner at **5:30 p.m.** The dinner and meeting will be held at the new home of John and Nancy Veldhuis, 4400 Kirchner Court, Alexandria, VA 22304

During the Potluck Dinner, there will be discussions leading up to the General Meeting, itself, which will begin at 7:00 p.m. and is expected to end at 9:30.

The agenda for the meeting so far, includes: Community Led Liturgies; Electronic Newsletters; and Alternative Presiders.

Decisions may be made at General Meetings through the consensus process.



### *NOVA Nite*

The next Nova Nite will be on Sunday, **November 15, from 7:30-9:30 p.m.** at Rose and Jerry Barrett's meeting room. The topic will be decided after the October General Meeting.

*"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."*

~ [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)

## Activities, continued . . .

### RAMADAN BASKET PROJECT 2009

*True charity remembers not only those in need who ask, but also those who are prevented by some reason from asking.*

*Holy Quran Verse 51:19*



Many thanks to the whole community for contributing to our partnership efforts with the Muslim Women Coalition (MWC) during this month of Ramadan. Every year MWC donates dozens of Ramadan Baskets to the area's abused women's shelters and a homeless shelter, including our project at the Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for the Homeless, AACH. On Sunday, August 23 we assembled laundry baskets of personal care products and food as well as a couple of baskets full of extra supplies for the shelter itself

*~Marie Keefe*

In the words of MWC, "we are helping to alleviate some of the burden in this blessed month of Ramadan for women and their families by providing a small package of self worth, dignity and love. "

One way to accompany our Muslim brothers and sisters in spirit during this holy time is through prayer:

### *~ Ramadan Prayers ~*

*The first ten days of Ramadan we recite:*

O Light! O Light of Light, O Illuminator of Light,  
Illuminate my heart by the light of Thy transcendent understanding.

*2nd ten days:*

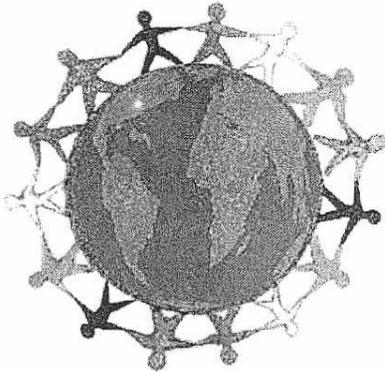
I ask Allah the Great to forgive me and I repent unto Him

*3rd ten days*

O Allah, Thou art the Pardoner,  
Thou lovest to pardon, so pardon us, O Generous One.



Calling A Circle of All People To Join....



## The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Prayer Vigil *for the* Earth

Sunrise, October 10<sup>th</sup> to  
1:00pm October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
(Saturday & Sunday)

The Washington Monument  
North Area  
(16<sup>TH</sup> & Constitution)  
Washington DC  
Smithsonian Metro  
Free & Open to the Public

*THE PRAYER VIGIL FOR THE EARTH IS A SEAMLESS  
TAPESTRY OF MANY TRADITIONS WOVEN INTO A  
LIVING PRAYER THROUGH COLLECTIVE  
EXPERIENCES OF FAITH. THE VIGIL IS AN  
INVITATION TO ALL PEOPLES TO GATHER, TO PRAY  
FOR HARMONY WITH THE NATURAL WORLD, PEACE  
AMONG COMMUNITIES. AND THE WELL-BEING OF  
ALL CREATION.*

**Weekend Highlights:**

- Sunrise & Other Prayer Ceremonies
- Sacred Fire Burns Continuously
- Dances, Song & Prayer
- Interfaith Dialogue through Talking Circles
- Taiko, Native American and African Drums
- Youth Programs

This is a 100% volunteer effort.

To donate, please make your check payable to:  
THE CIRCLE; send to:  
The Circle – East Coast Office  
11160 Glade Drive  
Reston, VA 20191  
Thank You!  
501c-3 Non-profit # 94-3133148

For More Information, to Volunteer or To Participate:

EMAIL: [oneprayer4@aol.com](mailto:oneprayer4@aol.com) CALL: 703-620-2577 FAX: 703-620-4480 WEB: [www.oneprayer.org](http://www.oneprayer.org)

For Updates On Activities , Other Prayer Vigil Locations & Our History, Visit Our Web Site:  
[www.oneprayer.org](http://www.oneprayer.org)

Please contact Peggy Meyer, if any additional information is needed.

