

nova notes

NOVA Catholic Community

September 2012

Chair Notes...

Typing with one finger leaves a lot to be desired. Two weeks ago today, I fell off a bicycle onto a cement driveway, and my life took an unexpected turn when I broke my arm on my dominant side. That's the bad news. The good news is that I don't need surgery as long as I maintain the clean break by avoiding crowds and falls. This is temporary!

Now for the really good news, I told my grandkids, who were at Hilton Head with us, that I believe things happen for a reason, and maybe this was a warning to them to be careful and not get hurt. They agreed and stayed healthy all week.

These past two weeks I've done a lot of sleeping, taking pain pills, sleeping some more, thinking, and being very grateful that this is temporary. I typed a note to NOVA friends, and to other friends as I felt I just wanted people to know. Thinking back I realize that it was more than that. I wanted to feel connected. Many people have sent cards or written e-mails of encouragement. I have so much appreciated these and have the cards sitting out throughout the house where I can and do read them.

Then last evening I went back to my e-mail trying to plow through the 218 still unread messages when I found this response to my letter sent earlier to NOVA. It was from Jeanne Clarkson and after I read it, I re-read it and then called Jeanne to thank her, and to ask her if I could use her words in the Chair Notes that I had been fretting over – how and what to write about.

Jeannie wrote, "Dear Cece, This is wonderful news. When we suffer in any way, be it physical or emotional it cements us further to one another, deepening our understanding, compassion and love.

Peace my friend, Jeanne."

It's true. This is so true. We have all experienced this at some time or another. As we connect with others, empathizing, sympathizing, comforting, we become a little of their world at that time, and they, through this, are not quite so alone.

We've all heard talk of the power of prayer. I believe unequivocally in this power.

Prayer – the lifting up of our thoughts of others – connecting them with us and with a higher power – God, the Spirit, the Force, Yahweh, Allah. We are so interconnected, intertwined, and a part of the whole body – the Eucharist. I am, thanks to you and others, a little more a part of the Eucharist today.

Things happen for a reason. I'm not wishing for another fall but I am grateful for this reminder. I hope that this renews my sensitivity to the needs of others and that this awareness helps me to connect with others.

Cece Michelotti, Co-chair



Cece at liturgy on August 26

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

September Birthdays

8	Barbara Formoso
	Cathy Showalter
9	Gloria Mog
13	Adam Clarkson
	Hetty Irmer
14	Christopher Iskander
18	John Michie
23	Bob Michie
25	Nico Mele
27	Daniel Cackley
29	Ted Miller

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 recently had cataract surgery and would appreciate a card or a call

Michael Iskander, who is going through a lengthy recovery process from extensive injuries following a car accident last year

Cece Michelotti, who is recovering from an accident.

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

We look forward to the time when the Power of Love will replace the Love of Power. Then will our world know the blessings of peace."

William Gladstone

NOVA Message Line	(703) 852-7907
Chairpersons	Cece Michelotti Meg Tucillo
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	John Tarrant
Directory & Yahoo Groups Coordinator; Webmaster	Ken Chaison
Announcements Coordinator	Linda Christie
Newsletter Editor	Judy Christofferson

October Newsletter Deadline

Please Note: Publication of the October issue of the newsletter will be published in mid-October. The deadline for the October issue is **Sunday, October 7.**

~**Judy Christofferson**

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. Beginning September 23, liturgies will be held at Kenmore School (located on Carlin Springs Rd. off Arlington Blvd. starting at 10:15 a.m.

September Music Liaison Tim White

September 2 – 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Note: Last liturgy at Lacey Woods Park

Priest: John Haughey, SJ

Planner: Gloria Mog

September 9 – 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Note: See details regarding time and location below.*

Priest: Quinn Connors, O.Carm.

Planners: Rosemarie and Joe Annunziata

September 16 – 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Retreat at Shrinemont (No local NOVA liturgy)

Priest: Quinn Connors, O.Carm.

