



nova notes

NOVA Catholic Community

January 2011

Chair Notes...

The Advent Committee gave us a great theme this year: traveling with Mary and Joseph. The poems about Mary's inconvenient pregnancy and donkey trip to Bethlehem made me feel like a person of privilege living in a different world from those two poor travelers. Not a good feeling but pretty much deserved.

On the second Saturday in December, about fifteen NOVA members visited the Trappist monastery in Berryville, VA. Outside it was cold and cloudy but inside the Abbot gave us a hot love poem by Thomas Merton, "Hagia Sophia." It reads in part:

At five-thirty in the morning I am dreaming in a very quiet room when a soft voice awakens me from my dream. I am like all mankind awakening from all the dreams that ever were dreamed in all the nights of the world. It is like the One Christ awakening in all the separate selves that ever were separate and isolated and alone in all the lands of the earth. It is like all minds coming back together into awareness from all distractions, cross-purposes and confusions, into unity of love. It is like the first morning of the world (when Adam, at the sweet voice of Wisdom awoke from nonentity and knew her), and like the Last Morning of the world when all the fragments of Adam will return from death at the voice of Hagia Sophia, and will know where they stand

Such is the awakening of one man, one morning, at the voice of a nurse in the hospital. Awakening out of languor and darkness, out of helplessness, out of sleep, newly confronting reality and finding it to be gentleness. It is like being awakened by Eve. It is like being awakened by the Blessed Virgin. It is like coming forth from primordial nothingness and standing in clarity, in Paradise.

In the cool hand of the nurse there is the touch of all life, the touch of Spirit.

To read the whole poem click on this link:

[Thomas Merton's Marian Poetry](#). Keep in mind as you read this poem that Merton actually did fall in love with a nurse. He seems to be wondering in this poem how his love for God, or God's love for him, stacks up next to his love for the nurse. After thinking about that and other things during the morning and after enjoying our lunches, we attended the 2:00 p.m. daily prayer service with the monks. There were only six or seven monks in attendance and there couldn't have been more than three who were under 60. They represent a dying breed. After they are gone who will show to humankind such a single-minded pursuit of God's love?

Looking back on 2010: NOVA's biggest achievement was to decide to continue having ordained and approved Catholic priests when we celebrate Mass, but when we have community-led liturgies (not Masses), we will invite people of all genders, ordained or not, to take a leadership role. As a community we found that our community-led liturgies brought us powerfully into contact with the actions of Christ at the Last Supper.

This past year we lost great friends and heroes – Jim Furlong, Grace Birch, and Bill Callahan. The memory of their gifts is an inspiration to all of us.

The Community chose the Micro-Finance Revolving Loan Fund for Nicaraguan women as a capstone project for 2010-2011. To help finance the project, NOVA members are swinging into action with our first annual "Men Who Cook" fundraiser, scheduled for March 6, 2011. So far we've sold 113 of 160 tickets. Only 47 are left and 30 of those are more or less reserved for PAX and UUCF, so get your tickets while they last.

Looking forward to 2011: Besides the MWC dinner, another big event to watch for is the American Catholic Council, which will meet in Detroit in June 2011. ACC is a movement bringing together a network of individuals, organizations, and communities to consider the state and future of our Church. For more information, visit their website at <http://americancatholiccouncil.org/> or talk to Clyde Christofferson, Rosemarie Annunziata, Peggy Becker, John Veldhuis or John Mooney. (*continued on page 2*)

January Birthdays

NOVA Message Line (703) 852-7907

Chairpersons	Tom Clarkson Teddi Ahrens
Treasurer	Joe Formoso
Coordinator, Community Life	Cece Michelotti
Liturgy Coordinator	Gloria Mog
Padre Cadre Coordinator	John Mooney
Music Coordinator	Victoria Robinson
Peace and Justice Coordinators	Dianne Carroll Marie Keefe
Christ House Coordinator	Kopp Michelotti
Facilities	Glen Passin
Newsletter Editor	Judy Christofferson

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 Road, Arlington, VA. Beginning Memorial Day weekend up to our Fall Retreat weekend in September, we celebrate at Lacey Woods Park, George Mason Drive near Washington Blvd., unless otherwise noted.

