



# The Antioch Community Voice

A newsletter published by the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch

Spring, 2016

## Convocation, 2015 ~ interrupted!

The World Parliament of Religions was last held in the United States twenty years ago, so when we learned it was to be in Salt Lake City at the same time as our scheduled CCOA Convocation, we did the only possible thing...we cancelled our convocation so at least some of our clergy and seminarians could attend the World Parliament!



It was a time of discussion, as seen here . Pictured: +Mark and Rick+

Some of us gathered for dinner.  
Shown: +Linda, Phil, +Mark, Mary+ and Ron.



+Linda met and talked with one of her heroes, Matthew Fox+.



There were many displays. Pictured at this one: Phil, +Linda, Rick+ and Darlene



## **Our Reflections**

**The Parliament was my first time experiencing around 10,000 people of very diverse religious beliefs in one place. Many turbans - even our local minister at First Christian Disciples of Christ was wearing a turban - and many different forms of dress - including a wizard in a glittery gown holding a wooden pole with a disco ball hanging from one end - were as comfortable walking around as everyone else. The overall feeling of just being accepted as-is was always in the atmosphere. The constant moving of people through the Salt Palace did not distract from this overall feeling; it added to the feeling of what a different place this small part of the world is right now.**

**Everyone was there to share their stories and to hear the stories of others. The joy could be seen in the people's faces as they talked and listened. Even from the sessions that dealt with serious matters, I saw the love of the topic and the concerns of the listeners emitting forth. A sense of hope that the world can be a place for all of God's creations was given. There can be a wonderful future for the world and life on it when the spirit that was in the Salt Palace overflows outward. I left the Parliament with this spirit of hope within my heart for a better world.**

**Ron , CCOA seminarian**

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**TAKING COMPELLING ACTION.** A few days before embarking to Utah to attend 2015 Parliament of World's Religions, I called Bishop Mark seeking his advice about what events to video tape. After reviewing the enormity of the event agenda, Bishop Mark's counsel to me was to follow whatever impressions the Holy Spirit would compel me to video tape. I took Bishop Mark's guidance to heart when I was impressed to step forward and introduce myself to Mr. Rahul Dubey. I believe Spirit moved me to take action because in my heart I wanted to know if Rahul was as authentic in real life as he was on stage in front of hundreds of people.

**Rahul is connected to the mass shooting that took place on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at a Sikh Temple in Wisconsin that killed his godfather and Temple Founder/President, Satwant Singh Kaleka. (Continued)**



## **Our Reflections, continued**

*(continued)*

**Rahul was one of the recipients of the “Faiths Against Hate Award,” an award that is presented by the Parliament to an individual or an organization who has made an exceptional contribution to countering hate within their community and the greater global community.**

**When presenting the award to Rahul, the Parliament presenter stated that Rahul Dubey was a trailblazer in his efforts that were devoted to creating a racially equitable community, and that he is an example to others on how to combat these complex issues. The award’s presenter concluded that Rahul had demonstrated a commitment to pluralism and inclusivity. Very impressive words to say on stage, but what grabbed me about the presentation was Rahul’s response when accepting the award. With enthusiasm and zeal Rahul stepped up to the stage microphone and declared: *“Each of you who are here are here because we all are making a difference! By being here you mean a lot to all of each other, to us, to yourself, to your parents, to your friends, to your loved ones. That is who we are: We represent humanity-We represent change-We represent faith-We are the world’s citizens!”* Rahul’s sincerity and fervency about being a citizen of the world and that my attendance at Parliament meant something to humanity and the interfaith movement struck an inner chime in my head and heart that wouldn’t stop ringing.**

**The next day my musing over Rahul’s words kept resounding in my heart and head. Later that evening when I began setting up for a video shoot at the evening Plenary Session, I needed to make a fast dash to the rear of the auditorium to pick-up some equipment. I was dodging incoming people when I found myself face-to-face with Rahul who was also weaving around the rush of humanity that was entering the auditorium. We stopped and looked at each other, then I moved forward as Rahul let me pass by. And then my inner voice shouted to stop-turn around-reach out to Rahul-introduce myself and give him a business card. (Instantly, I recalled Bishop Mark’s counsel, and I did what he said to do-which was to do something compelling.) Rahul was very gracious-accepted my card-gave me a hearty handshake-gave me his business card-we hurriedly moved on. The entire confrontation was less than thirty seconds.**

