



nova notes

NOVA Catholic Community

April 2012

Chair Notes...

Breathe... breathe in... slowly. Breathe out... slowly. Breathe.

Kopp came home from his new photography class last month suggesting, no, encouraging me to sign up. "I think you'd love this class." I did, and I do. "Zen through the Lens" it is called.

It is taught by a Vietnamese disciple of Thich Nhat Hanh and Kopp knew that I had been re-reading his 21 year old book *Peace Is Every Step*. Each class begins with a meditation. We breathe. Tuan encourages us to get in touch with our child within – our creative self – our peaceful self. He encourages us to live joyfully and wholeheartedly, continually throughout each day.

This Lenten season we have been encouraged to "**Live In the Promise**," and the rainbow has been our motif, our reminder. Dan Madigan reminded us of "The Good News:" The Spirit lives within each of us. We have free will. We **choose** to listen or not to the Spirit. We choose, or don't choose to let the Spirit flourish in our lives. Continually. Peace lies within, in our every breath. Dan reminded us that peace grows out from within. Peace begins with each of us. To have peace in the world, we must first grow the peace within each of us.

I had not been feeling very peaceful recently. I think this was what had drawn me to reread the book. Tuan said last week that when we are meditating – breathing in, then breathing out – we are losing the ego. And as this happens, peace grows. We are getting in touch with our inner self. He does not call it the Spirit. But he calls it our higher self, our creative self.

Joe Kenna inspired us a couple weeks ago with his trio of the **dance, pottery and stained glass**. You might want to go back and listen to his words. I could never do justice to his words; however, I was deeply struck when he said, "Christ never said, 'Worship Me.' He said '**Follow Me**'."

He added that it is not that we need to do something particular in this world, we need to BE. To be what we are called to be. If we are following Christ, we are **dancing** with others in our relationships as he did. We are the **clay** and God is the potter. It is really through our imperfections that the Spirit makes the art. We are the **stained glass** in that we bring the vibrant colors to the pure light that is God. We do this in our translucent relationships following in the way that Christ taught us to be.

So what does this all mean? Probably different things to different people. I am reminded of our closing song "Wake Up and Listen": "The word is always near us... the word is on our hearts." Remember: **grace is for us all**. Thank you, Tim and Barbara, for this reminder to carry with us as we leave liturgy this Lenten season.

~Cecelia Michelotti, co-chair

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For NOVA photos, click on:
<http://www.novacomunity.weebly.com>

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
Announcements Coordinator	Linda Christie
Newsletter Editor	Judy Christofferson

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
FOR MAY ISSUE:
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25**

April Birthdays

2	Chris Egbulum
3	John Marron
5	David Meyer Steve Michelotti
7	Archer Heinzen
10	Victoria Robinson
12	Meg Tuccillo
13	Maureen Flood Tom Hayes
14	Chris Massey Timothy Showalter
18	Jim Weber
25	Kopp Michelotti
27	Jason Powell
28	Emilia Formoso

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

Remember in your prayers. . .

Eve Birch, for the success of her work in assisting the needy

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

Jody Furlong, who also appreciates phone calls or notes

Michael Iskander, who is recovering from extensive injuries following a car accident

Jean Mendez, who appreciates a call or note

Peggy Meyer, for a speedy recovery

For a return to health following surgery:

Moira Eisele, Margaret Hayes, Linda Rosenberg, and Julie Taylor

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

Liturgies: Cycle B

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 School (located on Carlin Springs Rd. off Arlington Blvd.) begin at 10:15 a.m.

April Music Liaison
Tim White

May Music Liaison
Gloria Mog

April 1 – Palm Sunday

Dan Madigan, S.J.

Planners: Archer and Jim Heinzen

April 5 – Holy Thursday*

Center for Spiritual Enlightenment –7:00 p.m.

Jim Hug, S.J.

Planners: Holy Thursday Group

April 6 – Good Friday*

Kenmore – Black Box Theater – 8:00 p.m.

Planner: Meg Tuccillo

April 7 – Easter Vigil*

Unitarian Church in Oakton – 7:00 p.m.

Jim Hug, S.J.

Planners: Gloria Mog and Tim White

April 15 – 2nd Sunday of Easter

Quinn Conners, O.Carm.

Planner: Kate Doherty

April 22 – 3rd Sunday of Easter

John Haughey, S.J.