## NOVA News...

### Community Life Ministry

At the May, 2009 Calling Forth meeting, Eric made a plea for volunteers to become active members of a Community Life Ministry Team.

Wow! What a fabulous response!

We are now up and running and while we recognize that we are all aware of the need for all of us to minister to each other, the following members have volunteered to be called on and to support others in need in a very conscious manner.

So if you become aware of a particular need of any member of our community, we encourage you to call on any of the team and ask them to give their support.

Team members include: Teddi Ahrens, Joe Annunziata, Ken Chaison, Catherine Schmitt, Marlene Shade, John Tarrant, and Tim White. Cece Michelotti is coordinating the CLM team.  
~ *Cece*

### What's the news about Lucilda's family?

During 2008 Nova helped Lucilda and her family (4 girls) by paying her rent fully for 6 months and half for 6 months. She works as a prep chef part time at Legal Seafood and part time at a nursing home. In March she moved to a 1 bedroom apartment in Arlington in the same school district to reduce her rent. She now has help with the rent by renting the bedroom and she and girls are all in the living room as a bedroom. She wants very much for the nursing home job to become full time as it is during the day. A Nova member has offered to tutor her in English which will help her in many ways. Many Nova people helped with school for the children by purchasing their backpacks, school supplies, shoes, and gift certificates for an outfit for each school age girl (3). The community has agreed to take a second collection for the family on August 31 at the liturgy to help the family with expenses as the children return to school. She is a hard worker, determined to make sure her children are educated, strives to pay her bills, and desperately wants to have a job with benefits – healthcare!!

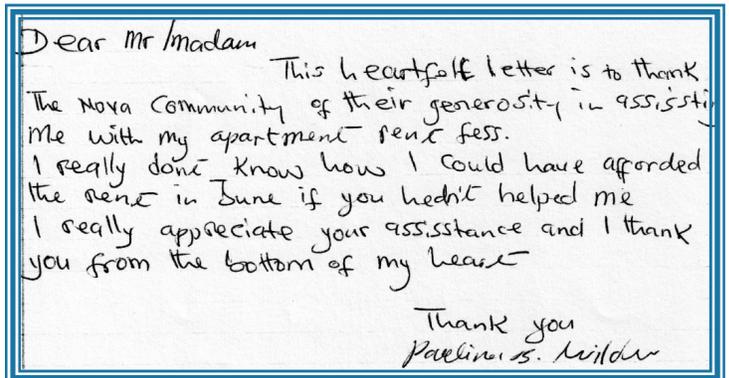
Thanks to all those who have helped with this project and to Nova for always being willing to offer help when it is needed.  
~*Dianne Carroll*

### Homeless Prevention Program

One of the Peace and Justice Projects of the Nova Community is a program to provide rental relief on a one-time, emergency basis for those in need in the Arlington Public School community. This program is administered by Jenny Carroll a former Social Worker in the Arlington Schools.

Four schools have been identified as targets for this year. Jenny developed a form for the social workers in the 4 school to use for making a referral. So far this year 6 families have been given rental assistance. Loss of job, surgery, loss of hours at job, childcare costs, are some of the presenting reasons for need. At the end of the year there will be a report with more details that Nova members can receive at the annual Peace and Justice meeting.

Following is a thank you that was received by one of the social workers to pass on to the Nova Community...  
~ *Dianne*



“Dear Mr./Madam

“This heartfelt letter is to thank the NOVA Community for their generosity in assisting me with my apartment rent/fees. I really don’t know how I could have afforded the rent in June if you hadn’t helped me.

“I really appreciate your assistance and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you  
“Pauline”

The following letter is being sent to all active Padre Cadre members as a prelude to in-person discussions with each of them. As discussed at recent meetings, Chairs, Gloria and Tom and John Mooney will have a dialog with each of our priests to solicit their opinions and guidance on these issues.

## *Nova Catholic Community*

August, 2009

Dear Padres,

We are requesting your input on some important issues that Nova has been discussing over the past several months. The main one is our potential use of occasional “alternative presiders” for Eucharistic Liturgies. As was often discussed at the Intentional Eucharistic Communities Gathering this past May, such presiders might include laicized priests, ordained Catholic women priests, ordained ministers from non-Catholic Christian traditions, and (as proposed by the Dutch Dominicans in 2007) prepared lay members of our own community. As you probably know, most of the IECs throughout the country do not have the rich resources of available priests that we enjoy in the DC area. Like many other communities in the Church throughout the world, non-hierarchically ordained leaders have been taking increasing responsibility for ministry and liturgical practices in most of the IECs.

