



# nova notes

NOVA Catholic Community

May 2012

## Chair Notes...

The woods are greener where I walk since we've had that blessed, drenching rain last week. Beside the path, young ferns unfold as I pass by, and leaves of poison ivy glisten in slanting beams of light. I have to stop at times so I don't miss how much has changed.

We've been blessed and drenched in NOVA these past few weeks as well. We've been blessed by inspiring celebrations of Holy Week and Easter and by sunshine and warmth for our MS walkers. We've been blessed with perseverance as we worked to reach consensus about changes in our Calling Forth process.

And most recently, we've been blessed by the generosity and creativity of our Men Who Cook and Clean Up and by Those Who Sing and Play the Piano. There are too many to name, so thanks to everyone who helped make that evening both an enjoyable night out and a successful fundraiser for the children of South Sudan. Now tension and excitement are building as the community considers which proposal to select for the 2012-2013 peace and social justice project. That's May 5—do come!

Unlike spring's unfolding ferns and blooming cherry trees, all of these NOVA activities happen because of thoughtful planning and discussions. And lots of meetings, needless to say. And unlike those spectacular-in-spite-of-being-expected-changes in nature, which seem to happen so easily, change doesn't happen quite that way in the human world.

Whether it is our own idea or not, whether it is intentional or not, change and decision-making is an

uncomfortable process, and NOVA is no exception. In fact, for any one of us, change may strike us at times like a patch of poison ivy. It involves a period of itchiness and discomfort. It always requires patience, sharing, perseverance, and trust. The good news is that only living things can change, that is, make the adjustments and grow. So if we want to be truly alive, what else can we do?

John Haughey suggested last month that Jesus may have said to the Apostles and may be saying it to us now, "I'm so glad to be here at the table with you." Isn't that what it's really all about? And so we continue to trust that our coming together in prayer, in our decisions, and in our projects, will lead to joy and celebration, not just itchiness.

**In addition to the General Meeting on May 5, (see p. 4) please put the following upcoming events on your calendar:**

**Sunday, May 20,** brief NOVA General Meeting after the liturgy at Kenmore

**Agenda: First step of Calling Forth process**  
This meeting will focus on recommending nominees for new Co-Chair. (See process, p. 5.)

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**Saturday, June 9:** NOVA General Meeting.

**Time:** 5:30 p.m. potluck supper  
6:30-9:00 p.m. meeting

**Location:** The Barrett's Social Room

**Agenda: Second step of Calling Forth process.**  
The purpose is to reach consensus on new Co-chair.

~Teddi Ahrens, Co-chair

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

**Congratulations to:**

**Adam Clarkson and his bride, Christine, who were married recently.**

**Stephanie Wharton, who will be married in early May**

## May Birthdays

- 3 Cathy Goldschmidt
- 4 Jean Mendez
- 8 Ann Passin
- 10 Dianne Carroll  
Jim Hug
- 11 Elena Bailey
- 17 Katie Chaison
- 20 Ella Carroll Teal
- 24 Anna Reich  
Genevieve Schmidt
- 27 Alicia Cackley
- 30 John Mooney



*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 died on April 28, 2012, and for her family

**Peggy Meyer**, for a speedy recovery from surgery

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

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE  
FOR JUNE ISSUE:  
FRIDAY, MAY 25**

## 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.

**May Music Liaison**  
**Gloria Mog**

**June Music Liaison**  
**Tom Clarkson**

### May 6 – 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

Gerry Stockhausen, SJ

Planners: Alicia and Phil Cackley

### May 13 – 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

Jim Coriden

Planners: Cathy and Larry Goldschmidt

### May 20 – 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

Joe Kenna

Planners: Jeanne and Tom Clarkson

### May 27 – Pentecost Sunday

**NOTE: Gathering: 9:15 a.m.**

**Liturgy at 9:30 at Lacey Woods Park**

Joe Nangle, OFM

Planner: Victoria Robinson

### June 3 – Trinity Sunday

Jim Hug, SJ

Planners: Peace and Social Justice Team

### June 10 – Corpus Christi

Aidan Shea, OSB

Planners: Carol and John Reeder

### June 17 – 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Quinn Conners, O.Carm

Planner: Emma Violand Sanchez

### June 24 – John the Baptist

Gerry Stockhausen, S.J.

Planner: Peggy Becker

*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.*



Palm Sunday – Fr. Madigan



Palm Sunday liturgy



Ella and Elena in Palm Sunday procession

## PALM SUNDAY

## 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, e-mail or call Dianne Carroll.

### May Gunston Volunteer Schedule

May 3: **Eric/Gamboa family**  
May 10: **Kane family member &, Syd, other volunteer\_\_\_\_\_?**  
May 17: **Tim/Jerry**  
May 24: **Syd/Glen**  
May 31 **Tim/Cathy G. & Kane family member**

## NOVA GENERAL MEETING

**Purpose:** To choose one big social justice project for 2012-2013

**Date:** Saturday, May 5

**Time:** 5:30 p.m. Potluck  
6:30 p.m. Meeting

**Location:** Meg Tucillo's home

The 2012-13 Annual Peace and Social Justice Project Proposals are in! The four proposals are compiled in a single document alphabetized by project title. (See descriptions on pp. 7-13.) The Peace and Social Justice team asks you to study them prayerfully over the next week to discern which one NOVA might do over this next year. There will be time at the meeting to ask questions about the proposal contents. Once NOVA selects a project, the community will brainstorm how to raise funds to support it.