Planners: Retreat Team

September 23 – 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Note: Return to Kenmore; liturgy starts at 10:15

Priest: John Haughey, SJ

Planner: Kate Doherty

September 30 – 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Priest: Gerry Stockhausen, SJ

Planners: Kate Doherty and Marie Pinho

*Reminder

September 9, 2012

Liturgy will be at the Michelotti's

11:00 a.m.

*Special celebration of Rose and Jerry
Barrett's 60th Wedding Anniversary*

Please bring your own chairs for sitting.

October Music Liaison Gloria Mog

October 7 – 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Priest: Joe Kenna

Planners: Amy and Charlie Bailey

October 14 – 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Priest: Dan Madigan, SJ

Planner: Peggy Meyer

October 21 – 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Priest: Ray Kemp

Planners: Judy and Clyde Christofferson

October 28 – 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Priest: Gerry Stockhausen, SJ

Planner: Peace and Social Justice Team

When possible arrange any needed exchanges with other planners on dates near your scheduled liturgy. Let Gloria Mog, liturgy coordinator, know of any changes to the schedule. Thanks!



Fr. Joe at his birthday celebration on 8/26

Gunston Volunteers Needed

NOVA volunteers distribute bags of nonperishable food and 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 provide needed help. Having someone who speaks Spanish is a real plus for each of the teams. **Please help.** If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Dianne Carroll.

September Gunston Schedule

September 6
September 13
September 20
September 27

Reminder: NOVA Annual Retreat

NOVA's annual retreat will be held at Shrine Mont from **Friday evening through Sunday noon, September 14-16.**

Shrine Mont is located in Orkney Springs, VA, approximately two hours from the Washington DC metro area, just beyond the Basye/Bryce Mountain ski resort. However, heavy traffic on Friday afternoon traffic on I-66 makes it prudent to allow a little more time.

Directions: To reach Shrine Mont, follow Route 66 West to I-81 South to Mt. Jackson (Exit #273). Turn left onto Rt. 703 (East), then right (South) on US 11; follow through town, turn right on Rt. 263 and continue approximately 15 miles to Orkney Springs.

Friday dinner will be served from 5:30 till 7:00 p.m. The first session will be held on Friday after dinner. The retreat will end with lunch on Sunday at 12:30 pm.
~Kopp Michelotti

Retreat Overview

Focus: Quinn Connors, Warren Reich, Rich Rosenberg, and Peggy Becker will lead an exploration of Twelve Step spirituality. The Twelve Steps are a spiritual (though not specifically religious) program developed for alcoholics beginning in the 1930s. They have later been adapted for various other clinical addictions (for example, drugs, gambling, and compulsive eating disorders). But many people who do not have clinical addictions have found elements of the Twelve Step approach useful in their own spiritual journeys.

Content: There will be four sessions of presentation and sharing (1½ to 2 hours each), leaving plenty of free time to relax or hang out. During the sharing, mostly in smaller groups, we hope most people will be open to moving a little outside their usual comfort zones, but no one is required to share anything they don't want to. The understanding is that anything shared on the retreat is confidential, not to be repeated in any way outside the retreat.

Tentative Schedule

Friday night	5:30-7:00 p.m. – Dinner 7:15 p.m. – First Session
Saturday	8:00 a.m. – Breakfast 9:30 a.m. – Second Session 12:30 p.m. – Lunch 4:00 p.m. – Third Session 5:30 p.m. – Dinner 7:00 p.m. – Party (?)
Sunday	8:00 a.m. – Breakfast 9:00 a.m. – Fourth Session 11:00 a.m. – Eucharist led by Quinn Connors 12:30 p.m. – Lunch followed by departure

~Rich Rosenberg

Upcoming Events

You Are Invited!

SOCIAL ACTION LINKING TOGETHER (SALT)

SALT presents **Sister Simone Campbell**, Executive Director of NETWORK since 2004, who will discuss working effectively for social change. She is a religious leader, attorney and poet with extensive experience in public policy and advocacy for systemic change.