There are a number of reasons why we are considering this. One is that, despite the generosity of our Padre Cadre members, there are increasing times when we are left without an approved priest to preside. Another is a desire to support the acceptance of ordained Catholic women priests, primarily to achieve justice and equality for women in the Church. We also believe that the Church needs the balance that women would bring to leadership positions as well as the rich diversity they would bring to ministerial and liturgical life. As we try to read the “signs of the times,” we believe our present search is not just relevant to NOVA but is a critical issue for the future of the whole Church.

We are not rushing into any decisions but have adopted an outline of alternative, related theological and canonical issues, and a study/discernment process. We have already met twice over the last five weeks, for a total of five hours, and will resume our study and discernment process in the fall. John Haughey, SJ, joined our August 9th discussion, and we warmly welcome all of you to join in subsequent sessions as well. We will address the issue further at our October 17<sup>th</sup> General Meeting and a Nova Nite discussion on November 15<sup>th</sup>.

In the conversations we are requesting to have with you individually, we would like your thoughts (theological, pastoral, and otherwise) on the alternatives we are considering and the issues we are studying, as well as on the study/discernment process itself. From our discussions thus far, two points repeatedly have been made. First, for all our discomfort with some features of the “institutional Church,” there is a desire among many to remain in communion with the universal Church, as complicated as the “tango of communion” may be. Secondly, NOVA loves and admires its Padre Cadre and sees you as one of our main connections with the universal Church. We would like the alternatives we choose to leave you comfortable presiding with us into the future. We want to know whether our adoption of any of the “alternative presider” alternatives would make it difficult for you to continue as an active member of the Padre Cadre.

The three of us have divided the responsibility of contacting you in the near future. Also, you should feel free to contact any one of us with any questions or concerns. Thanks again for all you do for us and for any help you can offer in this study and discernment process.

With care and blessings,

Tom Clarkson, co-Chair, 703-955-0809 (cell)  
[Tclarkson2@cox.net](mailto:Tclarkson2@cox.net)

John Mooney, Discussion Leader, 703-477-8469  
[jmooney7@verizon.net](mailto:jmooney7@verizon.net)

Gloria Mog, co-Chair, 703-522-1812  
[gloriamog@verizon.net](mailto:gloriamog@verizon.net)

# Retreat 2009 "Music for Soul-Making"



NOVA's 2009 retreat will be held at Shrine Mont from Friday evening through Sunday noon, September 18-20. The theme of the retreat will be "music," with our own music group planning a variety of activities to get us in touch with our more melodious selves.

Saturday evening will feature an introduction to drumming circles, by Master Drummer, Stream, who will lead us (courtesy of the Novatones) in a 2 hour session. Stream has 20 years experience and leads drum circles near Washington, D.C. He has worked with several NOVA members. You can find him on the web

at [www.onecircle.net](http://www.onecircle.net). (Click on 1000 Drum Circles.) He will bring

a carload of things to beat on but **please bring along any rhythm instruments you might have at home** for the drum circle on Saturday.

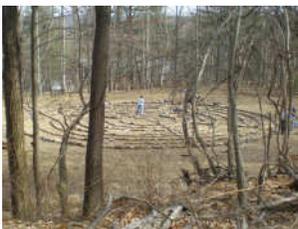
You must make reservations ahead of time with Kopp Michelotti because we have to give Shrine Mont a count of participants in advance. Call Kopp at 703-241-0789 or e-mail him at [koppmich@yahoo.com](mailto:koppmich@yahoo.com). Leave a message with the names of all adults and children for whom you are reserving space. Please specify whether the children are less than 3 or ages 4-12.

Shrine Mont is located 1 hour South of Winchester and a bit more than 2 hours from the Washington DC metro area, just beyond the Basye/Bryce Mountain ski resort. However, Friday afternoon traffic on I-66 might make it prudent to allow a little more time. To reach Shrine Mont, follow Route 66 West to I-81 South to Mt. Jackson (Exit #273). Turn left onto Rt. 703 (East), then right (South) on US 11, follow through town, turn right on Rt. #263 and follow approximately 15 miles to Orkney Springs.

Friday dinner will be served from 5:30 till 7:00 PM. The retreat will end with lunch on Sunday at 12:30 PM.