Planners: John Tarrant and Marlene Shade

April 29 – 4th Sunday of Easter

Joe Nangle, OFM

Planners: Judy and Clyde Christofferson

See Holy Week details on following page.

May 6 – 5th Sunday of Easter

Gerry Stockhausen, SJ

Planners: Alicia and Phil Cackley

May 13 – 6th Sunday of Easter

Jim Coriden

Planners: Cathy and Larry Goldschmidt

May 20 – 7th Sunday of Easter

Joe Kenna

Planners: Jeanne and Tom Clarkson

May 27 – Pentecost Sunday

(Liturgy at 9:30, Lacey Woods Park)

Joe Nangle, OFM

Planner: Victoria Robinson

When possible please arrange any needed switches with other Planners on dates near your liturgy. Let Gloria Mog, liturgy coordinator, know of any changes to the schedule.



2012 HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 1

Where: Kenmore Middle School
Time: 10:15 a.m.
Presider: Dan Madigan, S.J.



HOLY THURSDAY, APRIL 5

Where: The Center for Spiritual Enlightenment
222 N. Washington Street, Falls Church
Time: Gather: 6:30-6:45 p.m. - Liturgy: 7:00 p.m.
Presider: Jim Hug, S.J.

This is the one NOVA occasion where space is limited and an RSVP is required. Please call Cathy Goldschmidt by April 1 to let her know how many will attend and determine what you will bring to the dinner.

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 6

Where: Kenmore Middle School (Black Box Theatre)
Time: 8:00 p.m.
Presider: Meg Tuccillo

EASTER VIGIL, SATURDAY APRIL 7

Where: Unitarian Universalist Congregation
of Fairfax
2709 Hunter Mill Rd.
Oakton, VA 22124
Time: 7:00 p.m.
(Gather outside for Service of Light and procession.)
Presider: Jim Hug, S.J.



There will be an Agape following the Easter Vigil liturgy. Please bring finger food to share. Beverages will be provided.

Gunston Volunteers

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. NOVA volunteers have been active in this project for many years. More than one volunteer is needed. There is a seasoned volunteer every Thursday, so this is your chance to try out your skills. Having someone who speaks Spanish is a real plus for each of the teams. **Please help.** If you are interested in being a volunteer, contact Dianne Carroll by phone or e-mail.

April Gunston Volunteer Schedule

April 5: **Syd Boyne and two AFAC volunteers**
(Holy Thursday – thanks from NOVA)
April 12: **Tim/Jerry**
April 19: **Eric and Gamboa family**
April 16: **Glen/Syd**

Shrine Mont Annual Retreat

NOVA's 2012 retreat at Shrine Mont this year will be on September 14, 15, and 16. Kopp will announce reservation details this summer.

For now: Mark the dates on your calendars.

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see. ~Mark Twain

Christ House

Spring is in the air . . . Ah . . . the aroma . . . of meatloaf!

On Monday, April 16, NOVA will prepare and serve meatloaf and scalloped potatoes to the hungry clients at Christ House. **Please mark your calendars to remember to bring your meatloaves and spuds to liturgy on April 15.** Alternatively, you may drop them off at the Michelotti's anytime on Sunday or up till 1:00 p.m. on Monday, the 16th. Just leave them in the coolers on the front porch at 6325 19th Street N., Arlington.

If you'd like to get involved in the kitchen, please call or e-mail Kopp Michelotti or Ken Chaison. We start food preparation around 4:00 p.m.

And mark your calendars now. Here are NOVA's Christ House dates for the rest of 2012:
June 18; August 20; October 15; December 17
~Kopp Michelotti

Social Justice Yard Sale

**CASH ONLY!
NO CHECKS!**

**Saturday, May 5, 2011
7:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
Unitarian Universalist
Church of Fairfax**

2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton, VA 22124 www.uucf.org
1/2 mile from Chain Bridge Road (Rt 123)

Questions: lkozloff@verizon.net

- Clothes
- Toys
- Housewares
- Books
- Furniture
- DVDs
- CDs
- Small appliances
- Tools
- Jewelry
- Artwork
- Computers
- Office items
- Electronics
- Decorative items
- Sports equipment
- Linens & drapes
- Much, much more!