*continued*

# **PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS**

## **Our Reflections, continued**

*(continued)*

**My mind, however, continued to wrestle about my abrupt encounter with Rahul and I was posed with yet another musing about what meaning there was with our happenstance meeting. I looked at Rahul's business card and noticed he listed his cell phone. I had an urge at that moment to send him a text message. The hour was very late when I sent Rahul a text message and asked if he would grant me an interview the next day. (I had to know how true Rahul was and if his enthusiasm when receiving his award was good stage presence or the real deal.) Despite the late-night hour of my text, Rahul quickly responded with a positive "yes" for the interview. We exchanged more texts setting up a time and place for the interview and once Rahul even expressed his appreciation for the interview opportunity. All of these events astonished me because they had commenced from following an impulse to take compelling action.**

**The next day when we met to video tape the interview, I had a chance to learn more about what brought Rahul to his calling be a "peace warrior." Rahul told me about his godfather, Satwant Singh Kaleka, 65, who had managed to deter the gunman even after being shot twice so others in the Temple could escape. "Whatever time he spent in that struggle gave the women time to get cover in the kitchen," Rahul said. One of the women who escaped was Satwant's wife, who called police using her cellphone while hiding from the gunman. Rahul said Satwant dedicated his life to the members of the Oak Creek Temple, of which he was considered the Founder. From his godfather, Rahul learned valuable lessons of faith, honesty, hard work, doing regular service in community and helping the needy. What moved me about Rahul's story was that he never spoke negatively about the gunman who had killed his mentor. His remarks were dedicated to how we can create peace within a culture that is focused on violence, racism and hate. From our discussion I realized that Rahul truly believes that we can rise above the carnage of mass shootings in order to bring forth inclusivity in a diverse community. *continued***





# PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

## Our Reflections, continued

(continued)

There were many lessons to reap from my meeting and the realization of a new friendship with Rahul. With much heartfelt thanks to Spirit and Bishop Mark, however, I regard the biggest lesson that I learned at Parliament was listening to Her voice to reach out and take compelling action to meet Rahul and discover what compels him to serve his God and humanity. Rahul concluded our interview with this prayer spoken in Sanskrit, *"In a loud voice I say, Lord, you are the only One. True is your name. May peace be on all of us."*

Rick+

One Woman Priest's "Take" on Feminine Gender Justice and Countering Hate Speech in Religious Institutions Gleaned from the Parliament of World Religions. Trying to capture, in a short essay, a week's worth of immersion in the unitive spirit of the Parliament is indeed a challenge, but I will attempt to share some of the salient thoughts on "feminine gender dynamics" and "hate speech" that sprang from that "encounter". An awakening, a new understanding, an empathetic bonding, a resolute commitment, prayer-filled guidance and a personal action plan--that is what I came away with after the parliament. However, I also came away feeling humbled and woefully ignorant of many of the injustices which many are facing, but resolved to "get involved". It is often from within the faith-based institutions that some of the most unjust, discriminating and inequitable treatment of "the other" stems. The experience also, more than ever, leaves me convinced that the CACOA has a major role to play in the interfaith/inter-spiritual movement—to help recover, reveal and restore the eternal "Christ Principle" at the heart of all faith traditions and even in the lives of secular humanists who compose an ever increasing majority in our culturally diverse societies. *continued*





## Our Reflections, continued

(continued)

### A Parliament Theme of Gender Justice within Religious Institutions

The following is what I will call a “situational assessment” of “gender dynamics” within two major religious institutions as presented at the Parliament. These “situations” in other traditions were new to me, so perhaps this will be new information for you as well. More and more I find as I help in the spiritual guidance of folks of all faiths, there are basic misperceptions, misinterpretations and misunderstandings, based on ignorance, about the situation of women within various faith based organizations. And, I have found, *in every case* I have looked at so far, that the gender dynamics stems from a *skewed or deliberate misinterpreted reading of whatever scripture the tradition follows*. I hope this piece is helpful to you.

**Example 1: Gender Dynamics within The LDS Church—A Situation Assessment (from Parliament Sessions held on 10/19/15):** With regard to the position of Women in the Mormon Church, there are different gender rules with regard to leadership: Authority and legitimacy in the LDS Church is conferred solely by gender; All boys at age 12 are “ordained” in the LDS Church, and hold higher ecclesiastical authority than their mothers, sisters, grandmothers and Aunts; All clergy are “lay clergy” with additional occupations; Women have no ecclesiastical authority, no ability to minister in any capacity and no ability to even bless their children. It was said that Mormon women are treated with great respect —“put on a pedestal” by “a benevolent patriarchy”, but this “pedestal” by can also be viewed as a way of walling women off to be “cared for”. Women who challenge the status quo are often excommunicated, convicted of “apostasy” in which their Baptism is cancelled, are barred “from heaven”, and are declared “spiritually dead”.