Many thanks to those who brought these needs to the community. ~ **Peace & Social Justice Team**



**HOLY  
THURSDAY**



## Nova's Calling Forth Process for 2012

**Introduction:** There are times central to the life of our community. The Calling Forth is one of those times and involves a one month long period as follows:

1. **Two weeks before the Naming Meeting**, the Community enters a period of prayer and discernment. Each member is asked to reflect on who might best serve as the new Co-Chair of the Community in the next two years as well as their own role in the coming year. For those members unable to make the first meeting, names may be given to the current Co-Chairs in writing or by email preferably with a statement as to why the member would like to see that person called forth. These names/statements will be read at the beginning of the first meeting.
2. **The Naming Meeting** will be a brief after-liturgical gathering that begins with prayer and silent reflection asking that the Holy Spirit guide this process of leadership selection. All are asked to remain open to the Spirit throughout the process. Already submitted nominations will be read and then members will be invited to put forth the name of a nominee and the reason they are recommending that person. All members are free to pass, suggest another name, or affirm an already named person. All nominees are asked to be open to this call, consider it carefully and not decline it at this time. There will not be further discussion about the nominees at this meeting. The meeting will end with prayer.
3. **Discernment Period (2-3 weeks)** : Current Chairs will notify anyone who was named and not at the first meeting that they have been nominated. A complete list of all nominees will be published on the Nova Listserv. The whole community is encouraged to pray, reflect and talk with one another about the leadership position. Nominees may want to speak with present and/or past Co-Chairs about the position, talk with those who nominated them or otherwise carefully consider their call from the community. All nominees are asked to attend the Calling Forth Meeting if at all possible. If a nominee knows clearly that they are unable or unwilling to be considered, they should let the Current Chairs know of that decision before the final Calling Forth Meeting.
4. **The Calling Forth Meeting** is held to reach consensus on who should serve as the new Co-Chair. The meeting begins with prayer and reflection. A list of the nominees is posted and each is asked to share any thoughts and feelings they have about serving in this position. Additional nominations are possible including self-nominations at this time with prior agreement of person(s) so named. A go-around then begins with each Community member being asked to state their thoughts about who they would like to see serve and why. Discussion will continue with breaks and prayer until a new Co-Chair is chosen and affirmed.

This meeting is also an excellent time to set community goals and intentions for the coming year. Some may wish to transfer roles and responsibilities within the community. As time permits, members may express how they plan to support the leaders and reflect on their own role in the community in the coming year.

~Submitted by Eric Carroll

# NEW NOVA MONTHLY PEACE AND JUSTICE PROJECTS

## Catholic University of South Sudan

Fr. Mike Schultheis, SJ of Sudan with hopes to raise up leaders for the upcoming generation in Sudan, birthed the project. The university's main campus is located in the city of Juba. With educational opportunities in Sudan being among the worst in the world and adult literacy below 30 percent, Fr. Schultheis realizes that the Catholic University of the Sudan is a critical component in moving the country forward after almost 25 years of civil war. As a former Padre Cadre presider for Nova, Mike has been busy launching a faculty of art and social sciences in 2008 in Juba (the capital of the southern region) with 250 students already enrolled. In 2009 a second faculty of agricultural and environmental sciences opened with some 50 students in Wau. A third faculty of engineering sciences is planned for next year. The government in the north stopped the initiative as South Sudan sought independence. With the formation of the South Sudan nation Mike's efforts are underway again. Students at both campuses have to find their own food and housing, not an easy task where the average wage is \$1/day. Tuition costs per year are \$800. Any assistance goes towards help with tuition, building, books and computers. Fr. Mike addressed NOVA in a recent email:

*Dear all of NOVA, Peace... ..and HAPPY EASTER to All of you. And many thanks for your email with this good news of the offer of the NOVA Catholic Community to contribute US\$100 a month for the work here at the Catholic University of South Sudan. We are moving forward now with preparations for the graduation of the pioneer group of students, schedule for 12 May. The first group of about 20 will receive their degree from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, which assures the recognition of the first degree as credible! Yes, we have labored with some diligence over several years to enable and ensure this—and the good news came this week! And all will be well!*



## Loyola Jesuit Secondary School – Kasungu, Malawi

**Pete Henriot, SJ**, former NOVA celebrant and former peace and justice monthly project when he was serving in Zambia, is now overseeing building plans, raising funds and lining up people with educational background for planning the new school in Kasungu, Malawi. Loyola Jesuit Secondary School is specifically designed to be co-educational because of the belief that *gender-equity* is essential for a sustainable future for Malawi. More young women must be offered the opportunity for a good secondary school education if family life, health care and all-around development are to be possible.



He indicates in Kasungu they have already secured a well-situated plot of 60 acres close to their Jesuit pastoral center. This school will be in a poor rural area, away from urban areas where more educational opportunities are available. Since it will be government-assisted, fees will not be so high as to exclude ordinary families. At least 25% of enrollment will be from local children. Pete addressed NOVA in a recent email:



*Greetings! Your note brings me such good news coming from such good people!*

*The donation of \$100.00 a month for my work in Malawi is indeed a gift and a personal encouragement. In my new assignment, I am currently raising funds for our new school in Malawi, Loyola Jesuit Secondary School. This is a big challenge, but well worth the effort in a country where less than 35% of the youth have a chance to attend secondary school. It is indeed a real "option for the poor" to try to assist young women and men in a very poor educational system in one of the poorest countries in the world. Visit [www.loyola-malawi.org](http://www.loyola-malawi.org) and [www.facebook.com/loyolamw](http://www.facebook.com/loyolamw)*

Submitted by Eric Carroll, coordinator for these 2 projects

Next month you will hear about 2 more new projects approved at the Peace & Justice General Meeting in March.

## 2012 ANNUAL PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT PROPOSALS

### **Name of Project: Backpack Buddies FY13**

**Project Description:** to provide food through the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) for Arlington County's elementary-aged public school children who are homeless or in unstable home environments.

**Proposed by:** Eric Carroll who is a volunteer food distributor at AFAC's Gunston site and one of the coordinators for this site and who participates in AFAC staff considerations of program needs at AFAC.

**Funding Requested:** \$10,000

**Annual Program Budget:** \$29,440

**Annual Organization Budget:** slightly over \$4.5 million

**Project Description:** For many of these children, their lunchtime meal at school is their only meal each day. Over weekends or holiday breaks, these children often go with little to no food. On Fridays at their school, each child in the Backpack Buddies program is given a backpack filled with nourishment for the weekend. Items usually distributed in the backpacks are soups, ready-to-eat meals, snack bars, fruit cups, and canned vegetables. The backpacks are returned to their school on Monday and redistributed to the children the following Friday. With this program children and families are able to maintain their regular meals and healthy diets over school breaks and weekends. In FY13 (July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013) AFAC plans to distribute 1,280 weekend and holiday meal packs.

