



NOVA notes

NOVA Catholic Community

June 2011

Chair Notes...

A Washington Post headline this week referred to *hits and myths*, and it struck me as an interesting example of dualistic thinking, a problem Joe Kenna described in his recent homily. While the readings proclaimed Jesus as God, “the way, the truth and the life,” Joe explained that if we are to find our way to Abba Father, we need to stop thinking in a way that disconnects us from truth.

He cited Richard Rohr as a reference, and so I did some further reading to help me explore this theme and the more I read, the more challenged I felt by his ideas. Rohr says that he thinks Christians are a “bit worried about the God that Jesus believes in: ‘Who causes the sun to rise on bad as well as good, who lets the rain fall on the honest and the dishonest alike.’”

Rohr calls Jesus Incarnate “the living icon of integration.” Even in this fragmented, divisive world, no one is outside of God’s love and care because no one is excluded from redemption. As Joe said, “The truth is that I am loveable because I have been loved by God.” This is a vision that is all-inclusive, a vision that underpins every act for social justice, every act of forgiveness and reconciliation. But it does not seem to be a very common vision around the Beltway, or anywhere else, for that matter.

Rohr and others call this connectedness **of the universe** “The Great Chain of Being” (the title of his article), but links are broken in this chain by our habit of dualistic thinking, separating the earth and its people into categories. In reality, we are all linked together in Christ by our redemption and as one, we cannot disconnect any part from the rest of us. We cannot say that some people are righteous and others are lost. If the universe is one, we cannot disconnect ourselves from one region because it lacks resources or allies or strategic worth.

I find it easy to believe in the holy oneness of the physical universe, especially when I am captured by the glow of a starry night or whispered sounds among the trees. It is much harder to believe in the holy oneness of

humanity when I read the headlines and remember this planet’s history of bloodshed and environmental destruction, not to mention what else fills the news.

It is often a useful thing in daily life to discriminate, Joe added. “I am not a moldy bread-eater, for example.” However, dualistic thinking as a world-view is not useful. In fact, it is an illusion and dangerous because the category/the label itself is based on an illusion, the illusion that we know as God knows, and the illusion that we are not all in this together. Eventually, this type of thinking provides the grounds for fear and violent repercussions. Dualistic thinking cannot handle love or mystery. It is an incomplete way of thinking, an incomplete way of living.

Joe urged us to fight this way of thinking, to resist our comfortable, prejudicial habit of comparing and judging everything. If we want to go to Abba God, we must contemplate our oneness, he said. But how? Where do I even start? I am guilty of dualistic thinking all the time. I judge a Congressman when I hear him propose hurtful legislation, and I make another judgment when I reject an op-ed writer as irrational. Am I supposed to give up my values and agree with others, no matter how terrible their ideas? (Time for gnashing of teeth.) Yes, I know, we are all children of God – Democrat Republican, T-T-Tea Party. But today, right now this minute, I can’t honestly say I feel connected, on the same team, with many of them. But I will try. I will try to get beyond this way of thinking because I do believe, as Rohr says, that only if we stay connected will we find *the way, the truth and the life*.

In our quest to follow Christ, we are often challenged to act differently, but this time, Joe asked us to *think* differently, and it’s a lot harder than it sounds.

Congratulations to the following NOVA members:

Cece Michelotti, our new NOVA Co-Chair; **Elena Bailey** and **Ella Teal**, who received their First Communion this May; **Ana Cackley**, **Ben Brady**, and **Joe Kane**, our high school graduates; and the **Clarksons**, whose granddaughter, **Vera**, will be baptized at the June 5th liturgy.

~Teddi Ahrens, Co-Chair

June & July Birthdays



NOVA Message Line	(703) 852-7907
Chairpersons	Teddi Ahrens Cece Michelotti
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
Directory & Yahoo Groups Coordinator; Webmaster	Ken Chaison
Newsletter Editor	Judy Christofferson

JUNE

1	Phil Cackley
6	Tim White
10	Cecilia Cackley Quinn Connors, O. Carm.
13	Sami Clarkson Jim Heinzen
19	Kate Doherty
21	Peter Goldschmidt
23	Jeanne Clarkson
24	Gen Timpane
29	Joe Formoso

JULY

1	Bernice Todaro
2	John Cackley Nick Mele
10	Laura Goldschmidt
14	Greg Swanberg
16	John Birch
17	Jennifer Carroll
19	John Veldhuis
20	Joe Nangle, OFM
21	Jody Furlong
29	Carolyn Schmidt

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.

