



# NOVA notes

NOVA Catholic Community

July-August 2011

## Chair Notes...

Where do I begin? Why did I say I'd be happy to take on the summer "Chair Notes..." when I'm barely realizing that I've taken on a NOVA Co-chair position for the next two years? What would be best to write about in this issue? The ACC? No, I'm certain I know next to nothing about it. The retreat in September – "The Emerging Christ": exploring the meaning of Catholics in an Evolutionary Universe. It sounds promising but I know very little about it. Our Peace and Social Justice Ministry? I'm somewhat more familiar with that since I'm on the committee and I've attended the meetings... but no.

**Being Called Forth?** Yes, I think this is where I need to focus right now. Since joining NOVA in 1989 I've rarely missed a calling forth meeting. I've attended these meetings, some of which lasted over four hours and others that were fairly short. And generally after these nights I felt a new beginning for NOVA, sort of like I did each September, as a teacher, when a new school year began. When I went into the Calling Forth meeting last month, I knew I had voiced an interest in serving as co-chair, and I was told before the meeting that no one else had committed.

When I was "presented" at the meeting, each person spoke, affirming me in a very positive supportive way. I was overwhelmed with humility as each person spoke. At the installation a couple weeks later, I was again overwhelmed with the support and encouragement. I am grateful that I am a part of a community that offers such tremendous affirmations to its members. The Spirit life seems strong in NOVA and we all benefit in so many ways as a result. I believe this Spirit has been at our very core for over 40 years.

The last couple of calling forth meetings have been different: much shorter; fewer reflections on the year past. Fewer members were in attendance. Less of a sense of where individuals thought we might be moving as a community in the coming year. Change is good. I usually don't fight change; especially when I've reflected on it and believed it was a step in the right direction.

So I've gone back to do some reflecting. I've been re-reading *Listening Hearts – Discerning Call in Community*. We read this book several years ago when we were discerning the direction that we might be taking as an Intentional Eucharistic Community. I read the definition of *consensus* – "the sense of the group." Sense of the meeting is a Quaker term that has a spiritual connotation suggesting a settled place to which the Holy Spirit has led the group; it is sought through silence and listening together, unhampered by preconceived opinions. It is unity.

I read further thinking back on Calling Forth Meetings of the past. "Effective discerners need to be prayerful people and good listeners. [Members need to] . . . understand the concept of spiritual consensus and be alert to God's call." Having read much more of the book, I wonder if the community might want to review the discernment process again. Maybe it's time. Or maybe we're satisfied with how we are making decisions now. It seems to me that since I was the person "called forth," it is appropriate for me to ask this question.

Consensus can be messy, but messy is not a bad thing. I am a staunch believer in communication. Someone dear to me sent me a quote from the *Saturday Review* magazine back in 1967. I try to live by it. I don't always succeed but then I remind myself and try again.

***"The whole range of human error is essentially due to defective communication from mind to mind."***

I want us to communicate, even when it's messy. We are an Intentional Eucharistic Community.

**Joe Nangle** wrote about NOVA in his book- *Engaged Spirituality – Faith Life in the Heart of the Empire*. He wrote, "Intentional Eucharistic Communities... are lay directed, communal in design and practice, using consensus in their decision-making processes, outwardly oriented and centered on word and sacrament, they are a haven for many people who crave better quality in their public liturgical prayer.... They stand as a sign of hope for the church in the United States and as a source of solid Eucharistic spirituality." (*Continued on p. 4*)

## August Birthdays\*



NOVA Message Line (703) 852-7907

Chairpersons Teddi Ahrens  
Cece Michelotti

Treasurer Joe Formoso

Coordinator,  
Community Life Marlene Shade

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

### AUGUST

2	Marcelline Niemann
11	Joe Annunziata Anne Houck
12	Eric Carroll Bob O'Toole
20	Rose Barrett Marie Keefe
26	Tom Clarkson
29	Peggy Meyer

\*See June issue for July birthdays.

*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.

**Brigid Doherty**, Kate's sister, who is recovering from two broken ankles.

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

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

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.

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.

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

**September Newsletter Deadline:  
Saturday, August 27**

## 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.

### July Music Liaison Victoria Robinson

#### July 10 – 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

John Haughey, SJ – Peggy Meyer

Isaiah 55: 10-11

Psalms 65

Romans 8:18-23

Matthew 13:1-23

#### July 17 – 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Quinn Conners, O.Carm. – Christies and O'Tooles

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

Psalms 86

Romans 8:26-27

Matthew 13:24-43

#### July 24 – 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jim Noonan, MM – Victoria Robinson

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

Psalms 119

Romans 8:28-30

Matthew 13:44-52

#### July 31 – 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dan Madigan, SJ – Helen Michie

Isaiah 55:1-3

Psalms 145

Romans 8:35, 37-39

Matthew 14:13-21



### August Music Liaison Victoria Robinson

#### August 7 – 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dan Madigan, SJ – Peace & SJ Committee

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a

Psalms 85

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:22-23

#### August 14 – 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jim Coriden - Gloria & David Mog

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

Psalms 67

Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

Matthew 15:21-28

#### August 21 – 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

John Haughey, SJ – Linda & Jack Christie

Isaiah 22:19-23

Psalms 138

Romans 11:33-36

Matthew 16:13-20

#### August 28 – 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gerry Stockhausen, SJ – Meg Tuccillo

Jeremiah 20:7-9

Psalms 63

Romans 12:1-2

Matthew 16:21-27

**A special thanks to Marlene Shade for taking on the role of “Community Life Coordinator.”** Marlene will replace Cece Michelotti, our new NOVA Co-Chair.

## 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. (Items are funded by the NOVA Peace and Justice budget). The distribution takes place at the Gunston Middle School Recreation Center in Arlington

During the summer months, we have some help from the Arlington Emerging Leaders Program Coordinator, Gerson Paniagua. He is 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.