Food costs for these children runs \$18 per child per week, and there's another \$5 in supplies, transportation, and staff costs per child per week bringing the total to \$23 per child per week. This cost is exponentially higher than the cost AFAC outputs for a client in one of the other food distribution programs. The food packs include nonperishable microwavable meals, shelf stable milk, small boxes of prepackaged cereal, granola bars, dried fruit, etc. and are far more expensive than the other bulk foods AFAC purchases (eggs, milk, chicken) for other clients. There are 32 children in the program now (the program is currently limited to those children who are homeless per McKinney-Vento Act) and there are approximately 40 weeks in the school year. So that's  $\$23 \times 32 = \$736$  per week.  $\$736 \text{ per week} \times 40 \text{ weeks} = \$29,440$  program budget.  $32 \text{ children} \times 40 \text{ weeks} = 1280$  weekend meal packs. Each weekend meal pack holds 4 meals and 2 snacks.

**Timeline and Goal:** For FY13, purchasing for the meal packs starts bi-monthly in July 2012. A \$10,000 gift from Nova will help AFAC move into FY13 with assurance of 32 children covered for the whole school year and will cover approximately 40% of food costs for the meal packs. At least \$4,170.67 would be needed for the July purchases to enable this program to get started.

**Cost Management:** Eric Carroll and AFAC will manage accounting for the funds.

**Organization Description:** AFAC works to alleviate the day-to-day issue of hunger in Arlington County. AFAC is the only organization in Arlington devoted solely to providing dignified access to nutritious, supplemental groceries—free of charge—for our neighbors in need. In doing so, AFAC makes it possible for vulnerable families in our community to devote their limited resources to financial obligations such as housing, utilities, and other basic needs. AFAC currently distributes food to our community in the following ways:

**General Distribution** is an essential part of AFAC's services. At any one time we have over 2,200 active referrals.

**Seniors Outreach** is AFAC's hunger action program that distributes nutritional food supplies to our elderly clients.

**Backpack Buddies** program provides food for Arlington County's public school children who are homeless or in unstable home environments.

**Food for Peers** helps us collaborate with our peer human service agencies to make sure that their clients remain fed and prepared for progress.

**Emergency Food Kits** are food supplies provided by AFAC, packaged by local ecumenical groups, and stored at the Arlington Department of Human Services (DHS) for families and individuals needing immediate nourishment.

### **The Cost to Serve and the Need**

To meet the community's ongoing and growing need for food, AFAC has an annual budget in FY 2012 of slightly over \$4.5 million. This is made up of a cash budget of \$2.1 million in private funding, and over 1.2 million pounds of food (valued at nearly \$2 million) donated to us by individuals and through food drives held by schools, congregations, businesses, service organizations, and governmental entities. For the small amount of food AFAC must purchase, high quality-perishables such as chicken eggs, and milk as well as meal packs for children, AFAC is able to buy at a low wholesale cost due to its relationship with several reputable, local, civic-minded food distributors. Finally, through our dedicated volunteers, we receive over 26,000 hours of volunteer time each year (valued at over \$500,000.00).

Just over 90% of the Arlington Food Assistance Center's funding comes from private donations—cash and supplies donated from individuals, foundations, faith congregations, local businesses, and peer organizations.

However, in the last 12 months alone, AFAC has faced an unexpected and unprecedented twenty-four percent rise in demand for food assistance services putting stress on all of the programs. A \$10,000 gift from Nova will help alleviate this stress for one program.

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### **Name of Project: Dream Project, Inc.**

**Description:** The Dream Project is a newly approved 501C3 organization whose mission is to encourage and support promising low-income immigrant students in the pursuit of higher education.

**Proposed by:** Emma Violand-Sanchez, Carmela Ormando Kane and Mikaela Kane

**Funding request:** \$10,000 **Annual budget of organization:** \$30,000 in 2012 and \$40,000 in 2013.

### **What is the need and purpose this project addresses?**

Dream Project Inc addresses three needs: 1) **It awards college scholarships** to low-income immigrant students who demonstrate academic achievement, financial need, perseverance in the face of adversity, leadership and commitment to community service. In 2011The Dream Project awarded 4 scholarships; in 2012 the Dream Project received 24 applications and plans to award a minimum of 10 scholarships. 2) **Students involved with the Dream Project share their experiences in formal and informal settings in order to enhance understanding of the plight of undocumented students.** In 2011 "Dreamers" made presentations at NOVA Catholic Community, the Arlington Unitarian Universalist Church, American Association of University Women, and Amnesty International Conference and organized a "Dream Summit" in Arlington Public Schools. If this project is funded additional presentations and workshops will be presented to school staff, high school students and other organizations in order to enhance their understanding of the barriers faced by students and support them in their pursuit of higher education. 3) **The Dream project also provides mentoring support to**



**students.** In 2012 four Georgetown university students mentored 9 low-income immigrant students. High School and Georgetown students meet on weekends at the Georgetown University campus, and work on college and scholarship applications.

### **Purpose of the project:**

The proposed project funding is to institutionalize the mentoring program in order to recruit more mentors to support a minimum of 30 low income immigrant students as well as to sponsor college visits for students and their parents. The Dream Project will appoint a mentoring coordinator in order to enhance the coordination and training of the mentoring program. A guidebook will be developed to enhance the value of mentoring session. Experts in the fields of college budgeting and finances; college admissions; and essay writing will be invited to the mentoring sessions. In addition, a minimum of 20 scholarships will be awarded in 2013.

### **Who will be served by this project?**

Dream Project will mentor **a minimum of 30 students** using a guidebook with information specifically geared toward low-income immigrant students. These students may not otherwise have access to a similar comprehensive source of compiled information that considers and addresses the specific barriers of income, language and immigration status that these students face such as, inadequate financial resources, lack of counseling support, abundant information gaps, undocumented immigration status, and the unclear family understanding of the complex processes faced by students seeking college entry in the United States. Additional funding will support the Dream Project Inc. goal to provide **a minimum of 20 scholarships in 2013**. Dream Project scholarships are renewable.

In order to enhance the understanding of the plight of undocumented students, Dream Project will sponsor workshops **to 30 high school staff** in three high schools with the collaboration of high school students who will serve as allies of undocumented students in their school.

The Dream Project expects this program to positively impact the students it serves and will measure its impact through end-of-year surveys and by collecting data on the number of college acceptances and scholarship awards secured by participating students. Parents will also attend a minimum of three workshops.

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

Summer 2012: Dream Project Mentoring Coordinator organizes information needed to be included in the guidebook. Scholarship are awarded to a minimum of 10 students.