Liturgies at Kenmore begin at 10:15 a.m.
Gather at 10:00 a.m.
Liturgies at Lacey Woods begin at 9:30 a.m.
Gather at 9:15 am

Call the Message Line (above) or check the NOVA website for the latest information.

- 2 Marie Pinho
- 5 Michaela Kane
Jenny Tuccillo
- 11 Catherine Annunziata
- 14 Andrew Maussert-Mooney
- 15 Glen Passin
- 6 Larry Goldschmidt
- 23 Kirsten Carroll
Walt Landry
- 28 Phyllis O'Toole

Please send Judy Christofferson your birthday if you would like it to appear here (month/day only).

NOVA is praying for. . .

Eve Birch, who is looking for a home and items to provide temporary housing for the homeless.

Sonja Donahue, who appreciates a card, a call or a visit.

Jody Furlong, who would also appreciate a phone call or note.

Remember these and any other NOVA members and their friends and family who need our prayers.

Chair Notes *(continued from page 1)*

We are also about to get moving on getting to know each other better through the "Tables of Six" project, a series of dinners that will take place over the next year with six or eight people.

As the new year kicks off greet it with the enthusiasm of youth. ~Tom Clarkson, Co-chair

Liturgies: Cycle A

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 and print 65 copies of the liturgy program. Liturgies at Kenmore begin at 10:15 a.m. and at 9:30 at Lacey Woods Park.

January Music Liaison
Barbara Formoso

February Music Liaison
Barbara Formoso

January 2 – Epiphany of the Lord

Joe Nangle, OFM – Helen Michie

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 72

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

January 9 – Baptism of the Lord

Nova's 43rd Anniversary

Gerry Stockhausen, SJ – Mike and Gen Timpane

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Psalm 29

Acts 10:34-38

Matthew 3:13-17

January 16 – 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jim Hug, SJ – Betsy and Mike Marron

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

Psalm 40

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

John 1:29-34

January 23 – 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jorge Ferrer, SJ – Cackley Family

Isaiah 8:23-9:3

Psalm 27

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

Matthew 4:12-23

January 30 – 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dan Madigan, SJ – Peace and Justice Group

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

Psalm 146

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Matthew 5:1-12a

"Freedom from trying to or having to prove or make a point leaves us open and able to dialogue, truly communicating." - Bill Callahan

February 6 – 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gerry Stockhauser, SJ – Anne Passin

Isaiah 58: 7-10

Psalm 112

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Matthew 5:13-16

February 13 – 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

John Haughey, SJ – Cece and Kopp Michelotti

Sirach 15:15-20

Psalm 119

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Matthew 5:17-37

February 20 – 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Quinn Conners, O.Carm. – Goldschmidts

Leviticus 19:102, 17-18

Psalm 103

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Matthew 5:38-48

February 27 – 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jim Hug, SJ – Judy and Clyde Christofferson

Isaiah 49:14-15

Psalm 62

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Matthew 6:24-34

HAPPY NEW YEAR

**February Newsletter Deadline:
Monday, January 24**

SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS

Gunston Volunteers Needed

NOVA volunteers distribute bags of non-perishable food, cereal provided by the Community, and perishable items such as eggs, milk, and meat that are picked up at the Arlington Food Assistance Center warehouse on the night of distribution. Produce items are picked up every other week by Eric Carroll at the produce markets downtown (and funded by the NOVA Peace and 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 lot of years. Every Thursday there is a seasoned volunteer, so this is your chance to try out your skills. Having someone who speaks Spanish is a real plus for each of the teams. If you are interested in being a volunteer, email Dianne Carroll at: diacarroll@comcast.net or call her at 703-536-2616.