All proceeds go to our
social justice projects:

- Our Daily Bread – food bank
- Partner Church Circle
- Mosaic Harmony-gospel choir
- The Shepherd Center of Oakton/Vienna

Annual Peace and Social Justice Meeting Summary

On a glorious St. Patrick's Day, we gathered for a delicious potluck feast followed by thoughtful discussion of the processes we use to choose our projects as well as decision-making on current and new projects brought to the community. Kudos to Meg for her hospitality for the community's celebration of "The Green." – We even had green beer thanks to Kopp Michelotti.

After we reviewed our income for the last few years, we also looked at the distribution of funds to social action projects to get an idea of how much was spent on local, domestic and international needs to get an overview of what we've been doing. The community then agreed to increase funds for the Dream Project by \$25 per month and to provide funding of \$100 per month toward rent to sustain Eve Birch as she launches her 501(c) 3 efforts for the Butterfly Project.

The community deliberated over four other projects, all of them international and supportive of education. You will hear about them individually over the coming months. The community decided to support scholarships for six students at St. Gabriel's middle/high school in Haiti (\$150 monthly); education about female genital mutilation through the Global Women's Education Fund (\$50 monthly); Loyola Jesuit Secondary School in Malawi, Peter Henriot, Director of Development (\$100 monthly); and the Catholic University in Juba, South Sudan (Mike Schultheis, Vice Chancellor, (\$100 monthly).

NOVA also agreed to a more streamlined process for our Annual Project. (**See characteristics of Annual Projects below and the application on p. 7.**) We encourage all NOVA members be attuned to needs of the poor and marginalized. Many thanks to the community for all their efforts on behalf of those in need.

~ **Marie Keefe** on behalf of The Peace and Social Justice Team

Characteristics of Annual Projects:

1. Selected on the basis of the community's sense of discernment of what will energize us for the year, especially in special fund-raising efforts.
2. Has a community key point of contact.
3. Meets a finite need that can be met within the project year.
4. \$5-10,000 range.
5. All money raised goes to the same/selected project.
6. This does not preclude a follow-on effort to raise additional money or apply additional effort if the first year so energizes the community and additional aspects of the project come to light.

Considerations for the Annual Projects:

1. A major goal is to identify one project that will energize the community for the year with extra fund-raising and other efforts rather than an attempt to measure/compare needs in a competitive fashion.
2. As a project for the year, seed money or salaried position proposals may not be appropriate for meeting a finite need within the project year.
3. Each year of project consideration is a new year with, hopefully, one or more projects to be considered.
4. All participants need to be mindful of feelings when proposed projects are not selected.
5. A project can provide opportunities for increased networking/partnering with other organizations, churches for investment of time, money, and energy for increased impact.

2012 Annual Project Proposal Application*

The Peace and Social Justice Team invites you to actively listen for needs that NOVA might serve through a one-time social justice project. Use this brief application to bring them to our attention.

- Who can apply?** Any member of NOVA
- What is necessary?** A large impact project funded for 1 year
- How do I apply?** Write a brief proposal and email to Joe Annunziata
- What is the funding?** \$5,000-10,000 range
- When is the due date?** Proposals due April 18, 2012



Name of Project: _____

One-line Description: A project to do _____

Proposed by: _____

Funding request (\$5,000-\$10,000): _____

Annual budget of organization: _____

In 1000 words or fewer, please write a few paragraphs, answering the following questions:

What is the need and purpose this project addresses?

Who will be served by this project? (number of people and characteristics, if relevant)

What are the steps and timeline for carrying out the project and the goals to be met at the end of one year?

What is the sponsor's connection to and involvement in the project?

What is the cost and who will manage the money (be accountable)

How would you use extra money if we happened to raise more than your requested amount?

*The community agreed upon *Characteristics and Considerations* observed for Annual Projects, which are **listed on page 6** of this newsletter.) These are intended to serve as a guide for applicants.

Peace and Social Justice Team Members: Joe Annunziata, Dianne and Eric Carroll, Cece and Kopp Michelotti, Marie Keefe, Cathy Showalter, Meg Tuccillo, John Veldhuis, and Tim White.

