



nova notes

Newsletter of the NOVA Community November, 2006

Chair Notes

*Thankfulness and prayer belong together.
Thanksgiving is the deep inward certainty
which moves us with reverent and loving awe
to turn all our strength to the work which God
stirs us,
giving thanks and praise from the depths of our
hearts.*

~ **Julian of Norwich**

November brings us to our national celebration of Thanksgiving. Although we live today in a very troubled time by many measures, we also have so very much for which to be thankful!

- We celebrate the Eucharist each Sunday in a Spirit-filled community.
- We are blessed with the active participation of our Padre Cadre whose gifted members both inspire and challenge us each week.
- We are blessed by the exuberance and vitality of the young adults, youth, and children of the Nova Community.
- We are blessed with the wisdom of the elders and founders of Nova.
- We are graced with many community members who lead us to service: preparing and serving meals at Christ House, participating in fund raising events to support the search for cures to serious medical conditions, supporting children in orphanages in Bolivia, providing hope and the opportunity for an education for young people in Uganda, providing

sources of clean water in villages in Nicaragua and Uganda, gathering and distributing much needed food in our neighborhoods, calling us to find the means to be peacemakers in the world, supporting education and empowerment for women and girls in Latin America and East Africa and children in Arlington, staffing an emergency shelter, providing health care supplies to villages in Nigeria.

- We are blessed with the multitude of gifts that our members willingly share: the gifts of music and song, liturgical guidance, spiritual exploration, environmental awareness, compassionate support and the ministry of presence, a weekend celebration of God's Playground, communication through our website and monthly newsletter, coordination of our facilities and agapes.

From the depths of our hearts, we have so very much to be thankful for..... and for the work that we are called yet to do.

Namaste,

~Nancy



NOVA Catholic Community
<http://nova.novacommunity.org>

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The NOVA Catholic Community Invites You To Celebrate The Eucharistic Liturgy With Us Every Sunday In Arlington, Virginia.

Note: Our Liturgy is usually celebrated at Kenmore Middle School, Arlington Blvd. and Carlin Springs Rd, Arlington, VA. Beginning Memorial Day Weekend up to our Fall Retreat weekend, we celebrate at Lacey Woods Park, George Mason Drive near Washington Blvd, unless otherwise noted.

[Lacey Woods]
 Liturgies begin at 9:30 am—Gather at 9:15 am
 [Lacey Woods]

[Kenmore]
 Liturgy begins at 10:15 am—Gather at 10:00 am
 [Kenmore]

**Newsletter Deadline is
 Sunday, November 26....**

November Birthdays, etc.

- 3 Meg Brady
Ken Chaison
- 4 Tom Marron
- 5 Emma Violand-Sanchez
- 6 Marie Schum-Brady
- 7 Joe Houck
- 8 Rosemarie Annunziata
- 8 Phyllis Houck
- 9 Janet Michelotti
- 11 Carmela Ormanda
- 12 George Lowrey
- 17 Jennifer Powell
- 18 Dan Gatti
- 19 Peter Mandaville
Michele Whalen-Peck
- 21 Anna Formoso
- 23 Brittany Swanberg
- 25 Bernie Byrne
- 26 Lowery Wedding Anniversary (1976)♥♥
- 27 Mary Gillmarten
Natalia Mercado-Violand
Mike Timpane
- 29 Joanna Chase
Julie Hainer-Violand
Rich Rosenberg
- 30 Arthur Rosenberg

Liturgies

NOVEMBER MUSIC LIAISON ...
Linda Rosenberg

NOVEMBER MUSIC LIAISON ...
Linda Rosenberg

November 1 -- All Saints Day

Readings (not at Kenmore)

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

Psalm: 24:1-6

1 John 3:1-3

Matthew 5:1-12



December 3 -- 1st Sunday of Advent

Jim Scullion, OFM -- Linda Rosenberg

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Psalm 25:4-5, 8-10, 14

1st Thessalonians 3:12--4:2

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

November 5 -- 31st Sunday/Ordinary Time

Francis DiSpigno, OFM -- Ormando Kanesh

Deuteronomy 6:2-6

Psalm 18:2-4, 47, 57

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 12:28-34

December 10 -- 2nd Sunday of Advent

Bill Callahan -- John Tarrant & Peggy Becker

Baruch 5:1-9

Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Luke 3:1-6

November 12 -- 32nd Sunday/Ordinary Time

Bill Callahan -- Nancy & John Veldhuis

1 Kings 17:10-16

Psalm 146:7-10

Hebrews 9:24-28

Mark 12:38-44 or 12:41-44

December 17 -- 3rd Sunday of Advent

TBA -- Ken Chaison

Zephaniah 3:14-18

Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-6

Philippians 4:4-7

Luke 3:10-18

November 19 -- 33rd Sunday/Ordinary Time

Jim Scullion, OFM -- Walt Landry

Daniel 12:1-3

Psalm 16:5, 8-11

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Mark 13:24-32

December 24 -- Vigil Mass for Christmas

TBA -- Cackleys

Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29

Acts 13:16-17, 22-25

Matthew 1:1-25

November 26 -- Christ the King

Joe Nangle, OFM -- Lowreys

Daniel 7:13-14

Psalm 93:1, 1-2, 5

Revelation 1:5-8

John 18:33-37

December 31 -- The Holy Family

No Liturgy at Kenmore

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Psalm 128:1-5

Colossians 3:12-21

Luke 2:41-52

NOVA members are invited to join the PAX community at 8:45 am at St. Luke Orthodox Church hall, 6801 Georgetown Pike, McLean Va.