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.

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.

June Music Liaison Tom Clarkson

June 5 – 7th Sunday of Easter

Joe Kenna – Jeanne Clarkson
Baptism of Vera Clarkson Wachter – Agape
following the liturgy
Acts 1:12-14
Psalm 27
1 Peter 4:13-16
John 17:1-11a

June 12 – Pentecost

John Haughey, SJ – Linda Rosenberg and Kathy Scheimer
Investiture of New Co-Chairs: Cece Michelotti and Teddi Ahrens
Acts 2:1-11
Psalm 104
1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13
John 20:19-23

June 19 – Trinity Sunday

Abbot Aidan Shea, OSB – Archer and Jim Heinzen
Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9
Psalm Dn 3
2 Corinthians 13:11-13
John 3:16-18

June 26 – Solemnity of the Eucharist

Gerry Stockhausen, SJ – Rosemarie and Joe Annunziata
Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a
Psalm 147
1 Corinthians 10:16-17
John 6:51-58

July Music Liaison Victoria Robinson

July 3 – 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Presider and Planner: TBA
Zechariah 9:9-10
Psalm 145
Romans 8:9, 11-13
Matthew 11:25-30

July 10 – 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

John Haughey, SJ – Peggy Meyer
Isaiah 55: 10-11
Psalm 65
Romans 8:18-23
Matthew 13:1-23

July 17 – 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Quinn Conners, O.Carm – Christies & O'Tooles
Wisdom 12:13, 16-19
Psalm 86
Romans 8:26-27
Matthew 13:24-43

July 24 – 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Presider TBA – Victoria Robinson
1 Kings 3:5, 7-12
Psalm 119
Romans 8:28-30
Matthew 13:44-52

July 31 – 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dan Madigan, SJ – Helen Michie
Isaiah 55:1-3
Psalm 145
Romans 8:35, 37-39
Matthew 14:13-21

**July-August Newsletter Deadline:
Thursday, June 30**

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

During May and June we will have some help from the Arlington Emerging Leaders Program Coordinator, Gerson Paniagua. He will be bringing students, emerging leaders, to help with the distribution. In the schedule there is a need for a knowledgeable Gunston volunteer from NOVA to help. Please let Dianne Carroll know if you can help on any of those dates below! The students speak Spanish, which is a big help.

June Gunston Schedule:

June 2: Eric/Mike T. and Gerson students

June 9: Tim/Jerry

June 16: Michael and Carmela; Syd

June 23: Gerson students and NOVA volunteer

June 30: Gerson students and NOVA volunteer

June 12: Second Collection for Peace Camp Scholarships

Peggy Meyer will use money from a second collection on June 12 at NOVA to help fund scholarships for children to attend the Little Friends for Peace Camp. These scholarships will be given to children of refugees fleeing torture, primarily in Africa. Nova helped with this project last year. The participation of the children in the camp program was profoundly healing for them and enriching for the other children. Scholarships for the two-week peace camp are \$200 per child.

Christ House

Celebrate the Summer Solstice... with meatloaf!!!

On Monday, June 20, NOVA will prepare and serve meatloaf and scalloped potatoes to nearly 70 clients at Christ House in Alexandria. ***Please mark your calendars to remember to bring your meatloaves and/or scalloped potatoes to the liturgy on June 19.*** Alternatively, you may drop them off at the Michelotti's anytime on Sunday or until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, the 20th.

If you'd like a break from the summer heat, call Kopp Michelotti or Ken Chaison about working in the kitchen and serving dinner. (It's hot in the kitchen; once you *leave* the kitchen the Washington summer you will definitely feel cooler!) We start food prep around 4:00 p.m.