NOVA Calling Forth

Proposed by the Co-Chairs, April, 2012

Dear NOVA community,

The NOVA Calling Forth proposal that follows is a “translation” of the suggestions, comments, concerns, and observations made by community members at two General Meetings held on February 19 (attended by 46 members) and February 26 (attended by 30 members). Major concerns voiced at the meetings included: fostering a prayerful discernment process, calling forth co-chairs in a community setting, and providing adequate time for the process to succeed without meeting late into the night (thus having two meetings, if necessary).

The current co-chairs started with a blank piece of paper and with no agenda except to listen and respond to the concerns of our community. The proposal that follows reflects our efforts to take into account the more than 60 comments and suggestions you made. We truly hope this document resolves most of them. As always, NOVA will depend on the Spirit and on each other to find the way ahead.

We look forward to the discussion at the Consensus Meeting on April 14.

Potluck supper begins at 5:30 p.m. at the Barrett’s social room in Falls Church. Please come with yummy food or drink to share.

~Cece and Teddi

The NOVA Calling Forth Process is a time of prayer and discernment that includes:

- All members of the community reflecting on their role in the coming year.
- The calling forth of nominees for the new co-chair.
- Time for reflection and communication between the first calling forth of nominees and the selection of the new co-chair.
- A meeting dedicated to selecting the new co-chair by consensus.

The chairpersons select the dates for Calling Forth Meetings (usually held in May) and announce the dates to the community as well as a month-long period of discernment. All members of the community are expected to reflect on how they might best serve NOVA.

Before the first meeting, names may be communicated in writing, by telephone, or e-mail to the co-chairs by members who cannot to do this in person. The names of these nominees will be announced at the beginning of this first Calling Forth Meeting, which is scheduled after a morning liturgy. The meeting will begin with prayer and silent reflection. During this time, community members may consider their own calling to co-chair as well as others who might serve in this leadership position. Then members will be invited to put forth the name of a nominee for co-chair and the reason they recommend that person. As the discussion continues, members can pass, suggest another name, or affirm a named person. All nominees are asked to consider their call and not decline it at this time. The meeting will end with a prayer, and the chairs will ask each nominee to reflect on their call.

During the time period that follows this meeting, these nominees and the whole community are encouraged to pray, reflect, and talk with one another. The nominees may speak with those who nominated them, with the co-chairs, or anyone they wish, as they consider their call. *(continued on following page)*

The goal of a second Calling Forth Meeting is to reach consensus on the co-chair. (Before this meeting takes place, nominees may inform the chairs of their inability to serve in the coming year.) The community meeting will again begin with prayer and reflection as members consider the remaining nominees and recommend their preferences until a new co-chair is chosen and affirmed. This meeting is also an excellent time to set goals and intentions for the coming year as well as transfer roles and responsibilities within the community. As time permits, members may express how they might participate in the coming year.

The investiture liturgy will follow in June. Outgoing and ongoing chairs will meet to assure a smooth transition.

Thank You Note

REV. DANIEL J. GATTI, S.J.

3/18/12

Dear Cecelia,

A belated 'thank you' to you &
the NOVA Community for the
thoughtfulness in sending me a
surprise Valentine's Day gift!
(it was sent to my old address at Xavier
High School - only more recently received it)
I'm working for Jordanham University

now and my home address is:

Wishing all in NOVA great
Easter Blessings!

Peace,

Dan Gatti, SJ.

One of the Earth's Amazing Sights

I couldn't resist including in this newsletter one of more than 60 pictures I took during our recent trip to the Grand Canyon. Even with my limited photography skills, the pictures all turned out well. This is one of those places most of us may visit once in our lifetimes but want to remember forever.

I want to invite other NOVA members to share vacation pictures, or perhaps a memorable moment, encounter, etc. from trips they've taken. I think it would be a nice addition to future newsletter issues.

~ Judy Christofferson



Recent NOVA Photos



Helen, celebrating her birthday with the Community on March 4



Welcome to Stefanie Wharton, who has been attending our liturgies recently



Sydney Carome, waiting to present an Offertory gift



Joe Kane discusses his recent climate ride fundraiser



Nico, drawing a rainbow

More Recent Photos



Community photo sent to Camboni Sisters in South Sudan



Eric, receiving the community's blessing before surgery



Fr. Joe Kenna, making three points in front of his beautiful banner

Food for Thought

Secrets in the Bible (Abram)

Fourth in a Series by
John Veldhuis

When reading the Bible we must read between the lines to discover its full meaning.

