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The Catholic Bishops Forum Gathering by Bishop Linda Rounds-Nichols



Photo by Linda/Phil

This year I was able to participate in the Catholic Bishops Forum gathering in person. I've been involved in the forum for a number of years but have only interacted with most of the others through Zoom. Zoom is good, but seeing people in real life is so much better than only in the little Zoom boxes!

When I attended the gathering through the Zoom platform, I was part of the business and educational types of sessions, and while I knew I was missing the more human element, I didn't realize how much I had missed. It doesn't seem like much as I write the words, but having conversations during meals, during breaks, and at the end of the day makes a huge difference. Also, praying and worshiping with the others was truly a meaningful gift.

One of the purposes of the gathering and the forum is to help the bishops become the best we each can be. One way we all, bishops, other clergy, and the laity, grow into our best selves is through relationships with others attempting to do the same. Through the interactions I experienced at the gathering, I believe these bishops, just as our own CCOA people gathering at convocations, are all such people. I feel very blessed!

Presiding Bishop's Remarks



Photo by Linda/Phil

Dear Clergy and Friends of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch, One can find all manner of things on the internet, some of it amusing, some of it educational, some of it nothing more than dreck, and occasionally some of it inspiring. One recent posting that I found inspiring was from the Religious Formation Conference, "...a national Roman Catholic organization serving religious institutes of women and men with programs and services for those in the ministry of initial and lifelong formation, and general congregational membership." At the closing Eucharist of their 2023 Congress, Sr. Helen Aduku Ogbuji CCVI reminded participants that they were "called by Love to be love."

Called by Love to be love—what a simple yet elegant way to explain the mission of all who have chosen to follow the Way of Christ and of the institutions that have developed to support them in their efforts. This, my friends, is at the heart of what we as Antiochian Christians are asked to do. While this is always true of us, it is especially true at this moment in history when hatred and division are being powerfully played out on the world stage. Wars of aggression, the rise of authoritarian fascist ideologies in countries worldwide, the growing economic disparity between rich and poor, as well as other trends and movements, can evoke a sense of apathy, powerlessness, anger, despair, and all too often hatred for the ones considered responsible for these challenges. Yet, if what Sr. Helen says is true, and I believe it is, we are called by Love to be love even when it seems that love is impossible.

To be love and to express love in these difficult times is challenging, but not impossible. However, it does take discipline. When we recognize that our response to these challenges is characterized by any of the negative states

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Presiding Bishop's Remarks (continued)

previously mentioned, we need to remember the response that Our Lord made when he was similarly challenged—he loved those responsible. He did not give in to anger, vindictiveness, negativity. Instead, he loved them to the point that even at the moment of his death, he prayed for them, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.” (Lk 23:34) But more than just praying for and loving those who were responsible for the challenges of his time, he acted. Throughout his ministry, Jesus engaged the world, speaking truth to power and helping people discover their true value and worth. We too are called to do the same.

The Christian ethos calls us to action; action both internally and externally. Each of us must do the inner work necessary to extirpate the attitudes and emotions that contribute to the development and maintenance of the challenges our world faces. But where do we start? Hidden within each of us is a power all too frequently ignored or overlooked, a power that is an essential resource in our efforts for change -- the energy of Love that is the Presence of the Indwelling Christ. What we see happening externally reflects the energies that are at play within us, both individually and collectively. If we want to see our outer world change, our inner world must also change, so that the predominant energetic tone of our inner world is the all-encompassing love of Christ. When we align with that love, when we are transformed by that love, when we become that love, we no longer feed situations with the energies that sustain the problems of the world, but rather we provide the world with an energy that allows for peaceful and equitable solutions—the energy of Love. Love is the energy that fuels transformation.

Just as our inner world must change, so must our involvement in the outer world. A change in our inner environment is an important first step, one which lays the foundation for our efforts in the world. As we approach the outer work with a renewed perspective grounded in love, we can engage the world with a clearer vision of where and how changes are needed. The Way of the Christ is not a spectator sport; it is a call to both contemplation and action as Richard Rohr so ably reminds us. Each of us has talents that can be used to address our present challenges. I encourage you all to discover and engage those talents if you have not already done so. While it may be tempting to walk away from any efforts to improve the state of the world, the only way improvement will come about is by our active engagement in the world.

St. Paul reminds us that “...love never fails” (1 Cor 13:8). It is with this assurance that I am confident that despite present appearances, this too shall pass, and Love shall prevail. Maranatha!