August 2012: Dream Project retreat is organized for Board members, volunteers, students and parents. The retreat will be at the Unitarian/Universalist Church facilities.

September 2012: Georgetown University mentors are recruited and selected. High School students complete applications and enroll in the mentoring program. Mentors receive training from Coordinator.

Fall 2012: Mentoring sessions are offered at Georgetown University on Sunday afternoons. One college trip to a college is conducted for students and their parents.

October-December 2012: one workshop is offered to high school staff and presentations are made to community organizations.

December 2012: Dream Project parents and Board members conduct their traditional annual fundraiser in collaboration with NOVA Catholic Community volunteers and other partners.

January-May 2013: Mentoring sessions continue, a second college trip is organized and a workshop is offered to school staff.

January - April 2013: NOVA fundraiser is organized with support from Dream Project Board, students and parents.

April 15, 2013: Scholarship applications are due

May 2012: About 30 students are interviewed; NOVA volunteers participate in the interviewing committee.

**The goal is to award 20 scholarships, mentor 30 students, provide training to 30 school staff members.** **What is the sponsor's connection to and involvement in the project?** Emma Violand-Sanchez is the Chair of the Dream Project Board and Georgetown adjunct professor. Mikaela and Carmela Kane have participated actively in Dream Project information sessions and are personally connected with undocumented youth. Mikaela would like to be actively involved in this project at NOVA and at her high school. Currently the Dream Project is a Social Action project and Dreamers have shared their stories at NOVA. Ken Chaison is the webmaster for the Dream Project website [www.dreamproject-va.com](http://www.dreamproject-va.com) and <https://www.facebook.com/DreamProject.VA> Clyde Christofferson assisted with the incorporation of the Dream Project in VA. **This project could serve as a model of collaboration between NOVA Catholic Community and immigrant students and their families, who will work together to demonstrate social action through empowerment of the community it serves.**

**What is the cost and who will manage the money and be accountable?** The Dream Project Inc is a 501 C3 organization; it reports on an annual basis to VA and files tax returns. The Treasurer of the Dream Project is responsible for accounting. The total cost of the project will be \$50,000. The Dream Project will raise \$40,000 and NOVA Catholic Community will provide \$10,000. If extra money is raised, additional scholarships will be awarded to students.

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**Name of Project: Rural Women's Center (Centro Campesina), Department of Cabanas, El Salvador**

**Description:** Partial funding of a permanent location for education, training, and income generation activities for rural women and youth, from isolated communities surrounding the commercial town of Ilobasco, conducted by the 18-year old Asociación La Nueva Esperanza (LNE).

**Proposed by:** Archer Heinzen on behalf of *Co-partners of Campesinas (Co-partners)*, a 501(c)(3) organization, formed in 1997, that supports LNE and other Central American women's organizations with a focus on helping them to learn, earn, and lead.

**Request:** \$10,000

**Annual budget:** In the last four years the Co-partners' budget has ranged from \$13,500 to \$5,500, averaging \$8,300. Additionally volunteers and board members contribute from \$11,000 to \$5,000 in travel expenses annually.

**Need/purposes of the project?**

- Provide a **permanent space** for the education, training and income generation activities of LNE, as well as a regional headquarters for a network of similar groups. LNE programming consists of Saturday classes in income generation skills, including dressmaking and computer applications for youth, and week-long, life skills workshops, as well as transportation scholarships. As a training and scholarship program for rural women, youth and children, run by rural women with only elementary educations and as a long-term, low budget development project, LNE is highly unusual. (Until now, LNE has functioned in locations borrowed from an Ilobasco church, maintaining the building in exchange for its use. In the past this arrangement has helped keep the budget low, but now has two major drawbacks—the arrangement does not allow for program expansion and the priest seeks return of the space for catechism classes.)

- Enable **expansion of child and youth programming**. Addressing the huge disparity between urban and rural education is a primary goal of LNE and Co-partners. (Although Salvadoran law mandates nine years of education, rural residents average only 3.7 years (Greenwood Encyclopedia of Children's Issues Worldwide, Ministry of Economy 2005, 3-5).
- **Expand support for rural, middle and high school students** by opening the computer center after school.
- Enable **establishment of two small businesses**—a sewing workshop and an events center-- for which the current location is not appropriate.
- In the longer term, a permanent center will provide **a location for rural women to sell their products** and possibly a hostel for rural students to stay four nights a week to attend high school.

**Project beneficiaries?** 120-150 women and youth, residents of rural communities surrounding Ilobasco.

In a typical year, 50 women attend dressmaking/tailoring classes, 12 youth attend computer classes, 11 youth receive transportation scholarships, and 50 women and youth attend intensive life skills workshops. In the proposed permanent location, LNE will be able to add after-school programming for students, enrichment activities for children of mothers attending classes, and space for a sewing workshop allowing women to contract for production of school uniforms during the work week or for provision of food for meetings and special events. Organizational records reflect that approximately 2,500 women and children/youth have been served by the center over the last eighteen years.

Rural women in Latin America are an oppressed group, struggling to provide for and educate their children, burdened by the ethos of machismo and heavy domestic responsibilities, including carrying water and searching for firewood.

#### **Steps and timeline for carrying out the project:**

1. Complete negotiations for land. Two processes are currently underway: 1) Negotiation with the mayor for transfer of municipally owned land to LNE and 2) negotiation of the price on a piece of property adjacent to a youth vocational school with which LNE has a long standing relationship. A volunteer attorney will handle the contract.
2. The Department of Architecture of the Universidad Centro Americano José Simeón Cañas (UCA) has agreed to provide surveying and design. The architect has visited sites under consideration and has given an estimate of construction cost. Once the purchase or land lease is complete, the volunteer architect will finalize the plan.
3. It is traditional for community members to donate labor in the construction of schools and rural chapels, if meals are provided. Although the ideal epoch for volunteer community labor is the agricultural downtime of January and February, five communities have agreed to provide one day a week of labor regardless of the month.
4. Jim and Archer Heinzen will be resident on-site for the construction period.
5. The construction will be organized as a short-term training program for the workers, including youth. The UCA is exploring how they can certify the trainees. Food preparation for the construction crew would also be organized as a short-term food prep course.