Please mark you calendar: Remaining dates for NOVA at Christ House are August 15, October 17 and December 19. ~ Kopp Michelotti

Nova Meeting to Choose One-Year Peace and Social Justice Project

When: June 19, 5:30 p.m.

Where: Meg Tucillo's House (potluck)

This is your opportunity to help the Community select a Peace and Social Justice project based on proposals submitted to the Community by NOVA members for a one time, one-year project.

Proposals will be emailed to the NOVA discussions group and available on NOVA's website for your review. ***After carefully reading all of the proposals, make sure that you email any questions you might have to the proposal writers before this meeting.*** This will enable us to make this an informed decision. ~Marie Keefe

Mosaic Harmony "Partners in Harmony" Concert

When: Sunday, June 12, 7:00 p.m.

Where: Bishop Ireton High School
201 Cambridge Rd., off Duke St.
Alexandria, VA 22314)

Mosaic Harmony draws on the rich heritage of African-American inspirational music to "unify the world, one song at a time."

Cost: Tickets are \$25 at the door (or contact Victoria Robinson for advance purchase, \$20/person) Children 12 & under are free

Good music...message...energy...good cause!
We'll raise your spirits while you help us raise funds for "service through song."

Human Rights Award Recipients

Ken Fredgren, former NOVA Community member (and chairperson) was given an award by the Fairfax County Human Rights Commission on May 17 for his advocacy on behalf of persons with disabilities. Ken has driven initiatives at the local, county, and state levels. His efforts have included a proposed amendment to the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, for which he testified before the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and a Virginia House of Delegates subcommittee.

John Horejsi was also honored by the Commission for his tireless advocacy for legislation to help the poor, homeless, and elderly. John founded SALT (Social Action Linking Together) and has visited NOVA several times to discuss his work. Twelve NOVA members attended the reception and ceremony that honored Ken and John as well as two organizations that serve others with special needs.

To the right are photos of Ken and John with their supportive spouses.

NOVA's Annual Retreat

When: September 16-18, 2011

Where: Shrine Mont, Orkney Springs, VA

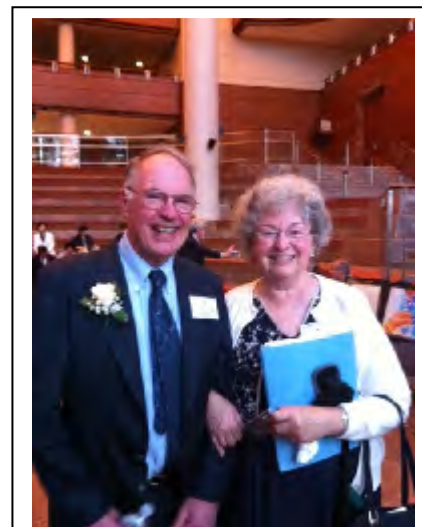
Retreat Planners: David Mog and Clyde Christofferson

Registration: Contact Kopp Michelotti

More information will be in the July-August newsletter.



Ken and Kathy Fredgren



John and Mariann Horejsi

SUMMARY OF “CALLING FORTH” MEETING

Twenty-seven members of the community gathered at Meg Tuccillo’s for pizza, salads, desserts and conversation before the two-part meeting began at six o’clock. Co-chair Tom Clarkson opened the meeting with a prayer, and Meg reviewed the period of discernment and process which preceded the meeting – contacting candidates who were recommended multiple times by community members.

She announced that Cece Michelotti had accepted the call to become co-chair, and asked if there were additional candidates that evening. No other candidates were proposed. Cece was unanimously welcomed as new co-chair to serve for the next two years, as Tom steps down. Meeting participants each affirmed Cece, pledged their support, and stated their commitment to the work they were doing in NOVA. Ideas which came up included a desire to focus on Nova’s adult children, recognizing them, fostering “homecomings,” continuing to welcome them back and support them. Ken Chaison said he would continue with communications, but would welcome assistants. Tom said he was thinking of starting up a religious education program for children. The community sang its blessing to Cece and Teddi as they begin this coming year of co-chairing.