Their Action Plan for “Correction” is many pronged: Getting the word out is among the first of the strategies. Several Mormon women human rights attorneys have started movements such as “ordain women.org” which has grown from 24 to 700 women members who are committed to surfacing the “truth” (their words) about their position in the church, that “the basic doctrine of Mormonism that women are not equal” is NOT based on scripture. It seems that this is a resounding theme in every faith who represses based on gender. *continued*



# PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

## Our Reflections, continued

(continued)

For me, one of the most revealing aspects of their “action plan” was the ongoing development of a Mormon “Theology of the Divine Feminine—the “Heavenly Mother”. They are using the *Theology of the Divine Feminine* as counterpoint to Institutional Gender Bias. Together with their “open canon” which says that “God is still speaking” today, the argument is made that God is speaking to and through women as well as men, and thus revelation is incomplete without inclusion of their “capture” of revelation. A fuller understanding of this is found in the recently released *Mormon Feminism: Essential Writings*, by Brooks, Steenblik and Wheelwright [eds], 2016 Oxford Press, which is a fascinating and authoritative anthology of writings by Mormon women, several of whom were at the Parliament and one served on the panel of experts from which I quote.

Perhaps the most illustrative example of what solidarity with other women who are actualizing their God-given right to ordination within their church comes from a panelist, a human rights attorney who attended the ordination of a Roman Catholic Woman Priest during the Parliament. Her testimony is as follows: “*I went into that experience expecting to stand in solidarity, but not for it to be as powerful as it was. It was a very powerful, spiritual event because I got to stand as equals with women in positions of authority, and that is something that I wish every Mormon girl could do...because it is powerful, it is transformative, it is life-changing...that is what that experience was for me, so I am grateful for that—the sisters in solidarity in other traditions*”. I too attended that ordination. For me it was my expression of solidarity with those courageous enough to challenge injustice from inside their tradition, in their own way, under their own banner, with their own approach, fulfilling their own Spirit-guided strategy and following their individual conscience.

**Example 2: Gender Dynamics within Islam—A Situation Assessment (from Sessions held on 10/19/15):** With regards to gender imbalance within Islam, a different picture emerges. Muslims don’t “ordain” any member      *continued*



## **Our Reflections, continued**

*(continued)*

of their faith, and the issues are not focused on who leads services/prayers which seems to be a more Western focus. The major issue is one of legitimacy and authority in the faith and since Islam considers itself a tradition of scholarship, bringing out the female voice in scholarship is one key strategy to ensure women's legitimacy.

Typically one who has studied the faith for over 10 years and has published articles is considered a legitimate spokesperson for the faith. However for women, it appears the bar is different- questions as to "with whom" did you study, in addition to "how long" suggest that, since no "legitimate" male authoritative figure would condescend to take on a woman "student", perhaps her legitimacy should be called into question. Thus "access" is a major issue. Second, a question as to "where was your material published?" brings up a catch 22 situation. It was stated that publishing houses for Islamic theological papers won't accept articles from women. Thus several Muslim women have countered these obstacles by doing the following: Starting on-line academic programs (much like our seminary) bringing scholarship to women overcoming the access issue. These same groups also have also started their own publishing house to publish books and scholarly articles by Muslim women, many of which have won awards for scholarship in the global market, as well as import scholarly works by women in Arabic so as to give access to other original writings. Another interesting issue was put forward and that is the architectural configuration of most mosques "give the impression that most women were not important", and new resolutions as to the renovation for "women-friendly" mosques are circulating, though yet to be implemented.

This leads to an additional point. For many Muslim women, the critical role of women scholars in this current political environment is to convey an authoritative scholarly understanding of the distinctions between the various forms of Islam being touted as the "true teachings of Islam". continued





## **Our Reflections, continued**

*(continued)*

As we know from today's political situation, there are many diverse forms of Islam which result from the specific translation/interpretation of their scripture (The Koran) which is followed. You might wish to view the short video clip or download the transcript of a recent PBS interview with two American Muslim writers, Manal Omar of the US Institute for Peace and Asra Nomani, co-founder of the Muslim Reform Movement and Author of "Standing Alone: An American Woman's struggle for the Soul of Islam" who quite eloquently express these concepts. Key points are the following: There is a difference between the "theology of Islam" and the "theocracy of Islamism" which gives rise to extremist ideology. The former is a religion, the latter concerns the establishment and governance of a political state. Extremism in all religions is a global problem for which we all have an obligation to counter with informed voices. ... "we have to challenge it. ... we're in a war of our generation. It's an ideological war. And we are the resistance. We, as Muslims, have to define very clearly that we don't believe in an Islam that is one of political governance ..." Many of the Movements are bringing in the feminine mystics in the fight against Islamic terrorism. The first person to enter Islam was a woman and, quoting from writings of the first Muslim Saint Rabbia Basri, Nomani says "We have to burn the gates of hell and throw water on the fire of hell". Nomani goes on to say "We have to challenge the theologies... That is what I believe we have to do... And it is a war of ideas and we have to win it"