Liturgy Report and Tip(s) . . .

The Liturgy Lottery is almost over – many thanks to Archer and all of you who have so generously picked up almost all the Sundays that need planning. We have 4 more to “sell”. If you have not yet selected a Sunday, please consider taking one of these, it is such a rich experience to have everyone in the community involved in liturgy planning at least once or twice a year. Archer is leaving town, so let Gloria know if you can plan the liturgy for one or more of these dates: Feb. 21 – Ash Wed.

April 1 – Palm Sun.

August 19

November 4

The annual Liturgy Meeting was held last month. There was a general feeling that the liturgies were well done: the themes and homilies are meaningful and inspirational; the music is wonderful and getting better all the time; the altar table and screen provide a beautiful back-drop. The following areas of “challenge” and the need for more focus were discussed —

The liturgy is often too long contributing to people coming late and leaving early, unhappy children (and many adults) and a sense of fatigue with the long mornings’ activity. The following suggestions were made to help with this:

- * Continue the Peace Candle ritual but simplify it to a simple reading of the names and a request for prayers ending with the “All we are saying . . .” chant. Planners are asked to choose someone to get the names from the Internet, light the candle and read them at the beginning of liturgy.
- * Always start on time and return to our original decision to end the dialogue or any post-homily activity by 11 a.m. It is the planner’s responsibility to signal the priest at 11:00 that it is time to start the Prayers of the Faithful.
- * Encourage the community to do less talk-

ing and more listening after the homily and to keep shared comments brief and relevant to the theme, readings, and homily. Some planners may choose to build in moments of silence, a musical interlude, or simply remind the community to be mindful of the value of silence and brief sharings.

The challenge of creating “sacred space” in the rather cavernous Kenmore Cafeteria was discussed. The following suggestions were made:

- * Bring the rolling gray wall in closer to create more of a feeling of connection.
- * Attempt to come up with a template for altar, chairs and Music Group set-up that would maximize our ability to see and hear one another.
- * Make a clear distinction between liturgical space and the outside business and busyness of the community. Participants mentioned words like respect, mindfulness, a sense of the Holy, awareness of God’s presence – as descriptors of what they would like to achieve.

Finally, the “straggle effect” of having 2/3 of the community come in late each Sunday was repeatedly mentioned as a distraction and deterrent to creating a communal experience with a clear beginning, middle and end. It was felt that if we kept the liturgy to about 1 1/4 hours and made a special plea once more for people to arrive on time, that might begin to address this issue.

Further feedback on these and other liturgical issues is welcome on email or at the General Meeting on November 4th.

~Gloria Mog

Social Justice Report 2006. . .

Project	Monthly Amount	Sponsor
Action Africa Rev.Chris Egbulem project/health care in seven villages in Nigeria	250	Joe Annunziata/Marie Keeefe
Adopt A Family Support of Daud and family, tutoring of daughters, emergency assistance	100	Tim White, John Mausert-Mooney, Cece Michelotti, Carolyn Miller, Cathy Golschmidt
Amanecer Orphanage-Salomon Klein http://www.amanecer-bolivia.org/amanecer.htm Orphanage in Cochabamba Bolivia	175	Emma Violand-Sanchez
(AFAC) Arlington Food Assistance Center Distributes food free to people referred by qualified agencies	100	Dianne Carroll
(ASPAN) Arlington Street People's Assistance Network http://www.a-span.org Offers support, emergency shelter, assistance in employment and housing	100	Meg Tuccillo
Barrios Unidos Organization working with teens, Culmore area, Falls Church, VA	75	Meg Tuccillo
Bethany House Housing for homeless and abused women (Dean Houck Memorial)	75	Anne Houck
Center for Concern http://www.coc.org Non-governmental Organization (NGO) working for greater global justice	75	Rev. Jim Hug
Co-partners of Campesinas Supports women's education and empowerment in Latin Am.	75	Archer Heinzen
Escuela Bolivia Courses in English, Spanish and Computers in Arlington	100	Emma Violand-Sanchez
Greenwell Foundation Therapeutic and recreational horseback riding for people with and without disabilities	100	John Tarrant
Handicapped Encounter Christ (HEC) Retreats for physically disabled and able-bodied	75	Bill Meyer
Helping Others Pursue Education (HOPE) Provides opportunities to needy students in Arlington	75	Emma Violand-Sanchez Cece Michelotti
Holy Cross Abbey http://www.holycrossabbeybrryville.org/ Trappist monastery in Berryville, VA	25	Marie Pinho, Gen/Mike Timpane
Kenmore Project Scholarships for summer school attendance are provided for Kenmore students.	75	Emma Violand-Sanchez
New Community Church, Washington, DC http://www.newcommunitychurchdc.org/index.html DVD available to view Supports Jim Dickerson and the MANNA projects,	50	Jim Weber
Nonviolent Peaceforce Project http://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/ DVD available to view Facilitate the creation of a trained, international civilian nonviolent peaceforce, then sent to areas of conflict.	200	Nick Mele
Classroom Project in Uganda Building student dormitories and classrooms for students at CBU in Uganda	150	John & Nancy Veldhuis
Nova Co-op	400	Eric Carroll

(Continued on page 6)

Social Justice Report 2006 (cont'd) . . .