Terah [or“Thare”], Abram's father, was a restless soul. He was searching for something and so he took his family and moved from Ur of the Chaldeans to the land of Haran. Therefore Terah is the first recorded immigrant in the Bible (Gen 11:31).

But that was not the end of it and so in Genesis 12 we read that God calls Abram to "leave his family and go to a land that I will show you." Gen 12:1-2.

Note the differences! When the family left Ur they went because **they** wanted to go there. - This suggests that when we seek a spiritual path, we will get help and get there whether it is our desire or the inner urging of our heart. In Chapter 12, the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth," but this time no destination is given. So sometimes we desire to reach a certain spiritual goal and at other times we are led by the Spirit to a great and blessed goal or level.

Abram never wavered in his desire to serve God and therefore we read that he built altars wherever he went. The Creator looked in vain for a human fit to become the patriarch of His nation. Divine grace did not come to Abram in a flash nor was he gifted with sudden inspiration but throughout his life he expressed the desire to receive for the purpose of sharing.

Abram created a channel to spiritual development that we can use. Through this connection we can bring the divine presence into our physical environment. In Hebrew this presence is called Shechinah which we call Sophia (Greek) or the Holy Spirit.

At age 99 Abram and Ismael were circumcised (Gen 17:24-27) This was the start of a covenant that lasts to this day for the Jewish people. Abram was sitting in the shady entrance of his tent and it was hot (Gen. 18:1). He undoubtedly was feeling the pain of his recent circumcision and therefore he was looking down but note, he looked up and saw three strangers. We learned earlier that in Judaic tradition numbers have significance, so who were these three strangers? Did he recognize the personification of God? - Do we recognize God in strangers?

Abram made sure the "strangers" were comfortable and then begins his famous debate about the salvation of others. Lot, his nephew, is living in Sodom and Abram wants to save him and his family but also others who may be “innocent of the evils” of the towns. Can we and do we bargain with God? Is that what we do in our prayers?

What does the cosmos say about “the law written on their hearts”? Part 1

Bernard Doering's [excellent article](#) in the March 23, 2012 issue of *Commonweal* discusses the thinking of Jacques Maritain and his confessor, Cardinal Charles Journet, about contraception, [Humanae Vitae](#), and submission to authority.

The article is interesting for several reasons. First, it uses contemporaneous letters which enable the reader to listen in, as if unnoticed, on a private conversation about a public topic. Second, it preserves the nuances of the different directions in which these first rate Catholic thinkers were being pulled. Third, it leaves the reader -- at least this reader -- with a fresh perspective from which to ponder the relationship between Church teaching and change.

It has been decades since Vatican II, the turmoil of the 60s, and [Humanae Vitae](#). The article nicely places in historical perspective the current controversy over contraception, and suggests that the question of whether and how Church teachings can change has been fermenting beneath the surface.

How are we to be faithful to a loving God? By loving one another, of course, but Church teachings have provided a more specific framework of principles and concrete guidance to assist the faithful conscience. On the one hand, Church teaching is acknowledged to be a work in progress: tradition and the *sensus fidelium* play a role. On the other hand, Church teaching should reflect and maintain the continuity and identity of the Church. As [Doerings's article](#) suggests, there continues to be tension between these aspects of Church teaching.

My own view is that at least one path forward is provided by what St. Augustine called God's "book of nature," although St. Augustine would never have dreamed what creative inspiration the book of nature is now providing us. It is probably only coincidence, but just as Vatican II was concluding, science was discovering the cosmic background radiation. This evidence from God's creation tells us that nature itself is evolving, putting to rest the idea that change is simply about uncovering what we do not yet know.

Even Einstein once thought that the universe was eternal, and that the task of science was to disclose the mind of "the old one." His General Theory of Relativity is elegantly based upon a single assumption: the laws of physics are the same everywhere, all across space and time. This

deceptively simple assumption leads to black holes and the Big Bang. It is -- as Einstein himself preferred to call it -- a theory of invariants (his field equations are "invariant" under transformations across time and space). Einstein proposed this new name for his theory in the early 1920s, after seeing how the public discussion of his theory confused "relativity" with "relativism." Einstein's novel ideas about space and time seemed contrary to the long accepted principles of Isaac Newton, and this led some to suggest that other long accepted principles might also be subject to change. Others saw the specter of "relativism" in the suggestion that long accepted principles were subject to change. Einstein saw this debate as an irrelevant distraction, and responded by trying to change the name of "The General Theory of Relativity" to "The Theory of Invariants." The proposed change didn't stick.