During the second part of the evening, the community had another opportunity to hear about the American Catholic Council and to ask questions and share concerns about NOVA’s participation in a panel when the ACC has its conference in Detroit in June. Clyde Christofferson, Joe and Rosemarie Annunziata, and Mike Timpane and representatives from PAX are featured in one of 17 “Breakout Sessions.” Entitled “Alternative Worship Communities: 40+ years in two Vatican II-inspired Eucharistic Communities,” the session’s goal is to describe NOVA’s history, liturgical and spiritual development, social action and social justice focus, community building and governance, and current issues and questions for the future. Rosemarie and Clyde pointed out that PAX will also share their history and practices, and much of the time allotted to the session will be dedicated to taking questions from the audience.

While the participation of those attending the conference may raise concerns from church authorities in Virginia, we concluded that NOVA’s “orthodoxy” should not be an issue because we have always invited priests in good standing to preside at our liturgies and not violated the authorization given us by the bishop in 1968. The ACC “delegates” emphasized that they will not propose that NOVA is a perfect model, or that we have solved all problems, just that we are trying to implement the reforms that Vatican II authorized to do. Unlike many IEC’s (Intentional Eucharistic Communities) both NOVA and PAX were begun with the endorsement of the diocese and with the help of priests in good standing. It was also made clear that NOVA members were attending the ACC conference not as representatives of NOVA, but as individuals. In light of the absence of an established current relationship with the bishop of our diocese, it was concluded there was no need to inform him that some of our members will be part of a panel on our community’s experience at the conference. However, it was suggested that our relationship with the local bishop be made the topic for discussion at a later general meeting.

Another suggestion endorsed by the group was for the panel to emphasize that NOVA has never been centered on one priest/presider or personality. Members and presidors come and go, and the community continues to thrive as a lay-led group, bound together by our commitment to liturgy, social justice and the reforms of Vatican II. Finally, and perhaps above all, members asked Rosemarie, Mike, Joe and Clyde to portray us as a group that doesn’t direct as much as it calls forth the gifts of its members. We are complex, we have changed, and we continue to change. Rosemarie urged everyone who hasn’t done so to read the interesting documents that have been collected about the history of NOVA, now digitalized and available in the archives of our website.

A July meeting will be scheduled for a debriefing of NOVA ACC delegates so that the community can hear details about the conference and reactions to the Nova presentation. **Date to be announced.**

REPORT ON NICARAGUA MICRO-LOAN PROJECT

On May 24, Joe Kane and John Mooney drove with three John XXIII staffers to visit the women's micro-loan group in La China, one of the communities in the municipio of Ciudad Dario that received some of NOVA's micro-loans. (La China got its name when some of the early inhabitants found pottery shards in the soil that reminded them of china dishes. True story!)

We met for about two hours today with 13 of the 16 women from La China who had received micro-loans out of the total 43 in the community who had gone through the six-month training. The meeting was held at the house of Suzana and Orlando Martinez, a wonderful couple who seem to be partners in every sense. Suzana had trained as a baker through John XXIII. As seen in the photos, Orlando works right with her, on both their small inside oven and large outside oven. They're both wood ovens – the inside one a semi-enclosed fire over which a large round steel plate is placed with the items to be baked atop that plate, then what looks like a big iron pot turned upside down atop the plate. They bake breads and cupcakes twice weekly and sell them in the La China community, to individuals and the ubiquitous pulperias (3rd-world convenience stores). They also bake cakes by request. They gross the equivalent of \$18 a week from their regular sales. I don't know what their net profit is, but the poverty line is \$2 or less per capita per day and extreme poverty is \$1 or less per day. Orlando delivers the baked goods on bicycle; some of the other bakers in the group on horseback.

Each of the 13 (other bakers, cooks, a seamstress) talked about her experience. Several spoke of how empowered they felt. Most of the other bakers in the group were from other communities in the municipio, but even those in La China said that the presence of other bakers didn't hurt but helped them: harsh competition was avoided by each baking on a different day, and they helped each other when they ran out of equipment or ingredients.