(Continued from page 5)

Provides fresh food to AFAC, 3 shelters and 4 families

Prison Ministry of Rev. Valerie Dixon	75	Dianne Carroll
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Support of her ministry in the women's prison in Connecticut

Rev. Peter Henriot, S.J.	75	Rev. Peter Henriot
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www.jctr.org.zm NOVA member working in Zambia

Voice of the Faithful	25	Marie Pinho/Bernie Byrne
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<http://www.votf-NOVA.com>
To support those who have been abused, to support priests of integrity, and to shape structural change within Church

Women's Ordination Fund	50	Nancy Veldhuis
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<http://www.womensordination.org/>

The Women's Ordination Conference is a US based Catholic organization working locally and nationally in collaboration with the worldwide movement for women's ordination.

Bread for the World	\$150/year	Peggy Meyer
Arlington Interfaith	\$100/year	Cece Michellotti
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy	\$250/year	Peggy Meyer

ASPAN Overnight Winter Shelter

Meg Tuccillo

Volunteers staff the emergency shelter in Arlington (courthouse area) in 2 shifts, evening and overnight.

Centro Villa Candelaria

Dianne Carroll

A school in Cochabamba, Bolivia educating and supporting the child and family.

A group of 34 Nova members participate in this project. Each person contributes \$10/month for 1 child.

The parents of the children contribute to the school a small amount and some cannot pay at all and are on scholarship

Christ House

http://www.cdda.net/christ_house.html

Kopp Michelotti George Lowery(emeritus)

Making and serving the evening meal to those who are hungry in Alexandria, a Catholic Charities facility.

Gunston food distribution

Dianne Carroll

Nova volunteers pick up perishable food at the AFAC warehouse on Nelson Street in South Arlington and take it to Gunston Middle School. They carry it in to the recreation center and distribute to the families. About 20 Nova people volunteer with this project.

St Clement's Emergency Shelter

Dianne Carroll

This overflow shelter is housed in the sanctuary at St. Clement's Episcopal Church in Alexandria. The guests, homeless men that otherwise would have to sleep outdoors, are prescreened at Carpenter's Shelter and arrive after their evening meal. Volunteers work a 7-7 shift in the sanctuary of the church. January 1-March 15 Nova sends volunteers 6 nights during that time

Norah's tuition Jan and June

Several Nova women are paying tuition for Norah in Uganda

This is an abbreviated description of each project. You can obtain a more detailed description if you'd like to have one.

Important Dates & Activities

You are invited to a

WomenCircles Retreat Day with

Gloria J. Mog, LCSW & Connie Ridgway, LCSW

Finding Your Voice

Saturday, November 4th 9:15 am- 4:00 pm

Potomac Overlook Regional Park

2845 N. Marcey Rd. Arlington, VA 22207

Immerse yourself in a beautiful setting. Let your voice be heard and affirmed by a circle of supportive women. Please join us for a day of reflection and personal experiences designed to encourage the expression of your most authentic soul-self. Through song, chant, meditation, movement and sharing our stories, we will allow our full voices to speak with inner confidence and renewed energy. Invite a friend or come on your own and help us to inspire one another in the journey to wholeness.

Fee: \$95 (early bird) Bring something to share for a pot-luck lunch. Drinks provided

Renewal Day Registration Form

Name _____

Street Address _____ City/Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work _____ Email: _____

___ Enclosed is \$95 (registered by 10/16/06) ___ \$120 (after 10/16)

___ I cannot attend this Retreat Day but put me on your mailing list for future WomenCircles events.

Make checks out to **Gloria Mog** and mail with form to: 6073 Arlington Blvd. Falls Church, VA 22044

Directions to Potomac Overlook Regional Park – 2845 N. Marcey Rd. Arlington

From the South: Take 95/395 North or I-66 East to Glebe Road North Exit. Follow Glebe Rd. for several miles to Lee Highway. Turn right on Lee Hwy. Go to third stoplight and take a left on Military Road. Follow Military Rd. (bear left after 1st stoplight) to the second stoplight and take a right on Marcey Rd. You will see signs for Potomac Overlook before and at this turn. Go to the end of Marcey Rd. (past the tennis courts) to the Potomac Overlook parking lot. It is a short walk to where we are meeting at the Nature Center down the paved path.

From Alexandria and DC (via Key, Roosevelt, Memorial Bridges): Take the George Washington Parkway North towards Arlington to the Spout Run Exit (left hand exit). After the Spout Run Exit ramp, take the first right onto Lorcum Lane. You will go over a small hill and at the bottom of the hill turn right onto Nellie Custis Drive (name of the road will change to Military Rd.). Go to the first stoplight and turn right onto Marcey Rd. Then follow directions as above. For more details go to www.potomacoverlook.org

Important Dates & Activities

NOVA General Meeting

- Date:** November 4, 2006
- Place:** Goodwin House, East, (Sonja and Gil's)
Ann Lee Room
- Time:** 6 PM
- Potluck:** If your last name begins with:
A-M please bring salads
N-Z please bring desserts

The "chairs" will supply the pizza. Please bring your favorite beverage.

FOOD DRIVE

Nova will have a food drive during the month of November to help fill the pantry at Sullivan House (transitional shelter for families in Arlington). Bring non-perishable items each Sunday in November

A list of especially needed items will be distributed at the liturgy on October 29th.

ALL SOULS DAY

.We are called to "*Live + Jesus*" until that time when we are called to that garden. Our hearts are not troubled for we remember the words of Francis de Sales who exhorted us to "let God gather to Himself whatever He has planted for He takes nothing out of season."