Date/Time: Saturday, October 20, 2012
9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Location: Arlington-Fairfax Elks Lodge-2188
8421 Arlington Blvd, Fairfax, VA 22031

For more information, visit the SALT website at:
<http://www.S-A-L-T.org>.

Film on Economic Hardships in Virginia

The local chapter of the [Virginia Interfaith Center](#) and the [Jewish Community Relations Council](#) invite you to a **free screening of *Blank Street***, a short documentary film about Virginians facing economic hardship, **on Wednesday, September 12, at 7 p.m. at the Northern Virginia Jewish Community Center** (8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax VA 22031).

Blank Street is a documentary film about economic struggles in Virginia, the people experiencing them, and the idea of becoming involved in your community. Sponsored by the Virginia Interfaith Center and "Half in Ten," the film follows two Virginia Commonwealth University film students as they travel the state hearing firsthand about the economic hardships many families are experiencing. From the homeless to the wealthy, no one is exempt from the possibility of hard times. The overlooked stories of our neighbors are finally told in this short film.

A Taste of Africa

Action Africa (<http://www.actionafrica.org>) invites you to attend "A Taste of Africa" Fundraiser on October 21, at 6 p.m. at Top of the Town, 1400 14th St. North, Arlington, VA 22209. Charles Mann will be the keynote speaker. Contact the office directly to avoid internet fees. Call 202-529-8350; or better still, email: actionafrica@verizon.net **Tickets requested and paid for between September 1-21 are \$100 each (a discount of \$25 per ticket).** If you have any questions, please contact Chris Egbulem.

Save The Date



A Taste Of Africa



*This fundraiser evening event
will have a key note speaker
fundraising events, entertainment
an array of African cuisine,
and much more...*

*Date: 10/21/2012
Time: 6:00pm*

*This event is being held:
At 'Top of the Town'*



To Purchase Tickets, Please Visit:
<http://atasteofafricadc.eventbrite.com>

*As our website is currently being updated, please click on the facebook logo below for current updates, events, and more information on 'A Taste of Africa'.

Mark Your Calendar

As part of NOVA's ongoing education about El Salvador, *there will be two opportunities* for you to see the film "Romero" in October. Let your hosts know which date you plan to attend.

Location: Rosenberg's home
Date: Friday, October 26
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Discussion following the viewing

OR

Location: Michelotti's home (handicap accessible)
Date: Sunday, October 28
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Discussion following the viewing

Recent NOVA Photos



The Reeder family – Planners of August 19 liturgy



Preparing to bring up Offertory gifts



Father Dan Madigan at August 19 liturgy



TEN DAYS IN EL SALVADOR

Heat. Crowds. Green. My most vivid impression of our arrival in San Salvador is a sense of being enveloped by warm, humid air, rivers of crowds, and once outside, the deep green palm trees swaying overhead. For the next ten days, I became so completely absorbed by the people, their beautiful land, and our experiences, that I forgot to worry about my family left at home and what they were eating, or doing, or forgetting to do.

We started out by getting acquainted with San Salvador and its environs, both modern and ancient sights, and a bit of shopping. We visited *Joya De Seren*, the UNESCO World Heritage Site of a Mayan village buried by a volcanic eruption around A.D. 640. Around the excavation were colorful gardens, huge trees, and a gorgeous view of a quiet volcano in the distance. We enjoyed an art museum, visiting Fernando Llorca's wonderful gallery of art and crafts, and even a Fonseca rock concert. Great fun!



A birthday celebration for one of the oldest Co-Partners on Saturday provided our first gathering with the women in *Ilobasco*. The occasion featured testimonials, singing, and cake, plus goodies in a piñata, waiting for someone with a home-run swing. The four of us spent the rest of the weekend in *Suchitoto*, descending a steep hill to a lovely, Spanish-colonial hotel in the evenings, and then climbing (breathlessly) back uphill for breakfast at the restaurant. We spent Sunday afternoon enjoying the central plaza and market. Street markets varied from small tables with fresh fruits and vegetables to long blocks of vendors, offering everything from clothing and kitchenware to hot food and plastics of every sort, particularly the small chairs we needed for the children's program.