We had a good discussion, stimulated by John XXIII staff, on whether they would like more training from John XXIII on business issues, e.g., lowering costs, increasing sales, perhaps forming a cooperative. Several women seem interested and are supposed to discuss the matter more with John XXIII.

The John XXIII folks introduced us, told the women how NOVA helped fund the loans, wrote each of their names on a paper bird and prayed for them, and then showed them Chris Swanson's wonderful video on "Men Who Cook." Ketxu, the assistant director of John XXIII, announced that Joe had just brought down from the US the final check for \$2,500. The women loved that as well as the video and were very grateful for the John XXIII training and loans.

The hit of the day was Suzana's wonderful yellow cake with a light caramel cream inside. Joe got her to write down the recipe for him. **The photos below show** Orlando and Suzana (in her John XXIII baker's uniform), the entire group at the meeting, and Suzana and Orlando's inside and outside ovens.

It seemed to be a wonderful time for all. It certainly made the two of us proud of what NOVA had done. ~ Joe Kane and John Mooney, May 24, Nicaragua





YERT (Your Environmental Road Trip) was a year-long (July 07-July 08) eco-expedition through all 50 United States. With video camera in hand and tongue in cheek, Mark Dixon, Ben & Julie explored the landscape of America's unique approach to environmental sustainability in a hybrid Ford Escape. They believe that Americans want to do the right thing - they just don't want to look strange doing it, and they don't have the time or the means to explore all the options. That's where the YERT team came in. They shamelessly bathed themselves in the best (and weirdest) of America's ecological progress with a mix of outrageous antics, provocative examples, and thoughtful



reporting. They shot hundreds of hours of video along the way which was edited into short video clips and finally into a feature film.

A fantastic world premiere took place at the Environmental Film Festival at Yale 2011 - complete with packed house, laughter, tears, two standing ovations, and friends and family all around. The YERT film won the Audience Award at the festival - in a tie with Oscar-nominated "Waste Land".

You can learn about the trip, view informative and entertaining video clips, and much more on the website:

<http://www.yert.com/>

The next screening of the film is in Oklahoma City at the deadCENTER Film Festival - one of MovieMaker Magazine's "Top 20 Coolest Film Festivals in the World" - and they need YOUR support! Even if you're nowhere near Oklahoma, you can still help - simply click on our festival link below and click "Like". That's it.

http://deadcenter.slated.com/2011/films/yertyourenviromentalroadtrip_darrenhoffman_deadcenter2011



Mark Dixon is the son of Gregg and Valerie Dixon, former Nova members. At the calling forth meeting many Nova members had an interest in informing the community about what the grown children of Nova members were doing in their lives. Hope you enjoy reading about Mark.

We attended the premier of the film and the critics said it perfectly: *"hilarious, powerful and often poignant chronicle of the year-long journey of three filmmakers, engineers and acclaimed Off Broadway performers — Julie Dingman Evans, Mark Dixon and Ben Evans — to explore breakthrough approaches, from the bizarre to the mind-*

blowing, for environmental sustainability in all 50 states." We were honored to be present.

Dianne and Eric Carroll

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

John Horesji, SALT Coordinator, provided the following reflection on poverty:

SOCIAL JUSTICE REFLECTION: POVERTY IN VIRGINIA

FACTS. Although Virginia is a comparatively prosperous state—it had the ninth lowest poverty rate among the fifty states in 2009—many Virginians live in poverty. How many? 14.3 percent of all Virginians in 2009, according to the American Community Survey. To put that in perspective, Virginians living in poverty could fill the Richmond International Raceway, the largest sports arena in the state, with a seating capacity of more than 107,000, every day for more than a week. Poor children in Virginia could more than fill the Raceway for two days.

REFLECTION. Try to visualize that: the Richmond International Raceway, full to capacity every day for more than a week, full of people who are struggling in poverty. Here in Virginia. Try to consider: Is there anything we can do to notice the poor in our midst more clearly, and to respond to their needs more mercifully and more justly?