#### July and August Gunston Schedule:

**July 7:** Syd/Peg, Michael/Carmela

**July 14:** James Hainer, Tim/Jerry

**July 21:** Cece/Kopp, Gerson and students

**July 28:** Eric, Mike T, Gerson and students

**August 4:** Cece/Kopp, Gerson and students

**August 11:** Eric – **another volunteer needed**

**August 18:** Tim, Jerry, Joe A

**August 25:** Syd/Peg, Michael/Carmela

#### **How often are we present in the moment?**

A priest, fumbling with his microphone at mass, mumbles to himself: "There's something wrong with this thing."

His congregation dutifully responds:  
"And also with you."

~Joke from James Carroll's speech at ACC

### Christ House

Stop The Dog Days of Summer!

When there is no one to prepare a home-cooked meal for the clients at Christ House, the staff boils hot dogs, gives each hungry person two dogs in two buns and sends them on their way. Don't let this happen in August. Folks at Christ House love our meatloaf!

On Monday, August 15, NOVA will prepare and serve meatloaf and scalloped potatoes to nearly 70 clients at Christ House. ***Please mark your calendars to remember to bring your meatloaves and/or potatoes to liturgy on August 14.***

Alternatively, you may drop them off at the Michelotti's any time on Sunday or up to 1:00 p.m. on Monday, the 15th. Just leave them in the coolers on the front porch.

If you want to find out firsthand whether it's hotter in the kitchen or on the street, call or e-mail Kopp Michelotti Ken Chaison about working in the kitchen and serving dinner. We start food prep around 4:00 p.m.

#### **Chair Notes** (*continued from page 1*)

So, what is it that I'm reflecting about in this first "Chairs Notes"? I want us to be communicating with one another, with a sense that the Spirit is among us, and working with us to understand what we're about as a community. I think we learn this through talking with one another, but maybe more clearly through silence and meditation alone and together. Perhaps we can then experience ***Engaged Spirituality***, or as Joe Nangle refers to it, **Other Based Spirituality**.

Have a happy and safe summer. And please pray that I can do the work you want me to do during this time.

~Cece Michelotti, Co-chair

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### NOVA General Meeting

**When:** Sunday, August 21, 6:20 p.m.

**Where:** The Barrett's Party Room

**Agenda:**

- The New Roman Missal (recently approved for use at Mass)
- If time, review of the consensus decision-making process

We are also just getting together to enjoy each other's company!

**Please bring beverages and/or finger foods to share.**

### NOVA's Annual Retreat

**When:** September 16-18, 2011 (Friday evening through Sunday lunch)

**Where:** Shrine Mont, Orkney Springs, VA

**Registration:** Contact Kopp Michelotti

The theme of the retreat will center around the ideas in the book *The Emerging Christ*.

The cost for the weekend (lodging and meals included) is \$180 for adults and teens, \$80 for kids 8-12, free for younger kids. You must make reservations ahead of time with Kopp Michelotti because we have to give Shrine Mont a count of participants in advance. Call or email Kopp.

Leave a message with the names of all adults and children for whom you are reserving space. Please specify whether the kids are ages 3 or younger, 4-7 or 8-12. NOVA does not want anyone to miss the retreat because of cost. We always have subsidies available; just talk to Kopp.

Shrine Mont is located one hour south of Winchester and approximately 2 1/2 hours from the Washington DC metro area, just beyond the Basye/Bryce Mountain ski resort. To reach Shrine Mont, follow Route 66 West to I-81 South to Mt. Jackson (Exit #273). Then take Rt. 263 west for approximately 15 miles to Orkney Springs.

Friday dinner will be served from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. The first session will begin on Friday evening. The retreat will end with lunch on Sunday at 12:30 pm. Again, please contact Kopp soon as possible to reserve your space for the retreat. ~**Kopp Michelotti**

**For more information on the upcoming retreat, see next page.**



Informal group discussion following July 3 liturgy

## UPCOMING SEPTEMBER RETREAT

### Where have we been and where are we going?

We are a community of many different gifts and many different journeys, which we share. And as we have been journeying, a new movement has been gathering steam in theological and scientific circles that some are calling “Evolutionary Christianity,” others “Quantum Theology.” Come see what this is about, and what effect it may (or may not) have on your journey.

The excitement is engendered by an explosion of scientific knowledge about the nature of energy and matter and about the brain and human consciousness as well as insights into both cosmic and biological evolution. **This new information** challenges many of our old paradigms and long-held assumptions about Creation, God, the nature of the universe, human behavior, etc.

Miriam Therese Winter sums part of it up this way:

The physical universe is telling us spiritual truths:

- We are all connected.
- The God of one is the God of all.
- Diversity is a blessing.
- The suffering of anyone or any part of Planet Earth is a desecration to us all.
- God’s grace runs through all creation and can heal us all.

In this retreat, we will explore some of these ideas and visions and consider what it means for each of us as well as our Community as a whole. Come with an open heart, a curious mind, and a willingness to expand your vision.

For those who would like to learn more before the retreat, try reading *Paradoxology: Spirituality in a Quantum Universe* by Miriam Therese Winter or *Quantum Theology* by Diarmuid O’Murchu. Both are guaranteed to get you buzzing with new thoughts and inspirations. Absolutely no requirement to read, however; just come ready to be relaxed and renewed in a gorgeous setting among wonderful friends! ~**Retreat Planning Team**



We are on a journey.  
(photo taken at Shrine Mont during last year’s Retreat)

## PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: MEETING AND ANNUAL PROJECT

On June 19<sup>th</sup> at Meg Tuccillo's home, we came together in community to listen to one another and the Spirit to decide which project NOVA would select to use its energy and resources this year. We were blessed that five proposals brought genuine human need to our attention and allow us as individuals to continually keep an eye out for ways to be supportive of these populations. Our thanks to Brian Carome, Archer Heinzen, Jim Hug SJ, Carolyn Miller, and Emma Violand-Sanchez for all their hard work.