The rest of the week flew by—Co-Partners in the morning, visiting other women's groups in the afternoons, and preparing for the next day's programs. We accompanied Co-Partners board members when they considered sites for their future building, and we listened to their thoughtful discussions. Every night after supper, we'd

hurry back to the hotel before darkness descended along with the evening rainstorm and its thunder and lightning. Archer, Kristen, and Rosa did final preparations for the women's *Diagosticos* and youth programs, and I made sure of my preparations for the children's activities.

Everyone's group was larger than expected, and that was exciting, but it also required many last-minute adjustments/multiplication of materials. My children's group started out at 18 *niños*, aged three to 11, and more joined us each day. My voice was hoarse, and my limited Spanish was inadequate, so I was grateful for a wonderful bilingual assistant. In spite of everything, the kids seemed to enjoy the variety of arts and craft projects, including self-portraits, butterfly mobiles, and fabric flowers.



Teddi with her young students



Some of the children (ninos) attending the Co-Partners program

Overall, it was a great trip. I enjoyed traveling with Archer, Kristen, and Rosa, and I was impressed by the energy and commitment of the Co-Partners in *Ilobasco*. My favorites: Food—*pupusas*, of course, and *torrijas con helado* (I think), a delicious ice cream dessert with caramel sauce and sweet fritters. Favorite place—*Suchitoto*. Most touching—hearing the stories at the *San Francisco Echeverria* memorial. Most favorite of all—spending those mornings with the *ninos*—all 23 of them! Would I go back? *Si, de seguro!*

~Teddi Ahrens

More of Teddi's photos from her volunteer work in El Salvador:



Woman working on projects at the Co-partners center



Seamstresses at work at the center



Archer, Teddi (left) and friends in El Salvador

The late Pope Paul VI (1963–78), in his address to the opening of the second session of the Second Vatican Council (1962–63) on September 29, 1963, declared: *“The Church is a mystery. It is a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God. It lies, therefore, within the very nature of the Church to be always open to new and greater exploration.”*

Frankly, this last phrase – *“always open to new and greater exploration”* – does not appear favored by current Vatican policy. The development of the New Roman Missal emphasized the unity provided by the Holy See rather than a language that engages the people. Thoughtful theologians have been criticized for not being sufficiently conventional. And, most recently, the Vatican intends to reorganize the Leadership Council of Women Religious (LCWR) because their services to nuns working with the poor and marginalized do not adequately attend to Catholic doctrine.

Yet there are and continue to be hopeful signs. The recent “Nuns on the Bus” tour was in solidarity with the U.S. bishops in calling for a Congressional budget that provides for citizens who are in need. This Gospel engagement of the structures and institutions of society at large follows through on the teaching of Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (literally, “new things”) that these structures and institutions are human creations and can be changed to better serve the ends of justice.

And the marvel of God’s creation is front page news with evidence of the discovery of the Higgs Boson, another kind of “new thing,” confirming human capacity to comprehend a universe whose mysteries continue to unfold.

What is so difficult about change? Would we truly be alive without some sense of mystery going forward? Admittedly, mystery has multiple faces. It is welcome, even anticipated with joy, if past experience provides a sense of competence and sureness of foot. It is less welcome if change threatens to unravel what has been sewn together over time. Or perhaps it is welcome precisely because what has been sewn together is a rag and needs to be unraveled and sewn again. Point of view and attitude make a difference.

In every age this sense of mystery going forward retains its multiple faces. Those in charge of the institutional Church seldom view their handiwork as

a rag and often are more concerned – like the servant who buried the talents given by the master – with preserving what has been sewn already. But the Church is not without its prophets, and the prophets speak hopefully, as did Pope Paul VI in his opening address to the second session of Vatican II, about a Church whose nature is openness to “new and greater exploration.”