"Informed Solidarity"- I think that one additional point is in order here. While I am an advocate of solidarity with those struggling for equality, in today's culture we need to be informed (particularly in our role as clergy, and in some cases, as parents) in our well-meaning solidarity. If needed, we can inform from the pulpit as to any misrepresentation. Case in point is in Washington Post editorial from December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015 concerning the wearing of the hijab. "Last week, three female religious leaders — a Jewish rabbi, an Episcopal vicar and a Unitarian reverend — and a male imam, or Muslim prayer leader, walked into the sacred space in front of the ornately-tiled minbar, or pulpit, at the Khadeeja Islamic Center in West Valley City, Utah. The women were smiling widely, their hair covered with swaths of bright scarves, to support "Wear a Hijab" day. *continued*



## **Our Reflections, continued**

*(continued)*

**Author Asra Nomani responded to that “event” in a Washington Post editorial as follows: “the spectacle at the mosque was a painful reminder of the well-financed effort by conservative Muslims to dominate modern Muslim societies. This modern-day movement spreads an ideology of political Islam, called “Islamism,” enlisting well-intentioned interfaith do-gooders and the media into promoting the idea that “hijab” is a virtual “sixth pillar” of Islam, after the traditional “five pillars” of the shahada (or proclamation of faith), prayer, fasting, charity and pilgrimage. We reject this interpretation that the “hijab” is merely a symbol of modesty and dignity adopted by faithful female followers of Islam. This modern-day movement, ... has erroneously made the Arabic word hijab synonymous with “headscarf.” This conflation of hijab with the secular word headscarf is misleading. “Hijab” literally means “curtain” in Arabic. It also means “hiding,” “obstructing” and “isolating” someone or something. It is never used in the Koran to mean headscarf... The media must stop spreading this misleading interpretation.” Apparently major organizers of the event included a Brooklyn based headscarf company among others. Whether you accept this view presented by the writer or not, we must become informed, particularly as clergy and/or parents.**

**And as a final point, a resounding finding of all of the sessions that I attended was the growing awareness that there has been in the past and still continues, a deliberate mis-translation, mis-interpretation or mis-reading of sacred texts in all religions—“a licensing of terror by archaic literal translation of scripture” (voiced from a respondent in the 10/19 Parliament session.) We owe it to future generations to correct this. One of the strengths of the CACOA is the freedom to look at non-canonical, “gnostic” gospels and writings to truly get at some of the underlying, metaphorical meaning of the gospels hidden beneath their literal translations. I believe we must take it as a priority to “up-level” the interpretation of the scriptures and to encourage those efforts in all other faiths to up-level their scriptural interpretations as well.**

**A Parliament Theme of Combatting Hate Speech and Spiteful Rhetoric. This brings us to our final issue which impacts every one of us today: *continued***



## **Our Reflections, continued**

*(continued)*

**Combatting hate speech and spiteful rhetoric. Above all, “terrorists and war-mongers demonize their neighbors”, and fear of demographic shifts fuel the hate machines. This is a “bigger phenomena than just election season” and “we cannot be the silent bystander when demonization occurs”. Unfortunately, there is no space to go into detail on these sessions from which I quote above, but as a follow up to the Parliament’s dedication to fighting hate speech, several webinars have been presented online with specific action items for countering such hatred. Perhaps a paraphrased summary of their suggestions might be in order here.**

**Dr. Larry Greenfield urged that we must find ways in being explicit in overcoming hate and affirming love. He states that non-Muslims can lend support to an oppressed Muslims in specific ways: “If you see Muslim being harassed, stop, intervene and express solidarity. This takes courage... The Parliament is developing a program for the ‘bystander’ who is active and intervening and expressing solidarity with harassed. If you see a Muslim in public spaces, say ‘peace be with you’ as the ‘verbal presence’ of one’s solidarity with one who might be feeling alone... If you have a minority neighbor, be their ‘watchfolk’-- invite their children to walk with yours... Spend time with children to help them understand bullying and hatred. You can’t assume your silence is golden and supportive... You must be visible... This is a wonderful season to be an active witness to ‘love being that force that is stronger than hate... And finally, through your speech and action, be a transforming presence of love in your community. Clergy have special “opportunities” in our Homilies and newsletters to expose how politicians use fear that fuels hate to their own political advantage, and to give their congregations information and verbiage to challenge their rhetoric”. He further states that we have the opportunity to develop liturgies which give people a language to express their concerns about the public expressions of hate speech. We can label it as a “Disease of Hate” in our culture and ask for prayers, lift up a witness, and give thanks for those who have stood up.** *continued*