Today we celebrate and we remember

Location: St. Charles Church - Benedict Hall
3304 N. Washington Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22201
703.527.5500 x115

Date: 11/5/2006 from 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Hosted By: Virginia Interfaith Center
Helen O'Beirne, Communications Coordinator
helen@virginiainterfaithcenter.org
804.643.2474

RSVP by: November 2, 2006 at 12:00 am

NoVa Interfaith Dialogue

Amidst the current political, social, and spiritual climate, it is imperative that faithful advocates convene and share thoughts and concerns about how best to unite faith communities to improve the state of our commonwealth. The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy is proud to present:

**Muslim, Jewish and Christian Traditions:
Building Interfaith Understanding
Through Community Involvement**

Our three panelists will share from their various theological backgrounds and speak of their shared values, especially in the areas of concern for the poor and vulnerable. They will focus on the positive consequences for collaboration in the areas of domestic and local social concerns, especially in the areas of local advocacy, e.g. homeless and affordable housing.

Panelists Include:

- **Debra Gold Linick**, Assistant Director for Northern Virginia, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington
- **M. Imad Damaj, Ph.D.**, President & Social Programs Coordinator of the Virginia Muslim Coalition for Public Affairs

Rev. Gerry Creedon, Pastor, St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church and Chair of the Peace & Justice Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington

All three panelists represent their faith traditions on the Board of the Virginia Interfaith Center and work with staff and grassroots to build a more just and compassionate Commonwealth by advocating for responsible public policy at the Virginia General Assembly.

Sunday, November 5 at 7pm

St. Charles Church – Benedict Hall

Refreshments provided - All Are Welcome

St. Charles Catholic Church, 3304 N. Washington Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201

Questions? Call Michelle Miller, 703-527-5500 x115,
adultfaith@stcharleschurch.org

Learn. Pray. Act. The Common Wealth Depends On Us.

Important Dates & Activities

Sunday, November 12, 2006 — 2 pm Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown.

The DC Metro Affiliates of VOTF are proud to announce that Joe Cultrera, filmmaker of the award-winning documentary, "Hand of God" has agreed to come to the DC area to show his film in a private screening.

"With intellect, humor and a deep sense of betrayal," Joe examines his brother Paul's sexual abuse by Father Joseph Birmingham and the culture of "corporate faith" that allowed similar abuses to continue for decades.

"Hand of God" has had a number of screenings at film festivals across the country and recently won the Best Documentary at the Kansas International Film Festival. It was also shown at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

We are very excited to have the opportunity to have Joe with us who has also agreed to have a question and answer session and discuss the film following its showing.

We hope you can join us and help us spread the word. More information will follow as we get closer to the screening.

To learn more about VOTF Northern Virginia, you can also access our website at <http://votf-nova.com/>.

[From Joe Cultrera... (before first opening in Massachusetts) <snip>

One of the many things that make this film different than other media treatments of this issue is that it is told brother to brother, from the inside. The film details our Catholic upbringing; his abuse; what it was like for him to spend 30 years in silence; how he eventually came to action and how his own investigation unraveled various obstructions and lies by the Boston hierarchy (years before this material hit the headlines). It is also constructed in a rather non-traditional documentary style. Hand of God has screened at film festivals throughout the USA – from Montana to Florida.

We won the best documentary award at our last two stops (Ashland and Tupelo) and were runner-up for awards at the two before that (Florida FF and Cinequest). The screenings in Salem and Boston will be our first in the Northeast. At our previous stops Catholics and non-Catholics have connected with the film on many levels. Victims of abuse (not just clergy abuse) have been moved and affected. Ultimately it is a film about family, community and the triumph of individual spirits. <snip>]

Sunday November 19, 2006 Annual Social Justice Meeting at the home of Meg Tuccillo 2532 N. Ridgeview Rd. Arlington, VA 22207

Potluck from 5:00pm – 6:00pm Meeting starts at 6:00pm

This year's meeting will focus on:

- Are we meeting our commitments—both financial and “volunteers”?
- Should we adopt/institute/invent/initiate/organize/join in a project for the community to participate in together? (If so, how often, how long, how many volunteers, coordination, etc????)
- Project sponsors will send yearly update so that they can be in a handout at the meeting. Questions about present commitments will be entertained. Cancellations of projects recommended by the sponsor.

Everyone in the community is encouraged and invited to attend this meeting!

Directions to Meg's

From Lee Highway going east: Turn left on Lorcom Lane, follow to Military and turn left at the light/church, turn next right (Nellie Custis) and immediate left at N Ridgeview Rd. (second house on the left)

From Rt. 66 Take the US-29/Lee hwy EXIT 72- toward Spout Run Pkwy turn left onto Lee hwy/us-29 Turn RIGHT onto Military. (gas station on Corner) Military ends at Nellie Custis, turn right and immediate left on Ridgeview.

Meetings — Reports, Summaries...

Jesus' Teaching on Marriage: A Terrible Beauty Reflections on the Readings from the 27th Sunday of Ordinary Time (Genesis 2:18-25 and Mark 10:2-16) by John Mooney

These are very tough readings. Frankly, after our first review of them, we considered changing the readings, skipping the Eucharist, or leaving town. But, as Christians, we cannot dodge the tough parts of Scripture.

The first and perhaps most obvious difficulty is the prohibition of divorce and remarriage after divorce. Many of us adults who attend NOVA on a regular basis are divorced or married to someone who is divorced—and thus in apparent violation of Jesus's teaching against divorce in Mark.