As Richard McBrien describes it:

“To view the Church as a mystery, or sacrament, is to see it not simply as a religious community, institution, or movement (although it is all of these and more), but as the corporate, communal presence of the triune God in the world. The Church is a mystery, or sacrament, because the triune God is present and redemptively active in it on humankind’s and the world’s spiritual and material behalf.”¹

McBrien doesn’t suggest that “the world” is much bigger than “humankind.” But I think our perspective on the triune God would benefit from an explicit recognition of the likelihood that God’s children include other sentient beings throughout the cosmos. The Church cannot hope to be truly “catholic” without being humbled by the vastness of God’s creation.

Such contemplation of the small part that humankind plays in the universe may seem an irrelevant distraction. Yet it leads to a fresh look at who the People of God are, and to a more profound if more humble understanding of catholicity. The Church needs a *metanoia* that makes it more catholic than the Pope.

Change in perspective: the Church

The Higgs Boson is an apt place to begin this venture. One of our celebrants used a pun at the beginning of liturgy to explain the significance of this newly verified particle: “We could not have mass without it.” The ability of human consciousness to comprehend such matters is, as Einstein famously noted, incomprehensible.

The institutional Church has been on its own journey toward comprehension, and has not been as adventurous in recent decades as those who have pursued what science has to offer. But the Church has made some progress, most notably by concluding its most famous conflict with science, the episode with Galileo that goes back to the early 17th Century.

It has been nearly twenty years since Pope John Paul II's speech before the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at the conclusion of a thirteen year long review – begun in 1979 – of the “celebrated and controversial ‘Galileo case’.”² The speech is a hidden treasure of creative openness to what faith and reason can accomplish together.

We live in an age when change has become part of the public consciousness. We expect change. Substantial change is within the living memory of all but the very young. And these changes are not limited to technology. Vatican II ushered in a new era for a Church struggling to be the presence of Christ in the modern world. Yet time and again science has provided better models for this struggle than faith.

Change in perspective: Physics

Toward the end of the 19th century the scientific community believed it was on the verge of a complete understanding of how the physical world worked. Newton had explained motion on earth and in the heavens, and Maxwell had explained electricity, magnetism and light. Space and time provided a stable framework for the theories of both Newton and Maxwell, and some thought that the role of physicists in the 20th century would be to work out the remaining details.

There were some bothersome hints that all was not well with this view of reality. It had been assumed that light could not travel through empty space, and therefore space must be filled with a “luminiferous ether.” An experiment designed to confirm existence of the ether – the 19th century equivalent of the Higgs Boson – came up null. No one anticipated how fundamental the problem was, and even the physics community was slow to accept the new reality: there was something peculiar about space and time.

Einstein lived to see acceptance of this new vision of the relationship between space and time. Galileo had not been so fortunate. It took the better part of four hundred years for the institutional Church to formally recognize that Galileo's vision was worthy of respect rather than condemnation. The

Church has its own absolutes, and its own pace of change.

The Vatican and the Nuns

So where are we at this point in time? A resolution may be closer than we think. Within the last few months the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) concluded its summer meeting, resolving to “maintain the integrity of its mission” as it responds to the *Doctrinal Assessment* issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). The CDF has a different priority: to bring the LCWR on board, so that they teach from the same agenda as the bishops.

The term “dialogue” is used by both the LCWR and the CDF, but in different senses. And both positions have common roots in Vatican II, and in particular in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. To its credit, the institutional Church has taken seriously what *Gaudium et Spes* said about actively engaging the modern world. The framework for that engagement has been doctrinal, but while the particular form of engagement undertaken by the bishops may be questioned it is clearly an approach toward engaging the modern world.