**End of year goal:** Completion of construction and initiation of activities in the new center

#### **Sponsor's connection to/involvement in the project?**

Archer has been working with this organization for 18 years. She travels, at her own expense, to Ilobasco from one to three times annually to support LNE. Nova is already involved with LNE. Six Nova members have made volunteer trips with *Co-partners*. Jen Duffy worked with children in El Salvador in 2003. In 2007 the Nova

Affirmandi class worked in a week-long, summer camp program with elementary school students. Marie Keefe supported the group prior to departure and during the camp.

**Cost?** \$10,000

**Money management?** Jim Heinzen.

\$35,000 from a legacy is available for land. Purchase is on hold until the mayor determines whether he will provide municipal land (that would allow this money to be used for more extensive construction). The architect has estimated the building cost at \$30,000. \$20,000 is available for construction. Nova is asked to raise \$10,000 to complete the building fund.

**Extra money?** Additional funds would be used to buy kitchen equipment, utensils, dishes and serving equipment for training and event services, a projected income source for the group.

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## **Name of the Project: Water for Kanoni, Uganda**

**Project Description:** Bringing Potable water to the people of Kanoni Uganda

**Proposed by:** John Veldhuis

**Funding Requested:** \$ 7,000

**Annual Budget:** There is no annual budget since this is a one time operation. The total cost of the complete project is \$ 350,000 which will be raised over the next 4 years. This request, when granted, will get the project started. Any money raised will be matched by Rotary International (more below)

**Project Description:** Kanoni, is a small village in central Uganda. It is a rural community and very poor. It gets most of its water from a spring just outside the village, which is very polluted and causes all kinds of stomach problems (health report available) The other source of water is several miles away and requires young children to carry one or more heavy jerry cans of water from the well to their home for drinking, cooking, cleaning and bathing. This takes time and energy and interferes with the education of the children. There are 8 schools in the area and none have a source of drinking water so children are assigned to carry water for their class mates further reducing their time spent in class.

**Who will be served:** About 5000 people will benefit from this project which includes the citizens of Kanoni and Kasaka, the school population of 8 schools and others will all benefit from this project.

**Steps and Timeline:** The project which has been designed by the Uganda Department of Health, Engineers from Duke University's school of engineering and others is a proven method of supplying clean water. It will be developed over a 4 phase base

Part 1. Drilling 3 boreholes (Estimated cost \$ 30,000)

Part 2. Building the gravity tank and sand filter

Part 3. Connecting the villages and schools through underground pipes

Part 4. Ensuring training and maintenance to make the project self sustaining

The Timeline will depend upon funds available but should be completed in 2016 or sooner. The total cost will be \$ 370,000

**Goals to be met:** The most important first step is to drill 3 boreholes. (Part 1) Even if nothing else is accomplished the people will have three sources of clean water nearer than the present source.

**Sponsor connection:** This project will be a multi-sponsor project in that the following people or organizations will be part of the project with information, consulting, accounting or funding parts:

Duke University - Technical assistance and consulting.  
Mpigi Health Department - Health testing and information  
Mpigi Water Works - Licences, maps and consulting services  
Mityana Rotary Club - Accounting and supply logistics  
Rosslyn Fort Myer Rotary - Club Fund raising and promotion  
Rotary District 7610 - Matching funds and advice  
Rotary International, Major Grantor - (Matching the above funds)  
NOVA Catholic Community - Initial Fund raising  
Other Rotary clubs - Fund raising  
Corporate and individual sponsors to be identified  
Kanoni Citizens for hands on assistance and maintenance  
Duke University - Ongoing health seminars

**Cost Management and accounting:** The project will be overseen by the members of the Mityana Rotary Club, Rotary International and John Veldhuis. Accounting will be assured and is a requirement of any funding by Rotary and is taken very seriously. Periodic reports and updates will be made available.

**Extra money raised:** If there is any extra money (an unlikely event), it will be used for education of the citizens in health and hygiene.



**Good Friday**



**Easter Vigil**

## NOVA Retreat Survey

We need some input from the community. The NOVA chairpersons are talking with us about the possibility of doing the NOVA retreat this year (September 14-16) around the topic of Twelve-Step spirituality. The Twelve Step program was developed by alcoholics and others with addictions, but we think some aspects of it may be meaningful for non-addicts as well.

The Twelve Steps are all about accepting and dealing with (or letting God deal with) our imperfections, our weaknesses, our resentments, our compulsions, things we'd like to change about ourselves but haven't been able to, things outside our control, etc. etc. (you get the idea).

For the retreat to work, most of the participants would have to be willing to talk concretely about some of these kinds of issues in their lives. We wouldn't want anyone to feel pressured to share about such material, but we would need a critical mass of people who are willing to trust the other members of the group with this kind of vulnerability. It's a retreat that would not work if people just observe rather than share.

The first order of business is to find out whether enough NOVA members would be interested in participating in such a retreat. No offense taken if it's not your cup of tea!

**Would you please check the appropriate boxes below, and put this paper in the container provided at the Sunday Liturgy or convey your answers by phone or e-mail to Rich or Linda Rosenberg.**

**Thanks!**  
**Quinn Connors and Rich Rosenberg**

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**NAME(S) (feel free to leave this blank if you want)**

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**I (we) probably CAN attend the NOVA September 14-16 retreat this year**  
**-or-**

**I (we) probably CAN NOT attend the NOVA September 14-16 retreat this year**

\* \* \* \* \*

**Yes, I (we) would probably be interested in participating in a retreat like the one described above.**  
**-or-**

**No, I (we) would probably NOT be interested in participating in a retreat like the one described above.**



## Volunteers Needed for Short-term work in El Salvador and Guatemala in 2012

### **El Salvador: Lead workshops for women or youth, teach computer skills, or provide child enrichment activities, July 28-August 5**

Participants in these programs are low-income, rural residents associated with *La Nueva Esperanza*, a women's community development association in Ilobasco, El Salvador. Volunteers do not need to be experienced teachers, but should enjoy working with children or youth. An orientation will be provided in Alexandria, VA or in El Salvador prior to the work. Ideally volunteers will travel to El Salvador on Saturday, July 28 and have three days of country orientation, before beginning work for four days.

### **Guatemala: Assist in English classes for teachers or facilitate a workshop for indigenous women leaders. Nov. 1-17**

This program is in collaboration with the Ministry of Education or the Asociación de Desarrollo Comunitario (ASDECO). Volunteers will stay in a guesthouse in Chichicastenango. An orientation and materials for teaching English will be provided in Alexandria, VA prior to the trip or at the beginning of the work in Chichi.