But a closer look reveals a second and probably greater difficulty. The readings from Genesis and Mark portray a positive ideal of marriage so unattainable that it seems to condemn us more than does the prohibition of divorce. They call us to a beautiful nakedness—of body and spirit—toward each other; a union so close that husband and wife are flesh of one another's flesh, bone of one another's bone. They call us to shed not just our clothes but also our pretense at self-sufficiency to tell our partner, "I need your love." They call us to shed our selfish expectations and resentments of our partner and simply delight in her as God does; for nothing consoles us more than someone's sincere delight in us. They call us to such a union of love that, according to St. Paul in Ephesians 5:31-33, Christian marriage should be a sacrament of Christ's love for the Church, of God's love for humanity.

Anyone who has lived in marriage knows that there is no ideal marriage. We know that the sacrament of marriage is really the Church's second version of the sacrament of reconciliation. We know how fatigue, misunderstandings, fear, and selfishness can make us strangers in the same house, for longer or shorter periods. We know that some people, whether out of fear of change or out of a sense of heroic sacrifice, have stayed in bad marriages so long that they have seriously harmed their children and themselves.

So, we seem caught in an impossible scissors action between an impossible ideal and a prohibition of failure. How can these readings possibly be Good News?

The answer is to understand Jesus' teaching on marriage in the light of his teaching of the reign of God. All contemporary scripture scholars recognize that the message of Jesus was the reign of God. See, for example, how Mark 1:14 introduces Jesus's whole ministry on earth. The reign of God is the key, the framework for understanding everything Jesus said and did. And, for Jesus, the reign of God was nothing but the absolute, mutual love between God and humanity. The reality of God's love was so real to Jesus that he could do nothing more than give himself entirely to that reign of love, so that nothing—family, possessions, good name, even life itself—mattered if they distracted him from receiving and sharing that love.

That's why, last week, Jesus spoke of cutting off hands and feet and plucking out eyes if these distracted us from receiving and responding to the reign of God's love. That's why Jesus told us to leave father and mother, possessions, an unburied father, and life itself to follow him as he embraced the terrible beauty of God's love. That's why he told us to forgive our enemies, turn the other cheek, return good for evil.

And that is why, this week, he speaks of marriage the way he does. Because, for Jesus, marriage—like every other human value—is to be understood from the perspective of the reign of God's love. Each spouse should devote herself or himself in such total love to her or his partner that each becomes an unmistakable sacrament of God's reign of love to the other. So it is Jesus' sense of the absoluteness of the reign of God that leads him to paint marriage as the frightening beauty we hear about in today's reading.

But we can never match up to that ideal of the total devotion of marriage, even if we remain in our marriages. And some of us have judged, usually with great sadness and guilt, that we have to leave a destructive marriage. What kind of disciples of Jesus does this make us?

Very normal ones, as it turns out. Though Jesus never toned down the absoluteness of the demands of the reign of God's love, he understood and never crushed human frailty. And, at least sometimes, his Church has shown that same understanding and

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Meetings — Reports, Summaries...

(Continued from page 10)

compassion. Though the Church can never cease preaching Jesus' ideal of non-violent peacemaking, it has long taught a just-war doctrine. Though the Church can never cease preaching the universal call to evangelical poverty, it has defended the right to own private property. And though the Church can never cease preaching the ideal of total and life-long self-giving in marriage, it has often (but not consistently) sought ways to support those who found that ideal insupportable.

This at least episodic effort didn't start with the Church's more compassionate policy on annulments in recent years. Already in the New Testament, Matthew (5:32, 19:9)—unlike Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18—makes an exception to Jesus' absolute prohibition of divorce. That exception is the case of *porneia*. Though the Greek word *porneia* is usually translated "adultery," its general meaning is broader, "sexual misconduct." In Matthew, however, it probably means marriage to a relative so close that Jewish law considered it incest. Such marriages would have been divisive between early Jewish and gentile Christians in Matthew's local church, so Matthew allowed divorce in such marriages for the good of both the individuals involved and of the community. "Incest" is the clear meaning of *porneia* also in Acts 15:20, 29, where the apostles, to resolve a similar disagreement between Jewish and gentile Christians, decided to forbid for gentile Christians only what Leviticus 17-18 forbade for gentiles living in ancient Israel.

Paul in I Corinthians 7:12-16 allows divorce (explicitly noting that Jesus didn't) for Christian converts whose pagan spouses abandon them. Tellingly, Paul's reason for allowing divorce in this case is: "For God has called us to peace."

What are we to make of such things as the Church's just war theory, allowance of private possessions, and easing the prohibition against divorce and remarriage? Do these just reflect the Church's going soft on Jesus' message about the absolute demands of God's reign of love?

No doubt the Church does fail to be true to the demands of God's reign, at least sometimes, perhaps often. But I think these accommodations to human

limitations also reflect the Church's grasp of the real nature of God's reign, a reign that comes by grace alone. Now, grace doesn't allow us to sit on our butts. It requires that we give every ounce of our strength to be open to the power of God's love. But, after all our efforts, we cannot make the reign of God come—not in our peacemaking efforts, not in our efforts to live simply, and not in our marriages. Human effort alone can neither guarantee success nor prevent failure in these critical areas of human life. We must give all we are and all we have to God's reign, nothing less—but also nothing more. We can cause great harm in all these areas if we try to muscle through some "ideal" state by our own efforts, if (in the mystery of God's providence) the grace is not there. As the old Black preacher said, Don't try to outrun grace.