Presiding Bishop Mark Elliott Newman

Parliament of the Worlds Religions: A Reflection

by Bishop Theodore Feldmann



Photo by Feldmann

"No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your God in heaven" (Matthew 5:15-16).

This past August, I joined Bishops Mark and Linda and Linda's husband, Phil, at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. It was my first time attending the Parliament and it was quite an experience.

I have been to a lot of conventions. The American Guild of Organists or the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (Roman Catholic) may attract a maximum of 3,000. The Parliament drew over 7,000!

There was a good bit of chaos: The technology in use for registration had a meltdown causing long lines; many workshops and presentations were moved at the last minute causing a lot of frustration and missed meetings; some meetings were held in an area where it was very difficult to hear the speakers; the large morning gatherings were often loud: Lots of amplification. For an introvert, it could be overwhelming.

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Parliament of the Worlds Religions: A Reflection (Continued)

But what was impressive was the remarkable patience and kindness demonstrated by those in attendance when things went wrong. We helped each other find our way. The meditation experiences, such as the labyrinth, were very popular. People were taking care of themselves on a spiritual level.

These religious people were, well, really nice folks. They were there to celebrate their own faith traditions and those of others, learning from each other and seeking common ground in the quest for justice and peace, for all people and for our planet. So often, religion is part of the problem in conflicts around the world. These people were working to be part of the solution.

I was particularly touched by a group called the Abrahamic Reunion, which showed several films of their work in bringing the four Abrahamic traditions (Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Druze) of the Holy Land together. I am deeply moved when I think of those fine people as we see war erupt once again. I attended a Gnostic mass. I saw a powerful film about 4 young people of various traditions whose homes are being threatened by global warming and who were invited to come to Rome and meet Pope Francis to discuss his hopes for saving our planet. I met a group of Unity ministers, visited with the Roman Catholic Women Priests at their table, chatted with a man selling exquisite singing bowls from Tibet. I saw more Sikhs than I have ever seen in one place. I listened to an organ concert with music chosen to revere the earth. The frustration was in having to choose between so many fascinating presentations.

Many folks seem to look forward to seeing the colorful attire and rituals of the various groups. I was told that Christians were in the minority. Other than a few Roman priests, who could tell? Most, I assume, were in “civilian” clothes. We joined in by wearing our purple attire at all events and it was a catalyst for some interesting conversations: The retired Episcopal Bishop of California thought I was one of his confreres and he learned a bit about Independent Catholicism as a result; several people from India wondered if I was Anglican; I chatted with a Lutheran pastor from Denmark and several rabbis. I had a long conversation with a Pakistani man living in an area where his people had been recently attacked. It gave me a bit of a start to see a very tall Imam (?) who looked disturbingly like Osama bin Laden. But the Parliament invites us not to judge by appearance. We were all there in peace, standing for justice.

I often think that many independent/old catholic clergy seem almost invisible. Are we unsure of ourselves? Do we sometimes feel like imposters? I remember being told that Archbishop Meri Spruitt, in speaking to someone about to be ordained at Loreto Chapel, said that she should wear her collar proudly as she walked through the streets of Santa Fe, to claim her role and have the experience. Good for Meri Spruitt!

We need to let our lights shine, especially as we gather with other folks in ecumenical settings. We have lit the lamp of ordination. Letting it shine at these events is good for us. It also can inspire dialogue and invite us to reach out to others.

Ordination Day

by Rev. Celeste Handy



Photo by Linda/Phil

On October 15, 2023, I was ordained to the priesthood in the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch. I did not realize it at the time, but I spent many years in preparation. Previously, I had worked with Native American college students and racial reconciliation with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and SouthWest Campus Christian Fellowship for seventeen years. During that time, I attended Fuller theological Seminary, working on a degree in Intercultural Studies. In 2014, I moved to North Carolina, where I am originally from, to attend Duke Divinity School and complete a Master of Divinity degree. I was a United Methodist pastor for three years with a two-point charge, meaning I was the pastor of two small churches. After that time, church leaders from the tribe in North Carolina with whom I had grown up asked me to be an associate pastor for a Lumbee United

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Ordination Day (continued)

Methodist Church for a year and to work on a hurricane disaster response team in Robeson County, North Carolina with the Lumbee people.