## **Our Reflections, continued**

*(continued)*

**And finally, Imam Malik Mujahid, chairman for the Parliament of the World's Religions, puts forth the following several points for Action:**

- 1. One Can't fight a hate unless it has a name- so name it— for example “Islamophobia”**
  - 2. Develop plans in your local community for 2016- what can we do as an inter-faith community?**
  - 3. Use the media- letters to editors, organizations might request meetings w/ editorial boards- take an interfaith organization with you to the meeting with the media for greater impact**
  - 4. Host and engage in dialogues at local level- ie Black Lives Matter, Jewish concerns...**
  - 5. Help Muslim neighbors find voices against ISIS**
  - 6. Use sermons and dialog to expose hate speech**
  - 7. Interfaith groups are often weak in communications so broaden the network and connect interfaith with public guiding institutions- public schools, school boards,**
  - 8. Use organizations who help the bullied, suicidal, etc.— connect with the cities, charter of compassion**
  - 9. Identify the Islamophobes in your area- find out about organizations and individuals who get money on speaking tours against Muslims- identify the hate mongers- “hate in American fuels hate overseas”**
- Pray for humility- pray for neighbor and others**

**The Parliament is planning more webinars on this in the near future as part of their “inter-Parliament Plan.**

**Stay tuned to stay informed. ([parliamentofreligions.org](http://parliamentofreligions.org))**

**Peace be to all Mary+**

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/how-do-we-reconcile-todays-divergent-voices-of-islam/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/how-do-we-reconcile-todays-divergent-voices-of-islam/#.VoJOjdJflfk.mailto)  
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<http://www.sltrib.com/opinion/3339990-155/washington-post-op-ed-as-muslim-women?fullpage=1>



## **This is the church**

**This is the church.**

**Open the doors.....**



**This is the steeple.**

**Here are the people.**

Google photo.



© photo by LRN 2015

**The old children's chant isn't working so well these days — except in some mega-churches and on special occasions. This was the scene in Chartres, France just after Pentecost. People traveled for days to arrive at the Cathedral and celebrate their journey.**

**However, much more common in many places of the world, includes Chartres a few days later is the empty church. Open the doors and where are the people? What is our role today? Empty churches have little**

**need for clergy.**

**A CCOA priest in Italy has an idea He writes: Lucca, Italy is a quiet place with strong foundation and rich heritage...still nowadays well educated people go away for there is no chance for them here anymore...**

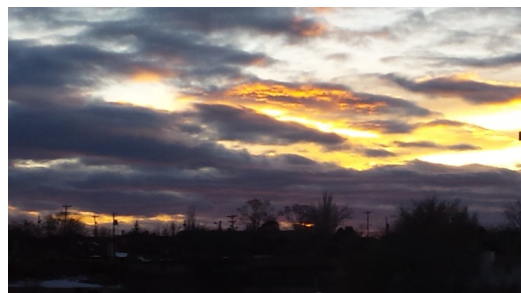
**The same is happening in the church, few people go to the Mass, of those who do, almost all are over 60, which means within 10-15 years nobody will go any longer... life is changing, we can only adapt to the change.**



© photo by LRN 2015

**We adapt, but we can still keep the experience of the saints as model. I could not see a life without the example of St. Bernard, Teresa, John of the Cross or Meister Eckhart. During the eleventh centuries and all the middle ages, the spiritual life was competing with the external life of research and development.**

**I'm wondering what the spiritual life can do in these times... maybe those of us who live the spiritual live are keeping alive the flame of the eternity in time... keeping alive the eternal love of Christ in this time of changes... I keep on praying with you...thank you for sharing your light... Marco+**



© photo by LRN 2015

**He's right—we hold the Presence. We give hope. Let us all share the light! +Linda**

## Celebrating with Our Friends



© Photos by PBN, 2015

**Presiding Bishop Mark Elliott Newman and Bishop Linda Rounds-Nichols were honored to serve as co-consecrators for two new bishops. Bishop. Dr. Roger Martin was consecrated in October and is now the Bishop of Flanders for the Autocephalous Catholic Church of Antioch, under Presiding Archbishop Leon Hunt.**



**Bishop Sue Provost was consecrated in September for the National Catholic Church of North America, and serves with Presiding Bishop William (Bill) Wettingfeld.**

© Photos by NCCNA , 2015



## The Presence of the Divine

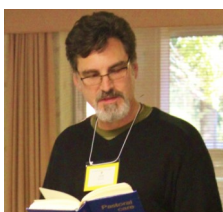
**It's about the presence of the Divine, however She shows herself.**