As Jesus repeatedly reminded the Pharisees, the reign of God comes to us only NOW. Neither our past sins nor our past virtues ultimately count; what counts is only how we respond to the absolute demands of God's reign of love in each NOW of our lives.

So, as far as God's reign is concerned, it does not matter whether we are married or not, divorced or not, whether we find ourselves near the top or the bottom of ideal marriage scale. Whatever our past, we are called to respond with all our heart and strength to the reign of God's love NOW, to receive and to share that love as fully as we can—but always realizing that grace, not our efforts, will usher in the reign of God in our individual lives, our marriages, our Church, our nation, and our world.



Meetings — Reports, Summaries...

Eileen McCafferty DiFranco

August 6, 2006, First Sermon delivered at the First United Methodist Church in Germantown

[Editors Note: Rev McCafferty was one of the Pittsburgh 12 women ordained in August, 2006)

Imagine being a part of a miracle, only you don't know it because it begins in an ordinary way. You and three of your friends are walking up a hot and dusty mountain trail without food and without water. There is no shade in this dry place and the noonday sun beats down upon you, mercilessly, just like today. Your leader, the man you have come to honor, love, and respect, continues his upward hike without breaking stride. Because you love him, you follow him, even though he hasn't told you why you need to climb a steep mountain in the middle of nowhere at high noon. At this point in time, you really do think that you will follow him everywhere so you don't ask any questions. The four of you pant as you hike straight up, sweat pouring into your eyes and pooling around your spine. Up, up, up you go, seemingly right into the blazing sun. Birds of prey watch you intently as they fly around in lazy circles above your heads, their eyes trained to track weakness. Finally, you reach the summit and look down at the rugged terrain of Israel stretching below you and turn and face the sun-splattered mountain to talk to your three companions.

But there is another voice talking you think, but a voice that sounds like a peal of thunder from a blue sky. Your three companions are not the three figures you see standing in the blinding sunlight. Your two buddies have left you and are ducking for cover under a rock. There your teacher is, or there you think he is shining more brightly than the sun and talking to two other people who were not part of the original traveling party. What is going on here? You blink your eyes a couple of times and rub them a couple of times more. Meanwhile, there is this booming noise going on and these three strangers talking. Are you missing something? You tend to miss a lot of things. In fact, you missed something really big six days ago when you told Jesus that the idea of suffering and death was a bunch of nonsense. No one in their merry bunch of men and women who signed on to follow Jesus, signed on to follow a messiah who would die, that is a fact, you told him. But your confident assertion really annoyed him. In fact, it made him down right angry and made you feel stupid. Again. As usual. Poor stony headed Peter. Then, as quickly as this whole weird thing started, it was over. The sun was just the plain old blazing sun, the mountain was barren and rocky, and your buddies were climbing out from under the rock you wished you had found.

So what did three very human and frightened men say to Jesus when he finished talking with Moses and Elijah up there on that mountaintop? Peter announces to the man who has said over and over again that God was to be worshipped in spirit and in truth that he would build three tabernacles on the mountain, in honor of the three beings he had seen. His friend Jesus, back to his normal looking self down to the last bead of sweat on his forehead, dismissed Peter's idea out of hand and said simply, "Don't tell anyone about this until after the Son of Man has risen from the dead." The three men exchanged those furtive looks as if to say, "Do you know what he's talking about, because I certainly don't have a clue." Even after seeing a transfiguration upon the mountaintop, they still could not imagine a resurrection.

If three men who lived in a world where miracles, visions, and disembodied voices were commonplace could not make head or tails about what they saw that day, how much more difficult it is for us modern, rational, mechanistic people to understand. We know with our modern minds there is no such thing as the supernatural and even the church goes to great lengths to disprove visions, visitations, and voices. In fact, if three of your friends told you they had a recent conversation with Moses and Elijah, you would probably get a new set of friends. I know I probably would.

Seriously, here were three people who walked and talked with Jesus on a regular basis. These were people who saw with their own eyes, and touched with their hands the word of life revealed to them directly by God. And they didn't get it. Not for a long time, anyway and even then, imperfectly. They saw Jesus transfigured, but it didn't transform them because a little later in the story they were talking about who was going to get the power and the glory to lord over their sisters and brothers. They were touched by the Almighty, and they didn't feel it. They literally saw God and did not recognize the divine, even when it was as big as a Fourth of July celebration. If they didn't get it, then surely there is no hope for us. On the other hand, perhaps their lack of faith remains a source of comfort for those of us whose hands did not touch and whose eyes never had the opportunity to see. Their failure to understand reaches across the millennia to us, dropping a miracle right into our laps. If they could eventually learn to believe in something as strange as a transfiguration and a resurrection, then perhaps we can learn to believe as well.

Sadly we belong to a generation that sometimes finds very little that is meaningful in the teachings of the church about Jesus, our Emmanuel, God with us. On

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one hand, churches that were full two generations ago with mandatory children's masses, novenas, Stations of the Cross, missions, and May processions are emptying out and parishes are closing. Those who are trying to staunch the flow of people out of church focus upon the necessity of reciting the catechism, obeying church teachings, and developing personal holiness that sets them apart from the maddening crowd that is the rest of us. Some think that a return to those pietistic days of yesteryear where the laity knew its place and only the priests knew and spoke the words of God will repopulate the seminaries and repack the pews. If it worked 50 years ago, the reasoning goes, it should work again.