The entire evening was spent in respectful listening, prayerful song, and discussion as we were called beyond our individual concerns to collaborate as community in a one-time, one-year project. Repeatedly, members tried to create clear propositions out of the flow of discussion that could form the basis for consensus decision-making.

Ultimately three propositions were put forth: (1) Education Support for South Sudan as this year's project; (2) Raise funds for Education Support for Southern Sudan for six months and then raise funds for Rural Women's Center for six months; and (3) Education Support for South Sudan as this year's project, and commit to Rural Women's Center for 2012. There was consensus for the first proposition, but the community did not arrive at consensus for the other two.

As this process took the whole evening, the topic, *How we support what the community feels called to do*, was postponed for further discussion. The committee is grateful for all the thoughtful consideration put into this effort and will set a timetable for NOVA to discuss how to develop resources for Education Support for South Sudan. ~The Peace and Social Justice Committee: Joe Annunziata, Dianne and Eric Carroll, Cece and Kopp Michelotti, Marie Keefe, Cathy Showalter, Meg Tuccillo, John Veldhuis, and Tim White.

### **Adriana Tovar Villacis, Comboni Sister in South Sudan**

The following article *by Carolyn Miller* provides background on the project selected by the Community at the Peace and Social Justice meeting.

NOVA has been providing support to Sister Adriana for about 18 years. She is originally from Ecuador, and joined the Comboni order about 26 years ago. The Comboni Sisters are an Italian order of missionaries, and many of the sisters work in Africa. When we were first asked to consider helping her, she was in an Ethiopian village far from a city, teaching single women to weave. She called it "The Cotton Project." In Ethiopia, only men were allowed to weave the white cloth that is used to make clothing for the poor. In a country where millions of women and children were starving, she decided to flout the tradition. During the ensuing approximately thirteen years, she taught many women to weave in several small villages. She also provided as much medical care as she and her sisters could, and began schools for the children and illiterate adults.

We sent books and tapes, some old clothes, and tried to send over-the-counter drugs such as Tylenol and vitamins, which the sisters needed desperately. Unfortunately, the authorities seized the drugs and Sr. Adriana was in trouble. She wrote to me and told me not to try to send medications or vitamins again. I made many calls to various authorities, including the World Health Organization and learned that there was no way that I could get around the laws of Ethiopia and get any drugs to them. But, when we learned that she had acquired a portable CD player, we began to send CD's.

Sudan is the largest country in Africa. When the peace accord ending the civil war was signed, she went to South Sudan. That was more than five years ago. We waited a few months to see whether she could establish

herself in Sudan before we continued our support. We need not have worried. She is very determined, a strong and capable woman of very strong faith in God. She lived in a small hut, planted a garden to grow her own food, and began to learn the language and eventually to teach. There has been no education system in Sudan for at least the past 50 years, as prior to the civil war, the country was in constant conflict among the various tribes. The northern part of the country is primarily Muslim, while the south is Christian and animist. Moreover, much of the wealth of the country is in oil, and a significant amount of the oil is in the south. She had no electricity and no telephone service. Her only connection with the outside world was via very poor roads to Nairobi, Kenya where her administrator was located.

In time, three more Comboni Sisters joined her. They were finally able to complete a small convent within the last year. The parish for which she is responsible, centered in Leer, is very large. The population is primarily Nuer. The Comboni sisters have very strong presence in Sudan, and work very hard to educate the women and girls as they believe, just as we do, that the education of women is crucial to the peace and prosperity of a country. Women are usually not the ones going to war. Their sons, husbands and fathers are. The sisters have now acquired email and the ability to show DVDs. We have sent a number of DVDs, including one showing how the human body works, and another about Nelson Mandela. She has been delighted to receive the DVDs and uses them in teaching. During the rainy season, the sisters have a very hard time traveling to the isolated villages in the parish. However, when the rains end, she travels often for days on rutted paths to spend time in the villages throughout her parish.

She writes interesting letters and we try to put shortened versions in the NOVA newsletter from time to time. We feel that she is an extraordinary woman, a holy woman of our time, doing extremely important work in a country that is in great need. NOVA's support is very important to her work.



A photo from Sr. Adriana with members of her Sudan Community taken in November of 2009



Joe Kane describing his experience in Nicaragua related to this year's annual P&SJ project

*"The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells the Great Spirit, and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us." ~ Black Elk*

## REFLECTIONS ON THE ACC MEETING

**Introduction:** The following are thoughts/observations from several of the NOVA Community members who attended the American Catholic Council meeting in Detroit (June 10-12). I hope they not only enhance your appreciation of the ACC experience but offer ideas for the Community's ongoing spiritual journey. ~ Judy Christofferson

### **Observations from John Veldhuis:**

To name the ACC, the American Catholic Council, is like naming an elephant a grey animal. Partly correct but lacking enough detail to make it a useless description. It could easily be called the "International Catholic Council" since several representatives from other countries were present. I made contact with Canadian, Dutch, German, and French representatives and I know several other countries were also represented among the nearly 2000 strong convocations of Christians of the Catholic tradition who met in Detroit this June.

But it was much more than an international gathering. It was also an expression of a common desire to bring the Church back to the spirit of Vatican II and move forward toward a more loving and inclusive church community that nurtures rather than excludes people who do not fit the Curia's description of what it means to be a Roman Catholic. This spirit was evident in a thousand or more ways throughout the conference. We met new friends, shared common and uncommon ideas, worked on difficult topics, and dreamed of what the Church could be.

NOVA was described, admired, and envied as a model of the Spirit-filled, loving Community. The speakers were motivating, inspiring, and challenging. What do we want the Church to be? What do we have to do to make it so? Do we need to work within the present framework and evolve into a Church more in line with the spirit of Vatican II or do we need a revolution along the lines of the Reformation to make the changes happen?