**As opposed to many Protestant churches, Catholic churches of the past were often “more representative of the whole world: filled with English, and Polish, and German, Italian, Latin American and African people. In his book, *I Like Being Catholic*, William J Bennet wrote, ‘There isn’t any question that my view of the world, my view of life, my view of myself, my view of family, my view of work in the world was deeply informed by my faith, which is Catholic.’” The church and all of her people can give one not only a world view, but also a “cultural identity support,” even if one’s church attendance becomes rare, as often happens as we enter college or the world of work.**



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2013

**Many in the independent Catholic movement have wide interests and wide areas of study, including that of comparative religion. We learn “about the Gnostics, alternative Christianities, magick and the esoteric traditions, Christian and otherwise.” Many in the independent movement may identify with the sacramental ‘Catholic imagination’**



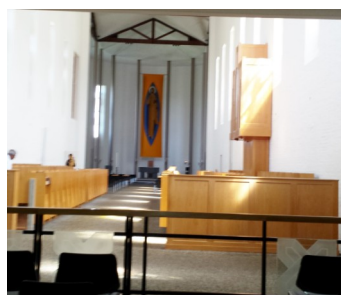
**sociologist and priest Andrew Greely associated with the heart of Catholic experience,” in his book with the same title.**

**We have left the dogma, without leaving the heart of Catholicism: the ritual and the sacraments. We can't leave these, having been "forever shaped by the presence of the Divine through the sacraments."**

**Scott, seminarian** (*paraphrased and quoted from Sophia Divinity School coursework*)



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2015



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From yahoo images

**Celebrating Thomas Merton ~ 2015 marked the 100th anniversary of his birth.  
January 31, 1915—December 10, 1968.**

**Bishop Linda and her husband, Phil, visited the Abbey of Gethsemani last year and participated in the Divine Office in the chapel, shown above.**

*“All Christian life is meant to be at the same time profoundly contemplative and rich in active work.”*



## Failing to Be

### James 1:2-4 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

### Philippians 3: 13-14

<sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it (my goal). But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

### Reflection:

Well, in case it has escaped your attention, it's that time of year, when we reflect on what we want to change about our lives and then make a resolution which we most likely do not expect to keep.

I do a lot of reading and I don't consider my writings original ideas. They are the result of my need to organize my thoughts on a subject. Unfortunately, I can't always give credit to the persons who inspired or influenced me. I usually remember what I read but not where. One morning, I woke with a refraining that haunted me for hours: "We fail in our ministries because we focus on doing good." This is much too intuitive to be something born of my own independent philosophy. Thus, to me, the Holy Spirit and my prolific readings have co-mingled to enlighten me.

"We fail in our ministries because we focus on doing good." What does this mean for me? My first gut reaction is failure has always taught me something worthwhile. It may be years before I can appreciate the lesson I was able to glean and often it is realized in the middle of another intense failure but it has always made me a better me. "Failure, disappointment, and rejection" have initiated greater rewards. Failure is not frightening, just an invitation to a learning adventure. But failure is necessary.

Countless success stories are filled with mistakes and obstacles. Can you relate to any of these failures? Walt Disney was fired from an ad company because his editor felt he "lacked imagination." Thomas Edison's teachers told him he was "too stupid to learn anything". Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team. Oprah Winfrey was fired from her first show for getting "too emotionally invested in her stories." Steven Spielberg was rejected by the School of Cinematic Arts numerous times. Mohammed Ali took many knockouts before he became the world's greatest heavyweight. J.K. Rowling was a single welfare mom when she wrote the first "Harry Potter" novel. An executive told Harrison Ford he'd never succeed in the movie business. And, there are many more. *continued*



*Continued...*

We are additionally blessed because the scriptures give us even more heroes who failed. In fact, the Bible records the failure of many people we admire most. Remember: Adam & Eve disobeyed the only rule God gave them; Abraham disbelieved the faithfulness of God and posed as his wife's brother; Moses disregarded the plan of God and lived as a fugitive making his own plans; Jonah rejected the Word of God and tried to hide; David defiled the Will of God, killing his lover's husband; Samson despised the gifts of God and surrendered his powers to his enemy; Peter denied the Son of God; John the Baptist doubted the purpose of God. How many times did the 12 disciples fail to understand Jesus?

We have all failed through what we have done (stubbornly holding onto a hate) and through outside forces (illness, acts of violence). Gratefully, we have a Lord who loves us in spite of our failures. It means He stands side-by-side with us to help us overcome even the worst of failures!