I worked for conservative Christian organizations for many years, but I have always felt called to be involved in progressive and inclusive ministry. At times this worked in my favor, but many times I got into trouble for my radical ideas. I was never very outspoken, just quietly doing what I thought was right. When I found out about the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch and its values and stance on many things I was passionate about, I thought, this is the place for me. When I came last year to the CCOA Convocation and was ordained to the diaconate, I became even more convinced. I was so happy to meet the wonderful members of CCOA clergy and to experience their kindness, enthusiasm, and deep spirituality. I felt I had met great mentors and peers to learn from and look up to in this group. I also was able to begin serving our community here in Gallup in what felt like a more complete way. I was not sure what the Holy Spirit was calling me to do in Gallup at first, but I believe God is showing me the way.

I have always wanted to help people who do not feel loved by God to understand that God loves them as they are. It is something that I have always been passionate about, and I started a little group in Gallup called Hozho Ministries – CCOA. A fascinating assortment of people have come together to join me, and they each have expressed their enthusiasm and calling to serve the community of Gallup. We have been meeting each month to talk about how, and some wonderful friendships have occurred as a result.

I have said a lot just to get to the ordination itself. Two of the members of my group drove all the way from Gallup not only to see the event, but also to participate in it. Imagine how delighted and thrilled I was to have my tiny new community come to my ordination! Other friends and relatives of all different backgrounds were also able to join us thanks to a Zoom meeting set up by Bishops Mark and Michael. Even now, a month later, my two friends Betsy and Sandy tell people about how meaningful the event was for them. Betsy tells people of how it was one of the biggest spiritual highlights of her life, and Sandy tells of how included she felt by our group of bishops and clergy and how exciting and uplifting that was for her. I also feel that it was one of the biggest highlights of my life, especially since CCOA people, friends, and family were all able to come. It meant the world to me, and even better, I will be able to serve our community here in Gallup and the Navajo Nation in a greater capacity. I am very excited about what God is doing and will do in the future with us.



Photo by Linda/Phil



Photo by Linda/Phil

NACEC and Me
by Bishop Linda Rounds-Nichols



Photo by Linda/Phil

Many years ago I had the opportunity to make a planned chance visit to an Independent Catholic Church in Albuquerque. It was a planned visit because I had wondered if I'd ever be in the city at the right time, and chance because – just so happened the opportunity arose. It was fun meeting other Indy people and interesting to see how another Indy group did things. I'm not often in Albuquerque on a Sunday, so I didn't expect to see these people much, other than possibly on Facebook.

Then, in 2021, when the North American Catholic Ecumenical Church was able to meet after the pandemic, they were ready to consecrate a new bishop. Then Presiding Bishop David needed to find bishops who were close enough to drive because, as we may all remember, in 2021 people weren't quite ready for public transportation! So, I was honored to be a co-consecrator of their new bishop. Again, I didn't expect to see these people much, especially since I go to Albuquerque even less than in the past.

And yet I was honored yet again this year. The group was ready to consecrate Mark Jeffery Swartz and I was invited to be one of the co-consecrators. Added to that, was the experience of seeing the elevation of Scott Bradly Burris, the man whose consecration was two years ago, as he became the group's new Presiding Bishop. And another experience was being there to support the outgoing Presiding Bishop, David Doyle, as he began his new life in (semi-) retirement. +David was the clergyperson whose service I attended all those years ago!

NACEC is a small group like CCOA, and they have a good feel – they seem to be a contented group, concerned about each other, and great fun to visit.



Photo by Linda/Phil

THE VOICE is not only our voice to one another; **THE VOICE** is our voice to the world.

If you have anything to share, contact me, Fr. Ron - your Editor, at roncat@zianet.com

Your **VOICE** is an important part of who the Catholic Church Of Antioch (CCOA) is.

For more information about the CCOA visit our website <http://www.churchofantioch.org/>

Convocations

Please mark you calendars for the next two Convocations of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch to be held in Phoenix, Arizona.

- Thursday, October 17, 2024, through Monday, October 21, 2024
- Thursday, October 16, 2025, through Monday, October 20, 2025

Words from our Presiding Bishop in regard to the importance of attending Convocations:

“I would encourage you all to make yearly attendance at Convocation one of your spiritual priorities and to begin making plans to attend next year and in subsequent years. Unlike some other independent jurisdictions, the CCOA does not mandate attendance at the yearly gatherings; however, it is an expectation. There are circumstances that can legitimately prevent someone from attending, but in the absence of such circumstances, failure to attend sends a concerning message about commitment and interest in the life of the Church. The work of “reclaiming the original blessing” requires the efforts, insights, and contributions of all our clergy, not just a select few, and Convocation is the place where all those elements are brought together, shared, and refined.”



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