The mountains are gorgeous and the weather cooler than in DC. It's advisable to bring a jacket; also, insect repellent, extra towels, soap, and shampoo. Even if the weather is clear in the DC area, a raincoat and/or an umbrella might be needed in the mountains. (Flashlights are good to bring along too.) Feel free to bring snacks of any kind to share during Friday and Saturday evening get-togethers, as well as games and puzzles, soft drinks, juice, wine, beer. Smoking is not allowed; pets are not allowed.

The cost for the weekend, lodging and meals, is \$175 for adults and teens, \$60 for children ages 4 to 12, free for children 3 years old and younger. NOVA does not want anyone to miss the retreat because of cost. We always have subsidies available; just talk to Kopp. Again, please call 703-241-0789 or e-mail [koppmich@yahoo.com](mailto:koppmich@yahoo.com) as soon as possible to reserve your space for the retreat. ~ Kopp



## Shrine Mont Prayer Labyrinth

Shrine Mont has recently installed a seven-circuit prayer labyrinth. It is forty five feet across and has a cruciform design patterned after the labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral in France. It faces north towards the Cross on Shrine Mountain and North Mountain beyond. The Labyrinth is located about 1,000 feet to the northwest of the Shrine and was constructed by volunteers in March 2009 using native stones from the area. Download a brochure on the Labyrinth by clicking on following link...

<http://shrinemont.indigofiles.com/Labyrinth.pdf>

## **NOVA Shrinemont Retreat 2009**

### **Retreat note from Linda:**

We still need a few more people to send me a piece of music they'd like to share at the opening session. Any kind, as long as it's meaningful for you: classic, rock, religious, not religious, whatever. E-mail me the name/performer of the piece, and we'll make arrangements for me to get the music from you if I can't get it on my own. [LindaRosenberg1@me.com](mailto:LindaRosenberg1@me.com)

### **Retreat note from Rich**

Saturday afternoon I'll lead an optional session on listening to music as a way to pray. If you think you might like to come to that session, let Linda know and we'll get you a CD with music we'll be listening to. Pre-listening helps. No commitment required—you can change your mind and skip it even if you got your CD.

### ***Retreat Schedule***

#### **Friday 18 Sep**

5:30 – 7:00 pm      Dinner  
7:45 – 9:45 pm      Opening session: music sharing

#### **Saturday 19 Sep**

(7:00 – 8:00 am)      Birdwalk with Tim White (optional): meet in front of hotel  
                             Silent meditation (optional—come anytime): main meeting room  
8:00 am                Breakfast  
9:15 – 11: 30 am      Singing as prayer (lousy singers, this is especially for you)  
                             with break  
(11:30 am – 12:15 pm)    The planning team meets to plan Sunday liturgy  
12:30 pm                Lunch, followed by lots of free time unless you choose to go to....  
(3:00 - 4:00 pm)      Group composes music for one of Sunday's readings (optional)  
                             10 people max, no musical training necessary, reserve with Linda  
(4:15 – 5:30 pm)      Listening as prayer (optional)  
5:30 pm                Dinner  
7:30 pm                Drum circle led by special guest Stream, followed by social hour

#### **Sunday 20 Sep**

(7:00 – 8:00 am)      Silent meditation (optional—come anytime): main meeting room  
8:00 a.m.                Breakfast  
9:15-10:00 am        Everyone can actually sing harmony: learn a new song in 3 parts  
10:45                    Liturgy  
12:30                    Lunch