Our best example of failure is JESUS. He went to the cross because He failed to reform the religious and political leaders. He tried but they just didn't have the will to listen. However, He is our greatest success story because He rose from the dead and *showed them they were wrong*.

So what is the secret in my haunting phrase: "We fail in our ministries because we focus on doing good." It is the word "doing". Whether we "Do" good or not, we can always "be" good, be what God created us to be. It isn't about doing. Abraham was to be the father of many Nations; Moses, the rescuer and lawgiver to the Israelites; and Peter, the leader of a new spiritual revolution.

We are all too busy doing "good", trying to do a task perfectly, but we are the ones trying to control the event. Look at Paul, he was paid to kill the Jesus believers and was very skilled at his job - until one day when God knocked him to the ground. Then he became the robust apostle to the gentiles.

Just be... be all that you can be... be joyful in your work and trust that God can use even our failures to nurture us... so that you can know why you do what you are doing and not just how to do it. Be that creation who crawls as an infant, toddles as a child, rebels as a teenager, and misses the mark as an adult. Be that Child of God that God created. Then you are everything and failures are nothing more than success waiting to happen, waiting to BE made good, *not DO* good.



God so loved us that he gave his only Son to BE... Jesus said, "I must BE about my Father's work?" Believe...

Dolly+

## ***Exegesis Edge and Subtle Hermeneutics, Part II***

*{Editors Note: Part I was in the 2015 newsletter, which is on our webpage.}*

### **PART TWO: UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE**

The more skilled we become in using and interpreting language of all kinds, the more useful we can be to God and others in every area of life that involves communication. True language consciousness on the part of the interpreter is essential. To develop this in the original languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) is very rewarding. But if one cannot study the original languages, then a language awareness in English will help the interpreter to escape many pitfalls and to lay hold of many truths which he might otherwise pass by.

We must remember that a word can only mean one thing at a time. Therefore, when a Biblical writer uses a word, we should make every effort to determine that single intended meaning. In order to do this, we first need to know the possible range of meanings that the specific word might have. Exegesis Professor Richard Erickson expresses the importance of structure of a single specific word, “For this reason, understanding language structure and semantic structure, which give texts their communicative power, is an essential part of interpretive method. For our purposes, this issue takes two main forms. (1) It involves understanding how authors *synthesize, build up or construct* texts that is, how they link smaller elements to one another to form larger units, and how they join those larger units together to form even larger units. (2) It also involves understanding how to *take a text apart*, how to *analyze* it into its constituent pieces, moving from the larger units to the smaller ones of which they are made. Even a modest grasp of this dynamic will enhance our skill in interpreting *anything* based in language.”<sup>5</sup>

Yet as significant as it is to understand the language structure of a text, Professor Erickson warns of the dangers of focusing on the origins and history of a single word.<sup>6</sup> To say that there is a range of meaning does not mean that one can identify the whole range and then pick the meaning that best suits what her/he would like the author to have said. No, the author had a very specific meaning in mind! If God and the Holy Spirit took the care to inspire the very words, we must be careful to search out the intent of the author in his choice of words.

We should also consider the meanings of words and how they are established by their common usage during the time of the writer. The specific meaning (context) of a word is always determined by its use in a particular context..

*[to be continued in the next newsletter]*

<sup>5</sup>Erickson, Richard J. *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Exegesis*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press 2005, p. 57



Rick+

## Christmas 2015

*[Editor's note: This message was sent to CCOA clergy and seminarians in December. It is included here for others who may be perusing the CCOA site and newsletter.]*

*"My, how foolish I am!" my friend cries, suddenly alert, like a woman remembering too late she has biscuits in the oven. "You know what I've always thought?" she asks in a tone of discovery and not smiling at me but at a point beyond. "I've always thought a body would have to be sick and dying before they saw the Lord. And I imagined that when He came it would be like looking at the Baptist window: pretty as colored glass with the sun pouring through, such a shine you didn't know it's getting dark. And it's been a comfort to think of that shine taking away the spooky feeling. But I'll wager it never happens. I'll wager at the very end a body realizes the Lord has already shown Himself. That things as they are:" – her hand circles in a gesture that gathers clouds and kites and grass and Queenie pawing earth over her bone – "just what they've always seen, was seeing Him. As for me, I could leave the world with today in my eyes."*

*--Truman Capote, A Christmas Memory*

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I admit that one does not normally expect a quote from Truman Capote to be the first thing one reads in an episcopal message for Christmas. After all, wouldn't a quote from one of the birth narratives found in Scripture or a few lines from a traditional Christmas carol be a more appropriate opening? And, it's understandable that one would question that. The images those quotes from Scripture evoke or the images evoked by the words of the familiar carols are what Christmas is really all about, right? What does Christmas have to do with someone's musings about colored glass, clouds, kites and dogs burying bones in the backyard?