There are no clear answers yet but it is clear that the 2000 who attended will never be the same again and perhaps this is not the beginning, nor is it the end of a new movement in the Church but it is the end of the beginning. How many will gather in 2015 and how many changes will have occurred by that time? The Spirit is moving and nothing can prevail against the Spirit which stirs the hearts of the People of God. (A more detailed report to follow.)

### **Notes from Mike and Gen Timpane:**



Mike and Rosemarie before start of NOVA/PAX Session

Attending the ACC on June 10-12 was for us an occasion for renewal, rejoicing, and reflection. We met, spoke and celebrated with devoted people of God, who had spent their lives in pursuit of the vision and goals of Vatican II—many of whom had paid a far greater price than we—in terms of insults, rejection, denunciation and, yes, cruelty—for their devotion. It was an honor to be with them.

NOVA's particular assignment was to represent, with PAX, the experience of intentional Eucharistic communities as one manifestation of Vatican II's call to become People of God, gathered together in community to celebrate liturgy, minister to one another, and pursue peace and social justice. To this end, we told our stories twice,

morning and afternoon, in well-attended sessions of 40-50 people. We had prepared well for these sessions and with PowerPoint slides, presented our experience clearly, and learned a lot about our communities in the process!

We will be sharing more of this experience with communities at some stage, but in terms of our overall contribution to the council's deliberations, just a few points:

1. There is a deep hunger "out there" for the creation of small Vatican II communities. People are desperate. They've left their parishes—voluntarily or otherwise—but have not been able to satisfy their hunger for spiritual nourishment, social justice activities, or participation in the life and reform of the church; but
2. The experiences of PAX and NOVA seemed amazing and attractive to them and unfortunately, beyond the realm of current possibility. The context of our founding—young professionals in the 1960s, "hearts on fire," with hope, enthusiasm, amid both religious and social progress—is a distant memory. In 2011, they feel isolated, almost impotent. For PAX and NOVA to have been encouraged, initially, and then tolerated these many years by the diocese seems a romantic dream, and to have, over the years, a large number of religious order priests eager to foster and join in the life of the community is quite inconceivable to them, when many of their local parishes have no resident pastor. How lucky and blessed we have been!
3. *There is an opportunity for NOVA and/or PAX to fill a great need to encourage and support these emerging communities,* [italics added] with ideas and suggestions for somehow getting started within their current contexts and developing ties with one another—a process already begun at the council. Perhaps we can become a clearinghouse using Internet and social media, in conjunction with ongoing work of the ACC. Risky, to be sure, but so badly needed.

With regard to the larger agenda of the ACC, we were just two of two thousand observer/participants. Our thoughts, for what they are worth:

1. The council was well-organized and smoothly presented. The agenda was clear and focused throughout the council. This is a well-led body that can do more great things.
2. The principal addresses were outstanding, often inspirational. To us, Hans Kung, John Hushon and Joan Chittister stood out, but every keynoter was eloquent and reinforced what others had said. There was, though, it is fair to say, not a wide range of theological or ecclesiological perspective. This was a call to action, not a symposium.
3. The repeated and ongoing errors and malicious clericalism of the institutional church dimmed all hopes for change from that quarter, except, of course, for the ever-present hope that the Holy Spirit would descend upon us.
4. The participants, God bless them, were old, the majority well beyond 65. They were also overwhelmingly Anglo and middle class, and, by a good margin, women. People who have long carried the burden of resistance and reform. People you would trust with your lives, but not the people who could lead a broadly based, sustained reform movement. *The need to enlist younger and minority Catholics in this crusade is overwhelming. Otherwise, the hierarchy can just wait us out.* [italics added].
5. The Archbishop of Detroit did the council a great favor by denouncing us and prohibiting his clergy from attending, under threat of discipline. It made the council a national and international story (and reportedly hotter item in the blogosphere), rather than a one-day story in the Detroit *Free Press* and the NCR.
6. There are many opportunities for follow-up by the ACC's leadership and all there present, but time must be of the essence. (*continued on following page*)

There is much to chew upon, as we contemplate the future of Vatican II based reform in our church and its implications for PAX and NOVA. By the standards of many at the council, we have been cautious to a fault, cozy in our beloved communities. Should we, must we, change that?

### **Observations of Rosemarie Annunziata on ACC Experience:**

It is not impossible to fully describe my exhilaration upon walking into Cobo Hall's meeting place for the American Catholic Council's Gathering on the Vatican II Ecumenical Council, the culmination of the process that began last year in the listening sessions in McLean, Virginia and where, for many, it was less than clear that we had truly embarked on a mission of renewal and reform. How important was it that NOVA participated in this effort?

The answer came quickly in the form of nearly 2,000 others, including a significant contingent of ordained priests, who came to Detroit to be counted and to be heard.

The two breakout sessions presented by NOVA and PAX members to tell our stories as Intentional Eucharistic Communities were two of the most popular breakout sessions of the conference. As the Timpanes point out in their notes for this newsletter, people are looking for a way to celebrate their Catholic faith in a meaningful way at meaningful liturgies and to do so in communities where all our recognized as the people of God through baptism. A good number of those at our sessions were not aware of the IEC conferences that have been held in D.C. (I made sure to give the participants the IEC web site) and the role that IECs play as a resource for those who are trying to find a way to implement Vatican II principles, whether within or outside the parish structure.