For their part, the sisters have taken a different approach. Their work is in the trenches, as it were, tending to the marginalized. The pain and suffering that they deal with every day is palpable. Arguably, the sisters model Jesus Christ more closely than an approach focused on doctrine. For the sisters, the notion of doctrine comes down to the summary famously repeated by Jesus at the beginning of the Good Samaritan Story: love of God and neighbor is “all the law and the prophets.”

How can the CDF and the LCWR have a dialogue? They are not on the same page. Cardinal Lavada was concerned that any dialogue would be “the dialogue of the deaf.” By that he meant that for the last four years the Vatican has been hinting at the changes that were necessary, and LCWR was turning a deaf ear. For their part, the sisters have a mission that calls for something other than an emphasis on the points of doctrine that are of prominent concern to the hierarchy.

A Common Heritage

While they are not on the same page, they are under the same umbrella: Catholic Social Teaching. It all goes back to Leo XIII and his 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. The point of *Rerum Novarum* was to challenge the existing social structures and

institutions affecting labor, asserting that these structures were not sanctioned by God but were made by human beings and could be changed by human beings to better serve the ends of justice.

In the last hundred or more years that same principle has been applied to other social structures and institutions – except the institutional Church itself. Is the institutional Church outside the basic principle of Catholic Social Teaching? The conflict between the CDF and the LCWR exemplifies the inconsistency implied by this question.

But change remains hard. It requires *metanoia*. Jesus understood this when he said “The reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe the Good News.” What we commonly translate as “reform” is *metanoia* in the original Greek, so that a better translation might be, “Turn your perspective around and believe in this Good News, that the reign of God is at hand!”

Change is hard in both science and religion

Yet the real joy of this recognition continues to require a *metanoia*, a change in outlook that can prove stubbornly resistant. One example of this kind of wrenching change in perspective is the transition – beginning about a hundred years ago – concerning the significance of space and time. It had long been thought that space and time were fixed, and that real objects were simply situated in time and space. Time and space themselves were given; they were absolute.

It is not entirely logical, but many human beings find comfort in a reliable frame of reference, and an absolute space and time serve that purpose. Consequently, when Einstein proclaimed that space and time were not absolute many people were concerned that society would drift into *relativism*. It was unfortunate that the title of his theory – the General Theory of Relativity – used the term “relativity,” which could be construed as a sanction for a self-indulgent focus oblivious to concupiscence.

This annoyed Einstein, because the heart of his theory was a very simple assumption: *the laws of physics are the same everywhere*. Surely there would be no concerns about *relativism* if the basic principle is that *the laws of God are the same everywhere*. Unfortunately, the public discourse had picked up on the word “relativity” in “General Theory of Relativity” and the debate turned from physics to moral philosophy and religion. In the early 1920s Einstein tried to rename his theory of relativity, and call it the “Theory of Invariants.” This was a more accurate description of his theory, because his field

equations retained the same form (i.e. they were *invariant*) under transformation from one frame of reference to another. While observers in different frames of reference might see the same event quite differently, the mathematical description of each perspective on the same event would have the same form.

Looking back on history, one wonders what all the fuss was about. True, there may have been people who saw the “new relativistic physics” as a model for rising up against old systems of moral constraints. But that had nothing to do with physics. Even for those who supported existing systems of moral constraints and wanted to see parallel constraints in physics, Einstein simply shifted from one set of constraints to another.

A subtle difference

The shift from absolute space and time to principles that were the same in all frames of reference had an unexpected consequence. In Einstein’s universe there is no preferred frame of reference. What ties different frames of reference together is not a common relationship to some preferred frame of reference but rather the *invariance* of the laws of physics, which apply equally to all frames of reference.

If this model is applied metaphorically to the Church, then the changes of Vatican II fit the model, as shown in the table on the next page. Metaphors have their limits, of course. But this one seems useful, especially if one takes into account a historical pattern as common to physics as to the Church: resistance to change.