### **Why teach English in Central America?**

Tourism is an important part of Central American countries' GNP.

Chichicastenango is a major tourist destination and students who wish to work in tourism need to be able to speak English. Although English is required for high school graduation, instruction is very weak and many people who could profit from English classes cannot afford them. Co-partners is collaborating with the Ministry of Education to improve English instruction in the municipality.

### **Volunteers pay their own expenses**

Volunteers pay their own expenses. Daily expenses are approximately \$35 per day, single occupancy. Needless to say the accommodations are simple. Local transportation ranges from \$60 to \$200, depending upon whether volunteers are able to coordinate their arrival. Airline tickets are usually slightly over \$600, making the total cost of the experience approximately of \$1,000.

### **You'd like to volunteer, but your Spanish is limited or forgotten?**

Guatemala has many wonderful language schools. We have used APPE—Academia de Profesores Privados de Español located in Antigua, Guatemala, [www.appeschool.com](http://www.appeschool.com) which provides 30 hours of individual instruction for \$130/week. Our experience is that for an individual with rusty high school Spanish, a week-long refresher course is sufficient for participation in some programs. Participants without any previous Spanish need two or three weeks of intensive classes.

### **Please contact:** Archer Heinzen.

*Co-partners of Campesinas* is a US based, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that supports *La Nueva Esperanza (New Hope)* and other associations working for women's education and empowerment in developing countries in Central America. *New Hope* is an organization of sixty rural girls and women from five impoverished communities near Ilobasco, El Salvador, who meet weekly to learn income-producing skills and advance the education of members and their children. Co-partners also supports the *Asociación de Desarrollo Comunitario (ASDECO)* located in Chichicastenango, Guatemala with goals similar to those of *New Hope*.

## MS WALK THANK YOU



## MS WALK 2012 - MOM TEAM

It was a gloriously sunny morning on April 15, just a week after Easter and a week before Men Who Cook. 61 friends and family gathered in the Reston Town Center at the MOM Team Tent - WOW!!! The team photo above turned out to be an interesting collage as 37 were ready for photo and some were in line registering.....so it is sort of like playing Where's Waldo?

So far the team has raised \$10,500 and donations can be made until May 24. A huge thank you to everyone - those who walked, raised money, donated, prayed and most of all thanks for your support!

~Dianne Carroll



## MEN WHO COOK: A Delicious Success!

*Men who cook, you are the ones,  
You make mealtime so much fun.  
Men who cook, we are awfully fond of you,  
Woh woh, bee doh!*

Rich Rosenberg's lyrics sum it all up. All you have to do is imagine them sung to the tune of Rubber Ducky in Victoria Robinson's rich voice and you are there. The only thing missing is the delicious aromas wafting through the room accompanied by the sound of very happy people. Well, and the taste of eight scrumptious entrees, salad, desserts, and wine.

Hats off to the men in toques as well as the ones holding dish towels and the debonair table servers!

Dinner was a rousing success, both in gastronomical and financial terms—it was sold out. The final tally of funds raised will be available soon, according to our Head Ticket Honcho, Tom Clarkson.

The children of South Sudan are the beneficiaries of the efforts of so many hard workers, but a standing ovation is owed Ted Miller, John Mooney, and Victoria Robinson for organizing this event. Thanks to them we had professional quality menus, visuals of the children, colorful décor, a hall donated by the UUCF, musical entertainment, speeches, even a random number table buffet assignment. It was also wonderful to welcome UUCF folks who joined us for dinner.

In these very difficult times for this brand new country, it's heartening to be reminded of all the good that is being done there, and as Katie Smith reminded us, *hope and joy are also present: women give birth to beautiful children, people fall in love, special occasions are celebrated, jokes are told, and a lot of dancing goes on.*

Many thanks to you all for joining in this joy. ~**Marie Keefe** for The Peace and Social Justice Team



Two of the chefs: John and Ted



Rich Rosenberg: chef and musician extraordinaire



Photographer Dianne with granddaughter, Ella

## Food for Thought

**Editor's Note:** Carolyn Miller requested that the following prayer, written by Ken Chaison, be included in this issue of the newsletter. The prayer is based on the Belgian Manifesto. Ken stated that he wrote the prayer around the time the Community was discussing the new missal, which we know more closely follows the original Latin. Ken has pointed out that the early Church language, was not really Latin, but was actually Greek, so he has also translated the prayer into Greek. (For those of you who read Greek, contact the editor for a copy of Ken's translation.)

### Prayer – Based on Belgian Manifesto

We, believers, ask our bishops to break the impasse and bring the true spirit of Vatican II to the entire Roman Catholic Church. We do this in solidarity with fellow Catholics all over the world who insist on vital church reform. *Response: Come, Lord Jesus!*

We pray for the day when the leadership in our local communities (e.g., parishes) is entrusted to men or women, married or unmarried, professionals or volunteers, who already have the necessary training. We need dedicated pastors! *Response: Come, Lord Jesus!*

We pray for the day when these our fellow believers can preside at Sunday liturgical celebrations. In every active community we need liturgical ministers! *Response: Come, Lord Jesus!*

We pray for the day when, in communities where no priest is available, a Word service can also include a Communion service. *Response: Come, Lord Jesus!*

We pray for the day when skilled laypeople and well-formed religious educators can preach. We need the word of God! *Response: Come, Lord Jesus!*

We pray for the day when those who, with very good will, have remarried after a divorce, are allowed to take Communion. *Response: Come, Lord Jesus!*

We also pray that, as quickly as possible, both married men and women be admitted to the priesthood. We, people of faith, desperately need them now! *Response: Come, Lord Jesus!* ~Ken Chaison

### Reflections on a Visit with Jean

Clyde and I visited Jean Mendez this past Thursday, April 26. It was a moving experience. Various family members immediately made us feel comfortable and welcomed, just as Jean always did. The first person to greet us was one of Jean's great-grandsons holding a little cherub, Jean's great-great grandson. (How many of us will live long enough to see that!) Family was definitely Jean's forte. And her family included not only 12 children and their offspring but her many, many friends, who were always treated like family.