Clearly, the experiences of NOVA and PAX are unique, given our association with and blessing by the church hierarchy from our inception. We continue to be unique by virtue of the numbers of ordained priests who regularly preside at our Sunday liturgies. That our stories cannot be duplicated, at least not in the near future, does not mean that communities such as NOVA and PAX have no role to play in the next generation of Church and the continuation of Vatican II principles. Our form of governance, rooted in consensus, our commitment to liturgy planning by our members with priests as co-planners when available and community-led when not, and our commitment to social action and social justice are all fundamental elements in the development of Vatican II communities. Consensus as a form of governance is integrally related to the community's ability to discern the *sensus fidelium* --the understanding of the faithful. Full participation by the laity in the community's spiritual development and liturgy planning is integrally related to the principle that we are a priestly people through our baptism and, under Vatican II, liturgy was conceived as the work of the people. Our approach to social action and social justice is a reflection and natural consequence of our liturgies and our consensus form of governance. These elements that have characterized NOVA's history, development and current functioning can be adapted and used in a variety of contexts in my view and are not, necessarily, dependant on the availability of a priest.

It, thus, appears to me that the role we can play in this ongoing development of future church is to share our 40 plus years experience with these important aspects of being a Vatican II community. We can share our experience through the mechanism that the ACC has established for continuing dialogue and planning for reform, and/or separately though the Internet and social media. There appeared to be a fledgling movement, for example, that had its beginning at our morning breakout session to establish a mechanism by which liturgies could be exchanged and shared by communities throughout the country.

The energy to continue the call from Vatican II is there, maybe yet unidentified, but there. Ideas that can guide, support that can encourage, resources that can lighten the load are sorely needed and can make an enormous contribution to the movement to continue responding Vatican II's call. In light of the great need for the establishment of meaningful faith communities that was expressed at our two breakout sessions at the

Conference, I share the Timpane's impression that we have been overly cautious about letting our light shine through. The challenges raised by this movement for reform are not going to go away. Indeed, I believe they will grow larger and more compelling. How NOVA is to respond will be among the greatest of our challenges. We can ignore the challenges, of course but, in the alternative, we may want to consider Joan Chittister's final words to us on Sunday morning in Detroit: "As you go through life, you will see a great a chasm. Jump!"

### **Judy Christofferson on "The Younger Generation" Breakout Session:**

The subtitle for this breakout session was "The church now and in the future." The room for this session was packed; there were folks standing or sitting on the floor. Obviously, there is a lot of concern out there about the younger generations who have left the church. At this session, there were also several young attendees. I suspect they had been recruited to be there for this session. I only saw one of them at any other session (interestingly at the NOVA/PAX session).

First, a brief story that was not part of the session but is, I think, relevant. I was recently at a local parish mass at which about a dozen little girls and boys were making their First Communion. After receiving the host, one little boy proceeded to walk toward the exit door at the back of the church. His mother chased down the aisle after him and brought him back to his seat at the front of the church. I was amused because I suspect he was just doing what his family typically does after receiving communion – head for the door and exit the church. My point in recounting this story is that while many families with young children and teens are at mass with their parents every Sunday in local parishes, I can't help wondering how many of them will one day walk out the door of the church as young adults with no intention of ever returning.

I chose to attend this session because I believe that making the effort to attract the young is important to NOVA. We should be sharing the loving, caring, joyful spirit that we have in this Community. (And how many of us will be around in twenty years and/or will still in good enough shape to attend a liturgy every Sunday?) We should care that others will become a part of and continue what many started over 40 years ago.

Emily Hawley, one of the presenters at this session, works for "Future Church," which has an extensive website at [www.futurechurch.org](http://www.futurechurch.org), who stated that the purpose of the session was to reach out and help young adults in "meaning making" [with respect to their faith]. As a starting point she and her co-presenter described the categories of and differences among the generations. Like many of you, I had already heard about how "Baby Boomers" differ from Gen. X-ers vs. "Millennials." Ms. Hawley suggested that for purposes of this session, we could think of the "young" as approximately 19-40 year olds, which sounds young to me.

The first of ten tips for helping the young in their faith journey was to "Listen." In that respect, the young are no different from the rest of us. We want to be *heard*, by which is meant supportive, accepting and non-judgmental listening. Their second point was that many young adults don't even know about Vatican II, so it means more to them to speak about "I'm a Catholic who is. . ." progressive? inclusive? . . . etc.

According to the presenters, what the young would find attractive about a reformed Church would be an opportunity to question, a place that accepted diversity, a place for spiritual growth, and one where people were concerned with social justice. Doesn't that sound as though NOVA would be an ideal Church community for them?

Some of the presenters' tips focused on marketing a specific event to the young, such as fundraising project. For example, NOVA could (and I think, *should*) try to get younger generations involved in an event to raise funds for our one-time annual social justice project. The challenge, of course, is keeping them coming after the project is finished. We need to have enough their "own kind" to keep young people coming.

After thinking about the pointers discussed in this session, I came to the conclusion that NOVA might want to focus on attracting to the Community some young families ("Generation X?"). They live in the local area and

we already have a few of these families in our midst. Although attracting younger people was discussed at a NOVA general meeting more than a year ago, I'm not sure where we are at this point.

We know that to attract young families, we need to provide a religious education program, one including preparation for receiving the sacraments, etc. for the children. (If anything is going with respect to developing a religious education program in NOVA, I am not aware of it.) As many of us know from our long ago experiences, this takes a lot of time and energy. The entire effort of coming up with specific ways to attract the young requires more thoughtful consideration and discussion by a group of interested Community members. I would be happy to work with others in the Community on this process.

**Note:** I have the PowerPoint slides, which have the ten tips and characteristics of the different generations from this session. If anyone would like to see them, just email me.