Others like to pretend that what the "big church," the one that speaks from Rome or 222 says doesn't really affect individual church communities or the real people with real lives who make up real congregations in real communities even when the little church is charged with carrying out the big church's business, business that sometimes causes great harm rather than great grace. Some have come to believe that to submit their intelligence or to compromise with injustice or error within the institution does not constitute love of neighbor or love of God, for that matter. Thus, some turn away from church, from religion and maybe even from God because it seems as if faith in the form of laws and order is "all there is."

The big issues that might have brought some of you here today remain unaddressed, untackled, unmentionable in that big church and consequently, in that little church as well. The lack of dialogue between the church hierarchy and mature and faithful Catholics blocks God's directive that Christians love one another. How can people love one another when conversation is purposefully and forcefully one-sided? With the threat of war hanging heavily in the global air, at the very least, people of faith owe it to our God to put aside differences and instead model forgiveness, reconciliation, and a beloved community where all, indeed, are welcomed, embraced and forgiven 70 x 7, where the only label affixed to anyone is, "Beloved child of God."

Without this sort of understanding among believers, what is the sense of a miracle like the transfiguration? For who can begin to understand the miracle of the transfiguration of the Son of Man into the manifestation of God if the church that believes itself to be divinely instituted betrays its best self by condemning, excluding, and marginalizing our gay sisters and brothers who are made in the image of God? Who can fathom what it means for the Child of God to rise from the dead when those with the power of the pulpit rant for a month of Sundays about a silly novel, yet infrequently remind

their people that 40,000 of God's little babies, babies like our Emmanuel, starve to death every single day? How can we learn about the Word of God in the world when words and doctrines and traditions and liturgical practices remain profoundly sexist? How would Jesus who lived on earth among us as our Emmanuel, God with all of us, respond to atomic bombs and shock and awe military campaigns against some of us?

Where is the gospel in the midst of all of this? Where is the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit? How can there be church business as usual when the people of Lebanon and Iraq and Israel are being murdered to preserve the security of some of us? In light of the carnage of the last century when more people died in wars than in all of the previous wars in all of the previous centuries combined, of what use is church's concern that the liturgical language of the church reflects the original Latin when little babies with binkies in their mouths scream in terror as the bombs drop in Beirut and Israel. Who really cares about who best images Christ when the best image of Christ ministers to the starving babies in the Sudan and the Congo. The disconnect between the gospel given to us by Emmanuel, God with us, and its lack of implementation in the world by those who are supposed to preach it and those who are supposed to live it is sometimes enough to make many of us walk out of both the little and the big church.

In reality, Christianity more about Jesus than it is about the church who he was, what he did, what he continues to be for all of us who call ourselves Christian. In Jesus, there was never a disconnect. Jesus directed us to love one another as he loved. He loved his friends and his foes so much, that he gave his life in order that they might live. For him, loving God and loving people was the same thing. Since he would not turn away from God, even when he was promised all of the kingdoms and all of the power on earth by the principality of evil, he would not ever turn away from his neighbor, even if that neighbor was regarded as a public scandal by the religious principalities. The words "excommunication" and "intrinsically disordered" would not have been part of the vocabulary of Jesus Christ.

Thus, the Jesus we read about in the gospel today was never disengaged from the life of the world, the life of God, or from the good news of his gospel. It is no wonder then, that he was somehow transfigured, changed, and altered in some manner on that mountaintop. And whatever happened up there was truly wonderful, marvelous, and glorious because it was a miracle. As our Emmanuel, however, we must always remember that Jesus was also one of the most wretched of the earth, a

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human being who had no political rights, no protection from Rome or from the elements in his own society who were out to get him because he was different. Thus, the man on the mountain, whose clothes became as bright as the sun that day so long ago, could not protect himself because he chose to be one of us, living among us. All the later accretions of fancy robes, golden crowns, and thrones and palaces and titles, all the feudal pomp and circumstance attached to his worship should not obscure the reality of his death as the very least one of us.

You see, Jesus did not live up there on that mountaintop with Moses and Elijah spending his free time discussing obtuse theological issues like the ontological differences between men and women or making rare guest appearances from a man-made tabernacle. He didn't die up there on the mountaintop in some fake glorified death either. He died alone, abandoned, unjustly condemned in the midst of people just like him: poor, disenfranchised, despised, and rejected as a sinner by the righteous and the powerful whose feet so often rush to torture, exclusion, condemnation, excommunication, and eventually the shedding of innocent blood. Generations of impoverished, oppressed men and women have lived the same type of defenseless life and died the same awful death that was meted out to Jesus. He stands there with them, every single one of them; the victims of the holocaust and the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the women burned as witches and the victims of religious warfare. He stands squarely with his gay sisters and brothers and with all of those who are labeled public scandals by the powers and the principalities. He stands most firmly with those who hunger and thirst for righteousness in Darfur, the Congo, Liberia, Lebanon, and Checyna. He stands with the women of the world: the African girls forced to undergo genital mutilation, with the little girls of the world sold into sexual slavery, with women forced to live with violent spouses in unholy relationships sanctified by the religious authorities as marriage. He stands with women who are oppressed by their own churches. And he stands there with each one of us.

In Jesus was life, and his life was the light of human beings. Wherever his great spirit shines, the oppressed gather fresh courage, the mourners are comforted, the peacemakers appear, and those who work for justice sound the bell of freedom. Firefighters walk right into burning buildings and office managers make sure that all of their people are safe before they leave a collapsing building. Nurses and doctors stay behind in a hurricane without food, water, or electricity in order to care for their patients. Millionaires give away their fortunes

and women and men share their visions about what the new heavens and new earth should look like.