But there were a number of untidy implications to Einstein's field equations. One of them was the possibility that the universe was either expanding or contracting. Either of these possibilities conflicted with the prevailing belief among scientists, including Einstein, that the universe had always existed in essentially its current or "steady state" condition. In order to preserve a universe that was eternal Einstein had to add a "cosmological constant" to his equations, an *ad hoc* addition which he later regarded as the biggest blunder of his life¹.

There is a parallel, I think, between conceiving the universe as an eternal and unchanging reality, about which we gradually learn more, and conceiving of Church teaching as changing only in the sense of greater refinements (developed gradually through tradition). Both conceptions grasp at continuity but do so by overreaching. Continuity is an aspect of what is real, but it was not necessary for Einstein to add a cosmological constant to achieve continuity. Nor should it be necessary for continuity in Church teaching to emphasize the authority of the magisterium at the expense of the *sensus fidelium*.

By adding what is unnecessary, these parallel responses -- ostensibly on behalf of continuity and truth -- obscure something that is important about reality, a reality that is alive, kicking and screaming its way into existence. This living reality is as familiar and inscrutable to us as our own children. It is this reality that a loving and

utterly awesome God is unfolding before us. What is being obscured is this: continuity does not require certitude in how we look at our past understandings ("Church teachings") of the law of God, any more than continuity requires that our children turn out as we once expected. Instead, continuity requires trust.

Trust in what? In science, understandings change, but past understandings can still be trusted to explain the evidence they once explained. Newtonian mechanics is still trusted with mundane tasks of constructing buildings and bridges, even though Einstein's equations are needed to make our GPS devices work. Newtonian mechanics is still trusted for calculating how galaxies move, even though Einstein's equations are needed to explain how the orbit of Mercury changes. So the understandings of Einstein and Newton are about being useful, rather than true. Einstein did not depose Newton; Einstein and Newton continue to live together, in continuity and in trust.

Vatican I spoke explicitly about the infallibility of the Pope. Vatican II spoke explicitly about the "sense of the faithful," which can serve as a crucible for discerning whether Church teachings are "received." The People of God continue to struggle with these understandings, but they can work together, can they not?

What ties these understandings together in a bond of trust is St. Augustine's "book of nature." Granted, St. Augustine would be surprised by the novelty of this approach but, upon reflection, might well find comfort in a God of surprises. It is remarkable how recent are our current understandings of the cosmos. The cosmic background radiation and a coherent picture of how the universe has evolved (what some who teach about such matters call "big history" from the Big Bang forward) has all come to light in the last fifty years. We have been graced with an unfolding reality, one that unfolds not simply with new knowledge but a reality that unfolds with further surprises, just as our children surprise us. We are, after all, God's children.

There are some among us who do not like surprises, and for whom the ideas of God and change do not go well together. For these folks reality is much more comforting as a known quantity, at least known in God's eyes. But can such a reality be alive? Would such a reality be worth living? Would our own children be able to surprise us in such a reality?

There is a certain comfort in the logic of known quantities, even if only God knows. And it is bracing to contrast that comfort with a logic of

surprise, where even God is surprised. But if we are God's children, this more bracing view should come as no surprise. The more comforting logic of known quantities depends upon the tendency (to use Bernard Lonergan's expression) "to conceive the real as a subdivision of the 'already out there now'."² If this evolving cosmos is pregnant with life – with our children and God's children, children of surprises – life itself stands as a contradiction to this tendency.

My faith tells me – or, better, suggests to me, subject ultimately to a "sense of the faithful" – that Jesus the Christ is one of these surprises. And what we now know about the cosmos suggests that further surprises await us. Although our understanding may come slowly, because we see "but through a glass, darkly," perhaps what faith teaches about the Second Coming foreshadows another of these cosmic surprises.

In this view creation and reality in its fullness are all of a piece. This is the work of an awesome God. This is in stark contrast with the dualistic view that God's children (or at least their souls) were placed by God within a separately created world. The concepts of "infusion of the soul" and "he sent his only Son into the world" can be interpreted as being consistent with this dualistic view. This would be a God of human construction, a God that acts in *deus ex machina* style. On the other hand, concepts such as "fully human, fully divine" and "I will write my law upon their hearts" fit better with the awesome God of a unified reality that brings surprises out of a pregnant cosmos, a cosmos that is vibrant and alive. This cosmos is not simply playing out what is already implicit in the "already out there now." God is doing a new thing.