In her bedroom, Jean, looked as fragile as a China doll and so unlike the strong, sometimes feisty woman we all know and love. One of her daughters and a granddaughter were on each side of the bed, each holding one of her hands. Although she had difficulty breathing and could barely open her eyes, she seemed to sense our presence and struggled to respond. It's times like this that talking is insignificant although many of us blather on, trying to say something appropriate. Quiet presence/nonverbal communication would be better.

As this issue "went to press," Jean passed away. She died as she lived – with dignity and grace.

~Judy Christofferson

### What does the cosmos say about “the law written on their hearts”? Part 2

The previous article addressed “the law written on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:31-34; see also 1 Corinthians 3:2-3) as a different understanding of how God communicates and teaches. This understanding can help the Church move forward from the still current tension within the Church over whether and how Church teaching can change and still remain faithful to a loving God. The article concluded that “the law written on their hearts” requires a different model for exercising authority, one based on trust.

This article continues that theme with a reflection upon the example set by Jesus the Christ. The contrast between Jesus and his contemporaries is starkly summarized in [The Last Week](#) of Jesus’ Passion and Crucifixion. The confrontation of Jesus before Pilate on Good Friday is a central element of the Gospel narrative, but the Gospels themselves do not address an earlier prelude to that confrontation: Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. As [The Last Week](#) tells it, Jesus entered on one side of the city as Pilate and his Roman guard was entering from the other side.

The events of Holy Week have long been a rich source for reflection. Jesus overturns the tables of the money changers in the temple, the temple authorities connive with the Romans to have Jesus executed, but in the end Christianity becomes the religion of choice within the Roman Empire. But what I want to focus on in this essay is Jesus as leader. The contrast between Jesus as a man of peace and Pilate as a military commander is both obvious and overdrawn. Both men were leaders, and leadership provides a perspective that helps highlight the significance of “the law written on their hearts.”

I recall my training years ago as an officer in the Marine Corps. We were taught the use of two distinct aspects of leadership. The preferred method of leadership was called “command presence,” where troops follow their commander not because they are supposed to but because they want to. The commander leads by virtue of a presence that inspires others to follow. The great generals – Alexander, Napoleon – had this kind of presence.

There is a second kind of leadership. It is not preferred, but is recognized as a necessary tool in the circumstances of war and discipline. This second form of leadership is leadership by authority. A soldier follows an order because that’s what soldiers do, and the consequences of doing otherwise are adverse.

Although I learned the distinction between command presence and authority in the military, it is a

distinction that is useful more generally. Jesus the Christ – perhaps paradoxically, since he turned the other cheek and his followers abandoned him at the time of his Crucifixion – demonstrated command presence in the events of Holy Week. The apparent failure on the Cross of the project begun on Palm Sunday embodied both sides of the command presence equation.

First, as to the leader: Jesus submitted not to Pilate and the Romans but to what was written on his heart. He was, after all, fully human. And he did it with passion, because of command presence – God within him. He was, as we believe, fully divine.

Second, as to those led: on Easter Sunday something quite extraordinary happened. His followers – who had been hopeless on Friday – experienced the presence of the Risen Christ on Sunday. It is, as we celebrate at every Eucharist, a very real presence, one that inspires us to follow, not because we have to but because our hearts burn within us. That burning heart is not about authority, it’s about love.

As with any leadership challenge undertaken by failed human beings, the institutional Church is not able to avoid at least a hint of authority. But the objective remains the passion of command presence. And the object of this passion is not what is written on stone but what is written on the hearts of the faithful.

In recent times and, indeed, in recent days, the authority of the institutional Church has been on prominent display. The Leadership Council of Women Religious (LCWR) is being set aside, to be remodeled. At least that is what appears from the seven page “Doctrinal Assessment” of the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).

There are various perspectives on what the CDF has done, and we have not yet heard from the women religious themselves, who are taking time and care in their response. Permit me to present another perspective, a perspective which returns to the title of this article. It is a perspective which I had intended to address anyway, but the immediate circumstance confronting the LCWR provides a certain clarity of focus.

The institutional Church is operating from a particular frame of reference that is rooted in the history of the last two thousand years. As is to be expected, this rootedness in history comes at a cost. The frame of reference was put together during a time when the Earth was thought to be the center of the universe and humanity was the only object of God’s salvation. The recent prospect that God has children

elsewhere in this vast cosmos has not yet been absorbed by the Church's frame of reference.

It is going to be a wrenching adjustment. At least that's my guess.

The Church has a frame of reference, but other sentient civilizations elsewhere in the cosmos will have their own frames of reference, conditioned by historical developments of their own. Yet there are elements of the Church's frame of reference that can encompass these other civilizations. There is but one God, after all. And it is a loving God, who cares for all children. Furthermore, the Trinity can adapt to an expanded cosmos. God is Incarnational (the Second Person) and the Spirit abounds.

Other aspects of the Church's frame of reference face a more difficult adjustment. The Church takes seriously the unity of the People of God and regards itself as the custodian of what has been revealed through Jesus Christ. Revelation is not simply a "deposit of faith" to be received and then transmitted, under the care of a duly delegated teaching authority. In light of cosmic neighbors, there is a different form of care that must be rendered in order to cultivate the unity for which Christ prayed.

This difference may be understood by reflecting upon God's incarnation with other sentient civilizations elsewhere in the cosmos. NOVA's liturgy of April 22<sup>nd</sup> – John Haughey's homily and the dialogue that followed – provided some insight about the nature of the incarnation: as we walked the road to Emmaus during that liturgy, did we not feel our hearts burning within us? And wasn't that burning a response to John's suggestion that Christ is family, anticipating with joy the prospect of sharing a meal with us. It is this active presence, not some doctrinal abstraction, which we celebrate at Eucharist.

This active presence, this incarnational joy, is being shared – to use the language of the April 29th Gospel – with "other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I will lead them, too, and they will hear my voice." Until recently the Church's frame of reference a) conceived of these "other folds" as other peoples on planet Earth and b) imagined that Christ would become known to these "other folds" through missionary activity. But nature – God's "book of creation" – is now unveiling for us a different picture. There are "other folds" so distant that missionary activity is impossible. First conclusion: these distant civilizations "hear my voice" directly. And if this is true for distant "other folds" it must also be true for "other folds" right here on Earth. Second conclusion: missionary work depends primarily upon "what is written on their hearts." Transmission of our "deposit of faith" plays a secondary role. Third conclusion: our own Catholic frame of reference serves not as a standard for missionary work, but rather as a living embodiment of the incarnational character of God's

presence. It is good that we tend to our own garden, but missionary zeal is not about selling the fruits of our garden. Rather, it is about sharing those fruits at a common table – a far more challenging mission for unity on planet Earth. The active and incarnational presence of the living God reaches throughout a life giving cosmos, to civilizations well beyond any capacity for transmitting a deposit of faith.