And people like all who are gathered here, sit down and eat, all of us altogether, in the house of God at the table of the Lord because that is what Jesus told us to do. Eat and drink together as friends in memory of the one who fed us all as friends. Love one another as Jesus loved us. And when we do this, we need to remember. There is always room for all of us in the house of God at the table of the Lord, Emmanuel God with all of us. No member of God's good creation is a threat to God or to any of us or to our doctrines.

So, what do we make of the transfiguration? What did Peter, James, and John see on that day 2 millennia ago? The late William Sloan Coffin wrote that for certain he could not know if Jesus literally walked on the water. He would not try to explain the Transfiguration. He could not know what he had not seen. He, like us, like Peter, James, and John, Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha could only have faith that what Jesus told them was true even though they were as confused as you and I. What he did know, and what our forefathers and mothers eventually learned was that faith needed to be lived before it could be understood, and the more it is lived, the more things become possible. As we know, nothing is impossible with God, not even women priests.

It makes sense today that we are gathered as one people, sharing bread and cup as we, though many, have become one Body in this one God., who made this whole thing possible, to whom we give thanks and praise. Let us remember that it is love that knits us into the church of God. We can only be that ecclesia of God when our caring for the world prompts that world to say, "Look how much they love everyone!"

Let us go into the world as God's word, spreading the good news that we will love our neighbor as we love our God. And if we err, as we all certainly shall, let us err always and everywhere on the side of choosing God's mercy and lovingkindness, pressed down, poured out, and overflowing into our laps. In, through and with that love, my dear friends, we find the image and likeness of God.

~Eileen McCafferty DiFranco

August 6, 2006

Thank you, Nova . . .



Action Africa sends its deepest thanks to the Orlando Kane family for so heartily participating in gathering medical supplies for our rural free clinics in Africa. So many villagers, young and old, come to the clinics sponsored by the NOVA Catholic Community that doctors often run out of the ordinary medicines such as aspirin that we here in the US take for granted. Thanks to Mali, Joe, Mikaela, Carmela and Michael, we are able to send six grocery bags bursting with medication. Look what just one family can accomplish! We thank all our friends from NOVA and all our unknown friends who helped make this a success.

God bless you all.

Chris Eg-
bulem
President
Action Africa



From Center of Concern . . .

Thank you for your faithful support for our work here at the Center of Concern. I don't know how we could keep up our work without such wonderful friends.

Many Blessings, Jim Hug

TOP 10 REASONS TO VISIT THE SACKLER MUSEUM, DC

1. you are curious to how the Bible took its form over many centuries
2. it is one of the largest/broadest groups of biblical material in one (& only!) venue
3. you are going to Egypt soon! where many of these came from or are usually seen
4. you wish to see sumptuously decorated masterpieces from all over the world "dripping in jewels & gold"
5. you heard that some of these works were rescued from an ancient garbage dump or were found in a hidden monastery wall or were found by peasants in a cave.
6. many are being shown for the 1st time in 1500 years; were discovered in the last 30 years & are worth many millions of \$\$\$ (they are "priceless")
7. you want to see early texts "that didn't make it" (the gospel of st. thomas?), but might have/could have-- OR to see the e-mails (epistles) of their day, written on wax over wooden tablets
8. to see one of the 219 Dead Sea Scrolls
9. to see 3 of the 6 oldest surviving Hebrew codices or scrolls
10. to see a 3rd C. papyrus of "the sayings of Jesus" or Thomas' description of Jesus' infancy &
11. (I LIED!)to listen to a superb audio by the brilliant British curator --Go see ""..Bibles before 1000" before 1/7/07!

Congratulations—Joe Nangle(Award Nite)



John Cackley, First Communion



Nova Saints

Bob Birch

Paul Birch

Rose Birch

Madeleine Bonsignore

Julie Byrne

Mary Chaison

Tony & Pat Chavez

Michael De Groot

John DeOrnellas

Fran & Jim Grady

Dean Houck

Bob Hovda

Marcy Jacomet

Phil Land

Tom Leckey

Tom Lowrey

Ruth Mausert-Mooney

Brenda McCormick

Louis Mendez

Paty Violand Mercado

Michelle Murray

Aubrey Osborne

Al Perreira

Jim Provost

Grover & Nancy Stock

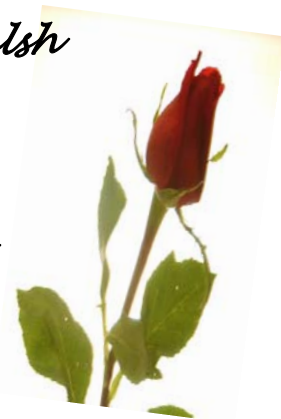
Lisa Todaro

Henrietta Walsh

Marjū Weber

George White

Kate Wholey





November, 2006



Nova Calendar...

Saturday, 11/4 ...6:00 pm – **Nova General Meeting** : See page 8 for details

Saturday, 11/4 ...9:15 am—4:00 pm **Retreat: Finding Your Voice** See page 7

Sunday, 11/5 ...7:00— 9:00 pm – **Northern Virginia Interfaith Triologue**, see page 8

Sunday, 11/12 ... 2:00 pm -- **Hand of God** film at VOTF of No. Va., see page 9

Sunday, 11/19 ... 5:00 pm — **Social Justice Annual Meeting** see page 9

Happy Thanksgiving