Consider, for example, Einstein’s friend and colleague Hendrik Lorentz. Lorentz was very attached to the old theory of the “luminiferous ether,” and developed a formula that would preserve the ether hypothesis, notwithstanding the negative test results. If the ether still exists, Lorentz reasoned, the test results would be negative if objects moving through the ether contracted in accordance with his formula.

Einstein derived the same formula, but had a different interpretation. Einstein surmised (correctly, as it turns out) that the Lorentz transformation was a matter of perspective, while Lorentz persisted in believing that the ether was real and that physical objects actually contracted. It took decades for the entire physics community to come to the same *metanoia*, and adopt Einstein’s new perspective.

Perhaps we are seeing a similar resistance in Vatican retrenchment after Vatican II. Some good and well meaning folks are as convinced as Lorentz of the truth of the old point of view. For Lorentz, the old point of view was the existence of a preferred frame of reference and the ether. For conservatives in the Church, the old point of view is that Christ's revelation is communicated through the teaching authority centered in the Vatican. They do not yet see that what is *invariant* is not the perspective of a teaching authority in continuity with the historical Jesus but rather "that which is written on the human heart." It is this *invariance* – not a preferred frame of reference centered on Jesus Christ here on Earth – that is the foundation for a truly capacious "catholicity".

Process of discernment

From this new perspective the challenge for each of us and for the larger community is discernment: what is it that is "written on our hearts" and how do we come to know it? Life presents us with choices that call to mind an inner voice which, if cultivated, becomes a mature conscience. Alternatives *resonate* differently with this inner voice, and we find ourselves free to choose the alternative that *resonates more* or the alternative that *resonates less*. The Church has always counseled personal responsibility for properly informing such choices, and the priority to be given to conscience.

So what is different about a perspective that looks first to "what is written on our hearts"? Is the Church not already there because of the priority given to conscience? In a sense, there is no difference. To return to the metaphor, Einstein and Lorentz came to the same formula – indeed, it is now called the "Einstein-Lorentz transformation" – and each gave it a different meaning. But Einstein's

meaning gave us access to a fresh, productive and resilient understanding of the cosmos.

Similarly, if the institutional Church – the teaching authority of the Church – interpreted its role differently the term "Catholic" would refer to a truly "catholic" understanding of who the People of God are. The mechanism for this transition is disarmingly simple: **give priority to the integrity of the faith journey**. Instead of preaching doctrine as if *doctrine* were primary, support the integrity of the journey as if *conscience* were primary.

This *metanoia* is yet to come to the institutional arm of the Roman Catholic Church. Sadly, the teaching authority since Vatican II has placed an even greater emphasis upon doctrine, and upon the primacy of the Vatican in using a doctrinal yardstick in maintaining the identity of the Catholic Church.

Catholicity is much bigger than that. If the integrity of the journey is paramount, then all God's children fit under the same tent, whether here on Earth or on a distant planet elsewhere in the cosmos. This is an enormously liberating recognition, once it is understood that "what is written on our hearts" provides a rock every bit as solid as the chair of

Peter. It is the same rock, the same Spirit, in each of us, across the entire cosmos. Cultivate that rock in each of us and the unity for which Christ prayed emerges. And it emerges more faithfully than by doctrinal imposition.

And we needn't wait to find sentient beings elsewhere, for there are already here on Earth other communities – Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, to say nothing of other Christians – who can be better loved by supporting the integrity of their journeys. The Good Samaritan Story – about whether Jews and

Physics	Church
Old: there is a preferred frame of reference (represented by the "ether")	Old: the preferred frame of reference is the Vatican's view of revelation; the measure of faith is conformity to Vatican teachings which express this preferred frame of reference
	Vatican II: shift toward a "People of God" vision of the Church; recognition that the Spirit moves through a <i>sensus fidelium</i> of the whole people of God
New: there is no preferred frame of reference; each frame of reference is subject to the same laws of physics	New: each frame of reference is grounded by "the law written on their hearts by a loving God"
	Beyond Vatican II: the primary focus is the integrity of the journey of faith (i.e. the primacy of conscience); the role of the community (and the Vatican) is to support the integrity of this journey

Samaritans can be neighbors – is a paradigm whose scope is truly universal.