## Shrine Mont Information...

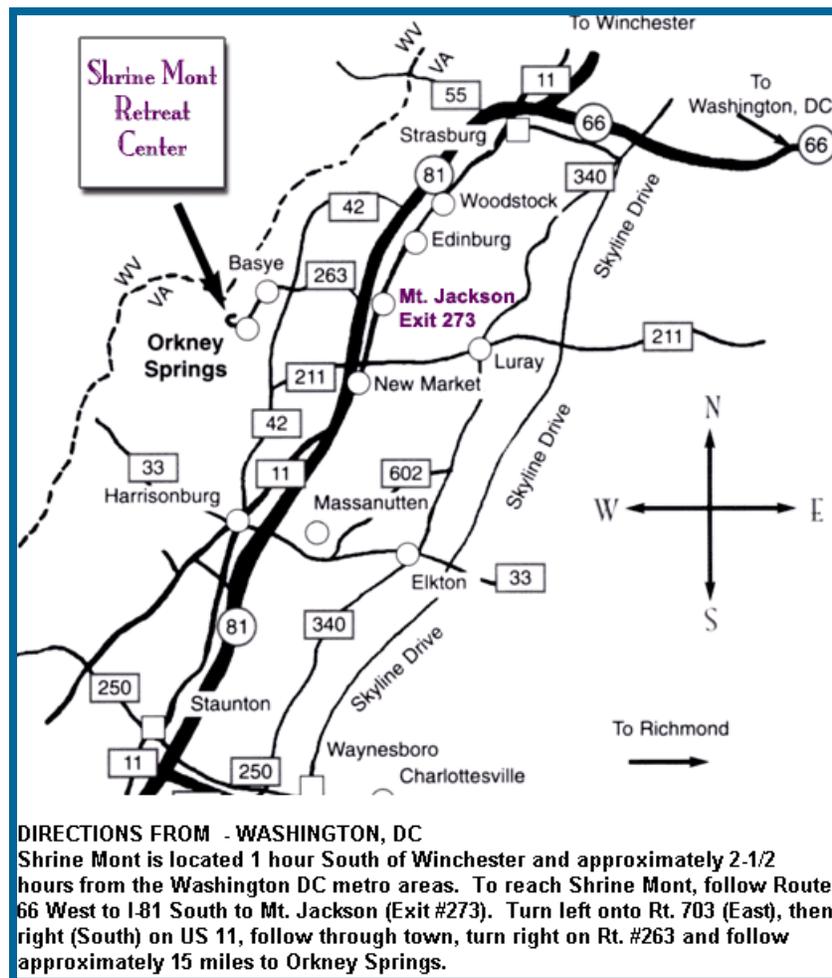
Shrine Mont has a NO SMOKING and NO PETS policy. Roller Blades and Skateboards are also forbidden. (Fines are assessed for violations.)

All phone messages go directly to the office, **Phone Number: 1-540-856-2141**  
Shrine Mont staff will do their best to deliver your messages to you, but the group leader or individual guests should check the office or message board occasionally.

There are no phones in any of the rooms or cottages. Guests may use the phone located in the Hotel lobby or Tucker Hall—see link to Facilities map below. Cell phone service is very limited.

Quiet Hour is 10:00 pm. A complete statement of Shrine Mont Guidelines can be found by clicking on the following link... <http://www.shrinemont.com/v.php?pg=10>

Below is a map with directions to Shrine Mont. Retreat attendees might also find the Shrine Mont Facilities Map helpful, especially if you have not been there before. Click on the following link to view or print the Facilities Map.... <http://www.shrinemont.com/v.php?pg=11>



# Theology for a Small Planet

A collection of essays by Clyde Christofferson © 2009

## Part 1: Lemaitre's Legacy

The morning was sunny and a pleasant breeze rustled leaves in the tall oak trees at the rear entrance to our building. It could not have been a nicer day. I had parked my car in the lot and was walking toward the door, and someone ahead of me saw me coming and held the door. I did the same for the person behind me.

This is an ordinary occurrence. I suppose the reason I remember it was that the person who held the door for me stood there, waiting. I felt I should move more quickly the last ten or fifteen feet, to accommodate this gracious behavior. And, as it turned out, the person behind me made a similar accommodation as I also held the door.

On a different occasion I was at home, somewhat out of sorts. I would have to return to the office after dinner. My wife, Judy, had made dinner and my job was to clear the table and clean up the kitchen. She helped with both, not saying a word. Not in the best mood, I took this kindness as dissatisfaction with my slow pace, and told her so. Upon reflection, though, I understood that she simply sensed the burdens I had brought to the dinner table and was being helpful.

Another example of everyday kindness became clear to me many years after my brother was killed at Chu Lai in Vietnam. He was a combat reporter with the 101st Airborne Division, and had been in the point platoon of the company whose mission he had been assigned to cover. He was among nearly two dozen men who lost their lives in an ambush. He was not yet twenty years old.

More than thirty years later my brother's combat photographer during these last days found one of my sisters via the Virtual Wall and wrote to her. It was a very touching account of mentoring by my brother. Even in the cauldron of war we do not cease to be human beings, and my brother's kindnesses were appreciated. I had often wondered about my brother's future, considering the violent circumstances of his death. This unexpected letter so many years later was itself a kindness.