It's easy to see the Christ in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The whole arc of his life—his teachings, his miracles, his selfless death—all affirm his divinity. What's not so easy to see is the life of Christ in us, the life of Christ in all that surrounds us, in all that we can see and all that we cannot see. All too often we limit our understanding of the Christ to the person of Jesus of Nazareth and fail to open our eyes to the Omnipresence of Christ. We fail to see the inherent divinity of all Creation, that all Creation is in Christ and that Christ is in all Creation. Most of all we fail to see our own inherent divinity.

This brief excerpt from Capote's *A Christmas Memory* calls us to open our eyes to the wonder of the Christ in all Christ's myriad forms and actions. While not negating the wonder and uniqueness of Jesus the Christ, it calls us to expand our consciousness to embrace in wonder and awe the innumerable ways the Christ is born daily. And as we open our eyes, truly open our eyes, we see the Christ in others and ultimately we see the Christ in ourselves; not fully realized and expressed as in Jesus of Nazareth, but nevertheless ourselves as no less Christ with the same potential for self-realization.

*Continued ....*

Continued....

Christmas then is both a celebration of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth and a reminder of who we are. It is invitation to embrace our inherent divinity and to give it birth in our daily lives. It is an invitation to let go of the limiting and self-defeating beliefs we hold about ourselves and touch deeply the true essence of our being—the Eternal Cosmic Christ who lives at the very center of each and every one of us. It is an invitation to feel the joy and wonder and awe of that deep truth and to say, as Paul of Taurus said, “I live not I but Christ lives in me”.

I offer these thoughts as my personal reflection on what Christmas means to me. They are not meant to be an official statement of the Catholic Church of Antioch about the nature of Christmas or the nature of the Christ. One is free to accept or reject them as one sees fit. But if these thoughts resonate with you, either in whole or in part, then I invite you to embrace the Indwelling Christ more fully and give Christ birth daily in your own life. For as the 14<sup>th</sup> century Dominican mystic theologian Meister Eckhart reminds us, what good is it to celebrate the birth of Christ two millennia ago if we fail to bring Christ to birth here and now.

With sincere wishes for a blessed and merry Christmas, I remain your brother in Christ,

*+Mark, OC*

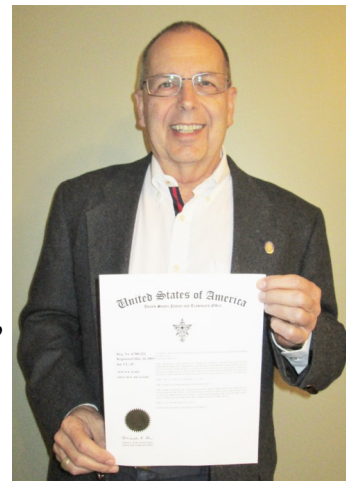
Most Rev. Mark Elliott Newman, OC

+++++



## It Always Was and Now It Is

Among those in the independent Catholic movement, the distinctive Cross of Antioch has long represented the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch, which has also been referred to as Church of Antioch, or simply COA or CCOA. There had been talk at different times to formalize what was well-known in those independent circles. CCOA Presiding Bishop, Mark Elliott Newman is shown here with the document from the USA Patent and Trade-mark Office. The cross is now the official trademark of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch.





## PARLIAMENT OF WORLD RELIGIONS CHOIR

Our own Rick+ and Darlene were among the many talented folks who participated in the choir and graced us with a wonderful performance during the Parliament this year.



Bishops Mark and Linda participated in the 2015 Spiritual Directors International Conference, which was held in Louisville, Kentucky.



+Mark Elliott Newman,  
CCOA Presiding Bishop  
© photo by Phil Nichols

***“May YHWH bless you and keep you!  
May YHWH’s face shine upon you,  
and be gracious to you!  
May YHWH look kindly upon you,  
and give you peace!”***

**The Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch  
is an independent jurisdiction within the sacramental tradition.**

website: [www.churchofantioch.org](http://www.churchofantioch.org)

*This newsletter is brought to you by the CCOA Communications Program, +Linda Rounds-Nichols, editor. We thank those who submitted materials for this issue, and invite all CCOA clergy and seminarians to submit materials for the next issue. Send your items to [lindaroundsnichols@yahoo.com](mailto:lindaroundsnichols@yahoo.com). Thanks! Thanks also to proof-reader, photographer, and all –round helper, Phil Nichols. The thoughts and opinions herein are not meant to be official statements held by the CCOA, but rather are the opinions of the individual writers.*