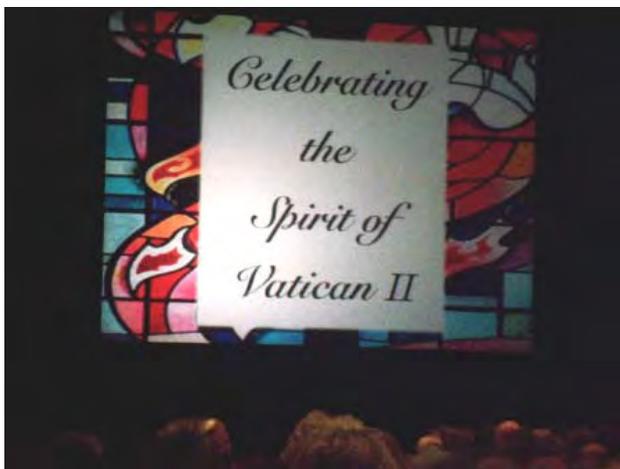
### **Clyde Christofferson on Breakout Session on Conscience:**

The breakout session on “The Primacy of the well-formed Conscience” was led by Sr. Jeannine Gramick, who spoke about her decision to continue with her ministry to gays and lesbians in the face of pressure from the Vatican. Over many years, letters from the Vatican to her order calling her ministry into question were resisted by her superiors within the order. But in the end she transferred to another order, and the process of letters from the Vatican has begun again.

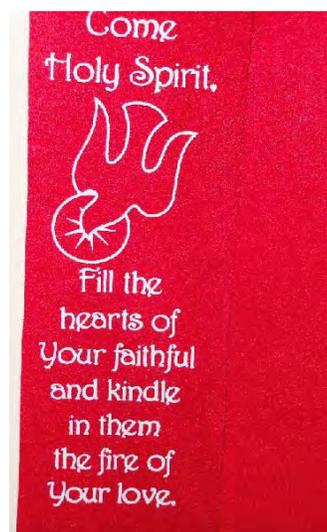
Those attending the session listened from tables of six or eight, who shared with one another their own journeys of conscience. At my table one woman said that for a number of years she had been encouraged by her pastor to contribute reflections during the liturgy of the Word. The pastor had been able to divert inquiries from the bishop so as to maintain this ministry, until someone who objected to the practice wrote a pointed letter to the bishop. The pastor was not able to divert the resulting inquiry from the bishop, and this woman's ministry ended. She and her family and friends ceased making contributions to the parish.

Another woman spoke about her calling to write letters to the local secular newspaper concerning the state of women in the Church, and in particular to inform readers about what was going on with the women priests' movement. The secular newspaper had nothing to do with her parish, where she was a minister of communion. One day she received a call from her pastor, who said that some parishioners had taken exception to her letters to the editor in the secular newspaper. The pastor said it would be best to discontinue her service as a minister of communion.

After the table discussions there followed a general question and answer session directed to and by Sr. Gramick.



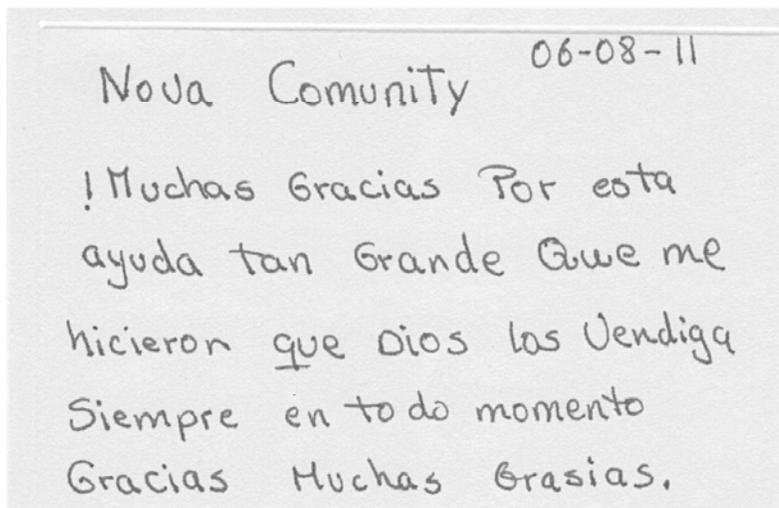
Projection for the ACC closing Pentecost liturgy



Stole worn by participants during Pentecost Mass

## THANK YOU AND UPDATE ON HOMELESS PREVENTION PROGRAM

### NOVA's Homeless Prevention Rental Assistance Program & Emergency Family Fund



During the first half of 2011 NOVA provided rental assistance for 2 families in Arlington Public Schools for a total of \$1661.90.

- undocumented mother with 4 children, father is incarcerated, mother's sheetrock construction job is not consistent, county services are helping the family.
- mother with 3 children, father incarcerated waiting for deportation, school is helping with supplies, summer school etc.

The thank you note comes from a person who benefited from the Emergency Family Fund, which was set up with donations to NOVA, designated for families in Arlington Schools when no other funds are available. These emergency needs referrals come from school social workers when they cannot find another agency to help. For 2011 so far a total of \$1541.00:

- medicine for elementary student, undocumented mother cleans houses, employer won't document earnings
- transportation for young woman with cervical cancer to go for treatment
- pull-up diapers for a child with traumatic brain injury, not covered by Medicaid
- mother of 2 without health insurance and documentation with thyroid cancer, her cost for surgery had to be paid prior to operation, father of children paid part, school employee paid part, NOVA paid the rest (thank you note above is from that mother)

Jennifer Carroll, former Arlington school social worker, oversees both of these programs. Present school social workers in 6 Arlington schools bring the housing or emergency needs of families to Jennifer by filling out a form stating the need, what agencies have been accessed, and family information.

Translation if you need for the note: *Thanks for the very big help!! May God bless you always.*

~ Dianne Carroll

## Theology for a Small Planet

Prior Essays

A collection of essays by Clyde Christofferson © 2009-2011

### Implications of being a Small Planet – Part 5: Aristotle and the Church

Who is the Church? And what is it becoming?

Since Vatican II, following the words of *Lumen Gentium*<sup>1</sup>, we are fond of saying that the Church is the people of God. But in the popular consciousness the term “Church” still calls to mind the institutional arm of the Church – the Pope and the bishops, the Vatican and the curia. These are concrete, whereas the “people of God” is a more mysterious notion.