- The American bishops, in urging Catholics to practice “faithful citizenship,” tell us, “*responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. This obligation is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do.*” As Catholics, we have an obligation to think about our responsibilities as citizens.
- The bishops also remind us of Pope Benedict’s teaching: “*Love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to the Church as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel.*” We have a responsibility to love the disadvantaged. What does it mean—concretely—to love the poor and the lowly?



A-SPAN – one way NOVA supports the poor in Northern Virginia

Theology for a Small Planet

Prior Essays

A collection of essays by Clyde Christofferson © 2009-2011

Implications of being a Small Planet – Part 4: Paul and the Church

At the end of the last essay I wrote:

“What is next? Vatican II opened up windows and let fresh air in, as John XXIII hoped. There is a sleeping giant in the *sensus fidelium*¹ that *Lumen Gentium* recognized. The People of God are waking to their own consciousness, and to their own role in the genesis of the very structures that now need to be reexamined.”

This essay will expand upon these suggestions, and conclude with a connection between Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus and the need for a comparable conversion within the institutional Church.

At about the same time as *Lumen Gentium* was being approved at Vatican II a couple of Bell Labs researchers in New Jersey were taking measurements of what they thought was an unwelcome noise interfering with the satellite antenna they were testing. The noise turned out not to be noise at all but the cosmic background radiation, which proved the existence of the Big Bang.²

The institutional Church has not yet absorbed the significance of the Big Bang, but it will. Indeed, humanity in general has not yet absorbed the significance of the Big Bang, and in some important ways is farther behind than the institutional Church. However, the institutional Church cannot absorb the significance of the Big Bang without a conversion experience like Paul had on the road to Damascus.

Thus this essay.

Lumen Gentium is a starting point. This Vatican II document reoriented the Church’s understanding of what “Church” means. It is common to associate “Church” with the institutional hierarchy headquartered at the Vatican, but *Lumen Gentium* takes a different approach. It begins with a discussion of the People of God³ in terms that can only be described as all inclusive. That is, “all inclusive” in the sense that that term would have been understood to those in attendance at Vatican II. “People of God” was methodically defined to encompass an ever broadening definition of seekers after truth, beginning with the Catholic faithful⁴ and Christians more generally⁵, and then extending to Jews and Muslims and to those seeking God, and then to those “who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life”⁶. All humanity is covered. All belong to a kingdom that is not of this world and are in communion

with each other through the Holy Spirit.⁷ It was to gather all these together as one that God sent the Word, Jesus the Christ.⁸

Universality is a specific commitment for the scope of the People of God.⁹ Since God created the entire cosmos (and in Trinitarian style the Son and the Spirit have this scope as well), it seems reasonable to suppose that the People of God must also include all sentient beings, wherever situated throughout the cosmos.

The Big Bang has a particular significance for the Church. The eyes of faith provide an understanding of why we are here. Science does not purport to answer that question and, therefore, must be more cautious. But if the reason for being of the cosmos is that a loving God is sharing existence with beings able to love one another and thereby image God, then the lesson of the Big Bang is that there are countless other such civilizations of sentient beings throughout the cosmos. We are not alone.

A theology for a small planet must take that into account.

How?

It is not that difficult, with a certain change of perspective, a *metanoia* if you will. The institutional Church may find that change difficult, but *Lumen Gentium* provides a path.

As the prior essays have tried to show, God’s presence in creation is both more subtle and more awesome than the stories of our tradition (or any religious tradition) allow. With insight provided by modern cosmology it is not necessary to suppose a separate heaven and a separate earth, where God “sent his only Son” by miraculous intervention. Instead, it appears that reality is simply unfolding. This is happening not in the manner of a watchmaker God but rather with unpredictable novelties. Jesus Christ is such a novelty, but that novelty could not be appreciated without a predicate novelty: our own consciousness.

A subtitle to a prior essay was “... 4, 5, 6.” The (thermoentropic) novelty of the Risen Christ is “5”, and human consciousness is “4”. There will be time in another essay for the novelty that is “6”.