Obviously, these other independent beings are not insulated by a transmission barrier from a living God who joyfully anticipates sharing a meal with them. God's active presence will not be denied. And what is the vehicle for this sharing of existence? It is the *resonance* rooted in the individual, the seeker who recognizes – however much "through a glass, darkly" – the burning joy from "what is written on their hearts."

Once it is understood that there can be no such insulation, once it is understood that this loving God is an active presence joyfully anticipating sharing existence – beginning with a shared meal – with independent beings everywhere, then it becomes clear that there can be a multitude of independently arising frames of reference that provide a life giving embodiment of this active and joyful presence.

Why does this not raise the specter of relativism? Very simply, because going down that path can't possibly work for sentient beings elsewhere in the distant cosmos. And that recognition gently pushes us to seek a more creative alternative for unity and universality. The answer is not – as it has been when relativism was assumed to be the appropriate question – a single teaching authority that presides over a single deposit of faith. The Church has traveled that path for two thousand years and it is a path overgrown with the weeds of politics, most recently with the Vatican's action against women religious.

What, then, is the common ground that ties together the different frames of reference across the cosmos (and, by extension, across planet Earth as well). The active and joyful presence of the living God is the common ground. Suppose any particular frame of reference is a practical accommodation to the limitations of our humanity (and cosmic sentience more generally) in response to the reality of this active and joyful presence.

The Good Samaritan story is exemplary of the dynamic. The Jews and the Samaritans had been one, but had parted ways and developed different frames of reference. Jesus' message in the Good Samaritan story was that this active and joyful presence of the living God was calling them to a more capacious understanding of "neighbor."

But it is difficult – because of our limitations – to be one family. Yet that is what we are called to be. How can that unity be realized in light of a multitude of frames of reference, each of which is on track

toward redemption if they "hear my voice," (from the April 29<sup>th</sup> Gospel) a voice whose active and joyful presence will find any open heart, any lost sheep, however isolated.

Patterns of isolation – extending across the cosmos – can then be understood in terms of these frames of reference, whose differences reflect the limitations of sentience. Yet all share the common thread of God's active, joyful and incarnational presence.

How will the Church digest this deeper meaning of the Good Samaritan story? How limited is our collective sentience? As a matter of formal rationality it would be easy enough for the Church to remain isolated by supposing that these other frames of reference – at least on Earth – fall short because they do not fully "hear my voice" as recorded in the deposit of faith. *Dominus Iesus* took this point of view. In the end this rationality founders on the shoals of the proposition that the Earth is the center of the universe.

So, something more is required for the Church to digest the idea that there are other sentient civilizations elsewhere in the cosmos that God also loves. And the question is driven by the limitations of our sentience, not only our individual limitations but our collective limitations. It is, after all, our collective selves – the identity by which we know ourselves as "Catholic" – that functions as a body. The Church's focus on maintaining its identity is in some measure a response to the varying comfort levels, among Catholics, with others who call themselves Catholic but who have frames of reference that differ in some degree from the collective frame of reference.

If we read the Good Samaritan story broadly, the active and joyful presence of the living God – this incarnation among us and to which we are called – is calling us to the next step. Beyond the lesson of Jews and Samaritans treating each other as neighbors, there is the question of unity. Can there be unity among a variety of particular communities, where each community struggles for a coherent identity in service to the same living and loving God?

So the call is the same. What we will come to understand – and modern cosmology may provide a common link for that understanding – is that our particular sense of coherence is destined to evolve into a recognition that its particularity, that is, its need to see other religions as departing from the "deposit of faith" is a reflection of human limitations, not the will of God.

The significance of modern cosmology is that it uncovers a God whose creation is evolving, and that we human beings – and other sentient beings elsewhere – are an integral part of that creation. Consequently, the cosmos – God's "Book" of nature – provides a model for humanity to come to a different

sense of coherence: we can "abstract" from cosmic reality to see a coherence in the mind of God that is beyond our own capacity.

Is this capaciousness beyond us? Do our limitations serve to restrict how generously, as a practical matter, we can describe the diversity of God's creation? Do our limitations serve to restrict how capacious our understanding can be, as a matter of principle? In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus did more than recite the basic principles guiding a moral life. He called us to stretch ourselves beyond those basics. Do we need to reduce a call for stretching to simply a more demanding catechetical rule?

The image of sentient civilizations elsewhere in the cosmos provides some clarity about the nature of revelation. For the Church, this means coming to a different understanding of the role of the magisterium in relation to the deposit of faith, and to a different understanding of what underlies the deposit of faith. Other sentient civilizations (here on Earth as well as elsewhere in the cosmos) may come to their own versions of the deposit of faith, and as evolution proceeds will likely face the same need for adjustment.

Yet for the Catholic Church such an adjustment was foreshadowed by Vatican II's emphasis upon the People of God and the "sense of the faithful." The one God can still write on hearts everywhere. There is a connection between the "sense of the faithful" and "what is written on their hearts." As a community of believers, we may always be "now, but not yet," because a style of dialogue is necessary to work with what is written on the hearts of individuals to eventually come up with a "sense of the faithful."

Vatican II's "sense of the faithful" is a sleeping giant, able to provide a more universal underpinning for a deposit of faith that moves ever closer to the active and joyful presence of the living God. It is all about how we dialogue in getting there. This style of dialogue provides a mechanism that, in principle, serves as well for finding unity amid diversity across the cosmos (or between Jews and Samaritans) as within the Catholic Church. It is a much different way of proceeding than the alternative premised on Magisterial authority.

Yet it is this Magisterial authority that is on full display in the "Doctrinal Assessment" of women religious. A different alternative burns in my heart. Perhaps this state of affairs is sufficiently sorry as to move this Church that we love away from reliance upon Magisterial authority and toward a style of dialogue more in keeping with a rootedness in "what is written upon their hearts."

This, I think, is what the cosmos is saying about "the law written on their hearts."

TO BE CONTINUED.