They are examples, and not mere anecdotes. With modest reflection each of us could assemble our own examples. I rely upon the willing reader's own examples as much as those I have given.

What follows is a heuristic argument rather than a proof. It may be persuasive or suggestive to some, and leave others cold. I make no pretense for greater consideration.

These examples of kindnesses pass by us everyday without notice. And yet when we do take the time to reflect upon them they resonate. I am reminded of a saying attributed to St. Francis: "Preach the Good News always; when necessary use words." A story goes with this saying. St. Francis walked through Assisi to preach and took a young friar with him. They greeted the townspeople and listened to their stories, generally being neighborly. When they finished the young friar asked, "Francis, I thought you were going to preach?" Francis replied, "We did."

Why do we do these things? Why do these stories resonate with us?

I would like to share with you a metaphor that I find helpful in responding to these questions. We've all heard of the Big Bang, but we may not have seen or may not remember the news accounts from 1965 of the evidence that confirmed that the cosmos had a beginning. Researchers at Bell Labs in New Jersey were finding a low level of annoying noise in their new horn antenna. They thought it might have been the pigeons who were nesting in the horn and leaving their droppings. But after they cleaned out the pigeons the noise was still there. In frustration they called the head of another research team at nearby Princeton.

As it happened, the research team at Princeton was in the process of developing an experiment to determine whether there was a cosmic background radiation. If the cosmos had begun with a lot of heat and light we should still be able to see some residual radiation. The evidence accumulated by the Bell Labs researchers -- who later received the Nobel Prize for their work -- was just what the Princeton team had theorized.

For those not acquainted with physics, this may seem strange. The researchers at Bell Labs thought they were seeing noise, and wanted to know how to get rid of it. The Princeton research team had a theory about the beginning of the universe, but not the evidence. What the Bell Labs researchers were missing was a theory that would explain their noise. But it was their evidence, and they received the Nobel Prize for the discovery of

the cosmic background radiation. In the end, it is evidence that proves theories. But theories are important, because without a theory evidence may be mere noise.

So I repeat the questions raised a few paragraphs ago about the kindnesses we observe in everyday life. Why do we do these things? Why do these stories resonate with us? Are these kindnesses we observe merely noise? Or are they like the cosmic background radiation, evidence of an unseen reality? The difference between noise and evidence is a theory. We need a theory.

Is God a theory? I don't think so. God as creator might account for the Big Bang, but we are concerned not with creation but with the kindnesses of everyday life. A mere creator won't due. Let's be more venturesome with our theory. At worst, if the theory doesn't work, another theory can be tried.

Let me borrow and slightly embellish a proposition from one of my favorite homilists: a loving God created the cosmos in order to share existence with independent beings able to image God by loving one another.

So how do we get from this theory to the observed kindnesses of everyday life, viewing these kindnesses as a sort of "background radiation"? There is a certain charm to this notion, because these kindnesses do indeed resonate with us. And it is the evidence – that our hearts leap when we see or contemplate good things being done for other folks -- that counts.

One might argue, of course, that a loving God would not leave us with mere background kindnesses. Why aren't we all imaging God in a more wholehearted fashion? Is God simply ineffective as a creator, or merely slow? How can we explain both the "background" kindnesses and the up-front pain and suffering of so many?

Return for a moment to the metaphor of the Big Bang. How does theory work?

The beginning of modern cosmology can be traced to a very simple set of suppositions. The laws of physics -- as we observe them on Earth -- are the same regardless of where we are and how we are moving. Albert Einstein developed these assumptions into the General Theory of Relativity in 1916, a theory which integrated space and time in ways that are not intuitive but which accounted for certain gravitational effects not explained by Isaac Newton's physics. Einstein's theory

was expressed in terms of equations which are "covariant" – that is, they retain the same form under transformation from one frame of reference to another – but very difficult to solve. It was soon evident that solutions to these equations could be used to show that the cosmos was either expanding or contracting. Most physicists, including Einstein, did not think either of these alternatives made sense, so Einstein added a "cosmological constant" to his equations which gave a solution -- which for many years Einstein thought was the only sensible solution -- that the universe was neither expanding nor contracting. The universe was simply a neverending presence. Philosophically, Aristotle's cosmos was not much different.

A young Belgian mathematician, Georges Lemaitre, cut his teeth on Einstein's field equations and developed a solution showing that the universe was expanding, and predicting that the expansion was progressive, that is, the farther away matter was the faster it should be moving. He tried to persuade Einstein of this interpretation at a meeting both attended in 1927, but to no avail. Einstein listened to what Lemaitre had to say, but then told the young mathematical physicist that his physics wasn't very good.