In the last essay I spoke of Paul and the Church. Paul is important because he came from the other side. He did not know Jesus, except by reputation. Jesus had “hung on a tree” and was therefore condemned by God.<sup>2</sup> Paul loved the God of Abraham and Moses, and these followers of Jesus, Jews who were following someone who was condemned by that God, were undermining the Jewish faith. Paul’s zeal for the faith led him to persecute the followers of Jesus, so his experience of the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus is quite remarkable.

Remarkable, yes. A fundamental change in who Paul was, probably not. In describing what happened on the road to Damascus I take the view that Paul’s journey of faith maintains its integrity, before and after the encounter that knocked him off his horse. As will become clear later in this essay, the integrity of the faith journey is a touchstone of identity – not only for Paul, but for each of us and, indeed, for the institutional Church itself. Paul’s journey has integrity if his change of heart came out of his own experience, an experience that connected his own love of God with something leading him to conclude that these followers of Jesus shared that same love of God. It says very little for the integrity of Paul’s journey if all that happened on the road to Damascus was a *deus ex machina* encounter, with God intervening to tap Paul on the shoulder and tell him he was on the wrong track.

The institutional Church is also on a journey, and – I will suggest – should be expected to maintain its integrity just as Paul maintained his integrity. The Church is going through a particular period of angst, and this may compound the difficulty of discerning the signs of the times. The Church has taken a number of actions that illustrate this difficulty, and I will talk about three of them: two of these actions involve theologians (Roger Haight and Elizabeth Johnson), and

the third is the new missal scheduled to take effect next Advent.

But the context for these illustrations is like a deep ocean tremor that produces a tsunami. I am referring to what science – modern physics in particular – has taught us in the last fifty years. Fifty years is a short time in the history of the Church. Change takes time. Furthermore, while the Church has come to an understanding of its guiding role in challenging overreaching uses of technology in contemporary society, the Church is supportive of scientific inquiry – how could it be otherwise with God’s “book of nature”, as St. Augustine well understood.

As these essays have emphasized, we have learned a great deal from what is called the cosmic background radiation, which was discovered almost accidentally in 1964. Its very existence confirms the creation of the universe in what is now understood to be a hot, and then expanding, Big Bang. Evolution of the cosmos from a point in time was one possible implication of Einstein’s Theory of General Relativity, but this implication was expressly rejected by Einstein himself until Hubble’s discovery that the universe was expanding. And it took another thirty or forty years before discovery of the cosmic background radiation put alternative explanations (mainly, that the universe had always existed) to rest.

The Church has not yet come to grips with the implications of the difference between a cosmos with a beginning and a cosmos that always existed. The notion that the cosmos had a beginning was welcomed by Pope Pius XII as a confirmation of God’s creative act as recounted in Genesis, and Pope Paul VI gave an award to Stephen Hawking for his work in further understanding the physics of the Big Bang. The Big Bang is more than a beginning, however. In the 13.7 billion years since the Big Bang a remarkable unfolding has taken place. It is, indeed, a genesis, but it is different in kind from the prosaic Biblical account. It is evolutionary rather than creative in the Biblical sense. We live in a pregnant rather than a created cosmos. Thus far, this distinction has been lost upon the Church.

To understand how the institutional Church may absorb the significance of cosmic evolution it is necessary to see where the Church is coming from. The

institutional Church regards itself as a fiduciary, as a caretaker on behalf of the people of God for the revelation<sup>3</sup> that culminates in Jesus Christ. In the created order – as opposed to the pregnant order – what was revealed is then handed down. For the Church, revelation has a cosmic dimension, appropriate to a universal God, but this cosmic dimension is provided not by the Big Bang but by Aristotle.

The transition from Aristotle's cosmos to the cosmos of the Big Bang is not as straightforward as seeing that the earth revolves around the sun. The Church had trouble enough with Galileo on that point, and only recently acknowledged that its treatment of Galileo left something to be desired. But Galileo was a gentle wave compared to the tsunami of cosmic evolution. The institutional Church is still following Aristotle, for the simple reason that its understanding of the revelation that is Jesus Christ was developed in the shadow of Aristotle's cosmos. It is not an easy matter to pull that understanding out from under Aristotle's shadow into the different light provided by cosmic evolution.

It is a much deeper problem than Aristotle's physics of the heavens, but that physics is a starting point. It is a sufficient summary to say that Aristotle's cosmos saw the Earth as fixed and eternal, with life placed upon it. The Sun and the Moon and the starry skies above were of a different order from the Earth, but were similarly eternal. The Genesis account grafts onto this view a beginning – through a series of deliberate acts by God – but is otherwise consistent with Aristotle's notion that the heavens are fixed and eternal.

The coherent identity of the Church was largely constructed during the reign of Aristotle's model of the cosmos. There is a certain comfort and confidence that comes with this model. That which is revealed by God can be regarded as eternal, like the starry skies above. Within this model, Jesus Christ was understood as an intervention by God in the affairs of his chosen people, completing the revelation begun by Moses and the prophets, as recounted in holy writ and further understood and enriched under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through tradition and the teaching authority of the Church.

The coherent identity of the Church under that model moved inexorably to a hierarchical structure<sup>4</sup> within which the truth could be determined. It would never do to have contrary views of the eternal truth, and so a single authority was necessary. It did not occur to them to consider whether they were asking the right question or, to use a modern metaphor, whether they were leaning their ladder up against the wrong wall. Cosmic evolution is going to place the fiduciaries of the

Church atop the ladder, where the question can no longer be avoided.

Let me digress for a moment, before returning to how the Church may change when it grasps what God's book of nature is telling us through cosmic evolution.