It all fits together if the basis for “revelation” is not God’s words – whether given to Abraham, Moses, the Prophet, or through Jesus Christ – but rather the “eyes of faith” provided by human consciousness. “Conscience” is a commonly used term. In prior essays in this series I have used the term *resonance* to convey the same meaning, and it is that term that I prefer to use here.

Resonance has a certain dynamic. Faith is a journey, and it is important to have language that can describe that journey. There are steps along the journey, and places of rest. Each journey takes its own course, yet each journey has its own integrity. The language of the journey must preserve the integrity of journeys that can be quite different.

The dynamic of *resonance* provides this language. Any journey faces forks in the road, where choices are made. One on journey takes the *more resonant* fork, adopts the *more resonant* position, or subscribes to the *more resonant* expression. Or, if the *less resonant* fork is taken, or the *less resonant* position is adopted, or the *less resonant* expression is subscribed to, conscience takes its toll.

And yet the journey continues. A *more resonant* fork may be followed by another fork and another choice. A *more resonant* position may later be understood as *less resonant* in comparison to another position that is *more resonant*. An expression that *resonates more* at one time may *resonate less* at another time in comparison to another expression.

We are each responsible for our own journeys, and know or come to know our own heart. Take the Apostle Paul as an example. Analogies are never perfect, but consider a parallel between Paul on the road to Damascus and the Church on the road to preserve its patrimony, the revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul was not merely a devout Jew. He experienced the living God, as a Jew, and saw the Jesus movement as an idolatry that should be stamped out. The Church also experiences the living God, and takes issue with theologians who might lead the faithful astray.

Paul persecuted the followers of Jesus, but had a revelation on the road to Damascus. In a blinding moment he recognized something new. He had come to a fork in the road, and confronted a choice. Using the language of *resonance*, Paul concluded that his persecution of the followers of Jesus *resonated less* and recognizing Jesus as the Risen Christ *resonated more*. If the analogy holds, the institutional Church will also experience a recognition that something new is happening. But why should anyone hope for a change in the Church as dramatic as what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus?

Paul's experience on the road to Damascus is my favorite account of the Risen Christ, although the story on the road to Emmaus is also a favorite. On the road to Emmaus the disciples who had known Jesus came to recognize him in the breaking of the bread. In some sense this is a mundane encounter: we do the same at Eucharist. But Paul is different. He did not know Jesus, except by a reputation that Paul understood as

undermining faith in the God of Moses. The man Jesus had "hung on a tree", which under Mosaic law meant condemnation by God.¹⁰

The language of *resonance* allows us to maintain the integrity of Paul's own journey. Paul was faithful to the Torah and its teachings. It was that faith that Paul was pursuing, and it was because of that faith that Paul was persecuting the followers of Jesus.

What happened to Paul on the road to Damascus? The traditional account has Jesus speak to Paul: "why are you persecuting me?" The workings of the Spirit are more subtle, I think. The traditional account places Paul's conversion entirely at the hand of a direct intervention by the Christ, not giving adequate credit to Paul's faith of long standing. Paul knew the living God, as the Church knows the living God. But Paul believed that Jesus and his followers were undermining faith in that living God, just as the Church is concerned that its theologians may undermine faith in that same living God.

Perhaps something about the followers of Jesus, something contrary to his presuppositions, had nonetheless rested upon his consciousness. Did Paul observe small acts of kindness among them? Did these *resonate* with him, despite his hostility to this idolatrous sect? Perhaps it dawned upon him, on the road to Damascus, that these followers of Jesus were living the same faith in the living God that Paul himself professed. That faith was, indeed, living and Jesus the Crucified One expressed that life. Paul's faith was renewed. He had come to a fork in the road, and had taken the *more resonant* path.

Understood in this fashion Paul's journey maintains its integrity. Perhaps the Church can undergo the same kind of renewal.

It would be a subtle yet dramatic renewal, as was Paul's. To see the analogy it is important to emphasize the genuineness of Paul's faith, and genuineness of the Church's faith. What had been missing from Paul's mindset – before his *metanoia* on the road to Damascus – were two important points. One was the genuineness of the faith of the followers of Jesus, and I think that is what turned Paul around. This is what he saw, through the eyes of his faith, on the road to Damascus.