January Gunston Schedule:

January 6: Eric, Mike T., Joe Timpane

January 13: Tim, Jerry

January 20: Glen, Syd

January 27: **Volunteers Needed**

Christmas Project

Eight children and two moms had a happy holiday thanks to the NOVA Community. A mom and four daughters (3-13) were shopped for by Ken Chaison, Cathy Showalter, Meg Tuccillo, Gen Timpane, and Betsy Marron. A mom with three boys and one girl (3-6) were shopped for by Archer Heinzen, Anne Passin, Linda Rosenberg, Barbara Formoso, Victoria Robinson, Kathy Scheimer, and Jeanne Clarkson. All were wrapped and delivered before Christmas with the love of the community. Thanks to everyone!

St. Clement's Emergency Winter Shelter

Every winter for the last six or so years Nova has provided volunteers for the shelter at St. Clements Episcopal Church in Alexandria. The guests come from Carpenters Shelter when that shelter is full. Two volunteers arrive at 7:00 p.m., greet the guests, help them get settled in a warm spot in the Sanctuary, wake them in the morning and give them McDonald's and bus tokens. Volunteers sleep in shifts – one of them is awake throughout the night. This year's volunteers are:

January 3: Anna Reich, Eric Carroll

January 17: Ray Tarasovic, Marie Pinho

January 31: David Mog, Jason Powell

February 14: Kopp Michelotti, Ted Miller

February 28: Michael and Joe Kane

March 14: Jerry Barrett, Clyde Christofferson

Special Christmas Collection

NOVA took a special collection on December 18 for the **Homeless Prevention Rental Assistance Project**. This fund is for local families in crisis with children in Arlington schools with no other sources for help. The fund has helped many families in the last two years to avoid eviction. One example:

Recently the cleaning company that a mother worked for lost the contract for the office building she was working in. They laid off many workers including her. She is currently taking classes to begin working as a licensed child care provider. She has a job lined up to begin in February. This rental assistance will help the family until then.

Nova members donated \$2,591. If you missed that special collection you can still donate by writing a check to Nova Catholic Community with memo line: rental assistance. Send to Dianne Carroll, 2739 N.Yucatan St., Arlington VA 22213 or give your donation to Dianne or Marie Keefe at a NOVA liturgy.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS PHOTOS



Nico – getting a closer look at what's happening



Jenny describing rental assistance project supported by NOVA



Extending peace to each other in song



Advent wreath



Elena as Christmas angel with her dad Charlie looking on



John as Joseph and Ella as Mary

The Up Side of Evil

Some years ago a nature program – I think it was National Geographic – described the survival struggle between lions and herds of wildebeest on the plains of Africa. The best face upon the process is that the fittest survive, and the lions weed out the weak and the less fit. I vividly recall one scene in the film. A pregnant mare was giving birth in a clump of trees near the herd. A lioness crouching nearby seized the moment and dispatched the vulnerable mare and her half-born calf.

Was the mare among the weak and less fit? It did not make any difference. She was vulnerable. Nature took its course. But I recall feeling great sympathy for the mare, because of her vulnerability. Bad things can happen to good mares; and surely her calf was innocent.

How different is this natural act of brutality from a flood or a fire that also cuts life short? If an earthquake levels a city and kills tens of thousands of people – as did the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 – the scale of the tragedy is large enough to raise questions about the beneficence of a loving God. Voltaire was deeply shaken by the destruction wrought by the Lisbon earthquake, and the occasion focused his acerbic pen on a then popular argument by Leibniz: since God created the world this surely must be “the best of all possible worlds.” Voltaire first wrote a poem about the Lisbon earthquake, and then *Candide*, putting Leibniz’s theodicy in the mouth of Doctor Pangloss.

The Lisbon earthquake was a catastrophe of the first order. The city was devoutly Roman Catholic and some theologians argued that the appearance must have been deceiving because God was obviously angry. Rousseau argued that the cause of this disaster was the vain mistake of crowding people into cities. A young Immanuel Kant wrote a short book attempting to systematically explain the earthquake in terms of natural causes.