At our community led liturgy at the Michelotti's over the Fourth of July weekend, the theme was the indwelling Spirit. At the dialogue John Mooney spoke about an Ignatian Spirituality mission that he and Tom Clarkson and Rich Rosenberg were undertaking with folks who had lost their homes, their families, virtually everything in their lives, and who were often alcoholics on top of all that. He began his comments by saying that he didn't like the word "ministry" – as in "minister to" – because he felt a strong sense of brotherhood with these men as they struggled, with some successes and some relapses, to become whole again.

This notion of brotherhood has worked its way into my thinking about relationships more broadly, including how individuals relate to institutional realities associated with government and Church. It's not exactly intuitive to consider a personal relationship with an institution. The current politics of partisanship in Washington makes sport out of distance from the institutions of government. For some, the government is distant and unworthy of trust. On the other side are those who defend the work that is being done through the institutions of government.

Would it help to apply the notion of brotherhood? Bishops and priests, Vatican and Curia, are certainly our brothers within the people of God. But brotherhood in that sense is at least in part a rough formalism. There is a wall of officialdom that separates us from the kind of brotherhood that John Mooney was talking about. But doesn't a similar wall arise from a "ministry to" attitude toward those as down and out as the Ignatian Spirituality folks?

John's distinction between "ministry" and "brotherhood" is a good one, and can perhaps be applied to the various "walls" that separate us. If there is a wall between me and the institutional Church, perhaps thinking in terms of brotherhood will help. May I not feel a sense of shared journey with our Church, as it also struggles, with some successes and some relapses?

Each of us has our own journey, from childhood to a maturity that we never quite reach. There is perspective in that journey, because while we are the same person we grow and change. It is hard to get our arms around the entire journey. Our consciousness and sense of self is in the present. On the other hand we can remember -- at least in snippets – who we once were. It is the same being. We know that. But the experience

of the journey's perspective is no more present than our memory of what is past.

Suppose the institutional Church is like the Ignatian Spirituality folks that John, Tom and Rich work with, and with whom they have a sense of brotherhood. These folks have lost much. In reflecting on our individual journeys, most of us see a progression that is generally upward and onward. The present improves upon the past, generally speaking. This is certainly consistent with the Western notion of progress. And the new and improved marvels that regularly demonstrate the power of technology sometimes give us a sense of material progress even when there is no progress.

Is that picture of life more than a one dimensional segment of a much broader and richer -- if sadder and more painful -- journey? The Ignatian Spirituality folks have put John, Tom and Rich in touch with life journeys that are in a much worse place as measured over time. Yet the sense of this touch with reality has been brotherhood rather than ministry. From the outside it may seem like service to the poor and downtrodden, a good thing surely. But there can be a wall of separation: there is the donor and the donee, the one who provides and the one who receives. Indeed, this is the model or lens through which society views this work. This is noble work, yes. But it is charity.

John's point is that from the viewpoint of Ignatian Spirituality it is the work of brotherhood, not charity. We may wonder why "charity" and "love" are different words. Was that so in Biblical times? Do we not remember the phrase about the three virtues, "faith, hope and charity, and the greatest of these is charity"? Surely -- from the vantage point of modern culture -- the better translation is "the greatest of these is love." The term "charity" has become burdened with the relationship of donor and donee. Perhaps there was a time, a cultural experience, perhaps with the early Christian communities, when this was not so. Like a child who has not experienced sin, perhaps our life in community did not then know the difference between charity and love.

John told us -- in his experience of brotherhood with the Ignatian Spirituality folks -- that those times are still with us. The Spirit is present, a presence that is somehow lost or diminished when we think in terms of donor and donee, in terms of a minister and those who are the objects of a ministry.

The brotherhood with the Ignatian Spirituality folks makes me think about our relationship to the institutional Church. The Church, too, has fallen on hard times and -- judging from history -- not for the first time. Over the last half century many have left the

Church -- former Catholics are so numerous that they would form the second largest religion in the United States. Over an even longer period the Church has suffered a loss of a different kind, eating at it from the inside, a loss that has come into a bright light only in recent years. I am referring, of course, to the sexual abuse of children in the care of the Church's ministers.

Should we think of the Church in terms of ministry or brotherhood? There would be some irony in ministering to the ministers. Brotherhood avoids that difficulty, and is better suited to Vatican II's understanding of the people of God. And the Ignatian Spirituality folks are a reminder that the journey of life is not always a forward progression, as the Church's current circumstances confirm.

There is a lesson for us and for the institutional Church in this digression. If the Ignatian Spirituality folks can take a wrong turn and hope to recover in the presence of brothers and sisters, so can the Church. Like Paul, the Church can have its own vision on the road to Damascus, a vision that is not imposed, *deus ex machina* style, from the outside, but that it discovers, in a manner that preserves its integrity, in the presence of brothers and sisters. The Church is still on journey, struggling with the demons of Aristotle's cosmos, of which the Church has drunk deeply.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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<sup>1</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter II, "On the People of God," ¶¶9-17.

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 21:22-23. "(22) If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, (23) you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, **because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse**. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance." (New International Version, emphasis added.)

<sup>3</sup> In Catholic theology, "revelation" is the historical and personal self-communication of God culminating in Jesus Christ; "scripture" is normative witness to revelation; "tradition" is the reception and renewal of revelation, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, down through the ages.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the discussion of hierarchy in the Vatican II document *Die Verbum* (compare ¶6 with ¶¶9,10) and in the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* by Pope Paul VI (see ¶¶9,22,27-28,37,46-48 and especially the logic of ¶110, bracketing an often eloquent discussion in ¶¶58-87 regarding the importance of dialogue in bringing the Mystical Body of Christ to fruition).

## RECENT NOVA PHOTOS



Teddi and Cece at Investiture as New Co-Chairs – June 12



Retiring Co-chair, Tom, opens community gift



Fr. Joe holding baptized baby Vera



Fr. Stockhausen offers bread and wine to the community

And what is so rare as a day in June?  
Then, if ever, come perfect days;  
~James Russell Lowell



Community blessing Emily before her marriage