But what about the tension that Doering's article summarized by the question: "How can a proposition that is not infallible – such as the conclusions of *Humanae Vitae* – be nonetheless irreformable?" We need a different way of looking at the problem, a different way of understanding how continuity is maintained in a progression from Papal infallibility to the *sensus fidelium*, a progression that proceeds in trust from an ancient heritage that is still open to surprises.

A mechanism for such an understanding is remarkably simple. Suppose that each conscience resonates with the word of God, "written on their hearts." The word is perceived "but through a glass, darkly," so that the choice made by conscience is made between such alternatives as may appear at the point of choice. Life is not an academic setting, and conscientious behavior leaves room for further reflection. An alternative that may have resonated at an earlier time may

give way to another alternative that now is more resonant. Common experience with progress toward maturity recognizes, of course, the role of concupiscence, whose cautionary tales are a mark of wisdom.

Apply this model to the People of God as a whole. Are we not the body of Christ, with a collective conscience that has found *resonance* in the teaching authority of the magisterium, even though individuals struggle with varying degrees of allegiance and submission to the Church's teachings? Is it not a sign of the times that many people are looking for a way of understanding the unity of the Church in a way that yields continuity with the past and yet *resonates more* than current calls for submission of mind and will? Those who are satisfied with reliance upon the infallibility of the Pope may see some form of concupiscence operating among those for whom the concept of "definitive teaching" does not *resonate*, but conscience and the *sensus fidelium* are hard and persistent taskmasters.

Thus the People of God as a whole struggles with what is written on their collective heart. Vatican I provided a doctrine that codified the practice of authoritative teaching by the magisterium. The doctrine was formally limited to seldom used *ex cathedra* statements. Vatican II articulated a "sense of the faithful" methodology for testing whether teachings were in accordance with the Spirit. But Vatican II also validated the teaching authority of the magisterium and, as Doering's article points out, the concept of "definitive teaching" implements that validation.

But all of this is understandable as the working out of the collective conscience toward ever more resonant formulations of what is "written on their hearts." Viewed in this light there emerges a bridge across any lingering separation between cleric and lay, between church and state: the bridge of dialogue. A style of dialogue becomes a prominent component of an ongoing process involving the whole People of God rather than a dilution of magisterial teaching authority. Vatican II highlighted the importance of parish and diocesan councils, but little has been done with these institutions. The Church continues to grow, slowly, as if seeing through a glass, darkly. General acceptance within the

Church of an understanding of continuity that trusts change and nourishes dialogue remains ahead of us, as does greater use of parish and diocesan councils. Lay led efforts toward the same kind of dialogue, such as the American Catholic Council, follow what is "written on their hearts."

These are exciting times. God's surprises in the cosmos, and in the history of our understanding of the cosmos, are a sign. These historical signs are mirrored by the transition noted in Jeremiah 31:31-34 from the tangible and teachable law written on stone tablets to a more direct communication to the heart of each of us, great and small alike.

How do you teach what is written on the heart? Has the Church been teaching as if the Gospel message were written on stone tablets? Must the magisterium speak as if from stone tablets? The *resonance* mechanism described above provides an alternative methodology, one that is more sensitive to cultivation of what is written on the hearts of the faithful, due account being taken of the learned wisdom that recognizes the difference between what we want to do and what is right to do.

It is an approach that replaces certitude with trust. The role of a teaching authority would then be more pastoral than authoritative, focused less on what can be written on stone and more on cultivating and relying upon what is written upon the hearts of the faithful. It is a more challenging role, rather like the transition faced by parents who become mentors and grandparents.

But if the cosmos is any guide, this is the future of the Church. Indeed, the role of the institutional teaching authority becomes not only more challenging but more important. The handwriting is on the wall, on the heart of the Church but not in stone. The formal recognition in Vatican II of the *sensus fidelium* – the "sense of the faithful" – is a sign for the future. As with all change, time works slowly.

TO BE CONTINUED.

¹ See the initial essay in this series.

² Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Longmans, 1957), p. 257.