The second point is equally important. Indeed, it is perhaps more important for the purposes of the analogy I am drawing between Paul and the Church. The second point is that Jesus was bringing something new. Yes, he was fulfilling the law of Moses, but the fulfillment meant change. The Jews – and Paul was a Jew – did no work on the Sabbath, ate kosher, and separated themselves from Samaritans. For Jesus, saving work took precedence over the Sabbath, cleanliness was about what came out of the mouth not what went into it, and the

Samaritan on the road to Jericho was neighbor to the beaten traveler. Love was more important than ritual and tradition. These were hard teachings for those who had become comfortable in their own ways of responding to the living God.

Is the Church too comfortable with what it has built up over two thousand years? Vatican II opened some windows and blew some fresh air into a fortress Catholicism, but as Paul's experience reminds us, a strong faith can be blind. The fortress is not so easily opened to renewal. It is not enough to open some windows and allow new breezes to refresh the inside. Vatican II provided some initial momentum, but that momentum has encountered resistance. For some the fortress seems well built, after all.

Lumen Gentium's understanding of the People of God hints of something new, something that the institutional Church may find challenging. The Church has in the past accepted the sense of the faith that has emerged from the people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is called the *sensus fidelium*. It is carefully circumscribed by *Lumen Gentium* so as to require unanimity within the People of God and guidance from the teaching authority of the Church.

However, the notion that God's presence in creation is still unfolding places a different twist on the *sensus fidelium*. "Revelation" does not come from on high but more subtly, through a journey – that we are all on, and that we share in community – toward that which *resonates more*. The current structures of the Church are what currently *resonate more* as the People of God journey together. That is, the authority of the institutional Church is itself validated by the *sensus fidelium*.

Let me restate that using the parallel between Paul and the Church. Did Jesus speak to Paul on the road to Damascus, out of the blue? Or did Paul recognize the Risen Christ from his encounters with the followers of Jesus, after those encounters struck a *resonant* chord within him? If Jesus spoke to Paul out of the blue, it was a miraculous intervention. This kind of expression for God's presence in the world is understandable, because it would have *resonated* with first century Jews. But if Paul's faith in the living God was true, and his faith journey has integrity, what he found on the road to Damascus was a new insight into Jesus and his followers. This new insight does not require a miraculous intervention, and is consistent with a cosmos that continues to unfold. In light of a God of subtlety and awe, this view *resonates more* than a miraculous intervention.

Similarly, is the current structure and authority of the Church derived from God's words in scripture, or is it the product of a community journey whose particulars have been determined by *resonance*? If current structure and authority is derived from God's words as interpreted by the Church's teaching authority, then there is no role for the *sensus fidelium* beyond the role allocated by the Church's teaching authority. But if the cosmos is continuing to unfold, the current structure and authority of the Church can be understood in terms of *resonance*. The structures of the early Church would have *resonated* with first century Jews, and the authority structures of the Roman Catholic Church would have *resonated* with Christians of the Roman Empire. The Reformation was a fork in the road, and *resonance* called some to continue in the Roman tradition and called others to undertake Protestant views of how to be the one true Church.¹¹ Within the Roman Catholic tradition the *sensus fidelium* is the collective *resonance* of the community, but God's people have a wider base and this wider base continues to grow in self-awareness and independence. The structure and authority that *resonated* at an earlier stage of growth may later be found wanting.

In this context, *Lumen Gentium's* understanding of the People of God acknowledges the integrity of a variety of faith journeys, and remains a hopeful sign for a still unfolding cosmos.

TO BE CONTINUED.

¹ *Lumen Gentium*, #12.

² See *Lemaitre's Legacy*, the first essay in this series.

³ *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter II, "On the People of God," ¶¶9-17.

⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, #14.

⁵ *Lumen Gentium*, #15.

⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, #16.

⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, #13.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 21:23.

¹¹ During the Reformation, both Catholics and reformers believed there was only one true Church.

RECENT NOVA PHOTOS



The beauty of May reflected in flowers and the First Communion liturgy of Elena and Ella.