Why do questions about the real presence – or lack of presence – of a loving God occupy the human mind in such circumstances? Another story may shed some light on this question. It begins as a question that might be asked by a small child: why is the sky blue? We look up on a clear day and see a blue canopy. It appears that this blue canopy is indeed “out there,” just as the Lisbon earthquake was “out there.”

But is the sky blue? I recall two courses during one semester in college that provided an answer to this question. One of these courses included a thin book about the behavior of bees. Bees who found a source of pollen would come back to the hive and do a dance that told other bees how to get to the source of pollen. Researchers found that the bees used the sun as a reference point for these directions. Amazingly, the bees were able to find their way on cloudy days. How could they see the sun?

The second course was a physics course on electromagnetism. Light, of course, is an electromagnetic phenomenon. The professor explained that the sun’s rays are filtered in a peculiar way by the ionosphere, a blanket of charged particles that surrounds the earth. Electromagnetic radiation from the sun causes these charged particles to vibrate. And when a charged particle vibrates it gives off electromagnetic radiation of its own. One of our class exercises was to figure out the pattern of this re-radiated light. It turned out that the amount of light re-radiated by a charged particle was proportional to the fourth power of the frequency.

Our eyes have three color cones: blue, green, and yellow-red. Blue is the highest of these frequencies. The eyes of bees are different: bees have cones that detect ultraviolet, which is a higher frequency than blue and – as anyone who gets sunburned on a cloudy day at the beach knows – goes right through clouds. For light re-radiated by the

ionosphere, it's the high frequency cone that matters. The sky looks blue to us because blue is the highest frequency cone we have. And bees can see the sun on a cloudy day because they have an ultraviolet cone – they don't see the clouds.

So the sky is not really blue, it just looks blue to us. It looks ultraviolet to bees. What we thought was “out there” was not really “out there.” The ionosphere is “out there” but the blue that we see says more about us than about the color of the sky.

So what about the Lisbon earthquake? Like the ionosphere, the Lisbon earthquake was “out there.” But what color was it? It killed a lot of people, and these deaths were also “out there.” Voltaire and Rousseau colored the event in their own distinct hues, but color it they did. The wildebeest mare and her calf, as a meal for the hungry lioness, were also “out there.” But why did I react the way I did, seeing something wrong and out of order – not for the good of creation – in what happened?

When bad things happen we hope for better things, and these better things resonate in the human heart. It is the same *resonance* that we have for the small kindnesses of everyday life. Only we see what is missing rather than what is present. As Saint Augustine said, evil is the absence of good. As Martin Luther King, Jr., advised, we cannot fight evil directly but must crowd it out by doing good.

We yearn to make this world a better place, and that yearning is no accident. It is a fundamental reflection of who we are, as

children of a loving God. Objective events contrary to this yearning – thousands killed by the Lisbon earthquake, the wildebeest mare and her calf being eaten by the hungry lioness – touch us because of who we are.

Arguably, the Lisbon earthquake is merely an act of nature – nothing genuinely evil about it, and not much that human ingenuity could do about it, notwithstanding Rousseau's protest that we get back to nature. Arguably also, the fate of the wildebeest mare and her calf is merely nature taking its course.

There is the old question about whether a tree falling in the forest makes a noise if there is no one there to hear it. We could ask a similar question in reverse: if we did not anguish when bad things happen to good people, would there be a God?

Perhaps the fact that bad things happen to good people says more about how we color the world, from the inside, than about the world “out there.” We see evil afoot in the land, and respond by yearning to make this world a better place. And we act on this yearning. This is a sign of life in the human heart. It is a life deeply connected to all of creation, a marvel to behold. We see what can be made better, and we act to make it better. This active living is testimony to the presence of a loving God who is sharing existence with independent beings able to love one another, thereby imaging God.

Just as hope has its down side, evil has its up side.

TO BE CONTINUED