A Vatican centered catholicity is strikingly similar to an Earth centered cosmos. In the end, freedom suffers as much for us as for Galileo. And if God is sharing creation with beings able to image God, surely independence and love are both part of the image. There is perhaps a third component of the image that contributes by its omission to the drift we see in the Church. Is not God also sharing with us a comprehension of existence? Einstein mused that such comprehension was incomprehensible, but he recognized that it was a reality nonetheless. A perspective – a *metanoia* – which gives primacy to the integrity of the journey meshes nicely with the “now, but not yet” character of the reign of God.

Nuns leading the way: an alignment of stars

Developments may be coming to a head, sooner than anyone might have thought. Consider the sisters. Their primary goal for their dialogue with the bishops is **preserving the integrity of their mission**. The nuns have provided the People of God with an alignment of the stars that is truly extraordinary. Their focus – their mission, the one whose integrity they are giving first priority – is on those who are in pain and suffering on the margins of society. Importantly, this mission includes those who are in pain and suffering because they are on the doctrinal margins of the institutional Church. It is the emphasis by the Vatican – the sisters would say overemphasis – on doctrinal conformity that is compromising the mission of the Church as a whole, not simply the mission of the nuns.

Integrity. That is the word the nuns have placed first. Not doctrine, but integrity. Each of us is on journey. To borrow the sentiment expressed by John F. Kennedy in Berlin, *I am a nun*. The sisters have crystallized in a very public way – in a circumstance they did not initiate – a struggle that many face on their own journey toward this loving God. There is a remarkable confluence of meanings here. The very work that is their mission – being the hands and feet of Christ to those on the margins – focuses attention on the journey of those who are marginalized, including those who are marginalized by the teachings of the Church.

Is there a better way? Is the Spirit calling the Church to a better way? Blessedly, this is a question that the present alignment will hold to our collective

attention long enough so that the People of God may turn the bark of Peter toward a better way. And the nuns have their finger on the pulse of our humanity. The CDF focus on doctrine – Church teaching – places the nuns on the same margin as those they have been serving. And their predicament *resonates* with many who struggle with Church teachings on their own journeys, and who have supported the nuns on that account. The reality of that support does not go unnoticed, certainly among the nuns who rightfully appreciate their solidarity with those on the margins, but also with bishops who see the handwriting on the wall.

The Spirit will not be denied. To use a metaphor from physics, the heat of this alignment will generate the light of something new. What is new is priority to *the integrity of the mission*. In their deliberations in early August 2012 the nuns stood upon this priority, and it is a beacon for the larger Church. It is as if a city on the hill has become a shining star. It all fits, remarkably. *Metanoia!* The unity for which Christ prayed is within the grasp of these awkward and failed human hands. ***Ironically, but poetically, this unity comes when we place the integrity of the journey in first priority, ahead of doctrine.***

The opportunity for the People of God because of this extraordinary alignment is a marvel to behold. You will remember where you were when this alignment bears fruit – as it surely will. Mark the day: the institutional Church, in response to this alignment, will become as capacious in its love as Jesus Christ. A fitting turn of events, surely, a consummation devoutly to be wished.

We know in our hearts – in what has been written on each of our hearts by the loving God of all – that the margins of catholicity are too often of our own making. We are graced by a loving God who opens a wide embrace for all who journey with integrity toward what is written on the heart.

TO BE CONTINUED.

¹ McBrien, Richard P. (2008-08-19). *The Church* (p. 354). Harper Collins, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

² “Faith can never conflict with reason,” address by Pope John Paul II before the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on October 31, 1992, on the occasion of the Academy’s presentation to the Pope of the conclusions of their thirteen year study of the case of Galileo Galilei. English translation as it appeared in *L’Osservatore Romano* N. 44 (1264) - 4 November 1992.