In the next year or two Hubble developed observational data using Mount Wilson's one-hundred inch telescope showing that those galaxies furthest away were receding fastest, as Lemaitre had predicted. At a second meeting with Einstein in 1931, with Hubble present, Lemaitre again made his case, and this time Einstein was persuaded.

By this time Lemaitre had also concluded that the equations of General Relativity required a beginning to the cosmos. A basic understanding of quantum physics had been developed, and Lemaitre developed a theory holding that all the matter in the universe had begun as a single quantum -- a primeval atom. This cold quantum was ultimately replaced by a hot Big Bang, but Lemaitre is credited with seeing a cosmic beginning in Einstein's equations. Lemaitre himself, good physicist that he was, was cautious because supporting evidence was still missing. Hubble's evidence for an expanding universe was clear, but there was no supporting evidence for a cosmic beginning.

So how does God fit into this picture? According to Lemaitre, who was also a priest and later a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, God is more likely to be found in psychology than in cosmology. He was sensitive to unwarranted conclusions being drawn from his theories about physics. He was well estab-

lished in the physics community, so his "primeval atom" was not ascribed to his own religious bias. On the other hand, his physics was not well understood within his religious community, and in particular by Pope Pius XII. At a meeting of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences the Pope said that the "primeval atom" theory had proved the Genesis story of creation,

Lemaitre was not happy. He felt the incident would simply confirm the suspicions of scientists opposed to Lemaitre's theory that the theory was suspect because traceable to Lemaitre's role as a priest. Lemaitre understood that the theory was not yet supported by evidence. The discovery of the cosmic background radiation – just before Lemaitre's death – provided the evidence.

Thereafter Stephen Hawking showed that Einstein's General Relativity equations could be "run backwards" to the Big Bang, a cosmic moment of creation. For this work Hawking was honored by Pope Paul VI in 1975. Six years later, however, Hawking returned to Rome for a conference on cosmology and was cautioned by John Paul II that there was no need to inquire behind the creation, for this was God's handiwork. This led Hawking to conclude that "even if science and religion were one on the moment of creation they still did not see eye to eye."

In the last twenty or thirty years there has been a further interplay between theory and evidence about the cosmos, so much so that the genesis of the atoms in our bodies is fairly well understood. Every proton, neutron and electron in our bodies (and the rest of the cosmos, for that matter) was created in the first fraction of a second of creation. The higher elements required for life were created in stars that exploded. This space debris coalesced as planets orbiting around second and third generation stars. Our sun is one such star.

Does this history suggest anything useful for our theory of a loving God? No, at least not in terms of the Big Bang and a cosmic moment of creation. Life and love come much later in cosmic history.

But this history does suggest the vitality of theory. With an eye toward that vitality what questions are raised by our theory of a loving God, and what evidence might be responsive to these questions? Would not the Garden of Eden have been much simpler and more straightforward than a cosmic journey of some fourteen billion years beginning with the Big Bang?

Perhaps simpler for us to conceive (and we

obviously did conceive it) but not adequate to the task. How does one God -- not just any God, but a loving God -- create a being that is independent of God and yet able to love as God loves? Occam's razor suggests that if the marriage of our independence and our ability to image God by loving one another could have been achieved more simply, it would have been. The road of evolution is long and problematic. Is this the price of independence?

And why so many independent beings? It's not just the six billion human beings currently on planet earth (to say nothing of an even greater number who are no longer living here but may be among the Communion of Saints). If, indeed, independent beings such as ourselves -- with hearts that resonate when we hear of works of love -- are the very reason for creation of the cosmos, it stands to reason that the same love responsible for life on Earth is at work in every other galaxy in the cosmos. These are not cold galaxies -- and there are a hundred billion of them -- where the prospects for life are different than in our own. And look at life on our own planet. Life flourishes in astounding variety and with dogged persistence. Even if there is only one such living planet per galaxy, that would mean tens of billions of other civilizations made up of other independent beings able to image God by loving one another. The "People of God" are in a much larger tent than we might have supposed. What does that say about our own flock on planet Earth?

TO BE CONTINUED.

***"Preach the Good News always;  
when necessary use words."  
~ St. Francis***

# *NOVA Photo Gallery for August...*



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